

Apophysis, Contemplation, and the Kenotic Moment in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Tim Flight

Magdalen College

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This thesis reveals the considerable influence of contemplation (sometimes referred to as mysticism) on Anglo-Saxon literature, manifested through the arrangement of narratives according to the theological concepts of apophasis and kenosis. This is demonstrated through a lengthy contextual discussion of the place of contemplation in Anglo-Saxon spirituality, and close analysis of four poems and a prose text.

Although English mysticism is commonly thought to start in the High Middle Ages, this thesis will suggest that this *terminus post quem* should instead be resituated to the Anglo-Saxon period. The first chapter seeks to reveal the centrality of contemplation to Anglo-Saxon spirituality through analysing a range of diverse material, to evidence the monastic reader borne from this culture capable of reading and composing the texts that make up the rest of the thesis in the manner suggested.

The thesis places chronologically diverse Anglo-Saxon texts in a contemplative context, with close reference to theology, phenomenology, and narrative structure, to suggest that our interpretation of them should be revised to apprehend the contemplative scheme that they advocate: to cleanse the reader of sin through inspiring penitence and kenosis (humility and emptying of one's will) and direct the mind intellectually beyond the words, images and

knowledge of the terrestrial sphere (apophasis), so as to prepare them for the potential coming of God's grace in the form of a vision. This reading is supported by the close taxonomical resemblance of each text's narrative structure. The thesis thus suggests that contemplation was central to Anglo-Saxon spirituality, producing an elite contemplative audience for whom certain texts were designed as preparative apparatus.

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Abbreviations

All references to Old English poetry are to G.P. Krapp and E.V. Dobbie, eds., *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*, 6 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-53). All translations of Old English texts are my own; due to spatial limitations, I have used translations of Latin texts where available. All scriptural references in Latin and Modern English are to Swift Edgar, ed., *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation*, 6 vols, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 1, 4-5, 8, 13, 17, 21 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010-13).

ABR	<i>The American Benedictine Review</i>
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
Bosworth-Toller	Thomas Northcote Toller, ed., <i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), with Toller, <i>Supplement</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), and Alistair Campbell, <i>Revised and Enlarged Addenda</i> (Oxford: OUP, 1973).
CL	<i>Comparative Literature</i>
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DMLBS	R.E. Latham, ed., <i>Dictionary Of Medieval Latin From British Sources</i> , 17 vols. (London: OUP for the British Academy, 1975-2013)

DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English: A-G</i>, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos and Antonette diPaolo Healey (CD ROM: University of Toronto Centre for Medieval Studies Dictionary of Old English Project, 2008)
EETS	The Early English Text Society
ELN	<i>English Language Notes</i>
ES	<i>English Studies</i>
Fontes	<i>Fontes Anglo-Saxonici:</i> <i>A Register of Written Sources Used by Anglo-Saxon Authors</i> <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>
G&L	Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, <i>Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100</i>, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 15 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014)
HE	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i>
HA	Bede, <i>Historia abbatum</i>
JEGP	<i>The Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
Ker	N.R. Ker, <i>A Catalogue of Manuscripts</i>

	<i>Containing Anglo-Saxon</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957; repr. 1990)
MÆ	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
MP	<i>Modern Philology</i>
MS	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
NM	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
NQ	<i>Notes & Queries</i>
OUP	Oxford University Press
PMLA	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
PQ	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
RB	Benedict of Nursia, <i>Regula sancti Benedicti</i>
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>Versus de patribus</i>	Alcuin, <i>Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae</i>
VSA	Athanasius, <i>Vita Sancti Antoni</i> , Latin trans. Evagarius
VSC	Bede, <i>Vita Sancti Cuthberti</i> (Prose)
VSG	Felix, <i>Vita Sancti Guthlaci</i>
VSH	Jerome, <i>Vita Sancti Hilarionis</i>
VSM	Sulpicius Severus, <i>Vita Sancti Martini</i>
VSO	Byrhtferth, <i>Vita Sancti Oswaldi</i>

VSW

Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*

VSWI

Goscelin of St. Bertin, *Vita Sancti Wlsini*

Note on Key Terms

For ease of reference, I have defined and discussed below three key terms used regularly in the thesis.

Apophasis¹

Apophasis, sometimes referred to as negative theology or *via negativa*, comes from the Ancient Greek ἀπόφασις, via ἀπόφημι (*apophēmi*, ‘to deny’).² In the Christian tradition, apophasis is a theological concept based on God’s ineffability (John 1:18, ‘deum nemo vidit umquam’, ‘no man hath seen God at any time’).³ Christian apophasis embraces the impossibility of knowing God or describing Him with terrestrial discourse, and so works to guide the mind beyond the words, concepts and logic with which man customarily attempts to understand things, but which in the case of God define Him less accurately than silence. In apophatic theology, language is seen to inhibit the proper understanding of God, and so apophatic texts apply consciously inappropriate terms to God, before negating them, to bring the mind closer to Him. The principle behind this denial is that the more concepts

¹ On apophasis generally, see D. Carabine, ‘Apophasis East and West’, *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 55 (1988), 5-29; O. Davies and D. Turner, eds., *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation* (Cambridge, 2002); C. Journet, *The Dark Knowledge of God*, trans. J.F. Anderson (London, 1948).

² J.P. Williams, *Denying Divinity: Apophasis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions* (Oxford, 2000), p. 3. For the beginnings of apophasis in Classical thought, see D.J. Gendle, ‘The Apophatic Approach to God in the Early Greek Fathers: With Special Reference to the Alexandrian Tradition’ (University of Oxford, 1975); Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena*, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs, 19 (Louvain, 1995); A. Louth, ‘Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 137-46.

³ A. Solignac, ‘Théologie Négative’, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: Ascétique et Mystique: Doctrine et Histoire*, ed. M. Viller, 17 vols (Paris, 1937-1995), XV (1994), column 15.

applied to God, and negated, the further the mind is turned from the language that cannot define Him into the darkness of unknowing, the silence beyond the meanings of words wherein His essence is best, though partially, signified. This denial, or negation, also applies to the initial negations: to say what God is not requires that we know what God is in the first place, and so one must deny what has been denied about God to truly free Him from all language and the human knowledge that informs discourse.⁴ A common technique of negated negation is the apophatic paradox, in which something initially said not to characterise God is then said to characterise Him in direct contradiction, thus signifying nothing in combination.

Contemplation

The term ‘contemplation’, as used in this thesis, refers to a practice which in later medieval texts is referred to as ‘mysticism’. My reasons for avoiding the term ‘mysticism’ are twofold. In the first place, ‘mysticism’ is a word of seventeenth-century origin, and so applying it to an earlier tradition is anachronistic.⁵ Secondly, the common use of the term to describe later medieval practices means that applying it to Anglo-Saxon spirituality could be a source of potential confusion. Later mystical texts lay a profound emphasis on the individual, and often took the form of a quasi-spiritual autobiography, as in the examples of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich. The texts selected for this thesis place far less stress on the

⁴ The best discussion of this that I have found is D. Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 19-49. On apophatic discourse, see S. Budick and W. Iser, eds., *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory* (New York, 1989).

⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, at <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124654?redirectedFrom=mysticism#eid>>, accessed 13/12/15. On the problems of terminology, see M. Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff, 2012), pp. 82-84.

individual and, with the possible exception of *De die iudicii*, are anonymous, which suggests a differing tradition of mysticism. The findings of this thesis indirectly suggest that the English medieval mystical tradition likely had its roots in the Anglo-Saxon period, but the nature of spirituality was altered by the changes in theology from the early to late medieval periods and the rediscovery of Plato and Aristotle in the early thirteenth century. To define the texts that I discuss as ‘mystical’, therefore, would obscure the distinction between the Anglo-Saxon and late medieval devotional traditions. For the same reason, I have not applied the term ‘mystic’ to individuals who led a lifestyle based around the attempt to ascend to a vision of God, but instead have opted for ‘contemplative’.

Contemplation, in the strict sense in which we shall be using it, is the direct contact of the soul or mind with some form of the transcendent God.⁶ Such events are ineffable, given God’s transcendence (see the definition of apophasis above), and since God still remains unknowable to man even after deigning to reveal Himself, I will be avoiding the term ‘experience’, since the term implies something apprehended by the human mind or senses. The specific characteristics of contemplation, and the activities of contemplatives — those whose lives were informed by the attempt to be granted a vision of God — in the Anglo-Saxon period are discussed in Chapter 1 but, in brief, we should note here that contemplation was thought to be enabled by the purification of the soul, the detachment of the mind from the experiences, images, and knowledge of the fallen world and, most importantly, God’s consent, given to those deemed worthy.

⁶ C. Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and Contemplative Life*, 3rd edn. (London, 1967), p. 4.

Kenosis⁷

Kenosis comes from the Greek *κένωσις*, ‘emptying’, and refers to the self-emptying of one’s will in order to be receptive to the coming of God’s grace, in imitation of Christ.⁸ The term kenosis itself originates in Philippians 2:6, where it refers to Christ’s emptying of will and humility, *ἐκένωσεν* (*ekenosen*, ‘He emptied’), translated as *exinanivit* in the Vulgate:⁹

hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Iesu qui cum in forma Dei esset non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo sed semet ipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo humiliavit semet ipsum factus oboediens usque ad mortem mortem autem crucis propter quod et Deus illum exaltavit et donavit illi nomen super omne nomen. (Philippians 2:5-9; my emphases)

For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause, God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names.

This scriptural passage is the theological foundation of kenosis. As Paul explains, the emptying of will is an act of humility, as Christ abased Himself by taking the form of man, and suffered the ignominy and pain of death, in obedience to God. The end of kenosis is also shown to be glorification, just as Christ, through the denial of will and self-abasement, was exalted in the Ascension. It is also important to note that kenosis is explicitly demonstrated

⁷ On kenosis generally, see O. Zijlstra, *Letting Go: Rethinking Kenosis* (Bern, 2002); C.S. Evans, ed., *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Oxford, 2006); M.J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, 2009).

⁸ H.U. von Balthasar, ‘Kénose (De l’Église)’, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, VIII (1974), column 1705.

⁹ A.J. Maas, ‘Kenosis’, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. C.G. Herbermann, 16 vols (New York, 1907-1922), VIII (1913), p. 617.

here to be in imitation of Christ,¹⁰ and that by imitating His humble denial of will and obedience to God, we, too, might be glorified.

¹⁰ D. Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London, 2011), p. 1.

1 The Contemplative Audience of Anglo-Saxon England

Ac hwæt is se dumba, se ðe on sumre dene resteð?
Swiðe snyttrað, hafað seofon tungan;
hafað tungena gehwylc XX orða,
hafað orða gehwylc engles snytro,
ðara ðe wile anra hwylc uppe bringan,
ðæt ðu ðære gyldnan gesiehest Hierusalem
weallas blican and hiera winrod lixan,
soðfæstra segn.¹ (*Solomon and Saturn*, 239-46a)

Literary texts initiate performances of meaning, rather than actually forming meanings themselves. Their aesthetic quality lies in this 'performing' structure [...] because without the participation of the individual reader there can be no performance.² (Wolfgang Iser)

It is a basic tenet of aesthetic theory that textual meaning is generated in the interaction between text and audience.³ The meaning of a text is not stable and unchanging, therefore, but varies between audiences, and this variation is increased greatly by the context of time and associated cultural change. My hypothesis of an extensive contemplative tradition in Anglo-Saxon England, which reinterprets how texts of this period were read, is therefore heavily reliant on reconstructing the audience that read these texts in the suggested way. My theoretical approach here of course runs firmly against the theory of the 'intentional fallacy',

¹ "But what is the speechless thing that rests in a certain valley? It is very wise and has seven tongues, each tongue has twenty points, each of the points has the wisdom of an angel, and each part will carry you up so that you see the golden Jerusalem, the walls glitter and their chorus shines: the sign of the righteous ones'.

² *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978), p. 27.

³ *Ibid.* See also 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', *New Literary History*, 3 (1972), 279-99, and *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore, 1989). Iser is but one pioneer of the school of reader response theory: see also S.E. Fish, 'Interpreting the *Variorum*', *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1976), 465-85, and 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', *New Literary History*, 2, A Symposium on Literary History (1970), 123-62; G. Poulet, 'Phenomenology of Reading', *New Literary History*, 1 (1969), 53-68. More broadly, see M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London, 2002), who extends the model of performative meaning to other artefacts.

which argues that literary critics can never reconstruct what the author of the text intended.⁴ Whilst it is not possible to identify unequivocally the author's intended meaning, I firmly believe that a contextual identification of the intended audience can at least partially elucidate the intended meaning of a text. Wimsatt and Beardsley's theory is also a reaction to biographical criticism of more recent texts, written in a more solipsistic period after Théophile Gautier's *l'art pour l'art* maxim became popular. Anglo-Saxon religious texts, broadly speaking, were written with an obviously didactic intention for the audience; texts which have been identified as the remains of the oral culture of the *scop* and meadhall were written for the entertainment of others. Both categories of text were written with a clear idea of audience: thus, the possibility of reconstructing textual meaning from a contextual identification of the likely ideal audience is especially realistic for the Anglo-Saxon period. As the opening quotation, a riddle whose solution is a book,⁵ indicates, the Anglo-Saxons were aware that textual meaning was forged in the interaction between the text and the audience's comprehension: until someone picks it up and reads it, the physical book is just an object, and remains *dumba*, despite possessing *seofon tungan*.⁶ In any act of Pre-Conquest writing therefore we can assume that the likely response of the ideal audience was a crucial part of the author's compositional process. In this chapter, I will attempt to reconstruct the audience for whom Anglo-Saxon contemplative texts were written, by examining monastic theology, archaeology, liturgy, psychology, and Anglo-Saxon reading theory. By the end, I hope to have provided evidence for a sensitive audience capable of following the course of

⁴ W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, 1954), pp. 3-18.

⁵ K. Powell, 'Orientalist Fantasy in the Poetic Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn', *ASE*, 34 (2005), 117-43 (pp. 121-2).

⁶ For a modern perspective on the materiality of the book, see Poulet, 'Phenomenology of Reading', 56. The detail of the book possessing *seofon tungan* is related to a long tradition of numerology: see Chapter 5, footnote 38, below.

negation and paradox in apophatic literary artefacts, for whom the suggested contemplative texts were written.

This thesis by no means represents the first attempt at discussing the currency of contemplation in Anglo-Saxon England. Since the late twentieth century, there have been several, ultimately dismissive, discussions of the tradition, which will be briefly summarised here.⁷ Anne Savage is the most prolific writer on meditative and contemplative themes in Anglo-Saxon literature. However, she firmly delimits the potential for an Anglo-Saxon contemplative tradition, lamenting how little we know of the 'extent to which it was distinguished from related practices such as prayer or reading, or about its impact on later English spirituality'.⁸ However, as shall be discussed in the last section of this chapter, the contemplative theory of the Early Medieval period is strongly associated with the act of reading, or *lectio divina*, which also provides a response to her observation that no Anglo-Saxon word exists for 'meditation': reading and meditation were not separated in this period.⁹ Savage's observation that we know very little about Anglo-Saxon contemplation's 'impact on later English spirituality' has been addressed to an extent by the scholarship of Thomas H. Bestul. The English contemplative tradition is commonly ascribed to the influence of Saint Anselm (1033-1109), who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 until his death, but Bestul argues that his influence on English spirituality was a case of evolution, rather than revolution.¹⁰ Based on his study of prayer books, Bestul argues that upon arriving in England Anselm found an existing tradition of private prayer and devotion, and

⁷ There are also several articles tentatively suggesting mystical elements to certain Anglo-Saxon texts, which will be discussed in chapters focussed on the relevant texts.

⁸ 'The Place of Old English Poetry in the English Meditative Tradition', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 91-110 (91).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 'St. Anselm and the Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions', *Annuaire Mediaevale*, 18 (1977), 20-41.

thus a community receptive to his contemplative teachings.¹¹ Despite this conclusion,

Bestul's discussion is limited to three authorities:

Augustine, Isidore and the Bible itself were the great sources that the great spiritual writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries had at their disposal. When we turn to them, we can see how much they are shaped by the previous tradition of which they are heirs, and at the same time recognise to what extent they created something new by extending and advancing the heritage of the past.¹²

To the three authorities cited, we can most pertinently add the works of Bede, whose writings, as we shall see throughout this thesis, were both contemplative and extremely popular. Further than Bestul's three authorities, this thesis will highlight other patristic texts and Insular theologians who made a valuable contribution to the Anglo-Saxon devotional tradition that predated Anselm.

We should also note at this point Robert Boenig's discussion of the contemplative tradition in his anthology of Anglo-Saxon religious texts: 'the tendency among scholars as well as the general public to conceive of spirituality in individualistic, affective ways is largely alien to the Anglo-Saxons'.¹³ By contrast, we will see in a later section of the chapter how far the influence of the eremite, the embodiment of 'individualistic, affective' spirituality, penetrates Anglo-Saxon theology and religious ideals.¹⁴ For the time-being, we must address briefly the term 'affective'.¹⁵ Assuming that Boenig's use of the term 'affective'

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20. See also 'St. Anselm, The Monastic Community at Canterbury, and Devotional Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anselm Studies*, 1 (1983), 185-98.

¹² 'The Anselmian and Cistercian Contributions', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 1-20 (4).

¹³ *Anglo-Saxon Spirituality: Selected Writings* (New York, 2000), p. 29.

¹⁴ Whether there can ever be true 'individualism' in religion, even amongst eremites, is another, albeit important, matter in itself. Spirituality in any religion is greatly dependent upon established, often ancient, practices and beliefs: any so-called 'identity' within faith is merely a rearrangement of existing tenets and beliefs. 'Asceticism entails subjectivity, a self who renounces but a self that is always expressed through the structures of tradition' (G.D. Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 2).

¹⁵ See also Chapter 4, which discusses the narrator's stratified imitation of the Cross, depicted so as to imitate Christ itself.

is to connote 'affective piety', or *imitatio Christi*, we can look to Byrhtferth's *VSO* for evidence that this was not such an alien concept to the Anglo-Saxons:

After the reading of the gospel lection and the offertory of the divine host, and the remorse of the inner man, and the outpouring of lacrimose tears (which faithful and blessed worshippers of God are generally accustomed to shed), then during the holy mysteries [of the Eucharist] [...] a drop of blood flowed out of the true flesh of Christ's Body; seeing this with attentive eyes he [Oda] marvelled in his mind. He is struck with fear, troubled in his heart.¹⁶ (I.5)

Byrhtferth's claim that 'faithful and blessed worshippers of God are generally accustomed to shed' tears at the Eucharistic ceremony, coupled with 'the remorse of the inner man' inspired by the sufferings of Christ, aligns with modern definitions of affective piety, Oda's reaction to the miracle of the bleeding Eucharist implying that he is saddened by the human suffering of Christ.¹⁷ The currency of beholding the crucified Christ compassionately is further evidenced by Ælfric, in a homily designed for lay audiences: 'we sceolon smeagan mid arfæstre heortan ures Drihtnes manðwærnysses' (*Sermones catholici* II.XIII, 'Dominica V. Quadragesime'; 'we should contemplate with pious heart our Lord's meekness').¹⁸ This thesis will build upon the works of Savage, Bestul, and Boenig, to suggest that contemplation was an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon devotion.

¹⁶ Ed. and trans. M. Lapidge in *The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgbwine* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁷ For a defence of the concept of 'affective piety', see S. McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010), p. 5.

¹⁸ *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. B.J. Thorpe, 2 vols (New York, 1846; 1971). Subsequent references are to this edition. For the influence of the Anglo-Saxons on the later, well-developed concept of affective piety, see S. DeGregorio, 'Affective Spirituality: Theory and Practice in Bede and Alfred the Great', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 22 (2005), 129-39.

I The Place of Contemplation in Anglo-Saxon Monasticism

It is widely acknowledged that until the tenth-century Benedictine Reform, despite the claims of the reformers that they were returning the English Church to its former state, there was nothing akin to uniformity in terms of monastic rule amongst the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁹

Whilst the evidence of what these 'mixed rules' contained is scant, we can use the best-attested pre-Reform monastic rule, that of Benedict Biscop, as a case study.²⁰ The moribund Benedict Biscop claimed that he created an idiosyncratic rule from 'all I found best in the life of the seventeen monasteries I visited during my long and frequent pilgrimages' (*HA*, 11).²¹

In the absence of any written version of Biscop's rule, it would be impossible to reconstruct its exact sources and content. However, it seems that *RB* was an important source of the rule, since Bede's work betrays extensive familiarity with the text.²² Bede's knowledge concurs with what we know of wider English trends, wherein *RB* was a popular text, as evidenced by the earliest surviving copy being an eighth-century South West England manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 48).²³ Eighth-century hagiography maintains, in the face of this, that *RB* was observed exclusively by certain foundations. Given the influence of

¹⁹ For discussion of Anglo-Saxon monastic rules created from a variety of sources, or composite rules, see P. Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 141-69 (142); for an especially sceptical discussion, see S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 11-25; J.D. Billett, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England, 597-c.1000* (Cranbrook, 2014), pp. 3-196. Though D. Knowles (*The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943-1216* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 3) is convinced that *RB* was the dominant monastic rule observed by the Anglo-Saxons, he also acknowledges the evidence of Benedict Biscop's mixed rule from Bede's *HA* (p. 23), discussed below.

²⁰ P. Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (London, 1970), believes that this rule 'was probably most characteristic of Anglo-Saxon monasticism', though *RB* remained an important influence (p. 199).

²¹ *The Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, in J.F. Webb, trans., *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; 1983). Subsequent references are to this edition.

²² See A.G.P. van der Walt, 'Reflections of the Benedictine Rule in Bede's Homiliary', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1986), 367-76.

²³ Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 50; Ker, no. 327, s.vii or viii; G&L, no. 631, s.vii^{ex}-viii^{med}. From the later period, the evidence for the popularity of the rule comes from the eleventh-century Durham, Cathedral Library, B.IV.24, 98v-123v (Ker, no. 161, s. xi²; G&L, no. 248; s. xi/xii), an Old English version of *RB*.

RB on Bede, the laudatory tone with which he alludes to a *regula* in the following extract suggests that Cuthbert introduced RB to Lindisfarne, until that point a Celtic monastery:

So when the venerable servant of God had passed many years in the monastery at Melrose and had distinguished himself by the many signs of his spiritual powers, his most reverend abbot Eata transferred him to the monastery which is situated in the island of Lindisfarne, in order that there he might also both teach the rule of monastic perfection by his authority as prior and illustrate it by the example of his virtue.²⁴ (VSC, XVI)

As Foot advises, we should be careful of Bede's claims for the unanimity of RB.²⁵ However, this claim mirrors the biography of Cuthbert's controversial contemporary Wilfrid of Hexham, who according to Stephen of Ripon, 'brought about a great improvement in the church by introducing the Rule of St Benedict' (VSW, 13).²⁶ Although the precise influence of RB cannot be unequivocally proven, especially across centuries of monastic observance, the testament of monastic practice from hagiography and surviving manuscripts, and of course the absence of any other regulation so well-attested, make it most sensible to assume at least the dominant influence of the rule, whilst remaining aware of regional variation.²⁷

Contemplation is central to Benedictine monasticism; though often seen as preventing contemplative practices through its emphasis on communal activities, it is clear that all Benedictines received training in contemplative techniques, to varying degrees.²⁸

Prayer itself is related to contemplation. If prayer — 'a "petition" (*petitio*), for to pray (*orare*)

²⁴ Ed. and trans. B. Colgrave in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1940; 1985). Subsequent references are to this edition.

²⁵ *Monastic Life*, pp. 11-25.

²⁶ *The Life of St Wilfrid*, trans. J.F. Webb in *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth, 1965; 1983).

²⁷ In the next subsection, I will discuss the influence of the British Church, which was not Benedictine, upon Anglo-Saxon monasticism.

²⁸ An interpretation of Benedictine monasticism in this regard is expressed by C. Stewart, 'Benedictine Monasticism and Mysticism', in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. J.A. Lamm (Oxford, 2013), pp. 216-34: 'RB tells us nothing about personal prayer. Nor does it suggest that a monk should be given over to "contemplation". Instead it emphasises reading, the *lectio divina* so closely associated with Benedictine monasticism' (225). Stewart sees contemplation and *lectio divina* as separate activities, which the final section of this chapter will argue is not the case.

is to beseech (*petere*), just as to ‘pray successfully’ (*exorare*) is to obtain (*impetrare*),²⁹ according to Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*, VI.xix.9) — is a direct communication of man and God, then we can see it in its most rudimentary form as similar to contemplation, in which man seeks union with God.³⁰ *RB* prescribes a rigorous daily routine of prayer, the Office, constructed around Psalm 118.164: ‘septies in die laudavi te super iudiciis iustitiae tuae’ (‘seven times a day I have given praise to thee, for the judgments of thy justice’). Advises Benedict, ‘this sacred sevenfold number will be fulfilled by us in this wise if we perform the duties of our service at the time of Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline’ (XVI).³¹ Central to this comparison is the belief that reciting Psalms was a mode of personal spiritual expression, as advocated by Cassian.³²

For divine Scripture is clearer and its inmost organs, so to speak, are revealed to us when our experience not only perceives but even anticipates its thought, and the meaning of the words are disclosed to us not by exegesis but by proof. When we have the same disposition in our heart with which each psalm was sung or written down, then we shall become like its author, grasping the significance beforehand rather than afterward. That is, we first take in the power of what is said, rather than the knowledge of it, recalling what has taken place or what does take place in us in daily assaults whenever we reflect on them.³³ (*Conlationes*, X.ii.4-5)

According to Athanasius, psalms are ‘like a mirror to the one who sings them’, so personal to the individual’s experience that each can reform his inner life to conform with God’s word, simply by singing them.³⁴ Ælfric even goes so far as to claim that certain Psalms are

²⁹ *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. S.A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and O. Berghof (Cambridge, 2006). Subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁰ Likewise, for *orare*, *DMLBS* gives ‘to ask, beseech’, as well as ‘to pray’ in religious contexts.

³¹ *The Rule of St Benedict*, trans. L.J. Doyle, at <<http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc>> [accessed 12/09/14]. Subsequent references are to this edition.

³² Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 202; A. Hollywood, ‘Song, Experience, and The Book in Benedictine Monasticism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 59-79 (64).

³³ *The Conferences*, trans. B. Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, 57 (New York, 1997). Subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁴ *Epistula Marcellium*, 12, quoted by B. Daley, ‘Finding the Right Key: The Aims and Strategies of Early Christian Interpretation of Psalms’, in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*,

superior to personally-composed prayers: ‘ne mæg ænig mann on his agen geþeode þa geswinc 7 þa costnunga nearonessa, þe him onbecumað, Gode swa fulfremedlice areccan, ne his mildheortnesse biddan, swa he mæg mid þillicum sealmum 7 mid oþrum swilcum’ (*Ælfwine’s Prayerbook*, 53; ‘no man can tell God so effectively, in his own language, of the hardship and oppression of the temptations which come to him, nor ask his mercy, as he can with such psalms and with others like them’).³⁵ This personal devotion is doubly important to Gregory, for whom prayer and psalmody are a step towards creating the *compunctio* essential for contemplation.³⁶ As quoted by Defensor in the *Liber scintillarum*, Gregory advises that: ‘uox et enim psalmodie cum per intentionem cordis agitur. per hanc omnipotenti domino ad cor iter paratur. Ut intente mente prophetiae mysteria uel compunctionis gratiam infundat; cum per orationem compunctio effunditur’ (VI, *De compunctione*; ‘for this voice, with the due attention of heart to the Almighty Lord of psalmody, prepares the way to pour into the heart of the attentive mind the mysteries of prophecy or the grace of compunction. Compunction is poured forth by means of prayer’).³⁷

There is further emphasis on contemplation in *RB*. The whole day was based around scripture, and specifically its interpretation, or *ruminatio*.³⁸ According to *RB*, after Compline is a time for reading: ‘let all sit together in one place, and let one read the *Conferences* or the *Lives of the Fathers*, or something else that will edify the hearers’ (XLII). This

ed. H.W. Attridge and M.E. Fassler, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series, 25 (Leiden, 2004), pp. 189-205 (201).

³⁵ *Ælfwine’s Prayerbook*: London, British Library, Cotton Titus D. XXVI & XXVII, ed. B. Günzel, Henry Bradshaw Society, 108 (London, 1993). For more on the use of the Psalter by individuals in Anglo-Saxon England, see M.J. Toswell, *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, Medieval Church Studies, 10 (Turnhout, 2014) generally, pp. 42-64 for Bede, and pp. 99-130 for a study of the Paris Psalter as a manuscript for private devotion.

³⁶ This contemplative scheme is discussed with reference to Anglo-Saxon texts in each subsequent chapter.

³⁷ *Defensor’s Liber scintillarum: With an Interlinear Anglo-Saxon Version Made Early in the Eleventh Century*, ed. E.W. Rhodes, EETS, 93 (London, 1889). Subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁸ J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York, 1961), p. 99. See also the discussion of Cædmon, pp. 64-65 below.

recommendation would of course be open to the interpretation of the Abbot and perhaps even the lower monastic orders, but one can assume, in theory at least, the general sanctity of the texts read at this hour.³⁹ The monks were not even to be afforded a break from study during meal times: 'reading must not be wanting at the table of the brethren when they are eating' (XXXVIII).⁴⁰ It is also important to draw attention to Benedict's prescription of private, along with public, reading here. On a daily basis, Benedict advises that reading should take place:

Idleness is the enemy of the soul; and therefore the brethren ought to be employed in manual labour at certain times, at others, in devout reading if, perhaps, anyone desireth to read for himself, let him so read that he doth not disturb others [...] On Sunday also let all devote themselves to reading, except those who are appointed to the various functions. (XLVIII)

Moreover, this is to be increased at certain times of the year, and on Sundays:

During the Lenten season let them be employed in reading from morning until the third hour, and till the tenth hour let them do the work which is imposed on them. During these days of Lent let all receive books from the library, and let them read them through in order. These books are to be given out at the beginning of the Lenten season [...] On Sunday also let all devote themselves to reading, except those who are appointed to the various functions. But if anyone should be so careless and slothful that he will not or cannot meditate or read, let some work be given him to do, that he may not be idle. (*Ibid.*)

The private devotion represented by reading was sufficiently important to Benedict to warrant considerable enforcement:

Above all, let one or two of the seniors be appointed to go about the monastery during the time that the brethren devote to reading and take notice, lest perhaps a slothful brother be found who giveth himself up to idleness or vain talk, and doth not attend to his reading, and

³⁹ How often this was the case in practice is debatable. Alcuin wrote a polemical letter to Speratus for allowing profane reading at mealtimes, famously asking 'Quid Hiniieldus cum Christo?' ('what has Ingeld to do with Christ?'), but it has been convincingly suggested that there was a place for pagan texts, interpreted appropriately, in a monastic setting. For a critical summary, see R. Abels, 'What Has Weland to Do with Christ? The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Speculum*, 84 (2009), 549-81.

⁴⁰ The gravity with which Anglo-Saxon monks took this command for spiritual nourishment at mealtimes is perhaps best evidenced by the development of a sign language, so as to ensure the silence required for the lessons to be heard. See D. Banham, ed. and trans., *Monasteriales Indicia: The Anglo-Saxon Monastic Sign Language* (Pinner, 1991).

is unprofitable, not only to himself, but disturbeth also others. If such a one be found (which God forbid), let him be punished once and again. If he doth not amend, let him come under the correction of the Rule in such a way that others may fear. (*Ibid.*)

This prescription is to be borne in mind when reading the final section of the chapter, on *lectio divina*, for in Early Medieval contemplative theory, the text is the starting point of contemplation. Though this will be elaborated in Section IV of this chapter, for the time being we should bear in mind the centrality of prayer and reading to the Benedictine daily routine, thus permitting contemplation. We can see, already, the foundation of a contemplative mindset: a day spent studying the word of God, which forms the basis of both private and public devotions, attending the prayers of the Office, and communicating with Him through the medium of the Psalter.

II The Eremite as Embodiment of the Contemplative Ideal

According to John Cassian, the most influential link between Eastern and Western monasticism, all hermits are contemplatives:⁴¹

This, then, should be the goal of the solitary, and this must be his whole intention – to deserve to possess the image of the future blessedness in this body and as it were to begin to taste the pledge of that heavenly way of life and glory in this vessel. This, I say, is the end of all perfection – that the mind purged of every carnal desire may daily be elevated to spiritual things, until one's whole way of life and all the yearnings of one's heart become a single and continuous prayer. (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3)

Cassian's work represents a synthesis of the sayings and tales of the desert hermits he encountered whilst travelling through Palestine. As influential as he was, his work represents less original thought than a recording of the predominantly-oral eremitical

⁴¹ On Cassian's influence, see S. Lake, 'Knowledge of the Writings of John Cassian in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 32 (2003), 27-41; C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998); S.D. Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture*, *Medieval History and Culture*, 8 (London, 2002).

ideology of the desert hermits that he met, Latinised, and made available to the West.⁴² In this strongly-worded passage, Cassian delimits the purpose of eremiticism to contemplation and the spiritual encounter with God, which function we can trace through the lives of the Desert Fathers preserved in collections such as the *Vitas Patrum* and the individual *vitae* of eremites.⁴³ These texts were all recommended as ‘something [...] that will edify the hearers’ in *RB* (XLII), and so we can assume Benedict’s approval of their content. Thus, in this section, I will discuss the Insular eremitical tradition, from the British and Celtic churches to the post-597 Anglo-Saxon church, and present the hermit as a model of contemplation. I will also discuss the possibility of identifying contemplative space in the archaeology of hermitages and monasteries.

II.i Eremites in the British and Celtic Church

We can see the influence of desert eremites most clearly in the Celtic Church, the eighth-century anchorites of which called themselves *Céli Dé*, or ‘companions of God’.⁴⁴ It is to the Celtic and British Churches that we now turn, in attempting to identify the contemplative audience of Anglo-Saxon England. We have seen how difficult it is to identify exactly which monastic rule the Anglo-Saxons observed, but obvious candidates for secondary influence after *RB* are the British and Celtic churches. When Augustine arrived on his conversion mission in 597, he most likely found an established church with its own tradition of

⁴² K. Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London, 1966), p. 18.

⁴³ D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in The Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1993), p. 122. For the influence of the text in Anglo-Saxon England, see P. Jackson, ‘The *Vitas Patrum* in Eleventh-Century Worcester’, in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. Hicks, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 2 (Stamford, 1992), pp. 119-34.

⁴⁴ For a lengthy discussion of the *Céli Dé* movement, see P. O’Dwyer, *Céli Dé: Spiritual Reform in Ireland 750-900* (Dublin, 1981); W. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages*, *Studies in Celtic History*, 23 (Woodbridge, 2006).

monasticism, albeit belaboured and of waning influence: it has been suggested that about a third of the inhabitants of the recently-invaded *Britannia* had some awareness of the Christian faith.⁴⁵ Whilst it was previously assumed that monasticism came to England through Irish and Welsh missionaries, historians now maintain that it came directly from Gaul.⁴⁶ In his account of the 597 conversion, Bede records the exchange of ideas between Augustine and bishops of the British Church, suggesting that there was an established intellectual class: 'Augustine, making use of the help of King Æthelberht, summoned the bishops and teachers of the neighbouring British kingdom to a conference at a place which is still called in English *Augustinæs Ac*, that is Augustine's Oak' (*HE*, II.2).⁴⁷ That Augustine saw it necessary to seek these natives out 'that they should preserve Catholic peace with him and undertake the joint labour of evangelising the heathen for the Lord's sake' (*Ibid.*), and that debate over certain points of dogma took place, suggests that this learned monk of Rome saw the British Church as useful to the mission.⁴⁸ The ensuing debate, whilst suggesting that the British Church was heterodox, indicates the existence of an established tradition, buttressed by Bede's detail that the British churchmen came from 'the neighbouring British kingdom', which implies that those at Augustine's Oak were merely

⁴⁵ R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), p. 6.

⁴⁶ K.R. Dark, *Archaeology and the Origins of Insular Monasticism*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures on Mediaeval Welsh History, 5 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 7; H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (University Park, PA, 1991) p. 36. Although Morris (*Churches in the Landscape*, p. 101), goes as far as to claim that monasticism developed in Gaul and Britain at the same time, based on the dearth of fifth-century Gaulish missionary activities, until a valid alternative route of cultural transmission is identified, we must assume the role of Gaul, at least as a centre of education, if not a missionary centre. Certainly, there is evidence that English ships regularly reached the Northern Gaulish coast by the sixth century: H.R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*, 2nd edn. (London, 1962; 1991), p. 83.

⁴⁷ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁴⁸ This exchange is unlikely to have gone both ways, as the British Church remained suspicious of the Roman Church: Aldhelm complained that 'Bishops of Dyfed [...] glorifying in the private purity of their own way of life, detest our communion to such a great extent that they disdain equally to celebrate the divine offices in church with us and to take courses of food at table for the sake of charity' (Letter IV, in M. Lapidge and M. Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 158).

the most local members of a larger clerical class.⁴⁹ Other evidence also points to a well-established monastic tradition. We have the example of Gildas, whose sixth-century work evidences such Scriptural knowledge that the exact Biblical material he had access to can be reconstructed.⁵⁰

Thus, when he arrived on the Kentish coast in 597, Augustine entered not a wholly pagan country, but one that had its own, albeit mostly unobserved, Christian traditions. Despite his difficulties with the British clerics at the Augustine's Oak colloquium, there was apparently enough that was orthodox in the teachings of the British Church for Augustine to ask Pope Gregory I why customs varied between churches, rather than dismissing them outright. In his response, Gregory permits the assimilation of tradition, even where it differs from Rome:

If you have found any customs in the Roman or Gaulish Church or any other church which may be more pleasing to Almighty God, I wish you to make a careful selection of them and sedulously teach the Church of the English [...] for things are not be loved for the sake of a place, but places are to be loved for the sake of their good things. (*HE*, I.27)

Whilst, again, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what, if anything, Augustine found 'more pleasing to Almighty God' in the British church, the possibility for assimilation of Insular customs is important, given the influence wielded by anchorites.⁵¹ In the aftermath of the council held at Augustine's Oak, the British clerics consult the advice of a hermit, who

⁴⁹ We should be wary of Bede's testimony, here, not just for the far from contemporary date of the *HE*'s composition, but also since Bede is guilty of anachronism. Bede is critical of the British Church's incorrect observance of Easter, but the correct Roman date was not decreed by the Vatican by 597: 'at best, this is an anachronism; at worst, it is a Bedan calumny' (Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 8).

⁵⁰ R. Marsden, 'The Biblical Manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. R. Gameson, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1999-2011), I: c. 400-1100 (2011), pp. 406-35 (409). See also Lapidge and D.N. Dumville, eds., *Gildas: New Approaches*, Studies in Celtic History, 5 (Woodbridge, 1984).

⁵¹ If Augustine passed any specifically anti-native church legislation, he was thoroughly unsuccessful. The Irish Church, especially, continued to be influential after the time of Augustine. For a summary of the Irish Church's influence, see J. Campbell, 'The Debt of the English Church to Ireland', in *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1987), pp. 332-46; N.K. Chadwick, 'The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 323-52.

advised, 'if he is a man of God, follow him', adding with the eremite's characteristic emphasis on humility, 'if this Augustine is meek and lowly in heart, it is to be supposed that he himself bears the yoke of Christ' (*HE*, II.2). Bede describes this unnamed recluse as 'holy and prudent' (*Ibid.*), demonstrating both the esteem with which he was held by the British, and the continuing veneration of anchorites in the Anglo-Saxon church.⁵²

British and Celtic monasticism was markedly more eremitical than the eventual Benedictine customs, deriving a direct influence from the Desert Fathers, via the works of John Cassian.⁵³ Archaeology also supports the theory that early British monasticism was markedly eremitic and Eastern in character: Anthea Harris interprets the recurrent presence of Byzantine pottery at early monastic sites such as Whithorn, Llandough, and Glastonbury Tor as evidence for contact with the East.⁵⁴ This is especially significant when we attempt to quantify the influence of Cassian, since after leaving the company of desert eremites in the East he established his monastery of St Victor, near Marseilles, in 415, which was constructed according to the eremitic model he encountered in Palestine.⁵⁵ As previously noted, for Cassian, 'the goal of the solitary [...] [is] to begin to taste the pledge of that heavenly way of life and glory in this vessel' (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3): that is, contemplation. His arrangement of Saint-Victor according to his experience of the habits of the Desert Fathers, therefore, must have been to facilitate the contemplation that he saw as inextricably linked to the hermit's life. Although it is now difficult to identify the architectural features of this early site given the centuries of continuous occupation, we can nevertheless assume the

⁵² A full discussion of this veneration is provided in Section III below.

⁵³ Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 78.

⁵⁴ *Byzantium, Britain & the West: The Archaeology of Cultural Identity AD 400-650* (Stroud, 2003), p. 160. See also C. Thomas, *The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain: The Hunter Marshall Lectures Delivered at the University of Glasgow in January and February 1968* (London, 1971), p. 22.

⁵⁵ H.-I. Marrou, 'Le Fondateur de Saint-Victor de Marseille: Jean Cassien', *Provence Historique*, 16 (1966), 297-308.

influence of Cassian's arrangement at St. Victor on other Gaulish, and British, monasteries, since the tremendous influence of Cassian's writings, at least, can be traced in the predilections of both British and Anglo-Saxon monasticism, and monks travelled between Gaul and Britain fairly regularly at this time.⁵⁶

We can be more certain about the architectural influence of Martin of Tours, for we have a detailed contemporary description of his monastery. Though he does not boast the same ascetical pedigree as the later Cassian, Martin (316-97) was especially influential on the contemplative aspect of monastic architecture. In response to the difficulties of combining pastoral duty with contemplative urge, Martin arranged his monastery at Marmoutier to accommodate ascetic retreat and contemplation, whilst living as a community. Sulpicius Severus gives a detailed description of how this complex was arranged, and goes to considerable lengths to ensure that the monastery is interpreted as an imitation of Eastern models:

This place was so remote and secluded that it was equal to the solitude of the desert. For on one side it was bounded by the sheer side of a high mountain, while on the level side, it was enclosed by a gentle bend in the river Loire [...] Martin lived in a small cell made of wood, and a number of the brothers lived in a similar manner, but most of them had made shelters for themselves by hollowing out the rock of the mountain that overlooked the place. There were about eighty disciples who had chosen to lead a life in accordance with their master's blessed example. No craft was practised there, apart from that of the scribes; the young were set to this task while the older ones spent their time in prayer. It was rare for anyone to leave his own cell, except when they gathered at the place of prayer.⁵⁷ (*VSM*, X.4-7)

As well as drawing an explicit comparison with the Eastern desert, Sulpicius also describes how the monastery's layout was designed to facilitate the necessary solitude for the contemplative practices of the desert hermits. The topographical setting, in Sulpicius's

⁵⁶ For a summary of works, see M. Fixot and J-P. Pelletier, eds., *Saint Victor de Marseille: Étude Archéologique et Monumentale*, Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive, 12 (Turnhout, 2009). For details of monastic exchange between Gaul and Britain, see Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 16, 101. See also footnote 46 above.

⁵⁷ *The Life of St. Martin of Tours*, trans. C. White in *Early Christian Lives* (Harmondsworth, 1998).

account, is also important: the site's remoteness and wild aspect recreate the solitude of the desert. We can also map the influence of this model, and thus the spirituality that inspired it, upon the British and Irish churches: this model corresponds to what we know of Insular, pre-597 monasteries in Britain.⁵⁸ Celtic monasteries are likewise characterised by their remoteness, an enclosing wall, manmade or natural, known as the *vallum*, and a series of individual cells wherein the monk would live, essentially, as a solitary, with a central communal building.⁵⁹ To demonstrate this resemblance, we can refer to fig. 1, below, which presents the results of an archaeological survey of Skellig Michael, an eremitic community off the West Coast of Ireland. At Skellig Michael, we can observe the influence of Marmoutier: Skellig Michael comprises a group of individual cells, ten feet in width on average, arranged around a central communal building, and the whole of the site surrounded by a *vallum*. As well as the influence of Martin, we can see a demonstrable commitment to contemplation in the arrangement of the site.

⁵⁸ For an account of Martin's influence on Celtic monasticism, see C. Donaldson, *Martin of Tours: The Shaping of Celtic Spirituality* (Norwich, 1997).

⁵⁹ For a description of these features, see M. Aston, *Monasteries in the Landscape* (Stroud, 2000), p. 60; A.W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture Before the Conquest* (Oxford, 1930), p. 51; M. Herity, 'The Buildings and Layout of Early Irish Monasteries Before the Year 1000', in *Celtic Monasticism*, ed. L. Freeman, Monastic Studies, 14 (Montreal, 1983), pp. 247-84; J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 45.

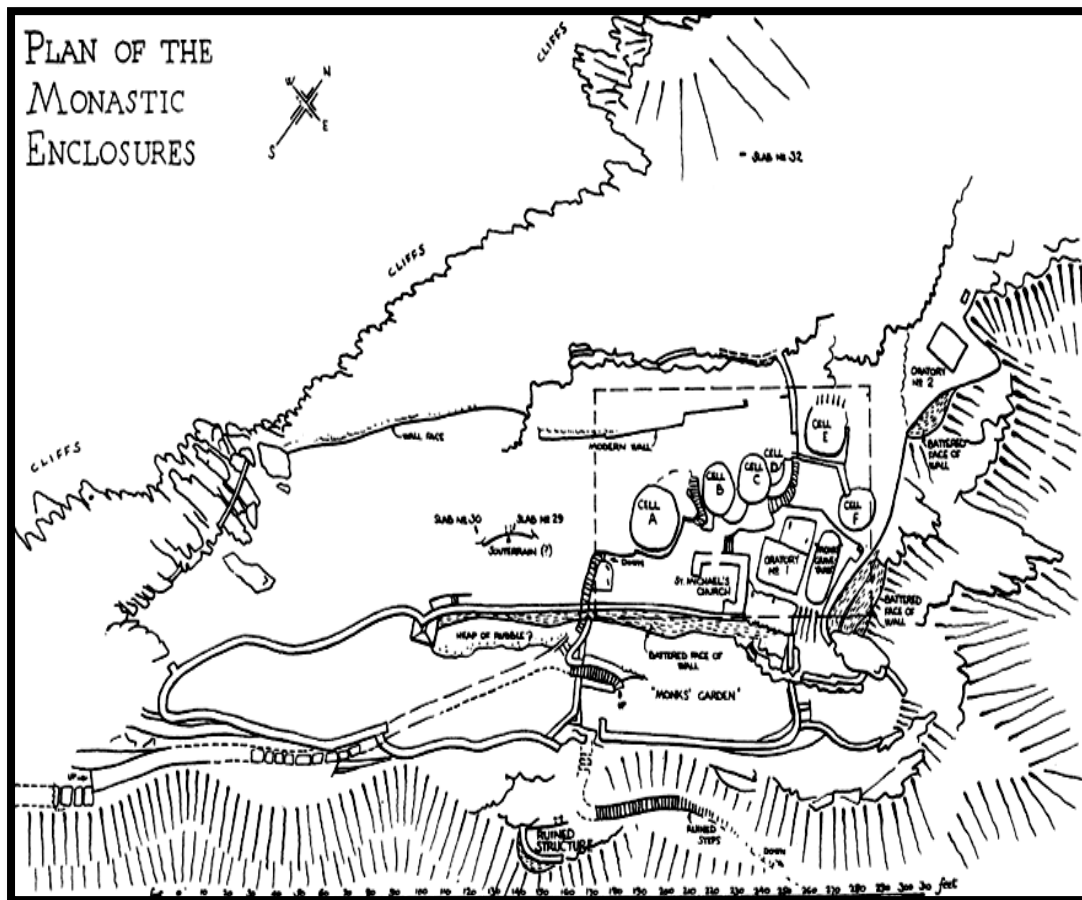


Fig. 1 Survey of Skellig Michael. Note the arrangement of cells around a central oratory, and the remains of the ruined wall around the cells.⁶⁰

Though it has been astutely noted that, ‘from an archaeological perspective, there are clearly major areas of monastic ideology which are readily not accessible through surviving material culture’, Sulpicius’s description of Marmoutier demonstrates that it is possible to trace the influence of contemplation on monastic architecture.⁶¹ This approach has been systematised by Roberta Gilchrist, who has written influentially on the idea of a hierarchy of

⁶⁰ After L. de Paor, 'A Survey of Sceilg Mhichíl', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 85 (1955), 174-87, Fig. 2.

⁶¹ D. O'Sullivan, 'Space, Silence and Shortages on Lindisfarne: The Archaeology of Asceticism', in *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. H. Hamerow and A. MacGregor (Oxford, 2001), pp. 33-52 (34).

contemplative space in medieval monasteries.⁶² By carefully comparing the archaeological record with contemporary written sources, it is possible to reveal somewhat the influence of the ideals of contemplation in Celtic monasteries. We can observe the arrangement of contemplative space in another British example from Somerset, Lamyatt Beacon (fig. 2). Archaeologically, this site is of particular importance, being originally a Roman pagan temple, and subsequently, it seems most likely, a Celtic monastery. The small edifice labelled 'Building 2' on the diagram has been interpreted as an oratory, associated with the eremitic monastery model we have already seen at Marmoutier and Skellig Michael, and the remains of a *vallum* have been identified around the complex. The excavator, Roger Leech, demonstrates how the likely purpose of a site can be reconstructed by reference to other contemporary sites (fig. 3), all of which, aside from Brean Down (Somerset), are notably Irish and Scottish. Whether the site was selected as an eremitic site because of the Roman temple, or because of Lamyatt Beacon's physically elevated position, is unclear.

Another Celtic monastery on the site of a Roman fortification, which profits more from a comparison of archaeological record and written source, is Burgh Castle, Suffolk. Bede relates how the Irish pilgrim Fursey, himself a contemplative, was granted land by King Sigeberht of East Anglia, to build a monastery: 'the monastery was pleasantly situated close to the woods and sea, in a Roman camp which is called in English *Cnobheresburg*, that is the city of Cnobhere' (*HE*, III.19). Cnobhere, or Cnobheresburgh, has widely been identified by archaeologists as Burgh Castle, a Roman Shore Fort, which matches the coastal location, and was once possibly surrounded by forest.⁶³ When excavated (figs. 4 & 5), Burgh

⁶² See 'Community and Self: Perceptions and Use of Space in Medieval Monasteries', *Scottish Archaeological Review*, 6 (1989), 55-64; *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (Leicester, 1995).

⁶³ See V.B. Redstone, 'Notes on Suffolk Castles', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 11 (1903), 301-19 (p. 309); A.J. Morris, 'The Saxon Shore Fort at Burgh Castle', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of*

Castle yielded evidence for seven huts, ranging from 14x10 feet to 24x14 feet, the small size of which seems to imply living cells.⁶⁴ The presence of a Saxon cemetery is further evidence that Burgh Castle is indeed the site of Cnobheresburgh.⁶⁵ Although there is no specifically-constructed *vallum*, perhaps what attracted Fursey to the site was the fort's encircling defensive wall (see fig. 4), which functioned in the same manner for the purposes of the monastery. The existence of small cells within an enclosure is strongly indicative of an eremitic monastery, but this evidence must always be corroborated with textual records and archaeological comparison.

Archaeology and History, 24 (1947), 100-20; Morris and C.F.C. Hawkes, 'The Fort of the Saxon Shore at Burgh Castle, Suffolk', *The Archaeological Journal*, 106 (1949), 66-69. Although S. Johnson is sceptical of a definite identification, he does concede that there is Ipswich-ware pottery from the period of Fursey's supposed occupation, suggesting that there was a community of some kind at Burgh Castle from the seventh to eighth centuries: *Burgh Castle: Excavations by Charles Green, 1958-61*, East Anglian Archaeology Report, 20 (Dereham, 1983), p. 39.

⁶⁴ R.J. Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. D.M. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 201-52 (214).

⁶⁵ J.S. Johnson, *Burgh Castle* (London, 1978), p. 15.

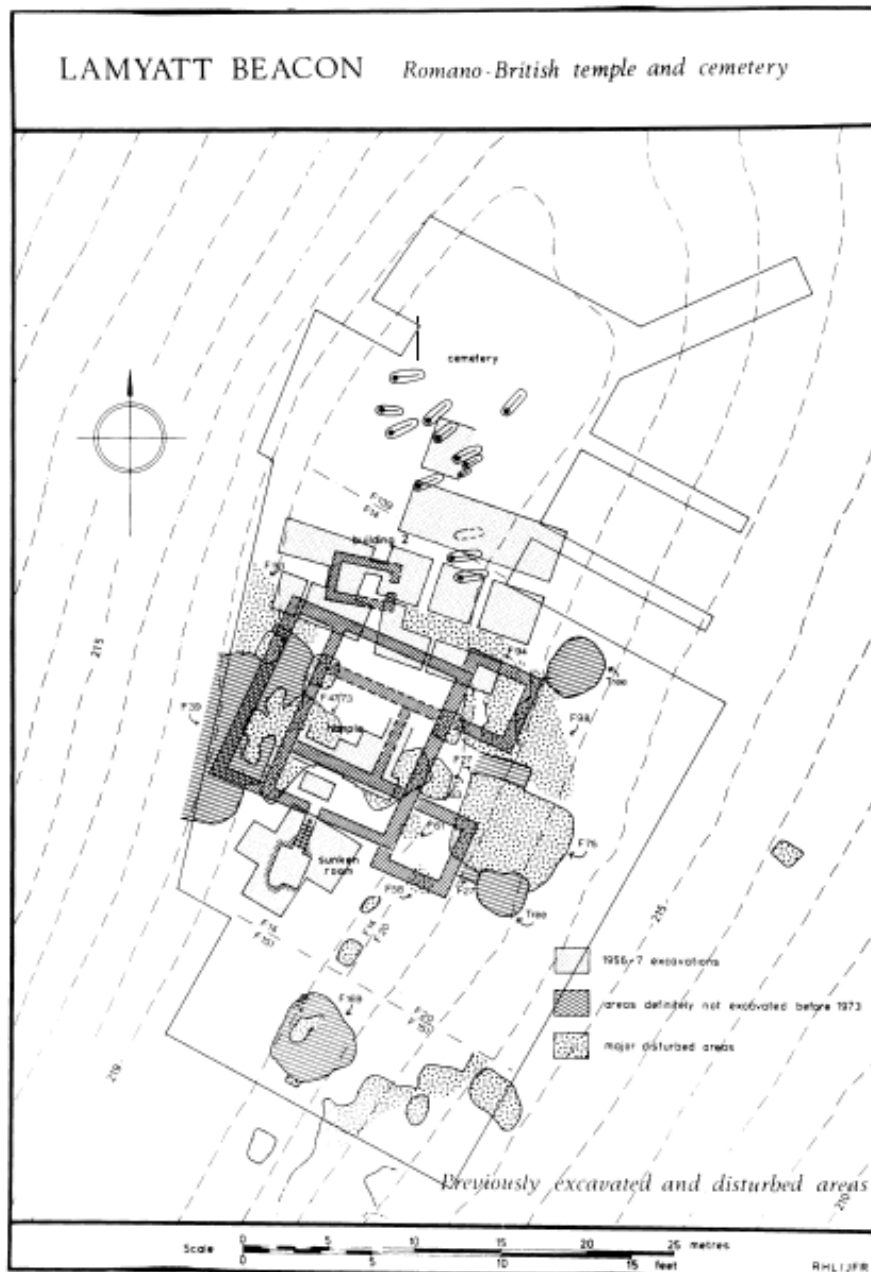


Fig. 2 The Lamyatt Beacon Site; the possible oratory is labelled 'Building 2'.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ After R. Leech, 'The Excavation of a Romano-Celtic Temple and a Later Cemetery on Lamyatt Beacon, Somerset', *Britannia*, 17 (1986), 259-328, fig. 2.

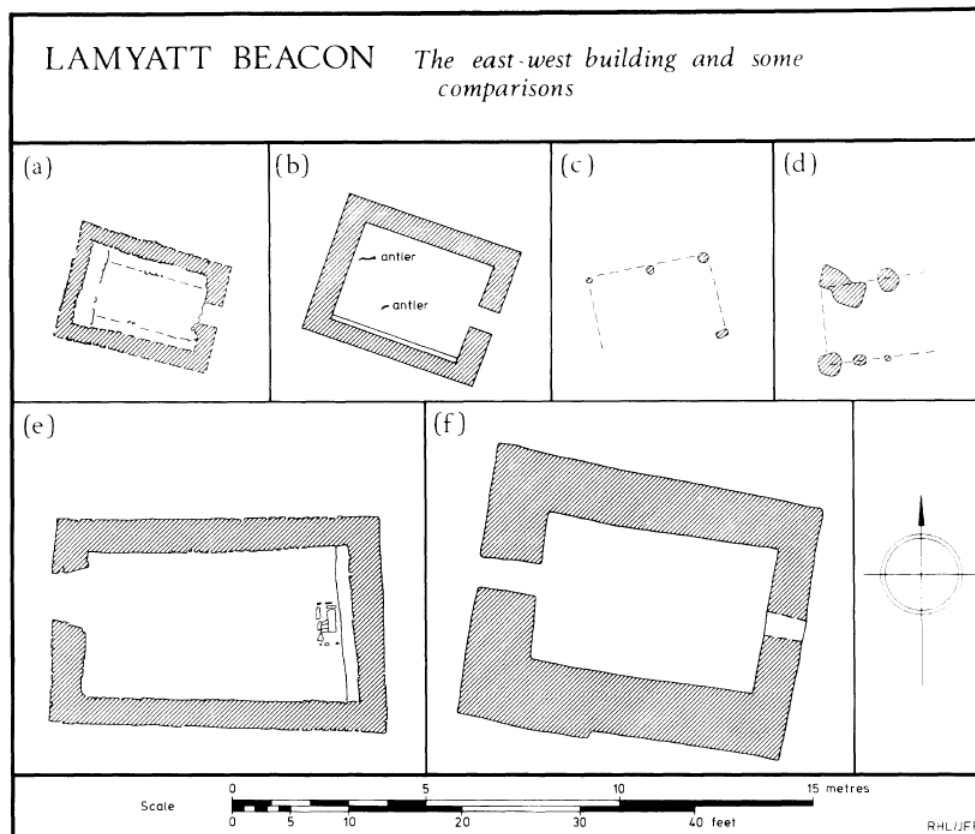


Fig. 3 Comparison of the small building on Lamyatt Beacon with known oratories: a.) Brean Down b.) Lamyatt Beacon c.) Ardwall Island (phase 1) d.) Church Island (phase 1) e.) Ardwall Island (phase 3) f.) Church Island (phase 2).⁶⁷

This approach to identifying contemplative space in Celtic monasteries, however, is far from a definitive technique, as the example of Tintagel indicates. The site was excavated by C.A. Raleigh-Radford in the 1930s, and interpreted as a Celtic site on the basis of its remote, cliff-top location, and a group of small buildings, which were interpreted as the cells typical of a Celtic monastery (see figs. 6 & 7).⁶⁸ However, there is no other evidence for monastic occupation: no central oratory has been uncovered, the evidence of the 'cells' is, at

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, fig. 11.

⁶⁸ See 'Tintagel: The Castle and Celtic Monastery Interim Report', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 15 (1934), 401-19; 'Tintagel in History and Legend', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, 25 (1942), 25-41; *Tintagel Castle, Cornwall* (London, 1939).

best, ambiguous, and the funerary remains are too restricted for a monastic site.⁶⁹

Ultimately, there is no definite evidence either way, and though no convincing alternative has been offered, the burden of proof resides with Raleigh-Radford and his bold interpretation.⁷⁰

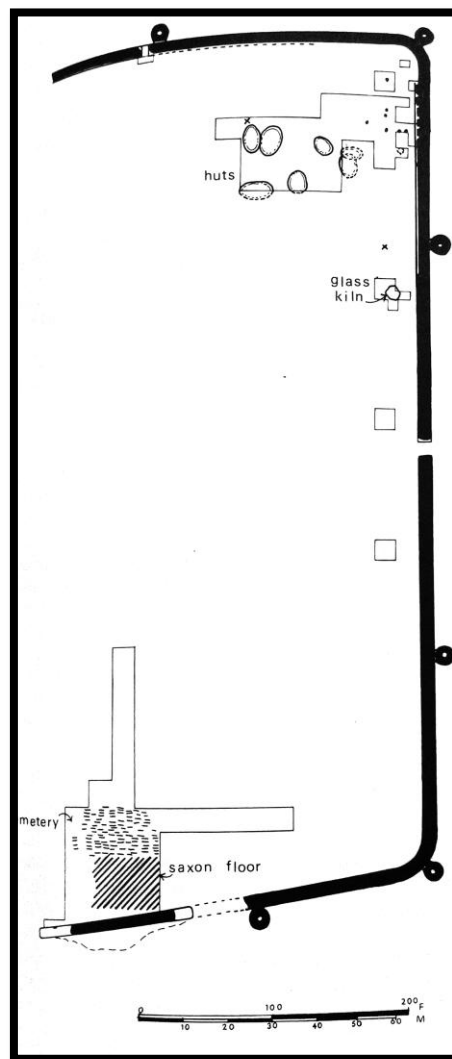


Fig. 4 Excavations at Burgh Castle, illustrating the enclosing Roman Wall.⁷¹

⁶⁹ S. Turner, 'Making a Christian Landscape: Early Medieval Cornwall', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, ed. M. Carver (York, 2003), pp. 171-94 (176); L. Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall*, Studies in Celtic History, 11 (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 34-35.

⁷⁰ An alternative, though inherently speculative, approach to defining Tintagel as a Celtic monastery is from place-name evidence: C. Thomas has proposed that Tintagel is in fact the unknown Irish monastery of Rosnat, based on the etymological link between Tintagel's former name, Bossiney and Rosnat/Rostat. See 'Topographical Notes: III. Rosnat, Rostat, and the Early Irish Church', *Ériu*, 22 (1971), 100-06.

⁷¹ After Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', fig. 5.3.

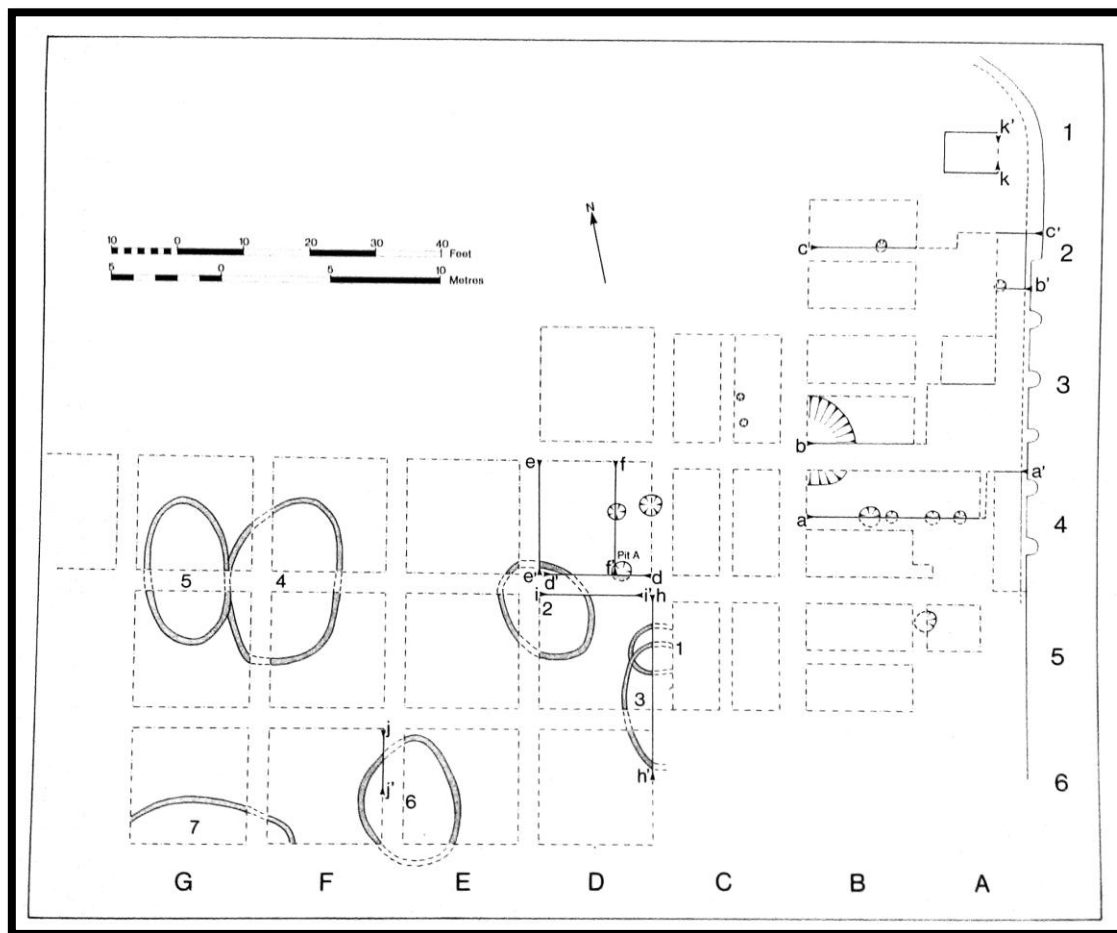


Fig. 5 The Possible Cells, North West corner of Burgh Castle.⁷²

⁷² After Johnson, *Burgh Castle*, fig. 16.

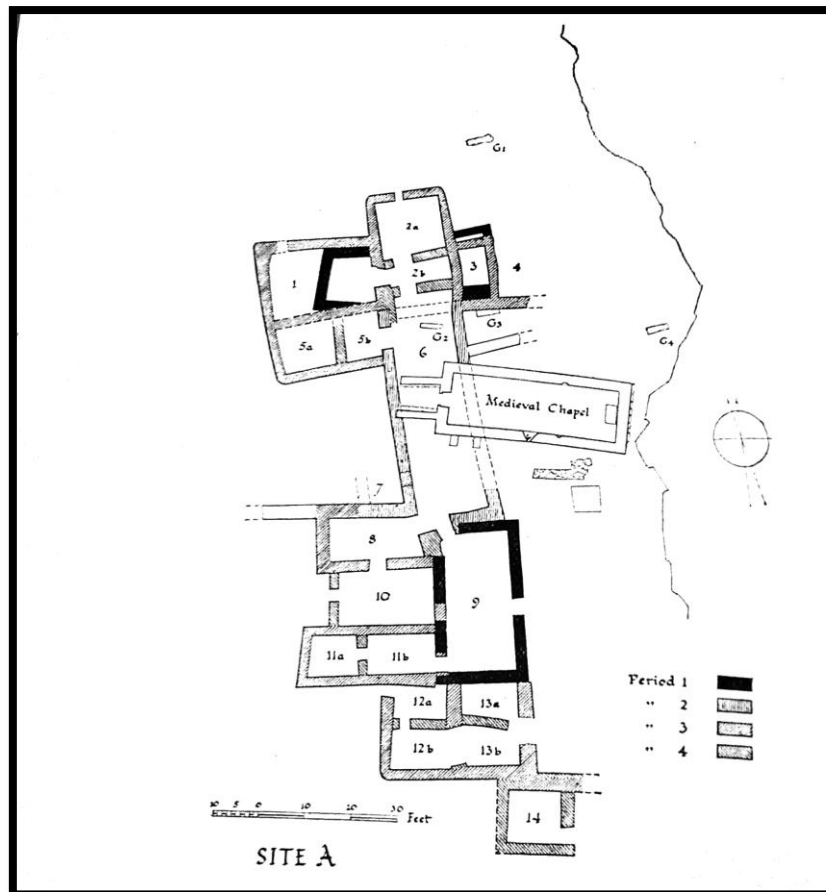


Fig. 6 Site plan of Tintagel.⁷³

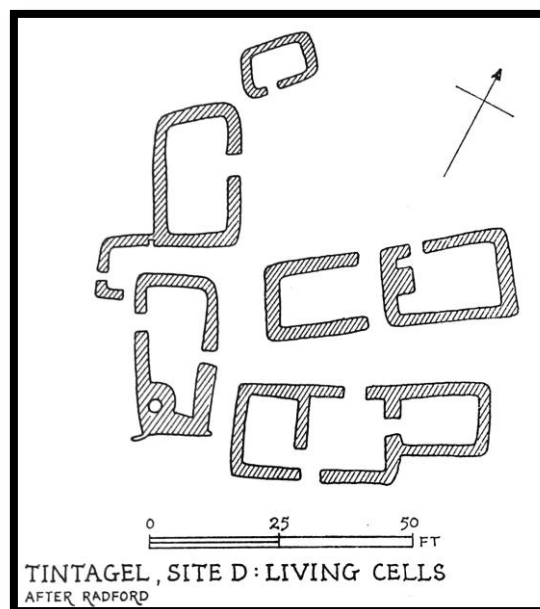


Fig. 7 Raleigh-Radford's interpretation of the site.⁷⁴

⁷³ After Raleigh-Radford, 'Tintagel in History and Legend', p. 30.

⁷⁴ After Thomas, *Early Christian Archaeology*, fig. 5.

There is another means by which the example of Gaulish monasteries such as Marmoutier can help us, however. Mick Aston suggests that we should use the model of Lérins to interpret the clustering of small ecclesiastical sites in close proximity in Somerset (fig. 8).⁷⁵ The Abbey of Lérins was founded on an island off the coast of Provence around 410 by Honoratus, inspired by the example of the Desert Fathers after travelling to the Syrian desert.⁷⁶ A disciple of the hermit Caprasius of Lérins, Honoratus originally lived as a hermit himself on the island, but, like Martin of Tours, was soon joined by others wishing to live the same life, thus forming an eremitic community of hermits living in close proximity.⁷⁷ We can observe already the similarities with the monastery of St. Victor, and the influence of the latter's founder, Cassian, on Lérins has been suggested.⁷⁸ Like the other Gaulish and Celtic monasteries that we have discussed, Lérins consisted of a central *coenobium*, surrounded by satellite hermitages in varying degrees of isolation around the island. This model would explain why so many small Somerset religious sites, unable to house more than a few monks each, were located in such close proximity.⁷⁹ It seems that the landscape of Somerset was especially attractive to eremites, as much of the area that Aston outlines in fig. 8 was seasonally swamped in the Early Middle Ages, rendering the small areas of high ground effectively islands.⁸⁰ This hypothesis is buttressed by place-name evidence, suggesting these

⁷⁵ 'Early Monasteries in Somerset – Models and Agendas', in *The Land of the Dobunni: A Series of Papers Relating to the Transformation of the Pagan, Pre-Roman Tribal Lands into Christian, Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire & Somerset, From the Symposia of 2001 and 2002*, ed. M. Ecclestone (King's Lynn, 2004), pp. 36-48.

⁷⁶ E. Glenn Hinson, *The Church Triumphant: A History of Christianity up to 1300* (Macon, GA, 1995), p. 229.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ A.C. Cooper-Marsdin, *The History of the Islands of the Lérins: The Monastery, Saints and Theologians of S. Honorat* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 111. The similarity of both saints' Eastern ascetical education and foundation of monasteries attempting to imitate the Desert Fathers, however, makes the question of influence largely irrelevant to the present discussion.

⁷⁹ Aston, 'Early Monasteries in Somerset', p. 36.

⁸⁰ Aston, 'An Archipelago in Central Somerset: The Origins of Muchelney Abbey', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, 150 (2007), 63-72 (p. 65).

sites were associated with one individual eremite.⁸¹ The example of Somerset seems to exist on the middle ground between the eremitical monasteries of Lérins, Marmoutier and St. Victor, and the complete isolation and spiritual self-sufficiency of the Desert Fathers, given the seasonal swamp between the eremitical sites and greater distance between individual satellite hermitages. In the next sub-section, the influence of these monasteries' model of a compromise between cenobitism and eremiticism will also be suggested as an influence on Benedictine monasticism.

In sum, then, the British Church was well-established when Augustine arrived in 597. It possessed its own traditions, and, whilst the written record is largely silent, archaeological sites indicate an eremitic impulse amongst these early British monastic communities. Whether, as has been posited, Augustine or his successors did find anything in the organisation of the existing church and its traditions worth adopting, is unclear. However, as we shall see in Section III, eremites and contemplatives were widely celebrated in the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and we have numerous records of specific individuals living as hermits: would it therefore be unreasonable to suggest that, perhaps, the British church, along with the Roman, offered to the Anglo-Saxons a lifestyle of prayer, asceticism and contemplation?

⁸¹ Referring to fig. 8, two confirmed hermitage sites seem to bear their inhabitant's name. Nyland was originally called *Edredeseie*, 'Eadred's Island', and Godney, originally *Godeneia*, 'Goda's Island': see E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn. (Oxford, 1936; 1960), pp. 346; 200.

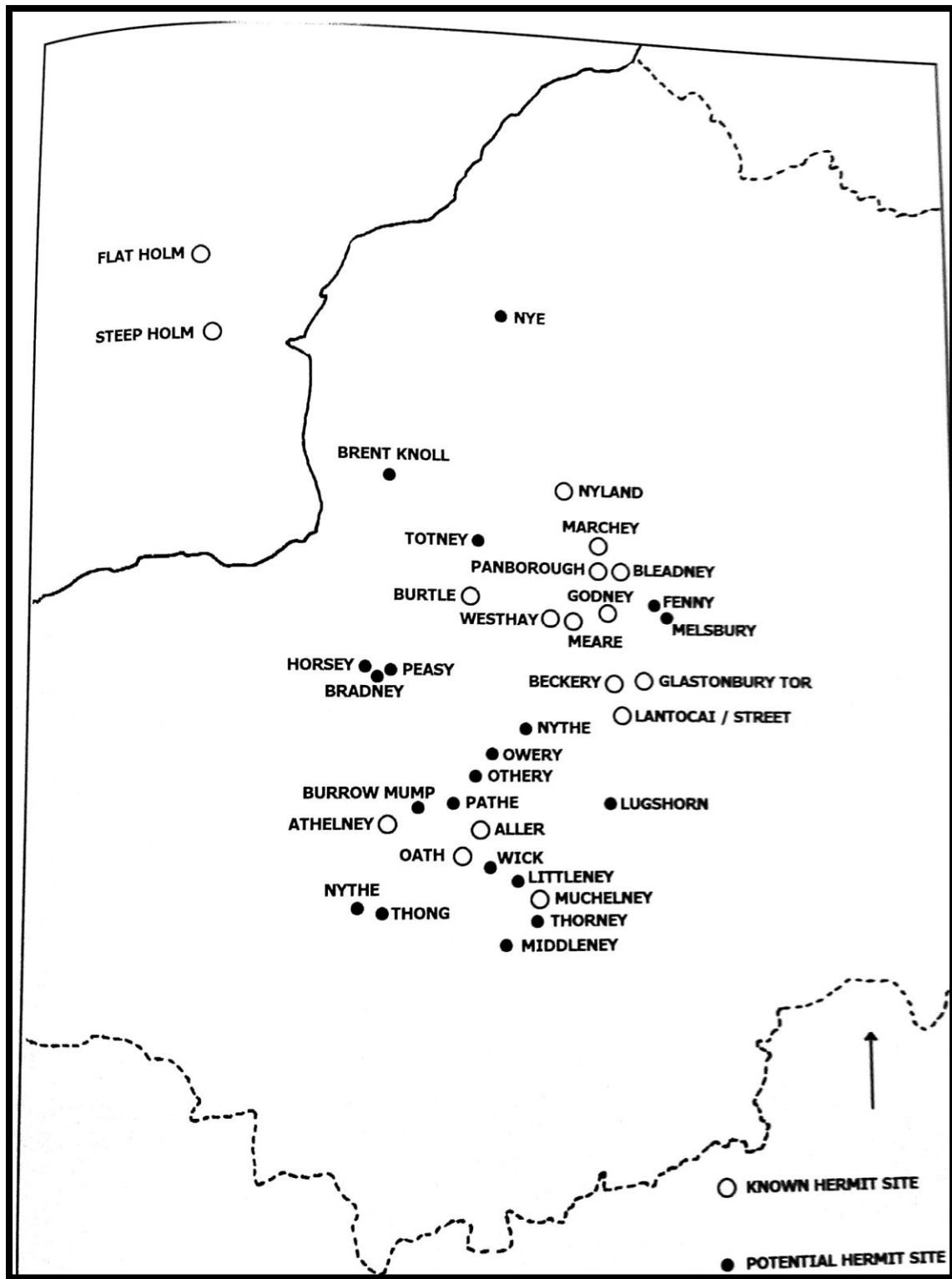


Fig. 8 The location of identified and suggested hermitage sites in Somerset.⁸² Note that those places ending in -ney and Holm translate to '-island', eg. Godney='God's Island'.⁸³

⁸² After Aston, 'The Early Church in Somerset', fig. 5.

⁸³ See the entries in Ekwall, *English Place-Names*.

II.ii Eremites in Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Monasticism

Whilst the emphasis of Benedictine monasticism is on the communal, rather than the individual, the eremite was nevertheless a celebrated class of monk. However, the overriding assumption of Post-Reformation criticism seems to be that Benedict was opposed to eremiticism. Reviewing the life of Cuthbert, the hostility of the great nineteenth-century antiquarian and Protestant clergyman James Raine is obvious: 'even at that early period absurd seclusion had begun to be considered meritorious, and mankind were forming the opinion that the best way to gain a victory was to shun the contest'.⁸⁴ Whilst modern criticism rarely betrays the same open disgust, the role of figures such as Raine in forming the Surtees Society, amongst others, means that we should be cautious when reviewing the position of the hermit in Benedictine monasticism. In the most influential discussion of hermits in Anglo-Saxon England, Mary Clayton uses the homilies of Ælfric as evidence that the post-Benedictine Reform church 'viewed the hermit's life with suspicion'.⁸⁵ However, we should note, on a contextual point, that there is no evidence for a reduction in the number of eremites after the Reform,⁸⁶ which suggests that any suspicion on the part of the reformers was not carried into legislation. We should also note that Ælfric's homilies are not unequivocally suspicious of eremiticism, though eremites are excluded from his *Lives of the*

⁸⁴ *The History and Antiquities of North Durham: As Subdivided into the Shires of Norham, Island, and Bedlington, which from the Saxon Period until the Year 1844, Constituted Parcels of the County Palatine of Durham, But are Now United to the County of Northumberland* (London, 1852), p. 59.

⁸⁵ 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. P.E. Szarmach (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 147-76 (167).

⁸⁶ J. Hewish, 'Eastern Asceticism versus Western Monasticism: A Conflict of Ideals in the Old English Translations of the Works of Sulpicius Severus?', *Quaestio Insularis*, 4 (2003), 115-28 (p. 120); H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150* (London, 1984), p. 12; similarly, T. Licence identifies the period 950-1050 as crucial in 'the rise of the hermit' in England, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 43-52.

Saints.⁸⁷ Within the *Sermones Catholici* II, we have Homily X, *Depositio S. Cuthberhti Episcopi*, which is forthcoming in its description of Cuthbert's ascetical lifestyle whilst living as a hermit on Farne. *Sermones Catholici* I, Homily XXXVI, *Natale Omnium Sanctorum*, has a laudatory section on eremites, to whom Ælfric ascribes wondrous miracles: 'blindum hi forgeafon gesihðe, healtum færeld, deafum hlyst, dumbum spræce. Deoflu hi oferswyð, don and afligdon, and ða deadan þurh Godes mihtum arærdon' ('they gave sight to the blind, walking to the lame, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb. They overcame devils and made them flee, and through God's powers raised the dead'). For any member of his audience wishing to learn more about hermits, Ælfric even provides a convenient bibliographical reference: 'seo boc þe is gehaten *Uitae Patrum* sprecð menigfealdlice embe þyssera ancersetla' ('the book which is called the *Vitas Patrum* speaks in various ways about the lives of these anchorites').⁸⁸ Far from viewing the hermit with suspicion, in *Sermones Catholici* — if not the *Lives of the Saints* — Ælfric is making the specific accounts of their lives available to anyone paying attention at this point of the sermon. Likewise, Ælfric does not suppress the detail of Benedict's eremitical origins, related by Gregory in *Dialogi* Book II, in his homily celebrating the life of the saint (*Sermones Catholici*, II.XI, *S. Benedicti Abbatis*). If Ælfric is, as Clayton suggests, a representative spokesman for the Benedictine Reform, then

⁸⁷ Although Ælfric does not include any lives of specific eremites, it is important to note that an anonymous life of Mary of Egypt — a former prostitute turned desert recluse — was transmitted along with *Lives of the Saints* in Cotton Julius E.vii, and composed around the same time (L.A. Donovan, *Women Saints' Lives in Old English Prose* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 98-99). This suggests that Ælfric's apparent suspicion was not universal in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church, and the contents of the *vita* of Mary of Egypt were seen as thematically harmonious with the collection by the manuscript compiler.

⁸⁸ The influence of the *Vitas Patrum* will be discussed later in the chapter.

it would seem on the contrary that the figure of the hermit continued to be celebrated in the reformed monastic spirituality.⁸⁹

Ælfric's esteem for eremites in his homilies, if we accept Clayton's identification of him as a representative voice, indicates that the late Anglo-Saxon monastic Reformers had studied *RB* thoroughly. The very roots of Benedict's monastic theology, alike but not as direct as those of Cassian and Honaratus, are in the Egyptian desert. In fact, all monasticism started with hermits.⁹⁰ Antony the Great (251–356) was perhaps the most influential of these first hermit-monks, and the account of his flight to the desert reveals some fundamental precepts of monasticism:

While he was on his way to church as usual, he came to think of how the apostles had rejected everything to follow the saviour and how many people, as it says in the Acts of the Apostles, had sold their possessions and brought the proceeds to lay at the apostles' feet for distribution to those in need. What great hope was stored up for those people in heaven! [...] He immediately went home and sold the possessions he owned.⁹¹ (VSA, 2)

We can see here the rudiments of ascetic piety: the embracing of poverty and the rejection of the world, in order to follow Christ, and achieve a space in heaven. Soon, despite Antony's desire for isolation, others were inspired by his example, and 'his words had the immediate effect of persuading many of those who heard him to reject human things: this marked the beginnings of the desert's colonisation' (VSA, 14). Much like the later Gaulish and Celtic monasteries set up in their imitation, the desert was full of solitaries living in close

⁸⁹ NB, however, that the Old English version of *RB*, a product of the Reform, is more fervent in its celebration of the cenobitic life, which it describes as 'the strongest kind (OE *stræcstum* ... *cynne*, "the strictest/most rigorous kind") of monasticism' (F. Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers: The Vercelli Book and the Mixed Life', *ES*, 94 (2013), 627–58 (p. 650)). Whilst this supports Clayton's identification of the Benedictine Reform's suspicion of eremiticism, see footnote 86 above, which suggests that there was no wider impact on the Anglo-Saxon veneration of hermits or those wishing to retreat.

⁹⁰ D.J. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (London, 1966), p. 3.

⁹¹ *The Life of Antony*, trans. C. White in *Early Christian Lives* (Harmondsworth, 1998). Subsequent references are to this edition.

proximity. Seeing the need for uniformity amongst the self-exiled mass, Pachomius (292–348) developed the first cenobitic rule, uniting the communities of individual recluses under a single mandate.⁹² Pachomius, along with Cassian, was a great formative influence on Benedict of Nursia.⁹³

As briefly mentioned in the discussion of Ælfric's attitude towards recluses, Benedict of Nursia, inspired by the lives of the Desert Fathers, lived as an eremite before entering a cenobitic monastery:

Benedict, desiring rather the miseries of the world than the praises of men: rather to be wearied with labour for God's sake, than to be exalted with transitory commendation [...] went into a desert place called Sublacum, distant almost forty miles from Rome.⁹⁴ (Gregory, *Dialogi*, II)

It is unsurprising, therefore, that eremitic ideals are traceable in *RB*. Though principally a rule for cenobitic monastic institutions, *RB* mentions eremiticism as a life for those with extensive training:

Anchorites or Hermits: those who, no longer in the first fervour of their reformation, but after long probation in a monastery, having learned by the help of many brethren how to fight against the devil, go out well armed from the ranks of the community to the solitary combat of the desert. They are able now, with no help save from God, to fight single-handed against the vices of the flesh and their own evil thoughts.⁹⁵ (*RB*, I)

For Benedict, the anchorite represents the apotheosis of monastic orders: their engagement with the devil and temptation, 'with no help save from God', implies that cenobites are spiritually incapable of such amazing feats. Additionally, that hermits only retreat 'after

⁹² For an account of Pachomius's life and the formation of his *regula*, see *Ibid.*, p. 22; J.E. Goehring, 'Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 267-85; P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 6 (Berkeley, 1999).

⁹³ For an account of the importance of the Desert Fathers in the formation of *RB*, see M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000), esp. p. 5.

⁹⁴ *The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great*, trans. E.G. Gardner (London, 1911). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁹⁵ NB footnote 89 above.

long probation in a monastery, having learned by the help of many brethren how to fight against the devil', confirms the close association of both cenobitic and eremitic lives; in a sense, the communal monastery was a school for eremites.⁹⁶ We are reminded here also of the association of eremites with contemplation: the spiritual battle against the temptation of sin strongly implies contemplation, which as we have seen in Cassian's thought, requires cleanness of heart and purpose. To do battle with the devil similarly implies the eremite's familiarity with the otherworld, and eremites were associated with demonic warfare from the days of the Desert Fathers:

At last that most hideous serpent found that he was unable to destroy Antony even by this means and saw that he was always being driven back by Antony's thoughts. So gnashing his teeth (as it says in the Bible) and wailing, he appeared, as was fitting, in the form that revealed his true nature: an ugly black boy prostrated himself at Antony's feet, weeping loudly. (VSA, 5-6)

In Benedict's mind, the hermit was uniquely placed to vanquish such visitations, alone.

Most pertinently to our discussion, however, the definition of a contemplative by an Anglo-Saxon monk, Bede, bears a clear resemblance to Benedict's definition of the eremite:

The contemplative life, however, is [lived] when one who has been taught by the long practice of Good actions, instructed by the sweetness of prolonged prayer [...] learns to be free of all affairs of the world and to direct the eye of his mind toward love alone; and he begins, even in the present life, to gain a foretaste of the joy of perpetual blessedness which he is to attain in the future, by ardently desiring it, and even sometimes, insofar as it is permitted to mortals, by contemplating it sublimely in mental ecstasy.⁹⁷ (*Omeliarum euangelii*, I.9)

For both the contemplative and the eremite, spiritual purgation and the ability to transcend worldly images and desires are vital. Bede's contemplative must first be trained ('by the long practice of Good actions, instructed by the sweetness of prolonged prayer'); the result of this spiritual training is that he 'learns to be free of all affairs of the world and to direct the

⁹⁶ A. Borias, 'The Spiritual Dynamism of St Benedict', *ABR*, 46 (1995), 271-82 (p. 277).

⁹⁷ *Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. L.T. Martin and D. Hurst, 2 vols, Cistercian Studies Series, 110-11 (Kalamazoo, 1991). Subsequent references are to this edition.

eye of his mind toward love alone', after which he may receive a vision sent by God. This matches the eremite's institutional training, which enables them to go 'well armed from the ranks of the community to the solitary combat of the desert [...] to fight single-handed against the vices of the flesh and their own evil thoughts'. Bede's contemplative must give up worldly existence in order to ascend to the contemplation of heavenly mysteries, much as the eremite aims to achieve closer proximity to God by retreating from sinful human society.

We can test our association of hermits and contemplation by reference to Cuthbert and Guthlac, the most venerated of Insular eremites.⁹⁸ Although Bede's *VSC* provided the model for Felix's *VSG*, eremitic hagiography commonly describes the actions of a saint by reference to earlier, celebrated saints, and if Guthlac did indeed copy the actions of Cuthbert as closely as Felix would have us believe, this is a demonstration of the influence that accounts of eremitic saints had over other prospective anchorites.⁹⁹ The first important point to note is that the *vitae* of both eremites follow the trajectory of Benedict's ideal eremite:

But as time went on his zeal for perfection led him to shut himself away from sight within the hermitage, rarely talking to visitors even from inside, and if he did so only through a window.¹⁰⁰ (*VSC*, XVIII)

When four and twenty months had run their course during which he lived a life of the greatest restraint in the habit of a cleric, he planned to seek the desert with the greatest diligence and the utmost earnestness of mind. For when he read about the solitary life of monks of former days, then his heart was enlightened and burned with an eager desire to make his way to the desert.¹⁰¹ (*VSG*, XXIV)

⁹⁸ For the general influence of the Desert Fathers on their way of life, see B. Ward, *High King of Heaven: Aspects of Early English Spirituality* (London, 1999), p. 67. For details of their liturgical commemoration, see Section III below.

⁹⁹ See the quotation of Flood in footnote 14 above. On the correspondences, see S. Downey, 'Intertextuality in the Lives of St Guthlac' (University of Toronto, 2004), pp. 59-65. The model of one eremite inspiring others to emulation has existed since the time of Antony: see the quotation of *VSA*, 14, p. 31 above.

¹⁰⁰ See p. 7 above for Bede's description of Cuthbert's time as prior, *VSC*, XVI.

¹⁰¹ Ed. and trans. Colgrave in *Felix's Life of St Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956). Subsequent references are to this edition.

As well as evidencing the influence of *RB* on the indefinable mixed rules that circulated around this time, that Cuthbert and Guthlac trained as cenobites before retreating indicates the Early Anglo-Saxon monastic institution's approval of the eremitical lifestyle.¹⁰² Both hermits also experience the 'solitary combat of the desert', encountering devils:

No one had been able to dwell alone undisturbed upon this island before Cuthbert the servant of the Lord, on account of the phantoms of demons who dwelt there; but when the soldier of Christ entered, armed with the 'helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, all the fires of the wicked one' were quenched, and the wicked foe himself was driven far away together with the whole crowd of his satellites. (*VSC*, XVII)

They were ferocious in appearance, terrible in shape with great heads, long necks, thin faces, yellow complexions, filthy beards, shaggy ears, wild foreheads, fierce eyes, foul mouths, horses' teeth, throats vomiting flames, twisted jaws, thick lips, strident voices, singed hair, fat cheeks, pigeon breasts, scabby thighs, knotty knees, crooked legs, swollen ankles, splay feet, spreading mouths, raucous cries. (*VSG*, XXXI)

The experiences of the eremites with the bellicose demons are reminiscent of Antony's spiritual combat:¹⁰³

After crossing the river, he found there a deserted fort full of venomous animals (due to the length of time that it had lain abandoned, and because of its solitary location). There he settled, living as the fort's new tenant. Immediately upon his arrival, a huge number of snakes fled as if they had been chased out. Antony then blocked up the entrance with stones and remained there all alone. (*VSA*, 12)

In a sense, the eremite is a link between this world and the next: their pious presence invites the ire of demons, transcendent creatures in themselves, which they then vanquish. Indeed, for Julianus Pomerius, the liminal situation of the contemplative means that he exists in a

¹⁰² Though C. Stancliffe traces a greater emphasis on Cuthbert's pastoral duties in Bede's *VSC* than in the earlier *Anonymous Life of Cuthbert* ('Cuthbert and the Polarity Between Pastor and Solitary', in *St. Cuthbert, His Cult and Community, To AD 1200*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 21-44), Cuthbert's eremiticism is never in doubt in *VSC*, and with reference to *De templo Salomonis*, I.7.1 (see p. 179 below), it is clear that Cuthbert's contemplative behaviour, including his retreat, directly influences his success in pastoral activities.

¹⁰³ There is a particular influence of the *VSA* upon the Guthlac legend. See Downey, 'Intertextuality', pp. 33-39; S. Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland: Land Tenure in *Guthlac A*', *ASE*, 40 (2011), 75-102.

living death: 'let him count the earth as dead to him, and let him show himself crucified to the enticements of the alluring world' (*De vita contemplativa*, VIII).¹⁰⁴

The need to exist in this death-like state is an important means by which to contemplate, according to Cassian:

To the extent that [the mind] withdraws from the contemplation of earthly and material things, its state of purity lets it progress and causes Jesus to be seen by the soul's gaze – either as still humble and in the flesh or as glorified and coming in the inward glory of His majesty. (*Conlationes*, X.vi.1)

Withdrawal, for Cassian and Pomerius, is the outward expression of the denial of temptation and sin, and a sign of the purity of heart which both systematise as the pre-requisite for any contemplative event. We can see this concern in the behaviour of Cuthbert and Guthlac. Cuthbert designs his hermitage to allow himself no view of the world around him, and thus quite literally 'withdraws from the contemplation of earthly and material things':

When his zeal for perfection grew, he shut himself up in his hermitage, and, remote from the gaze of men, he learned to live a solitary life of fasting, prayers and vigils, rarely having conversation from within his cell with visitors and that only through the window. At first he opened this and rejoiced to see and be seen by the brethren with whom he spoke; but, as time went on, he shut even that, and opened it only for the sake of giving his blessing or for some other definite necessity. (*VSC*, XVIII)

For Bede, this withdrawal was inextricably linked to the saint's ability to contemplate:

Cuthbert 'also took to the hermit's way of life, rejoicing to sit in solitude for no short time, and, for the sake of the sweetness of divine contemplation, to be silent and to hear no human speech' (*Ibid.*, I). As for Guthlac, allied to his withdrawal to the demon-haunted barrow in the fen is a severe asceticism of clothing and diet:

¹⁰⁴ *The Contemplative Life*, trans. M.J. Suelzer, Ancient Christian Writers, 4 (London, 1947). Subsequent references are to this edition. See also the discussion of contemplation as spiritual death, pp. 259-62 below.

From the time when he first inhabited this hermitage this was his unalterable rule of life: namely to wear neither wool nor linen garments nor any other sort of soft material, but he spent the whole of his solitary life wearing garments made of skins. So great was the abstinence of his daily life that from the time where he began to inhabit the desert he ate no food of any kind except that after sunset he took a scrap of barley bread and a small cup of muddy water. (VSG, XXVIII)

So severe was Guthlac's diet, that his daily calorie intake has been calculated as around seven hundred, which equates to partial-starvation, and has been suggested as the cause of his contemplative visions.¹⁰⁵ Bede does not provide such a thorough record of Cuthbert's diet, merely observing that Cuthbert lived a life of 'prayer and fasting' (VSC, XVII), but it is evident that he had little regard for his own nourishment from his languid reaction to the spoiling of his crops by birds: 'is it, perchance, that you have greater need of them than I? If, however, you have received permission from God, do what He has allowed you' (*Ibid*, XIX). However, in the lives of both hermits we can see the desire for contemplating that which lies beyond all earthly signification in the attempts to purify the self through shunning earthly pleasures such as company, food, and even, in the case of Cuthbert, the sight of the material world, all of which signify the process by which the mind 'withdraws from the contemplation of earthly and material things'. As final proof of the centrality of

¹⁰⁵ J. Kroll and B.S. Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (London, 2005), p. 85. Whether this was originally the case, the only records of Guthlac's visions we have are clearly influenced by those of Antony, and so it is all but impossible to identify any unequivocal symptoms of hallucination brought about by starvation. Elsewhere, however, a different perspective on the relationship of the visions of both Antony and Guthlac is suggested. They may well have inadvertently poisoned themselves, for by eating bread made with grain infected with the fungus ergot, both would have imbibed the hallucinogenic drug LSD. See M.L. Cameron, 'The Visions of Saints Anthony and Guthlac', in *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. S.D. Campbell, B.S. Hall, and D.N. Klausner (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 152-58. The visions have also been ascribed to swamp ague, or malaria: see H.E. Hallam, *The New Lands of Elloe: A Study of Early Reclamation in Lincolnshire*, Occasional Papers (University of Leicester, Department of English Local History), 1st Series, 6 (Leicester, 1954), p. 5. In both cases, however, our inability to wholly separate the reality of Guthlac's asceticism and Felix's embellishments render medical examinations of Guthlac speculative. Interestingly, in the light of Downey's argument that Guthlac successfully negotiates the temptation to fast excessively for reasons of pride ('Too Much of Too Little: Guthlac and the Temptation of Excessive Fasting', *Traditio*, 63 (2008), 89-127), his meagre diet does not seem to have been considered as either excessive or unusual, perhaps suggesting Anglo-Saxon familiarity with eremiticism.

contemplation to their eremiticism, we can review the success of Cuthbert and Guthlac in being granted contemplative ascent themselves.

The most indicative signs of the contemplative purpose of Cuthbert and Guthlac's asceticism are the visions themselves. As regards Cuthbert, we can infer that his miraculous knowledge of future events is a symptom of his contemplation; for example, VSC XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII, and XXXIV. In the latter of these, Cuthbert is in conference with another eremite, Herbert of Derwentwater, and predicts his own death. Herbert is saddened by the knowledge that he will never see his fellow hermit again in this world, and so Cuthbert petitions God: 'the bishop [Cuthbert] gave himself up to prayer and forthwith having learned in spirit that he had gained what he sought from the Lord [...] the issue of events confirmed the truth of his promise and his prophecy' (VSC, XXVIII), as Herbert dies at the same time as his friend. Cuthbert's prophecy here requires a two-way exchange with God, achieved because of his sanctity, and so can be classified as a form of contemplation.

Another of these prophecies allows Cuthbert a vision of heaven:

When they had taken their seats at the table at meal-time, the venerable father Cuthbert suddenly turned his mind from the carnal banquet to contemplate spiritual things. The limbs of his body relaxed and lost their function, the colour of his face changed, and his eyes were against their wont as if in amazement, while the knife which he was holding fell to the table [...] 'I have seen the soul of a certain holy man being carried by the hands of angels to the joys of the heavenly kingdom'. (*Ibid.*, XXXIV)

Alcuin further discusses Cuthbert's divine communion whilst a hermit, suggesting the inextricability of overcoming temptation and contemplation: 'often communicating with angels, he succeeded/ in thwarting the poisoned weapons of the deadly serpent' (*Versus de patribus*, 664-65).¹⁰⁶ Guthlac is also credited with the gift of prophecy, which Felix ascribes to

¹⁰⁶ *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. P. Godman (Oxford, 1982). Subsequent references are to this edition.

the closeness to God achieved by his eremitical life and contemplation: 'so greatly did the spirit of divine grace abound in him, that he discerned absent things by things present, and future things by the past, as though they were present' (VSG, XLIII). Felix elsewhere indicates that Guthlac, like Cuthbert, has frequently been in divine communion, when describing his teaching: 'there was such an abundance of divine grace in Guthlac, the man of God, that whatever he preached seemed as if uttered by the mouth of an angel' (*Ibid.*, XLVI). Perhaps the closeness of the contemplative, who has adopted the life of an eremite in order to 'withdraw from the contemplation of earthly and material things', to God is best explained by Guthlac himself: 'have you not read how if a man is joined to God in purity of spirit, all things are united to him in God?' (*Ibid.*, XXXIX).

The evident purpose of the retreat of Cuthbert and Guthlac was to purify the mind and body in order to be closer to God, and with divine grace, to contemplate Him. Thus, as with the review of the archaeology of the British and Celtic churches, we can discuss the notion of Anglo-Saxon hermitages as contemplative spaces. 'Contemplative space', as previously mentioned, is inherently difficult to identify, but to discuss this in reference to Anglo-Saxon hermitages is yet more troublesome. Firstly, we have the problem of eremites who resourcefully lived in existing structures or topographical features.¹⁰⁷ Alcuin gives the example of Balthere, who dwelt in a cave on Bass Rock, off the Northumbrian coast, 'a place completely encircled by the ocean waves/ hemmed by terrible crags and steep cliffs' (*Versus de patribus*, 1325-26). Identifying these exact locations, let alone interpreting any potential finds as evidence for eremitical occupation, is a hard task. Additionally, the hermitage is a physical expression of the contemplative's desire to purify mind and body, and so were

¹⁰⁷ For examples, see Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action*, p. 157, and the example of Burgh Castle, pp. 19-20 above.

often meagre, poorly erected structures designed to be uncomfortable and help the mind disregard worldly luxury. Bede's description of Cuthbert's hermitage on Farne evidences this: 'he made this same wall, not of cut stone nor of bricks and mortar, but just of unworked stone and of turf which he had removed from the excavation in the middle of his dwelling [...] [with] roofs of rough-hewn timber and straw' (VSC, XVII).¹⁰⁸ It would be very unlikely for much to remain of such structures over a millennium later, especially given the marked preference for isolated, weather-beaten locations by Insular eremites.¹⁰⁹ Many hermitage sites, such as Guthlac's at Crowland, also became the sites of minsters, inspired by the example of the recluse associated with that site, destroying all evidence of early occupation in the process.¹¹⁰ Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, almost no archaeological work has been carried out on hermitage sites.¹¹¹ The only work to be carried out on Farne was in the nineteenth century by an amateur enthusiast, and it is this excavation upon which most discussions of Cuthbert's hermitage draw to corroborate Bede's evidence.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ It has been suggested that Cuthbert's dwelling, as described by Bede, resembled a cashel, a very simple form of homestead made of turf and stones. See I. Richmond, 'Saint Cuthbert's Dwelling on Farne', *Antiquity*, 15 (1941), 88-89.

¹⁰⁹ H. Gittos, *Sacred Space in Anglo-Saxon England: Liturgy, Architecture and Place* (University of Oxford, 2001), p. 38; for a discussion of coastal hermitages, see Cramp, *The Hermitage and the Offshore Island*, Paul Johnstone Memorial Lecture, 2 (London, 1980).

¹¹⁰ Foot, *Monastic life*, p. 47; J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 145.

¹¹¹ As Cramp observes, the seabirds which live on the islands known to have been the habitation of Anglo-Saxon anchorites receive better protection from the authorities than the archaeological remains: *The Hermitage and the Offshore Island*, p. 20.

¹¹² Along the same lines, despite the local tradition identifying the hermitage of Herbert of Derwentwater on a specific island named after him in the Cumbrian lake, and his canonisation, no archaeological excavation has taken place. The most recent discussion of this archaeological site comes from Wordsworth: 'Stranger! not unmoved/Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones/The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's Cell' ('For the Spot where the Hermitage Stood on St. Herbert's Island, Derwentwater', 6-8). Sceptical, but nevertheless intrigued by the possibility that something of the hermitage remained on the island, I personally visited the island in April 2014. Despite local tradition that the remains of the Anglo-Saxon cell can still be seen, the only semi-visible masonry on the island was in fact erected by Sir Wilfrid Lawson (1795-1867). Nothing of Herbert's hermitage is apparent, though with the island in its current wild state, and the uncertainty of the National Trust, who manage it, about the possible location of the cell, this is perhaps inevitable. My only suggestion, in the absence of any definitive evidence for the hermitage site, is that the folklore is based on a mixture of historical association, the fancy of the Lake Poets, and the misleading creation of a folly hermitage in the nineteenth century. In the light of

In the absence of any other archaeological data, we, too, must refer to Crossman's 1886 excavation (fig. 9). Of the building foundations he outlines, none are Cuthbert's original hermitage.¹¹³ The best evidence we have for the remains of the site from the excavation is the 'low mound', which may be the scarring left on the earth by the small building erected by Cuthbert.¹¹⁴ As yet, this remains conjecture, as no excavation of the mound, or survey of the entire island using modern techniques such as geophysical survey, has taken place. The best approach to visualising what an Anglo-Saxon hermitage actually looked like comes from matching Bede's description of the edifice to excavated Irish hermitages of the same period. Cuthbert's dwelling, we are told, was 'almost round in plan', and comprised 'two buildings [...] namely an oratory and another habitation suitable for common uses' (VSC, XVII), which is usually taken to mean a circular enclosure surrounding two small buildings. Michael Herity has convincingly interpreted the layout of excavated early Irish hermitages based on the details given by Bede (fig. 10).¹¹⁵ An artist's impression of how the hermitage most likely looked (fig. 11) is helpful in visualising the use of space, and the meagre nature of the buildings. There is fundamentally little that we can assert, even with caution, about Anglo-Saxon hermitages, without proper excavations of known and suggested sites; if this subsection has achieved nothing else, hopefully it has at least drawn attention to this lacuna in our archaeological record.

the evidence of Cuthbert's hermitage, it also seems unlikely that Herbert, a far less celebrated figure, would have the financial backing to construct his cell from stone, as Wordsworth implies.

¹¹³ D. O'Sullivan and R. Young, *The English Heritage Book of Lindisfarne, Holy Island* (London, 1995), p. 43.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See Herity, *Studies in the Layout, Buildings and Art in Stone of Early Irish Monasteries* (London, 1995), pp. 72-90.

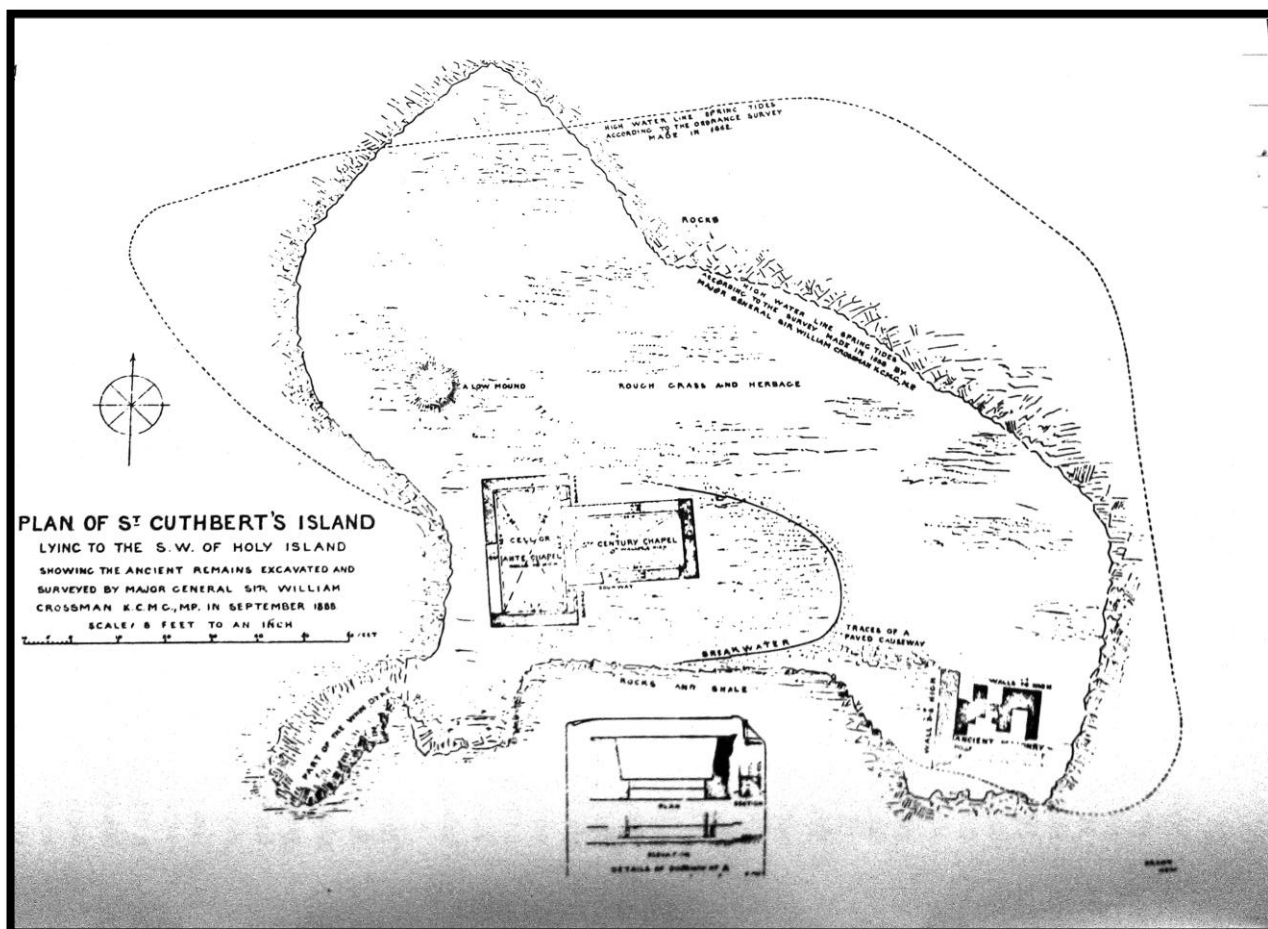


Fig. 9 St Cuthbert's Isle, Excavations by Crossman.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ After W. Crossman, 'Chapel of St Cuthbert-in-the-Sea', *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, 13 (1892), 241-42.

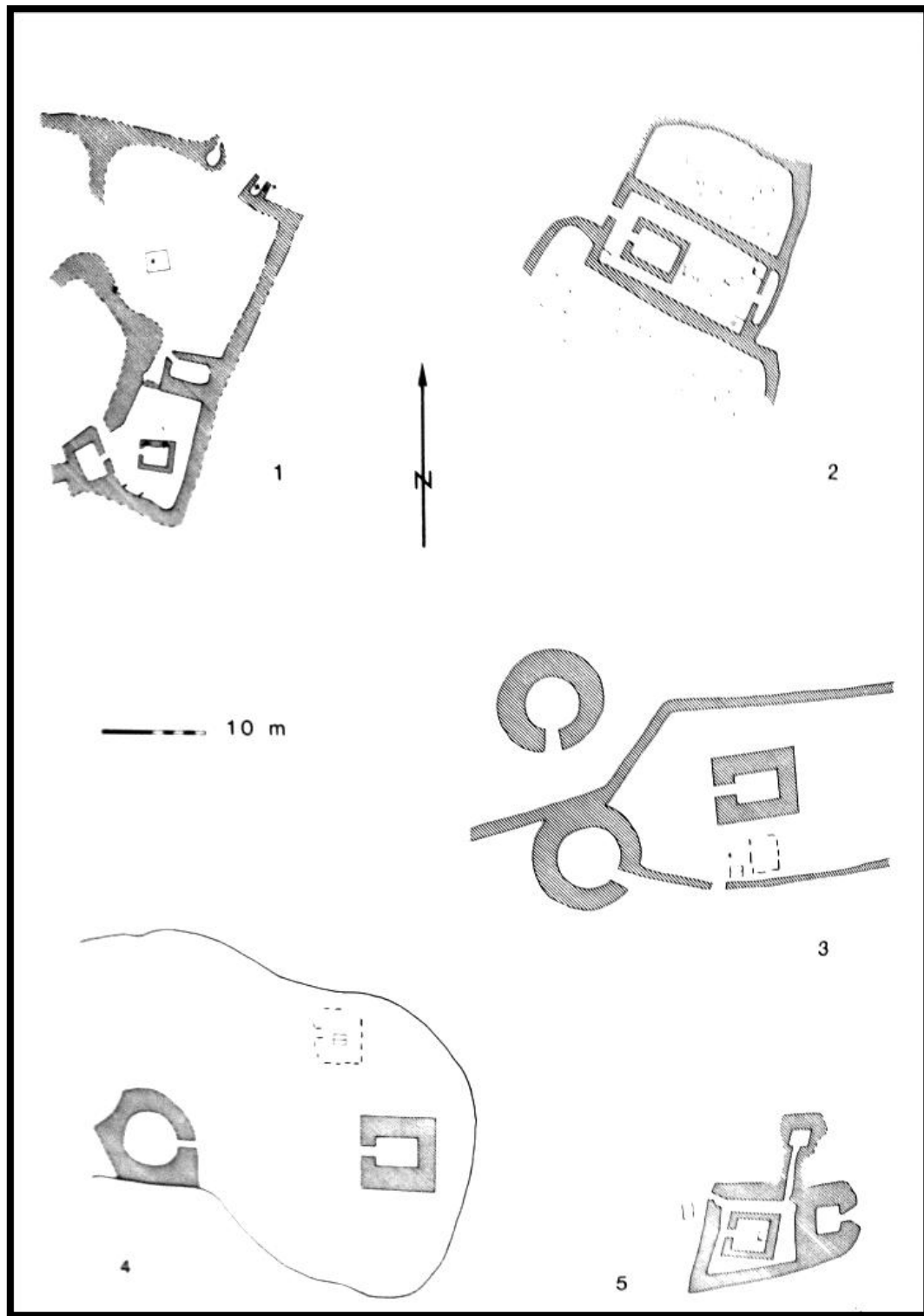


Fig. 10 Early Irish hermitage sites. Note their resemblance to Bede's description of Cuthbert's dwelling: two small buildings, a dwelling and an oratory, enclosed by a surrounding wall. 1 Rathlin O' Birne; 2 Caher Island; 3 Killabuonia; 4 Illaunloghan; 5 Ardoileán.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ After Herity, *Studies in the Layout*, p. 76.

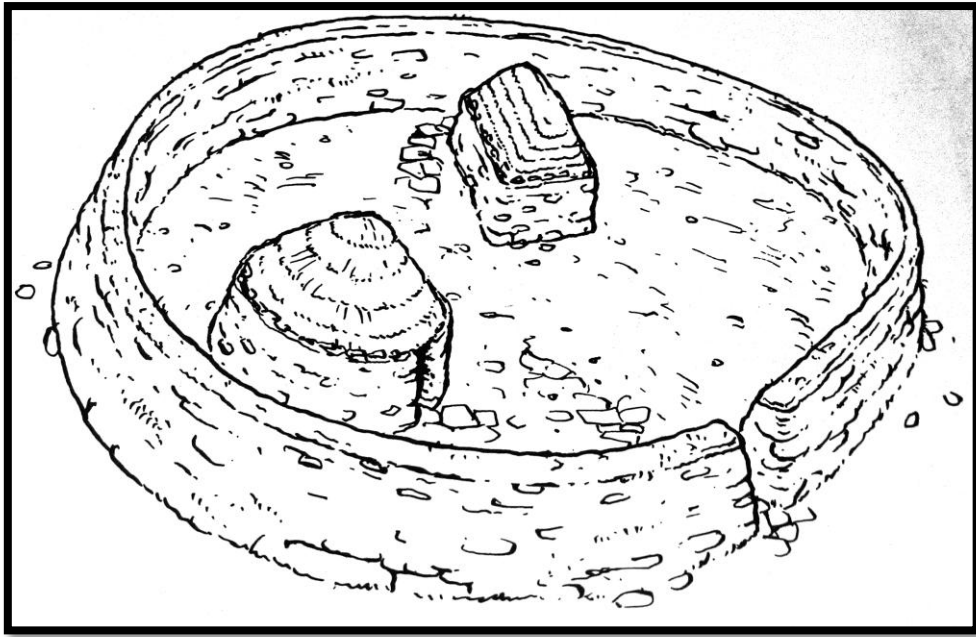


Fig. 11 Conjectural Sketch of Cuthbert's hermitage.¹¹⁸

There is evidence, however, that contemplation was an influence on the layout of Benedictine monasteries.¹¹⁹ We have several examples of Anglo-Saxon monks using small buildings for seasonal retreat, in imitation of the eremites whose spiritual example was so central to Benedictine monasticism.¹²⁰ Bede details several instances of this phenomenon in *HE*. Aidan, an influential figure in Northumbrian monasticism, is said by Bede to have been a predecessor of Cuthbert on Farne, where Cuthbert originally retreated: 'the reverend Bishop Aidan was staying on Farne Island, which is less than two miles from the city. He often used to retire there to pray in solitude and silence' (*HE*, III.16). This suggests an established tradition on Lindisfarne, of retreating to the nearby island of Farne for spiritual devotion, which was carried on immediately after Cuthbert by Ethelwald, Felgeld, and

¹¹⁸ After Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, fig. 23.

¹¹⁹ We should remember here that Martin of Tours's monastery, said to be 'so remote and secluded that it was equal to the solitude of the desert', was but a few miles from the urban centre of fourth-century Tours.

¹²⁰ Morris neatly describes these buildings as 'stylised wilderness': see *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 118-19. See also Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 217; *Ibid.*, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Stroud, 1994), p. 67. Cramp ('Monastic Sites', p. 203) believes that these 'retreat houses' resembled what we can recover about the appearance of Cuthbert's hermitage (see again, fig. 11).

Elwin.¹²¹ Elsewhere, other episcopal figures seem to have participated in the tradition of retiring to pseudo-hermitages for contemplation. Chad, Bishop of Mercia (634-72), another Northumbrian, also used a seasonal retreat for seclusion and prayer:

He built himself a more retired dwelling-place not far from the church, in which he could read and pray privately with a few of his brothers, that is to say, seven or eight of them; this he did as often as he was free from his labours and from the ministration of the word. (*HE*, IV.3)

Markedly similar in use is the cell used by John of Beverley, Bishop of Hexham (??-721), and a few companions, for private prayer. Bede tells us that

There is a remote dwelling, enclosed by a rampart and amid scattered trees, not far from the church at Hexham, about a mile and a half away, and separated from it by the river Tyne. It has an oratory dedicated to St. Michael the archangel in which the man of God with a few others very often used to devote himself to prayer and reading when a favourable opportunity occurred, and especially in Lent. (*HE*, V.2)

John's 'remote dwelling' and Chad's 'more retired dwelling-place' however seem to have been interpreted even by themselves as a communal space, since they allowed others to pray there with them. Though neither retreat can be said to have been a true hermitage, post-Bedan interpretation of John's 'remote dwelling', interestingly, is inclined towards defining it as a hermitage.¹²² These isolated spaces seem to have been relatively common and available, given that even the layman Drythelm, after a penance-inspiring mystical vision, 'was given a more secret retreat in the monastery where he could freely devote himself to the service of his Maker in constant prayer' (*HE*, V.12). Bede tells us that 'his retreat was on the banks of the river', which suggests a location some way from the *coenobium* itself, within the monastic precinct bounded by the water. These examples demonstrate how

¹²¹ Raine, *The History and Antiquities of North Durham*, pp. 340-41.

¹²² See, for instance, *Vita Sancti Johannis, Episcopi Eboracensis, Auctore Folcardo*, IV, and the account of John in the twelfth-century *Chronica Pontificum Ecclesiae Eboracensis*, in Raine, ed., *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, 5 vols (London, 1879-94), I (1879). S.E. Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 23-24, suggests that the anchoritic myth may have been an attempt to 'amplify John's ascetic virtues.'

contemplative space was created and made available within monastic bounds, and, like the model of Lérins for the British Church, can be used to reinterpret the layout of certain sites. For example, the close proximity of two large churches at Heysham can be explained by the more exposed structure having originally been a seasonal hermitage.¹²³ The cluster of religious sites around Glastonbury, too, includes several Anglo-Saxon grants of land, which may also have been seasonal retreats.¹²⁴

Most usefully, the idea of the contemplative retreat house within monastic bounds allows us to reinterpret small buildings within excavated Anglo-Saxon monasteries. At Whitby (fig. 12), several small buildings (labelled 'B' in fig. 12) within the monastic precinct can be interpreted as contemplative spaces, either as retreat houses or isolated cells in the Celtic tradition. Whitby's foundation was heavily influenced by the Celtic Church, and the remains of what appears to be the *vallum* (labelled 'A' in fig. 12) reflect these origins.¹²⁵ The cells' internal area is only 18 x 11 feet on average, and the first excavators, Charles Peers and Raleigh Radford, were unequivocal in identifying these buildings as '*domunculae*, or cells, each occupied by a single occupant'.¹²⁶ Although the uncovering of several small buildings within a monastic precinct does not in itself mean that they are contemplative cells, we have Bede's testimony from the Vision of Adamnán that small huts or cells were designed to be used for contemplation at Coldingham: 'the cells that were built for praying and for reading have become haunts of feasting, drinking, gossip, and other delights' (*HE*, IV.25). Given that the buildings in question at Whitby are unanimously associated with the Saxon monastery

¹²³ T.W. Potter and R.D. Andrews, 'Excavation and Survey at St. Patrick's Church, Heysham, Lancashire, 1977-8', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 74 (1994), 55-134 (p. 126).

¹²⁴ L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History, 8 (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 46; 56.

¹²⁵ Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, p. 150; A. Clapham, *Whitby Abbey, Yorkshire* (London, 1952), p. 7.

¹²⁶ 'The Saxon Monastery of Whitby', *Archaeologia*, second series, 89 (1943), 27-88 (p. 31). See also Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, pp. 150-51.

by archaeologists, we can draw an illuminative comparison here to provide more evidence that these were, indeed, designed to house on-site contemplatives.¹²⁷ Further evidence for this identification comes from the Cartulary of Whitby, which records that when William de Percy refounded the monastery in the late eleventh century, ‘there were at that time, in the same place, as aged countrymen have informed us, *monasteria*, or oratories to the number of forty’.¹²⁸ Since Whitby was abandoned after being sacked by the Danes in 870, these *monasteria* may well have dated back to Hild’s foundation. Identifying these buildings as contemplative cells allows us to suggest a contemplative tradition of which Whitby was a part. The founder of the monastery at Whitby, St. Hild, was granted land by Aidan (*HE*, IV.23), whom we previously discussed as a seasonal eremite, and so she may plausibly have been influenced by his example when constructing the monastery. Certainly, Hild displayed eremitic urges early in her life, as she aspired to live as a recluse with her sister Hereswith in eremitical Gaul, before her promotion to abbess (*HE*, IV.23). One of the five Anglo-Saxon bishops educated at Whitby was John of Beverley (*Ibid.*), whose periodic retreats are discussed above. It would not be unreasonable to suggest, therefore, that between these three figures we can track the dissemination of an ideal of contemplative retreat. That Whitby produced five bishops is evidence of its wider influence on the Anglo-Saxon church, and so we can conjecture that the contemplative ideal was passed further afield.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Although the quotation from the Vision of Adamnán reminds us that buildings could be used for an evolving variety of purposes, the likely original intention for these small buildings is as cells, which strongly indicates the importance of contemplation to the theory, if not always the practice, of monastic planning at this time.

¹²⁸ Quoted by Clapham, *Whitby Abbey*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ On the influence of Whitby, see Hunter Blair, ‘Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century’, in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 3-32 (esp. 32).

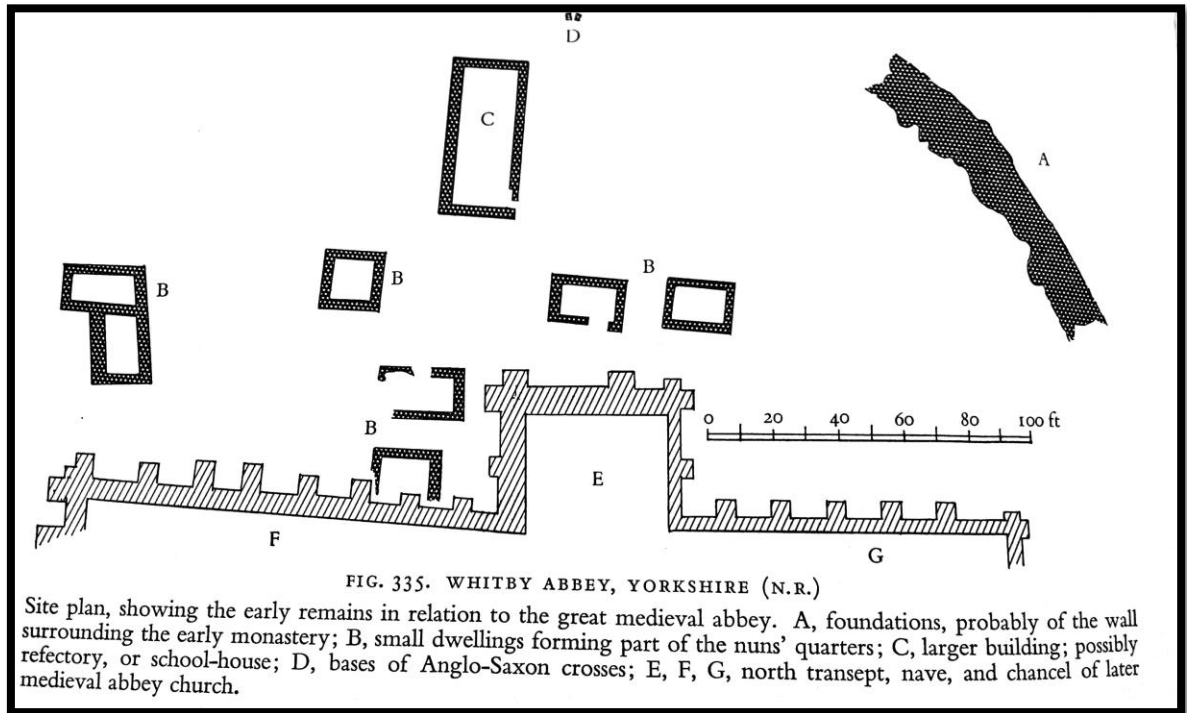


Fig. 12 Whitby Abbey, redrawn from the plans of Peers and Clapham by Philip Rahtz.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ After Cramp, 'Monastic Sites', fig. 5.7.

Another, albeit less celebrated, site which appears to incorporate contemplative space is the monastery at Hartlepool. Intriguingly, this is another of the Whitby group. Heiu, with Aidan's blessing, founded *Heruteu*, and was succeeded by Hild (*HE*, IV.23).¹³¹ Hild was abbess of *Heruteu* before founding Whitby, where 'she established the same Rule of life as in the other monastery' (*Ibid.*) Upon excavation, the ruined monastery yielded the remains of several small buildings, not dissimilar to those at Whitby (see fig. 13). Although these buildings contained items that suggest a variety of purposes over time, the presence of domestic items such as tweezers, a comb, and a latchlifter suggest that they were at some point used as cells, a conclusion drawn by the excavator, R. Daniels.¹³² Their small dimensions, of between 10.66 to 13.52m² of internal area, suggest individual occupation, and Building X has an internal partition wall, suggesting perhaps Cuthbert's model of oratory and living space on a smaller scale.¹³³ An additional find, a delicate figure-of-eight tag end which may have been a bookmark, further suggests a division of each building into living quarters and oratory.¹³⁴ It must be acknowledged, however, that until a larger scale excavation is completed, the exact purpose and relationship of these buildings remain conjectural.

¹³¹ Recently, the nineteenth-century identification of *Heruteu* with the fictional Heorot in *Beowulf* has been reassessed and advocated by J. Harris: 'A Note on the Other Heorot', in *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment*, ed. L. Neidorf (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 178-90.

¹³² 'The Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Church Close, Hartlepool, Cleveland', *The Archaeological Journal*, 145 (1988), 158-210 (p. 206). This reading is corroborated by a later report: Cramp and Daniels, 'New Finds from the Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Hartlepool, Cleveland', *Antiquity*, 61 (1987), 424-32 (p. 424).

¹³³ Daniels, 'Church Close', 168.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

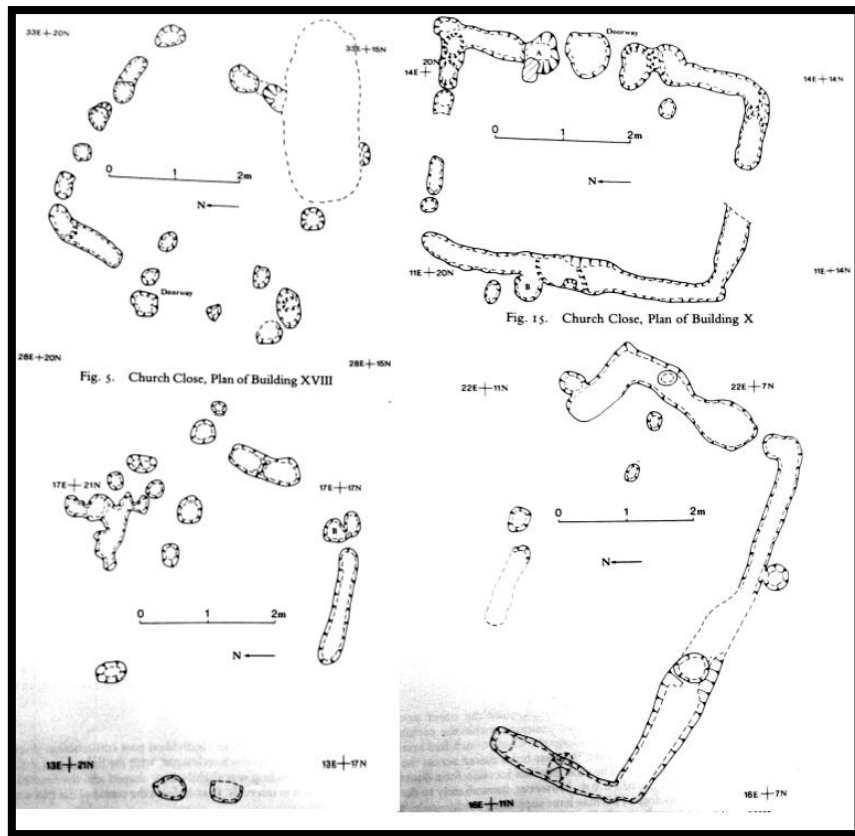


Fig. 13 Excavated cells from Hartlepool.¹³⁵

A final potential example of contemplative space is from Bede's own monastery, at Jarrow (fig. 14). Building B is interpreted by the excavator, Cramp, as another combination of oratory and living quarters, as seen at Hartlepool Building X, which she relates to the plan of Cuthbert's hermitage, albeit with an additional room for the reception of company.¹³⁶ The internal divisions make rooms measuring 43x21, 11x7, and 14x11 feet respectively.¹³⁷ If this reading is correct, it is interesting to note that contemplative space could exist in such close proximity to communal buildings. It is simple to conjecture however that the conditions of isolation and silence so-valued by the hermit could easily be served by the small room at the end of Building B, recalling here the later tradition of the anchorite walled up in an

¹³⁵ After Daniels, 'The Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Church Close', figs. 6 & 16.

¹³⁶ 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North', *Scottish Archaeological Forum*, 5 (1974), 104-24 (p. 122).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

anchorage attached to a parish church. We can link this potential contemplative space to the influence of Benedict Biscop, who spent several years training at Lérins, 'where he entered the community, received the tonsure, took vows as a monk' (HA, 2). As we have discussed, Lérins was a collection of satellite hermitages, the rule of which establishment was incorporated into Biscop's *regula mixta*. Perhaps the young Benedict was impressed by the model of incorporating the desire for contemplation and a semi-eremitical existence into the plan for a cenobitic monastery, and drew on this experience when he came to found Jarrow.

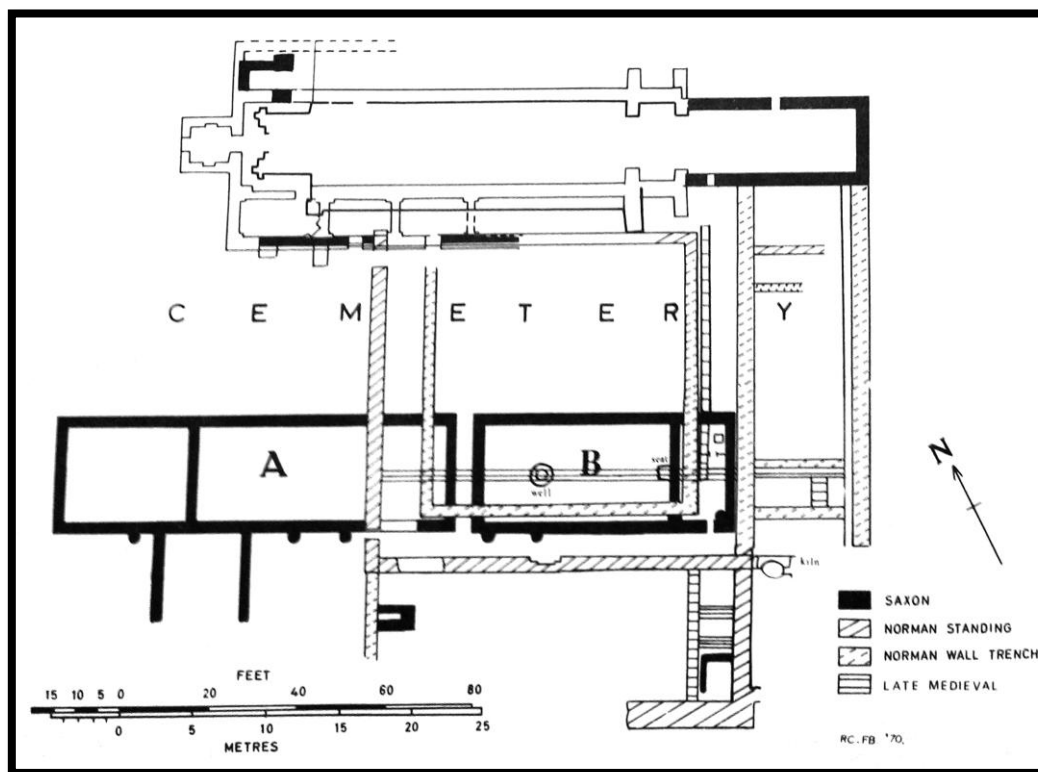


Fig. 14 Jarrow Excavations.¹³⁸

In sum, there is evidence for contemplative space in Anglo-Saxon monasteries. For Whitby, Hartlepool, and Jarrow, we have been able to combine contemporary record with

¹³⁸ After Cramp, 'Anglo-Saxon Monasteries of the North', fig. 5.

the findings of recent archaeological excavations, to give some idea as to the importance of contemplative space in monasteries. It is to be noted that all of these examples are Northumbrian, which could be seen as evidence for the influence that the eremitic Celtic Church held over Northumbrian monasteries even after the Synod of Whitby in 664. This certainly fits well with this thesis's reading of Bede as a frequent contemplative writer; a monastic setting wherein contemplation was so important as to be reflected in monastic architecture and layout would be the ideal upbringing for such a figure. There are other factors to consider, however, in determining why all of the foregoing examples have been Northumbrian: the generally limited excavations of Anglo-Saxon sites; the enduring, romantic appeal of Bede encouraging excavations in Northumbria; the more dilapidated state of Northumbrian monasteries compared to the continuing religious use of Southern sites such as Worcester, allowing for proportionately more extensive digs. Likewise, the only well-excavated Southern sites — St. Augustine's, Canterbury, and Eynsham Abbey — which yield no evidence for cells or retreat houses, should not be taken as representative of all monastic sites outside of Northumbria.¹³⁹ Bede's writings on contemplation were especially familiar to Anglo-Saxon monks, and thus influential on Anglo-Saxon monasticism as a whole, and so it would be foolhardy to confine the influence of contemplative ideals on monastic planning to Northumbria alone, in the face of such a gap in the archaeological

¹³⁹ For a record of Canterbury excavations, see R. Gem, ed., *The English Heritage Book of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (London, 1997); *Ibid.*, 'Reconstructions of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, in the Anglo-Saxon Period', in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. N. Ramsay, M. Sparks, and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 57-74; C.R. Peers and A.W. Clapham, 'St Augustine's Abbey Church, Canterbury, Before the Norman Conquest', *Archaeologia*, second series, 77 (1928), 201-18; Tatton-Brown, 'The Buildings and Topography of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 144 (1991), 61-91. For an elaborately detailed, if aged, plan of the site as revealed by excavations, see R.V. Potts, 'The Plan of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 46 (1934), 179-94. For Eynsham, see A. Hardy, A. Dodd, and G.D. Keevill, *Ælfric's Abbey: Excavations at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, 1989-1992*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 16 (Oxford, 2003).

record.¹⁴⁰ There are also documentary records of Southern monasteries with contemplative space, an example of which is Abingdon. Although most documents pertaining to this monastery are forgeries, with no excavation we cannot verify whether the later chronicler's claim that it was a Celtic foundation, with a *vallum* and individual cells, is embellished; certainly, this detail seems to serve no definite purpose for the property dispute that inspired the forgery of the documents.¹⁴¹ As things stand, however, we do not even know the location of the original foundation.¹⁴² There are also a few references to retreat houses used in the South, which may hint at a nationwide tradition of contemplative retreat. St. Frideswide is said to have established a chapel and well in a secluded place called *Thornbiri* ('thorn enclosure'), which John Blair suggests was a retreat house, possibly the church at Binsey, Oxfordshire, though no excavations have taken place specifically to corroborate this claim.¹⁴³ We also have a reference to a possible retreat house in use at Sherborne, by St.

Wulfsgige:

In his Lenten preparation [Wulfsgige] seemed more like a hermit than a Church dignitary. For having withdrawn into the confines of the cloister and having shrugged off the tumult of the world, he enclosed himself in a secret life of simplicity with the monks and relinquished the reigns of worldly affairs [...] he made his flight from the world a fleeing to God, and took upon himself hard-working peace and silence resounding with praise, and contemplative inactivity.¹⁴⁴ (Goscelin, *VSWL*, V)

¹⁴⁰ See M.L.W. Laistner, *A Hand-List of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943).

¹⁴¹ A useful review of the potential Celtic appearance of the early monastery and its relationship to the Northumbrian sites is provided by M. Biddle, H.T. Lambrick, and J.N.L. Myres, 'The Early History of Abingdon, Berkshire, and its Abbey', *Medieval Archaeology*, 12 (1969), 26-69 (p. 43). For an account of the forgeries, see F.M. Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (Reading, 1913). The chronicle in question is available as J. Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon monasterii de Abingdon, Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 2, 2 vols. (London, 1858).

¹⁴² A.C. Baker, *Abingdon Abbey: Some Notes on its History and Buildings* (Abingdon, 1949), p. 9.

¹⁴³ 'Saint Frideswide Reconsidered', *Oxoniensia*, 52 (1987), 71-127 (pp. 91-92).

¹⁴⁴ 'The Life of St Wulfsgige of Sherborne by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: A New Translation, with Introduction, Appendix and Notes', trans. R. Love in *St. Wulfsgige and Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Millenium of the Benedictine Abbey, 998-1998*, ed. K. Barker, D. Alban Hinton and A. Hunt, Bournemouth University School of Conservation Sciences Occasional Paper, 8 (Oxford, 2005), pp. 98-123.

Wulfsgige's retreat, like those of Aidan, Chad and John of Beverley, is inspired by the desire for 'contemplative inactivity', and requires his moving to a contemplative space. The retreat is also described in terms of Wulfsgige removing his focus from pastoral affairs to contemplate, which matches Cassian's scheme for the eremite of 'withdraw[al] from the contemplation of earthly and material things' (*Conlationes*, X.vi.1). That Wulfsgige was Bishop of Sherborne, and allowed to retreat in this way, indicates that the Northumbrian Church's apparent acceptance of the need for contemplation by high-ranking ecclesiastics was shared by Southern establishments.¹⁴⁵ There is some evidence, then, that monastics from beyond Northumbria also desired the pseudo-eremitical contemplative retreat, which was catered for by the creation of contemplative space.

Finally, we can consolidate our tentative identification of contemplative space with a discussion of the pastoral role that contemplatives and eremites played in Anglo-Saxon monasticism. The architectural accommodation of those with urges to contemplate is matched by their widespread acceptance in the Anglo-Saxon church. As well as the positions of authority held by the contemplatives Aidan, Chad and John of Beverley in the north, and Frideswide and Wulfsgige in the south, indicating the Anglo-Saxon Church's tolerance of such desires, we also have evidence of ecclesiastics in contact with less well-known eremites. Alcuin, in a late eighth-century letter to Colcu in Ireland, pays an unidentified group of anchorites to pray for him: 'per singulos anchoritas III siclos de puro argento ut illi omnes orent pro me et pro domno rege Carolo, ut Deus illum conseruet ad tutelam sancte sue æclesie et ad laudam et gloriam sui nominis' ('three shekels of pure silver

¹⁴⁵ Plegmund, Archbishop of Canterbury between 890 and either 914 or 923, was rumoured to have been a hermit in his early life, but this tradition did not begin until three centuries after his death, perhaps reflecting the continued veneration of eremites in the post-Anglo-Saxon period: see N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 153-54.

to each of the anchorites that they may all pray for me and for the lord, King Charles, that God may preserve him for the protection of His Holy Church and for the praise and glory of His name').¹⁴⁶ Alcuin here places great faith in the sanctity of the anchorites, in whose care he puts not only himself but Charlemagne, in Alcuin's mind a vital protector of the church as a whole. Similar faith in the wisdom and sanctity of the eremite comes from a letter by Alchfrid the Anchorite, who advises Bishop Egbert of Lindisfarne on preaching the need to meditate on death.¹⁴⁷ Whilst we cannot be sure how this letter was received, the length and evident effort Alchfrid has gone to suggests that he expected Egbert to take his advice, implying frequent correspondence between bishop and anchorite. The hagiography of Anglo-Saxon eremites also outlines the pastoral role, as exhibited by Alchfrid, that they played as teachers and advisors to high-ranking members of the clergy. As well as entertaining guests seeking spiritual advice and instruction, Cuthbert and Guthlac both receive promotions to episcopal and parochial sees, respectively, after living as hermits (VSC, XXIV; VSG, XLVI).¹⁴⁸ In both cases, they are elected to these positions by bishops and other high-ranking members of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

We end the section on an intriguing note. We have preserved in The Red Book of Thorney (Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 3020-21) the will of a late Anglo-Saxon anchorite, Mantat. The opening line of the will alone potentially reveals much about the position held by anchorites in society: 'Mantat ancere godes wræcca greteð Cnut cing 7

¹⁴⁶ Alcuin, Letter IV To Colcu, in C. Chase, ed., *Two Alcuin Letter Books* (Toronto, 1975). This also suggests contact between Irish and English Churches: see footnote 51 above.

¹⁴⁷ *Epistola Alchfriði anachoritæ ad Higlacum lectorem et presbiterum*, ed. W. Levison in *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946).

¹⁴⁸ B.D. Weber, 'A Harmony of Contrasts: The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book', *JEGP*, 114 (2015), 201-18, interprets the relationship of the Old English *Guthlac A & B* as a demonstration of Guthlac's contemplative and pastoral roles.

Emma' ('Mantat the Anchorite, God's exile, greets King Cnut and Emma').¹⁴⁹ The will being addressed to the King and Queen may suggest that Mantat was acquainted with Cnut and Emma, or simply that he believed himself important enough to address royalty, in either case a possible reflection of ecclesiastical approval of the anchoritic way of life, given Cnut's close relationship with the church.¹⁵⁰ Although Whitelock is sceptical of Mantat's self-definition as *ancer*, if he is indeed fraudulently claiming the position this demonstrates the reverence with which anchorites were held by the church and, possibly, royalty, throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁵¹ If Whitelock's suspicion is justified, his 'exaggerated antiquarianism' reflects perfectly the esteem with which the Late Anglo-Saxon Church viewed the anchorite, going so far as to organise their monasteries around the desires of those who wished to emulate their contemplative retreat. In the next section, we will further this analysis of the influence of hermits and contemplatives in Anglo-Saxon spirituality by examining their presence in the liturgy of the church.

III Hermits and Contemplatives in the Liturgies of the Church

The liturgy, in every era, represents a particular incarnation of the church's regular pattern of worship. As such, studying its contents can reveal the centrality of certain concepts to a particular church's devotional practices. Thus, a survey of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy is vital to our attempt to define the contemplative audience of Anglo-Saxon England. The presence of

¹⁴⁹ D. Whitelock, ed., XXIII 'The Will of Mantat the Anchorite', in *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042*, 2nd edn. (London, 1955; 1979).

¹⁵⁰ Cnut was a renowned friend of the church. A manuscript illumination from MS Stowe 944 f.6r, for example, shows King Cnut and Queen Ælfgifu presenting an elaborate jewelled cross to Hyde Abbey: see Appendix III.iii. See also Licence, *Hermits and Recluses*, p. 52.

¹⁵¹ Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 177.

hermits and contemplatives in the liturgy will indicate the extent to which ideals of retreat and contemplation formed a part of Anglo-Saxon devotion and spirituality. We begin, however, with a cautionary note, regarding the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, which is justifiably described by one commentator as being as elusive as a ‘will-o-the-wisp’.¹⁵² We cannot talk with any certainty about liturgical uniformity amongst the Anglo-Saxons: as well as the scant evidence, we must also remember the diversity of sources that influenced even the basic routine of everyday life, as in the example of Benedict Biscop’s *regula mixta*.¹⁵³ We are perhaps better off, therefore, in adopting the cautious plural of this section’s heading. These issues of divergence will also inform our analysis in this section: to ascertain how important an influence hermits and contemplatives were on Anglo-Saxon spirituality, we will review several sources of devotional practice.

The canonisation of eremites and contemplatives indicates not only their veneration, but their place in the liturgy, wherein the feast days of individual saints were celebrated. The number of eremites and contemplatives in John Blair’s list of Anglo-Saxon saints allows us to make a mathematical quantification of the veneration of these figures.¹⁵⁴ The list records twenty-eight canonised eremites and contemplatives, making up a significant proportion of Blair’s list.¹⁵⁵ Of the twenty-five hermit cults, twenty one are associated with a minster, either through institutional sponsorship or founding the site of a minster itself,

¹⁵² C. Cubitt, ‘Unity and Diversity in the Anglo-Saxon Liturgy’, in *Unity and Diversity in The Church: Papers Read at The 1994 Summer Meeting and The 1995 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R.N. Swanson (Oxford, 1996), pp. 45-58 (57).

¹⁵³ For a summary of the issue of uniformity and a generous bibliography on the subject, see Billett, *Divine Office*.

¹⁵⁴ ‘A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints’, in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 495-565.

¹⁵⁵ See the entries for Ælfgar; Ælfnōth; Æthelwold; Aidan; Balthere; Bega; Beorhthelm; Billfrith; Chad; Cissa; Cuthbert; Cuthmann; Eadwold; Ecgbēht; Echa; Guthlac; Huna; John of Beverley; Modwynn; Theokus; Wærstan; Wilgis; Wulfic. Blair omits Herbert of Derwentwater from his list, as there is ‘no Pre-Conquest evidence for his cult’ outside of Bede (private communication).

which equates to eighty-four per cent, suggesting a very close relationship between eremite and monastery. Whilst not all of the saints in the list are included in the surviving liturgies, their canonisation is enough to suggest that they were at some point liturgically commemorated to some degree.

An important indication of the importance of hermits and contemplatives to early Anglo-Saxon spirituality comes from London, BL, MS Cotton Domitian A. vii, the Durham *Liber vitae*.¹⁵⁶ Although this text is essentially a list of benefactors and the esteemed deceased of the bishopric of Durham, it also had a place in the liturgy, being read out from the High Altar during the Divine Service.¹⁵⁷ It was also apparently customary for centres on friendly terms to exchange the names of especially lamented deceased individuals to incorporate in each others' liturgical devotion.¹⁵⁸ Whilst we cannot be certain which names were sent to other centres in this way, the hierarchical arrangement of the document is especially illuminating for our discussion. The list of anchorites to commemorate is ordered only behind the register of royal benefactors in importance, even taking precedence over abbots, suggesting the great influence that they wielded on devotional activity at Durham.¹⁵⁹ In the light of this precedence, it is appropriate that the *Liber vitae* lists twenty-eight individual Insular hermits associated with Durham (Cotton Domitian A. vii, p. 6),¹⁶⁰ some of whom we can assume matched *RB*'s model of training as a cenobite before retreating (see pp. 32-33

¹⁵⁶ Ker, no. 147, s.x^{ex}-xi^{med}; G&L, no. 327, c.840-s.x^{ex}, with additions from s.ix^{2/4} onwards.

¹⁵⁷ E. Briggs, 'Nothing But Names: The Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*', in *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context*, ed. D.W. Rollason, A.J. Piper, M. Harvey, and L. Rollason, *Regions and Regionalism in History*, 1 (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 63-86 (71). Subsequent references to the text of the *Liber vitae* are to J. Stevenson, ed., *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis: Nec Non Obituaria Duo Ejusdem Ecclesiae*, Publications of the Surtees Society, 13 (London, 1848).

¹⁵⁸ Stevenson, ed., *Liber Vitae*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁵⁹ M.R. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London, 1914), p. xix.

¹⁶⁰ See Stevenson, ed., *Liber Vitae*.

above), and celebrated by the church. The list includes Herbert of Derwentwater and Balthere, with whom we are familiar from earlier discussion.

Studying the presence of eremites and contemplatives in Anglo-Saxon liturgies has been greatly facilitated by Rebecca Rushforth's recent index to Anglo-Saxon calendars from the archives of the Henry Bradshaw Society.¹⁶¹ Calendars are annual diaries providing a day-to-day list of observances to which reference could be made by the celebrant.¹⁶² Rushforth's index reveals that twelve canonised eremites and contemplatives were liturgically commemorated across the period.¹⁶³ These figures show, clearly, the widespread commemoration of Cuthbert and Guthlac, our representative Anglo-Saxon hermit saints. It is notable that whilst Antony and Paul of Thebes are also frequently included, their feast days were not as widely celebrated as those of Cuthbert, who was presumably more popular due to the more familiar form of his retreat and example to others. As with all Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, not many liturgical texts survive, and so for Antony, Paul, Cuthbert, and Guthlac to appear in so great a percentage of the survivals suggests that their commemoration was also widespread in now-lost manuscripts.

We can further buttress the findings from Rushforth's index with reference to *The Old English Martyrology*, dating from the late eighth to early ninth century.¹⁶⁴ Despite its misleading title, *The Old English Martyrology* is in fact another calendar, arranging hagiographies of various saints, not all of whom were martyred, in order of their feast days,

¹⁶¹ *Saints in English Calendars Before A.D. 1100*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 117 (Woodbridge, 2008).

¹⁶² J. Harper, *The Forms and Orders of the Western Liturgy* (New York, 1991), p. 49.

¹⁶³ The relevant saints, and the number of occurrences in Anglo-Saxon calendars, are as follows, in chronological order of their appearance in the church calendar: Antony (21); Guthlac (20); Cuthbert (39); Paul of Thebes (19); Æthelwald (1); Cuthman (4); Eadwald (1); Wilgisle (1); John of Beverley (9); Aidan (6); Chad (16); Hilarion (14).

¹⁶⁴ C. Rauer, ed. and trans., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 10 (Cambridge, 2013), p. 3.

which suggests its liturgical purpose.¹⁶⁵ This text commemorates a wide range of eremites and contemplatives.¹⁶⁶ This extensive list of hermits and contemplatives numbers seventeen individuals of various nationalities, and strongly indicates their influence on the Mercian church, the likely provenance of the manuscript.¹⁶⁷

We finish this section with an anomaly, the commemoration in stone of two eremites, a proto-hermit, and an allegory for the merit of contemplation. Though it differs in form from the other sources consulted for liturgical observation in this section, Éamonn Ó Carragáin has convincingly argued that the Ruthwell Cross had a liturgical function.¹⁶⁸ For our purposes, it is of significance, primarily, that the designers and sculptors chose to commemorate the eremitical and contemplative lives on so great an undertaking as the cross. The first depiction to note is that of Paul and Antony, two hermits celebrated widely in the liturgies of the Anglo-Saxon church, breaking bread, which is surrounded by the inscription, 'Sanctus Paulus et Antonius duo eremitae fregerunt panem in deserto' ('Saints Paul and Antony, two eremites, break bread in the desert') (fig. 15). This is taken from Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli primi eremitae*, which recounts how Antony hears of a longer-established hermit, Paul of Thebes, and goes to discourse with him. Whilst there, God sends a raven to bring the pair bread, a trope also employed in *VSC* and *VSG*. Incorporating this scene onto the Ruthwell Cross, a significant undertaking, demonstrates the veneration of anchorites in Anglo-Saxon England, and perhaps also their pastoral role, as we discussed in the lives of Cuthbert and Guthlac. We can use this identification to reinterpret the John the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ In order of their appearance, the list includes Paul the First Hermit; Fursa; Antony; Chad; Cuthbert; Guthlac; Æthelwald; Eadberht; John of Beverley; Erasmus; Columba; Simeon the Stylite; Cassian; Aidan; Mamilian the Hermit; Hilarion the Hermit; St. Martin of Tours.

¹⁶⁷ Rauer, 'The Sources of the Old English Martyrology', *ASE*, 32 (2003), 89-109.

¹⁶⁸ For a general account of its liturgical use, see *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), and pp. 12-78 for an exhaustive discussion of scholarship.

Baptist holding the *Agnus Dei* panel as having eremitic leanings (fig. 16). John is an archetypal figure of the eremite, as Isidore notes: 'anchorites imitate Elijah and John (the Baptist)' (*Etymologiae*, VII.xiii. 4).¹⁶⁹ John is 'vox clamantis in deserto parate viam Domini rectas facite semitas eius' (Mark 1:3, 'a voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight His paths'), prophesying the coming of Christ. His manner of living is also reminiscent of the later eremite: 'et erat Iohannes vestitus pilis cameli et zona pellicia circa lumbos eius et lucustas et mel silvestre edebat' (Mark 1:6, 'and John was clothed in camel's hair, and had a leathern girdle about his loins: and he ate locusts and wild honey'). Here John is reminiscent of Cuthbert and Guthlac, who similarly have the ability to prophesise, and lived ascetic lives in the wilderness. Finally, we have a possible depiction of the ideal of contemplation. The scene of two women embracing (fig. 17) is surrounded by the inscription, 'marþa maria mr dominnae' ('Martha and Mary mother of the Lord').¹⁷⁰ Commonly, in Patristic theology, these two represent the active and the contemplative lives: Martha the active, for washing Christ's feet, and Mary the contemplative, having had direct contact with both an angel and God in the form of Christ. As Howlett observes, there seems to be no hierarchy of superiority in this allegorical depiction, reflecting Gregory's idea that the active and contemplative lives were not mutually exclusive,¹⁷¹ also borne out by the examples of Aidan, Chad, and John of Beverley previously discussed.¹⁷²

In reviewing the findings of our examination of liturgical sources, it is evident that the eremite and contemplative had significant currency in Anglo-Saxon spirituality. The example they set was emulated even by bishops in using retreat houses, and we can see the

¹⁶⁹ M. Schapiro, 'The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross', *The Art Bulletin*, 26 (1944), 232-45 (p. 236).

¹⁷⁰ D.R. Howlett, 'Two Panels on the Ruthwell Cross', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 333-36 (p. 334).

¹⁷¹ For an exposition of Gregory's ideal of the mixed life, see Leneghan, 'Teaching the Teachers', 632-36.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

same approval of this way of life in the presence of eremites and contemplatives in the liturgies we have examined, which of course would have been compiled according to the approval of episcopal figures. So far, our evidence adds up to present the ideal of contemplation, specifically, as of particular spiritual concern for the Anglo-Saxons: we have seen how contemplation is fundamental to Benedictine and Celtic monasticism, discussed examples of Anglo-Saxons going to considerable lengths to accommodate and experience this way of life, and have seen how widely celebrated the lives of canonised contemplatives and hermits were. In the next section, we move on to discussing the education that fostered 'contemplative sensitivity' amongst Anglo-Saxon monks.

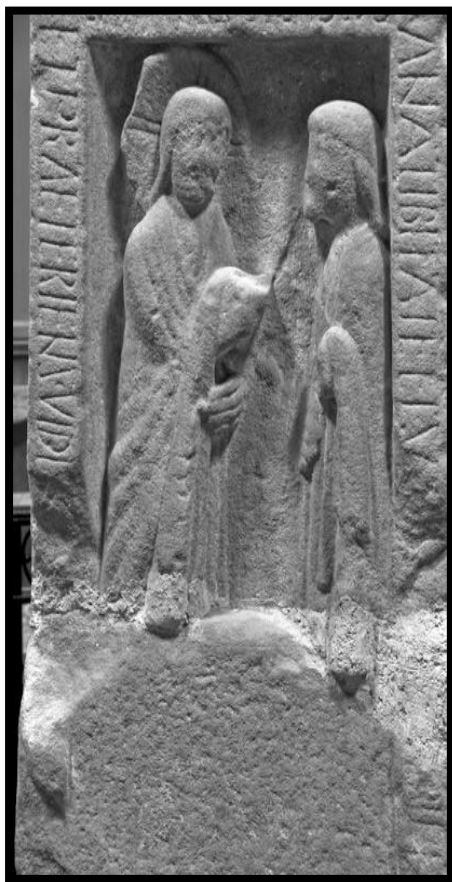


Fig. 15 Paul and Antony break bread in the desert.



Fig. 16 John the Baptist holding the *Agnus Dei*.



Fig. 17 Mary and Martha, figures of the active and contemplative lives.

IV Anglo-Saxon Phenomenology, *lectio divina*, and the Gateway to Contemplative Ascent

In the light of the preceding discussion, we can now move on to consider the practical aspect of contemplation, *lectio divina*.¹⁷³ The practice of this reading-technique was linked firmly to contemplation in the Early Medieval period, and the various discussions circulating at this time will be analysed with reference to modern psychological theories of reading, to demonstrate more clearly how *lectio divina* could facilitate contemplation. We will also discuss how apophysis, which attempts to clear the mind of worldly images in discussing God, functions as a contemplative device in reading. This section will demonstrate, ultimately, the possibility of reading Old English texts in the contemplative manner suggested by this thesis.

¹⁷³ Though he omits *lectio divina*, for an account of the Old English terminology for reading, see M.B. Parkes, 'Rædan, areccan, smeagan: How the Anglo-Saxons Read', *ASE*, 26 (1997), 1-22.

First, it is worth recalling the centrality of reading to the Benedictine *opus dei*. Each day, after Compline, is the time for reading: (*RB*, XLII; see p. 9 above). Even the dining table is not to be separated from reading: (*Ibid.*, XXXVIII; see p. 10 above). Benedict also recommends private reading as part of the monk's daily routine, and the time allocated to reading increases according to the time of year: (*Ibid.*, XLVIII; see p. 10 above). Moreover, the time allocated for *lectio divina* is to be strictly enforced: (*Ibid.*; see pp. 10-11 above). It was an inescapable part of monastic life that each had to read often, to facilitate which oblates were taught to read using the psalms as soon as they had entered the monastery.¹⁷⁴

It is important to begin by apprehending the centrality of reading to *RB* because contemplation and *lectio divina* were not divorced in the Early Medieval period. *Lectio divina* is a combination of reading and meditation, in modern parlance: so close are the two processes that in Rabbinical and Christian tradition, 'one cannot meditate anything but a text, and since this text is the word of God, meditation is the necessary compliment to *lectio divina*'.¹⁷⁵ By meditating upon the meaning of the text, one can come to reveal the mysteries of God concealed therein. This process of careful meditation was systematised as exegesis, the careful reading and glossing of Scripture.¹⁷⁶ Bede offers two illuminating examples of exegesis. In the story of Cædmon, Bede puns on his former profession as a cowherd: 'they then read to him a passage of sacred history or doctrine [...] memorising it and ruminating over it, like some clean animal chewing the cud, he turned it into the most melodious verse' (*HE*, IV.24). The laborious process of *lectio divina*, which requires slow and careful meditation of words, is emphasised in this image by reference to perpetually-chewing

¹⁷⁴ Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 254; Cubitt, 'Monastic Memory and Identity in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. W.O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (London, 2000), pp. 253-76 (263).

¹⁷⁵ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁶ For the history of medieval exegesis, see B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1941); H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2 vols, trans. M. Sebanc (Grand Rapids, 1998).

livestock, and was therefore also known as *ruminatio*. The lengthy meditation required by such exegesis is further revealed in Bede's discussion of Samuel 9:2-6, which implies both the time required and multifarious techniques for monastic exegesis:

We are being fed on food roasted on the gridiron when we understand literally, openly and without any covering the things that have been said or done to protect the health of the soul; upon the food cooked in a frying pan, when by frequent turning over of the superficial meaning and by looking at it afresh we comprehend what there is in it that corresponds allegorically with the mysteries of Christ, what with the condition of the Catholic Church and what with setting the right ways of individuals. Afterwards we search the oven for the bread of the Word when by exertion we lay hold of those mystical meanings of the Scriptures, that is, upon matters concealed aloft which we cannot see but which we hope to see in the future.¹⁷⁷

Bede here articulates *lectio divina* as a cumulative process: one must first thoroughly understand the literal and allegorical meaning of the text before the mystical meaning can be uncovered. The suggestion that reading the Bible in this way can permit one to apprehend the mystical meaning hidden in the words of God demonstrates the link with contemplation, which is also a process of uncovering obscured information about the divine. In *Homiliae in Hiezechielim Prophetam*, Gregory makes his position on the role of the text in contemplation clear:

You sense that the words of Scripture are heavenly if you yourself, enkindled through the grace of contemplation, are lifted up to heavenly things. When the reader's intellectual soul is pierced by supernal love, the wonderful and ineffable power of sacred texts is fully realised.¹⁷⁸ (1.7.8)

¹⁷⁷ In *Samuelem Prophetam*, trans. B. Ward, in *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1998), pp. 79-80. For more on Bede's approach to exegesis, see A.G. Holder, 'Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis', *Anglican Theological Review*, 72 (1990), 399-411; DeGregorio, 'Nostrorum socordiam temporum: The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 107-22.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in B. McGinn and P.F. McGinn, *Early Christian Mystics: The Divine Vision of the Spiritual Masters* (New York, 2003), p. 79. For a discussion of Gregory's mystical approach to exegesis, see M. Mayeski, 'Early Medieval Exegesis: From Gregory I to the Twelfth Century', in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, 2 vols (Grand Rapids, 2003-09), Vol. II (2009), pp. 86-112 (96). For more on the exegetical influence of Gregory on Bede, see DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: Exegetical Connections, Spiritual Departures', *Early Medieval Europe*, 18 (2010), 43-60.

Gregory sees scripture as a vehicle to contemplation of the divine, though he orthodoxly confines this possibility only to those 'enkindled through the grace of contemplation'.

To unlock the mystical capacity of sacred texts, then, systematic and careful reading and meditation is required. This meticulous method of reading was common in the middle ages, as Leclercq explains:

People read in the middle ages, as in antiquity, not principally with the eyes but with the lips, pronouncing what they saw, and with the ears listening to the words pronounced and hearing 'the voice of the page' [...] this makes reading very close to the *mediatio*.¹⁷⁹

This process was made necessary by the fact that, 'for the ancients [...] to meditate is to read a text and to learn it "by heart"'.¹⁸⁰ This meditational practice began early in monastic education, with the oblates tasked with memorising the Psalter by heart so as to be able to participate in the liturgy as soon as possible.¹⁸¹ The measured pace that this memorisation required and the synaesthetic nature of medieval reading highlighted by Leclercq is crucial: modern studies have found that pronouncing the words as they are read, or 'subvocalisation', aids comprehension of the text.¹⁸² Reading texts in this way thus would have facilitated deep understanding of their meaning, as well as creating a large mental store of quotations and knowledge with which to understand future texts, as the common exegetical technique of explaining one verse by reference to another indicates.

In addition to the role of subvocalisation in revealing the hidden depths of scripture, it is evident that the Anglo-Saxons interpreted reading as an act of visualisation. We return here to the chapter's epigraph (*Solomon and Saturn*, 239-46a; see p. 1). The book that Saturn

¹⁷⁹ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁸¹ Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 254; see also E. Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books: From the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century*, trans. M. Beaumont (Collegeville, 1998), p. 129.

¹⁸² C.D. Hardyck and L.F. Petrinovich, 'Subvocal Speech and Comprehension Level as a Function of the Difficulty Level of Reading Material', *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 9 (1970), 647-52 (p. 651).

allusively describes here is believed to permit a vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem, in terms reminiscent of Gregory (see p. 65 above), suggesting that Anglo-Saxon reading theory also saw a link between *lectio divina* and contemplation. We see also a reference to the practice of reading and meditating slowly, as it is said that all of the book's many tongues will carry the reader to this vision, in apparent collaboration: 'hafað seofon tungan/hafað tungena gehwylc XX orda/hafað orda gehwylc engles snytro'. That the book possesses *tungan* also implies the technique of subvocalisation used to unlock the contemplative meaning of scripture, as the words contained in the text will be heard when read out. The definition of reading as seeing is corroborated by Bede, who explains the rationale behind the wall-paintings imported by Benedict Biscop:

Everyone who entered the church, even if they could not read, wherever they turned their eyes, might have before them the amiable countenance of Christ and His saints, though it were but in a picture, and with watchful minds might resolve on the benefits of our Lord's incarnation, and having before their eyes the perils of the last judgment, might examine their hearts the more strictly on that account. (*HA*, 6)

Bede equates reading with looking at a picture, to the extent that seeing the literal pictures is secondary in clarity to what is seen through reading.¹⁸³ Bede consolidates this link between reading and contemplation suggested by *Solomon and Saturn*:

In the present age, the likeness of His [God's] face and of His everlasting beauty has not only been shown to the fathers when the Lord appeared in the company of angels, but even today it is being shown to us who read what the fathers have written, when we remember what they have written about the glory of the heavenly homeland and continually long to see them [...] the heavenly mysteries are revealed to us with the splendour of spiritual sayings.¹⁸⁴ (*In Cantica canticorum* I, re: Song of Songs 1:9-10)

¹⁸³ For a discussion of the use of pictures in the place of text, see H.L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 116.

¹⁸⁴ *On the Song of Songs*, in *On the Song of Songs and Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. A.G. Holder (New York, 2011). Subsequent references are to this edition.

For Bede, the contemplation arising from reading is the intimation of the direct vision of God that is promised to the elect post-mortem, for ‘videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem’ (I Corinthians 13:12, ‘we see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face’). Crucially for our analysis of Anglo-Saxon texts, Bede extends the application of *lectio divina* to Patristic literature, and not just the Bible, asserting that non-scriptural texts can also be the starting point of contemplation.

The role of visualisation in Anglo-Saxon reading is fundamental to our understanding of how apophatic paradox guides the mind beyond terrestrial images and words. Augustine defines the memory as a collection of mental images derived from one’s sense-perception of worldly phenomena: ‘in the memory everything is preserved separately, according to its category [...] in the vast cloisters of my memory [...] are the sky, the earth, and the sea, ready at my summons, together with everything I have ever perceived in them by my senses’ (*Confessiones*, X.8).¹⁸⁵ When a text is read, the mental visualisation of words has recourse to these images in the memory, making reading a sort of conjuring trick. Picturing words as they are read based on one’s own memory of concepts and objects is known as ‘schema’ in modern psychology, described with similar terms to Augustine’s as ‘a data store for representing the generic concepts stored in the memory’.¹⁸⁶ According to the theory of schema, when a text is read, images in the memory are organised so as to provide a logical visualised sequence for what the text is describing.¹⁸⁷ Thus, when a feast in a hall is

¹⁸⁵ *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, 1961). Subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁸⁶ D.E. Rumelhart and A. Ortony, ‘The Representation of Knowledge in Memory’, in *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge*, ed. R.C. Anderson, R.J. Spiro, and W.E. Montague (Hillsdale, 1977), pp. 99-135. See also P.W. Thorndyke, ‘Cognitive Structures in Comprehension and Memory of Narrative Discourse’, *Cognitive Psychology*, 9 (1977), 77-110.

¹⁸⁷ R.C. Anderson, ‘Role of the Reader’s Schema in Comprehension, Learning and Memory’, in *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, ed. H. Singer and R.B. Ruddell, 2nd edn. (Newark, DE, 1976), pp. 372-84 (375).

described in a text, the Anglo-Saxon reader's comprehension would be based on their ability to conjure up an image of a hall and the activities associated with a feast from memory.

However, by making contrary statements about God, apophasis subverts these logical structures by placing several concepts, and their respective mental images, in direct opposition, introducing in this way concepts for which no image from the memory can exist, and thus signifying nothing. In this way, apophatic texts aid the methods of contemplation we have been discussing by emptying the mind of images. For instance, we have the depiction of hell from *De die iudicii*, discussed in Chapter 2:

Ignea tu tibimet cur non tormenta timebis,
Dæmonibus dudum fuerant quae parta, malignis,
Quæ superant sensus cunctorum et dicta uirorum,
Nec uox ulla ualet miseras edicere poenas;
Ignibus æternæ nigris loca plena gehennæ.¹⁸⁸ (*De die iudicii*, 90-94)

Why will you not be afraid of the fiery torments, long ago given to the evil demons, which surpass the senses and words of all men? Nor is there any voice strong enough to declare the wretched punishments, the places of eternal hell filled with black fires.

This depiction is inherently paradoxical: the text twice says that hell is inexpressible, and yet makes mention of *ignibus*, for which a mental image could be conjured from the memory.

The text is simultaneously saying that hell is ineffable and describable, yet does not resolve this obvious paradox. The unresolved paradox is a common contemplative technique: by leaving concepts in mutual opposition, rather than replacing one statement with another, the signification of the concepts is undermined. Here, the reader must call to mind the concept of inexpressible torment, for which no image from the memory can exist, and an image of fire, which the text has stated to be entirely insufficient. The reader's natural inclination to

¹⁸⁸ Ed. G.D. Caie as Appendix to *The Old English Poem Judgement Day II: A Critical Edition with Editions of De die iudicii and the Hatton 113 Homily, De domes daege*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 2 (Cambridge, 2000). Subsequent references are to this edition.

create a logical visualisation of the events is denied, leading them into the realm of the ineffable, wherein the transcendent may be signified, albeit imperfectly.

I called the suggested Anglo-Saxon audience of contemplative texts 'sensitive' in the introduction to this chapter, partially because of their awareness of contemplative practices from the culture in which they existed, and also because of *lectio divina*. Given the mnemonic and synaesthetic process of *lectio divina*, it is unlikely that the monastic reader would be oblivious to the stratified disruption in logic in many Anglo-Latin and Old English texts, such as the example given above. Apophatic texts, when depicting God or heaven, are hostile to any attempt to construct logical schema. However, the denial of logical schema is in fact a protean process: God's definition exists in the ineffable realm, which is accessed in the negations between words, and as such is nebulous, requiring the reader's active engagement. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains, 'the lack of a sign can itself be a sign; expression does not consist in the fact that there is an element of language to fit every element of meaning'.¹⁸⁹ For an audience trained in the art of *lectio divina*, the contradictions in a text are held in mutual paradox, to take the mind beyond the realm of words. Gregory discusses silence about God in this way as a form of description:

For when we more thoroughly compass the deeds of Divine Might, when we acknowledge that we can never compass them; we then speak with greater eloquence, when we are silent on these, being struck dumb with astonishment.¹⁹⁰ (*Moralia*, IX.xii.19)

This quotation is doubly of use to our discussion. Firstly, Gregory's advice to would-be writers is that Divine matters are best left undescribed. However, he also describes silence as 'greater eloquence', suggesting that stratified silence about heaven is a semiotic act in itself,

¹⁸⁹ Quoted by Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 169.

¹⁹⁰ *Morals on the Book of Job*, 3 vols, Library of the Fathers of the Catholic Church, 18 (Oxford, 1844-47). Subsequent references are to this edition.

recalling the contemplative cue to imagine God and heaven beyond words and senses. Texts such as *De die iudicii* signify nothing, on the literal level, by employing apophatic description: the reader's task is to follow these negations, and to maintain the paradoxes of the text in mind, in order to direct the mind away from the sinful terrestrial world and so potentially to contemplate the ineffable. Each apophatic text, then, makes an image of heaven available, albeit to those capable of following progressive negation and affirmation to the realm beyond words and sufficiently sinless to receive divine grace.

We can observe a link, here, between the process of progressive detachment from the world whose temptations and images are contained within the language developed by fallen man to signify them, and the destruction of the meaning of this system of signs in apophasis (Cassian, *Conlationes*, X.vi.1; see p. 36 above). Apophasis facilitates this very process of withdrawing the mind 'from the contemplation of earthly and material things'. As such, this further consolidates the link between contemplatives and eremites discussed earlier in the chapter. Contemplation is sent by the grace and will of God to the worthy, and so requires physical asceticism to achieve purity in heart; apophasis aids this process by diverting the mind from discourse based on the sensory experience of the world. The equivalence between textual (apophatic) and physical (bodily withdrawal) asceticism would have been available to the contemplative audience I have been trying to define, through the theological texts discussed throughout this thesis. Apophasis and bodily withdrawal are sister arts of the contemplative technique of deautomisation, the active process by which the mind trains itself to renounce worldly images and desires.¹⁹¹ This is the ultimate result of the ascetical renunciation of the world, and allows contemplation potentially to take place beyond

¹⁹¹ A.J. Deikman, 'Deautomization and the Mystical Experience', in *Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings*, ed. C.T. Tart (London, 1969), pp. 23-43.

terrestrial desires, images, and the words that signify them. We can evidence this link by reviewing the process of contemplative ascent occurring through reading, with an Anglo-Saxon example. The ninth-century *Vita Sancti Alcuini*, written at Ferrières, reports that the young Alcuin displayed contemplative ecstasy explicitly related to that of Benedict whilst reading John's Gospel, a basic text for Christianity:

Alcuin was reading the Gospel of St. John [...] he came to the part that only the pure in heart can comprehend – that part, namely, from where John says that he lay on the Lord's breast, down to the point at which he relates that Jesus went with His disciples to the brook Cedron [John 13:25-18:1]. Inebriated with the teaching of the Gospel, suddenly as he sat before his master's couch, his spirit was carried away in ecstasy, and by those same who once in a ray of sunlight showed before the eyes of the most holy father Benedict the whole world, collected as it was in an enclosure the whole world was set before the eyes of the young Alcuin.¹⁹²

Alcuin's superior comprehension leads directly into contemplative ascent, but allied to this is his being 'pure in heart', which enables him to read the text in a mystical manner in the first place; in other words, he displays successful deautomisation. The semiotic and physical renunciation represented by deautomisation also allows us to consider again the retreat house. If the retreat house can be defined as a 'stylised wilderness',¹⁹³ then the perfect complement to the process of withdrawing physically from the world is the apophatic text, which potentially provides a schematised gateway to ineffable contemplation. Whilst it would be fanciful to suggest that manuscripts would have been stored in the more extreme eremitical spaces, such as Balthere's storm-beaten cave on Bass Rock, the proximity of the retreat house to the *coenobium* would allow for books to be borrowed and utilised in

¹⁹² Text quoted from G.F. Browne, *Alcuin of York: Lectures* (London, 1908), p. 17. Compare this with the more recent discussion of M. Ohligslager, 'The Divine Office and Liturgical Mysticism', *ABR*, 1 (1950), 193-99, who believes the very routine nature of the communal liturgy potentially enables participants to engage in contemplation.

¹⁹³ Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 119.

contemplation. We do not see pieces of artwork as much as see according to them:¹⁹⁴ for one seeking a temporary retreat from the world to contemplate God, reading an apophatic text according to the process of *lectio divina* could potentially provide the requisite restructuring of a worldly, possibly episcopal, mind for contemplation.

V Conclusion

In conclusion, contemplative ideas had significant currency in both early and late Anglo-Saxon England. To make this assertion, a thorough investigation of contemplation has been necessary: we have traced the importance of contemplation to monasticism, and discussed the role of eremites and contemplatives through hagiography, archaeology, and the liturgy. Our conclusion does, of course, come with a proviso, namely that there are inevitable gaps in our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon England, which mean that we will never be able to quantify exactly how important contemplation was to Anglo-Saxon spirituality. As such, it is difficult to give an approximate estimate of the proportion of Anglo-Saxon monks that exhibited specifically contemplative behaviour, but the evidence from across the area covered by Anglo-Saxon England suggests that there were individuals throughout the period engaged in contemplative activities, numerous enough to have been considered in the planning of Anglo-Saxon monasteries. We can trace their inspiration to the cultural atmosphere in which they existed, meaning that the influences they were subject to were available to others. Overall, the presence of contemplation in all of our diverse fields of

¹⁹⁴ I. McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, 2009), p. 183.

inquiry makes it self-evident that contemplation was an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon spirituality, as far as it can be reconstructed. There is, however, a manifestation of contemplation which has been mostly omitted by this chapter: the identification of contemplative texts in the extant Anglo-Saxon literary corpus, and a practical demonstration of how they were read by this tentatively-identified contemplative audience. The remainder of this thesis will attempt to supply the evidence for this aspect of the contemplative tradition, and so constitutes my own contribution to this seldom-discussed part of Anglo-Saxon culture.

VI Selection of Texts

For this thesis, I have chosen five texts which I believe are representative of the contemplative tradition in Anglo-Saxon England. We begin in the next chapter with *De die iudicii* and its faithful Old English translation *Judgement Day II*, as this allows us at an early stage to test our assumption that Latin texts were well-understood by certain Anglo-Saxon readers. Similarly, the near-identical rendering of contemplative theology across two texts in different languages suggests its familiarity to Anglo-Saxon audiences. We then move onto two chapters on texts which I will interpret as retellings of contemplative visions, *The Seafarer* (3) and *The Dream of the Rood* (4). I have also selected these owing to their presence in two of the major codices of Old English poetry, the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book, respectively, as this offers an opportunity to discuss other texts in the manuscripts as contemplative, offering a clue as to the interests of those who compiled them. We conclude with a discussion of another Vercelli Book item, the prose Vercelli Homily IX, which again

provides the opportunity to discuss contemplative items in the manuscript as a whole. Vercelli Homily IX, as a homiletic text, also demonstrates most clearly out of the texts selected how apophatic discourse and a contemplative dimension could be incorporated into a text with an obviously wide audience. Building upon the work of other scholars, I interpret the Vercelli Book as principally a private reading manual, assisting its compiler in balancing the 'mixed life' of action and contemplation, which is further evidence for the text's contemplative audience. For these reasons, and for its different form, I have made Vercelli Homily IX the final chapter of the thesis. I will be referring to Patristic texts familiar to the Anglo-Saxons in the course of my analysis, and so have given a list of manuscript witnesses to non-Insular Latin texts referred to frequently in Appendix I.

2 Where Language Goes to Die: *De die iudicii*, *Judgement Day*

II, and the Apophatic Construction of Heaven

Throughout this thesis, links between Latin texts, of both continental and Insular origin, and Old English texts are suggested and discussed. This chapter gives us a valuable opportunity to examine how Latin material was received by Old English writers. *Judgement Day II*

(hereafter referred to as *JDII*) is a vernacular translation of an Anglo-Latin text, *De die iudicii* (hereafter referred to as *DDI*), and so offers an indication of how Latin material was responded to, and interpreted by, an author writing in the vernacular poetic tradition.¹

Although most of the influences suggested by this thesis are theological texts, *DDI*, as the following discussion will indicate, is a text complex in theme and structure, and suffused with apophatic theology. That *JDII* is a faithful, if amplified, translation of the Latin suggests that these concepts were understood and endorsed by the Old English poet(s) of *JDII*, making it likely that other vernacular poets were capable of the same level of comprehension. Despite this level of complexity, we will also be discussing features of the poems that would be more readily comprehensible to a wider audience, such as the adaptation of the 'Soul and Body' trope. The primary focus here however will be upon how both texts develop a nuanced depiction of heaven through negations derived from the depiction of hell, and how the texts function for the contemplative audience as apparatus for

¹ That *JDII* is a translation of *DDI* is evidenced by the manuscript's claim: 'INCIPIUNT VERSUS BEDÆ PRESBYTERI. DE DIE JUDICII' ('here begins the poem of Bede the priest concerning the day of judgement'). This claim is not debated by scholarship. For a summary, see G.D. Caie, *The Old English Poem Judgement Day II: A Critical Edition with Editions of De die iudicii and the Hatton 113 Homily, De domes daege*, Anglo-Saxon Texts, 2 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 39-45. My reasons for suggesting the fidelity of the Old English poem will be demonstrated across the chapter.

contemplative preparation through the cumulative negation of worldly images, language, and bodily sensations.

I Description of the Manuscripts

Whilst *JDII* exists in a single manuscript, *DDI* was amongst the most popular texts of the medieval period, based on the number and geographical diversity of extant witnesses.² It is first important, therefore, to discuss this manuscript tradition, and my reasons for referring to the textual variant of the Latin poem contained in London, BL, Cotton Domitian A.i. This also provides a convenient point at which to discuss the *JDII* manuscript, CCCC 201.

Leslie Whitbread lists thirty-nine manuscripts containing *DDI*, from across Europe.³ The prospective scholar, therefore, has a wealth of material from which to choose when studying *DDI*. The most commonly referred to version for most Anglo-Saxonists is Allen and Calder's translation of the text.⁴ This translation is based upon Hurst and Fraipoint's oft-cited edition of the text in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*.⁵ This edition, however, is based on what Whitbread calls the 'derivative text' of Migne in *Patrologia Latina*, an edition based upon a 'continental manuscript of little importance'.⁶ Caie also highlights the dubious basis of Migne's edition, which is several times removed from an examination of the actual

² L. Whitbread, 'After Bede: The Influence and Dissemination of his Doomsday Verses', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteratur*, 204 (1968), 250-66 (pp. 258-59). P. Lendinara has recently delivered a conference paper increasing this total to forty-one: see J. Steen, *Verses and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 170-71. Whitbread suggests that *DDI*'s influence can also be traced in borrowings by later Latin poets: 'A Study of Bede's *Versus de Die Iudicii*', *PQ*, 23 (1944), 193-221 (pp. 197-98).

³ See footnote 2 above.

⁴ See M.J.B. Allen and D.G. Calder, eds., *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 208-12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁶ 'MS. C. C. C. C. 201: A Note on Its Character and Provenance', *PQ*, 38 (1959), 106-12 (p. 111).

manuscript, and has as its ultimate source Georg Cassander's 1556 transcription of the poem.⁷ Caie's edition of the Latin text is instead based upon London, BL, Cotton Domitian A.i. As well as *DDI*, Cotton Domitian A.i also contains a commentary on Priscian, Isidore's *De natura rerum*, and medical recipes.⁸ This tenth-century⁹ manuscript witness of *DDI* was suggested long ago by Whitbread as the most sensible version to examine as a source for *JDII*, since it is most similar to the Old English poem and 'indisputably insular in origin.'¹⁰ The version of *DDI* in Cotton Domitian A.i is also glossed in Old English.¹¹ It is best, therefore, to follow the edition of *DDI* published as an appendix to Caie's edition of the Old English poem.¹²

CCCC 201 is a mid-eleventh century manuscript,¹³ chiefly known for its collection of Wulfstan's homilies. It also contains secular lawcodes, several Latin religious texts, a confessional manual, Old English hagiographical material, the *Old English Benedictine Office*, Ælfric's Old English translation of Genesis, *Apollonius of Tyre*, and several minor, which is to say, overlooked, Old English poems.¹⁴ The diversity of material in the manuscript has led to several theories about its compilation,¹⁵ mostly surrounding Wulfstan. Dorothy Bethurum

⁷ Caie, *Judgement Day II*, p. 35.

⁸ Ker, no. 146; G&L, no. 326.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 'MS. C. C. C. C. 201', 111. Caie gives a selection of close parallels between the Cotton Domitian version and the Old English text, in *Judgement Day II*, pp. 37-39.

¹¹ Ker, no. 146; G&L, no. 326; Caie, *Judgement Day II*, p. 36.

¹² M. Lapidge has bemoaned the absence of an edition taking into account all manuscripts of *DDI*, and announced some time ago that he is personally preparing such a publication, which will be contained in a volume called 'Bede's Latin Poetry.' See 'Bede and the *Versus de die iudicii*', in *Nova de veteribus: Mittel- und Neulateinische Studien für Paul Gerhard Schmidt*, ed. A. Bihrer and E. Stein (Munich, 2004), pp. 103-11 (111). As of 2015, this edition is still forthcoming, and so Cotton Domitian A.i remains the most sensible text to use.

¹³ Ker, no. 49; G&L, no. 66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; Caie, *Judgement Day II*, pp. 10-15.

¹⁵ See also S. Zacher, 'The Rewards of Poetry: "Homiletic" Verse in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201', *SELIM*, 12 (2003-4), 83-108, who posits that the manuscript's unity is based on rhetorical and poetic devices. P. Wormald suggests that CCCC201 is 'a textbook on Christian government' for those serving 'kings of both earth and heaven': *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Volume 1, Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), p. 210; see pp. 204-11 for a full description of the manuscript.

posits that the manuscripts containing material by Wulfstan are based upon a 'Commonplace Book', a repository of materials compiled by Wulfstan to aid him in his archbishopric.¹⁶ Caie accepts the 'Commonplace Book' hypothesis, but suggests also that the unifying theme of CCCC 201 may be the eschatological material evident in the Wulfstanian homilies and other material in the manuscript.¹⁷

It is also worth discussing the immediate context of *JDII* as it appears in the manuscript.¹⁸ Reproduced below is the ordering in table form:

pp. 151-60: Ælfric, portion of Genesis from *Heptateuch* (Scribe C)
 pp. 161-65: *JDII* (Scribe A)
 pp. 165-66: *An Exhortation to Christian Living* (Scribe A)
 pp. 166-67: *A Summons to Prayer* (Scribe A)
 pp. 167-69: *The Lord's Prayer II* (Scribe B)
 pp. 169-70: *The Gloria I* (Scribe B)¹⁹

The five poems, though written in two hands, are linked together in the manuscript by the absence of spacing between them.²⁰ Their relationship has been convincingly interpreted as thematic by Whitbread, the ordering preserving a logically structured penitential scheme, the idea being that the fear inspired by the doomsday passages in *JDII* are to inspire a reformation buttressed by *Exhortation*, itself glossed by *Summons*, and concluding appropriately in the two prayers.²¹ Fred C. Robinson sees the thematic links, and lack of

¹⁶ 'Archbishop Wulfstan's Commonplace Book', *PMLA*, 57 (1942), 916-29. See also M.D. Elliot, 'Wulfstan's Commonplace Book Revised: The Structure and Development of "Block 7"', *On Pastoral Privilege and Responsibility*, *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 22 (2012), 1-48.

¹⁷ *Judgement Day II*, p. 11.

¹⁸ On the importance of presenting Old English poetry in its manuscript context, see F.C. Robinson, 'Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context', in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. J.D. Niles (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 11-29 and 157-61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²¹ 'Notes on Two Minor Old English Poems', *Studia Neophilologica*, 29 (1957), 123-29 (pp. 127-28). This interpretation is shared by Caie, *Judgement Day II*, pp. 15-19. On the manuscript's penitential theme, see also D. Anlezark, 'Reading "The Story of Joseph" in MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201', in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. H. Magennis and J. Wilcox (Morgantown, 2006), pp. 61-94.

manuscript spacing, between *Exhortation* and *Summons* as so close as to suggest that they are, in fact, two parts of the same poem.²² Instead of spacing, the poems under consideration are distinguished from each other principally by the use of green, red and blue initials of varying sizes.²³ The scribes also indicate internal divisions of the poems using a scheme of coloured capitals, which will be referenced in my discussion of *JDII*.²⁴

CCCC 201, then, is a diverse manuscript, albeit with strong thematic and palaeographic links between certain items. The general importance of its other liturgical and legislative contents suggests that *JDII* was esteemed by the manuscript compiler. My own view of the manuscript is a slight modification of Bethurum's suggestion of a 'Commonplace Book.' Wulfstanian or not in origin, it has been convincingly demonstrated that it was copied from a single exemplar,²⁵ and its contents suggest a cleric attempting to fulfil the 'mixed life' of action and contemplation, advocated by Gregory I: 'he must not be remiss in his care for the inner life by preoccupation with the external; nor must he in his solitude for what is internal, fail to give attention to the external' (*Regula pastoralis*, II.1).²⁶ Within CCCC 201, the 'external', or active, life can be seen manifest in the items evidently for pastoral administration, such as the lawcodes and the vernacular homiletic material, whereas a concern for the 'inner', or contemplative, life is evident in the inclusion of a confessional manual and the penitential poems. Other material strongly advocating a life of contemplation as well as action was at one stage contained within the manuscript. The

²² "'The Rewards of Piety': Two Old English Poems in their Manuscript Context", in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. P.J. Gallacher and H. Damico (Albany, NY, 1989), pp. 193-200.

²³ Ker, no. 49; G&L, no. 66.

²⁴ The number of scribes is discussed by Wormald, *Making of English Law*, Table 4.3, pp. 204-05.

²⁵ H. Sauer, 'The Transmission and Structure of Archbishop Wulfstan's Commonplace Book', in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. P.E. Szarmach and D.A. Oosterhouse, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 5 (New York, 2000), pp. 339-93.

²⁶ *Pastoral Care*, trans. H. Davis, Ancient Christian Writers, 11 (London, 1950). Subsequent references are to this edition. The Vercelli Book as a manuscript embodying the 'mixed life' is discussed in Chapter 5.

Regularis Concordia, of which only a fragment of an Old English translation remains due to Archbishop Parker's insertion of a table of contents into the manuscript, advises a cycle of daily psalmody which links contemplation with spiritual health.²⁷ The manuscript's advocacy of the *vita contemplativa* can be extended more specifically to *JDII*, which, as will be discussed, is a poem geared towards aiding contemplation for the contemplative audience.

II Proposed Structure of the Poems

For ease of reference, outlined below is my proposed framework of the structure of the poem. This also outlines the chronological development of my analysis in this chapter, and my definition of each section will be elaborated at length as the discussion proceeds. I have based the internal poetic divisions upon thematic identification, and the manuscript capitalisation of CCCC 201.²⁸

DDI

1-4: Eremitic Setting

4-11: Contemplative Turn

12-89: Contrition inspired by *contemptus mundi*

90-123: Description of Hell

124-51: Description of Heaven

152-57: Contemplative Longing and spiritual reinforcement

JDII

1-8: Eremitic Setting (p. 161; exceptionally large green capital on **Hwæt!**, 1a)

9-14: Contemplative Turn (p. 161; red capital on **Pa**, 9a)

15-175: Contrition inspired by *contemptus mundi* (p. 161; blue capital on **Ic**, 15a)

176-247: Description of Hell (p. 163; red capital on **Hwæt**, 176a)

²⁷ For more on the utility of psalms for individual spiritual expression, see B. Daley, 'Finding the Right Key: The Aims and Strategies of Early Christian Interpretation of Psalms', in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. H.W. Attridge and M.E. Fassler, Symposium Series, 25 (Leiden, 2004), pp. 189-205 (199-201); see also pp. 8-9 above.

²⁸ NB that CCCC 201 has more coloured capitals than those mentioned in my structure; I have mentioned only those which coincide with my suggested thematic divisions.

248-300: Description of Heaven (p. 164; red capital on Eala!, 248a)

301-06: Contemplative Longing and spiritual reinforcement (p. 165; red capital on Hwæt, 301a)²⁹

III Prologue: An Eremitical Setting

Both versions of the poem begin with the narrator situated in an idyllic place:

Inter florigeras fecundi cespitis herbas,
Flamine uentorum resonatibus undique ramis,
Arboris umbriferæ mæstus sub tegmine solus
Dum sedi. (*DDI*, 1-4)

While I sat sad and alone under the canopy of a shady tree, among the flower-bearing plants of the fertile grassy plain, with the branches resonating on every side from the wind's breath.

Hwæt! Ic ana sæt innan bearwe,
mid helme beþeht, holte tomiddes,
þær þa wæterburnan swegdon and urnon
on middan gehæge, eal swa ic secge.
Eac þær wynwyrta weoxon and bleowon
innon þam gemonge on ænlicum wonge,
and þa wudubeamas wagedon and swegdon
þurh winda gryre; wolcn wæs gehrered.³⁰ (*JDII*, 1-8)

Lo! I sat alone within a grove, covered with a crown (of foliage)³¹ in the middle of a wood, where the water streams murmured and flowed, in the middle of an enclosure, just as I say; there each of the pleasant plants in the multitude flourished and blossomed in the singular place, and the trees shook and murmured through the wind's ferocity. The heavens were agitated.

²⁹ All references to CCCC 201 are to the digital facsimile at *The Parker Library on the Web*, <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/manuscript_description_long_display.do?ms_no=201> [accessed 04/04/14].

³⁰ *JDII*'s amplification of *DDI* is discussed on p. 110 below, but here we should note that *JDII*'s amplification is on roughly a two-for-one ratio.

³¹ *Helm* ('helmet') is also used to describe the top of a tree in an arboreal context, as in the *Old English Boethius*, 34, 269-79: 'eall se dæl se þæs treowes on twelf monþum geweaxð [...] anlang þære rinde oð þone helm' (quoted from *DOE*; 'each part of the tree that grows in twelve months [...] along the bark and up to the crown'). I have thus opted to put a reference to the top of a tree in brackets.

Though this opening section has been heralded by some as the beginnings of the secular garden setting of the later medieval Dream-Vision genre,³² it is more profitable to relate it to the established early medieval tradition of the *locus amoenus*, an idyllic space in the natural world.³³ The *locus amoenus* has its roots in the classical genre of the pastoral, exemplified for the medieval period by Virgil's *Bucolica*.³⁴ The concern, however, for both the Anglo-Latin and Old English poets, is not to write a panegyric of nature, but to evoke the appropriate setting from which to contemplate the afterlife.³⁵ The *locus amoenus* of both poems can be interpreted as consciously aligned with the Paradise of Genesis 2:6-10.³⁶

fons ascendebat e terra inrigans universam superficiem terrae formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae et factus est homo in animam viventem plantaverat autem Dominus Deus paradisum voluptatis a principio in quo posuit hominem quem formaverat produxitque Dominus Deus de humo omne lignum pulchrum visu et ad vescendum suave lignum etiam vitae in medio paradisi lignumque scientiae boni et mali et fluvius egrediebatur de loco voluptatis ad inrigandum paradisum qui inde dividitur in quattuor capita.

A spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth. And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein He placed man whom He had formed. And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of: the tree of life also in the midst of paradise: and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads.

Like the biblical depiction of Paradise (*pulchrum visu*), *DDI* (1) and *JDII* (5; 6b) emphasise the setting's general beauty. The defining feature of the Genesis Paradise, according to Gregory of Nyssa, is the number of trees: 'a grove that is thickly planted with trees is accustomed to

³² R.L. Hoffman, 'Structure and Symbolism in the *Judgment Day II*', *Neophilologus*, 52 (1968), 170-78 (p. 170). Caie observes out that there is no vision in *JDII* to match that of a later Dream-Vision text such as *Pearl: The Judgment Theme in Old English Poetry*, Publications of the Department of English, University of Copenhagen, 2 (Copenhagen, 1976), p. 120. A similar claim about *The Dream of the Rood*'s influence is also commonly made: see Chapter 4.

³³ Caie, *The Judgment Theme*, p. 125.

³⁴ D. Pearsall and E. Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London, 1973), p. 10; R. Tuve, *Seasons and Months: Studies in a Tradition of Middle English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1933; 1974).

³⁵ Old English poets, generally, display mistrust and even fear of nature. See J. Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 27 (Cambridge, 1999).

³⁶ Hoffman, 'Structure and Symbolism', 177, calls the opening setting of *JDII* 'a kind of earthly Paradise.'

be called a paradise.³⁷ Trees certainly feature prominently in the opening scene of both versions of the text: *ramis* (2), *arboris umbriferæ* (3); *bearwe* (1), *helme* (2), *holte* (2), *wudubeamas* (7). Both texts also emphasise the fecundity of the location, which Genesis implies in its mention of the spring and the number of trees growing there (*DDI*, 1; *JDII*, 5-6). *JDII*, however, goes further than *DDI* in its allusions to paradise in including the specific detail of the stream (3), which recalls the river flowing through Eden (Genesis 2:10). The Genesis Paradise is a *paradisum voluptatis* (2:8), devoid of the danger associated with Post-Lapsarian nature, and likewise both poems represent nature in their opening setting as notably empty of threat. A further indication of the Old English poet's attempt to align the opening scene with Paradise is the noun *gehæge* (4a), which appears as a gloss for the Latin nouns *hortus* ('garden') and *pratum* ('meadow'), terms often used to describe Paradise.³⁸ As well as revealing the translator's intentions, this lexical decision also suggests how the Prologue of *DDI* was interpreted by a near-contemporary audience.

We can further consolidate our assertion that both poems align themselves with the biblical depiction by considering the most extensive Old English description of Paradise, contained in *The Phoenix*. The first part of *The Phoenix* is a translation of Lactantius's *Carmen de ave phoenice*, which was the primary source for Latin writers wishing to depict Paradise, and so the details included by the Old English poet are strongly indicative of what was thought to characterise Paradise in the Anglo-Saxon period.³⁹ *The Phoenix* describes at great length the garden wherein the titular bird infrequently lives:

³⁷ Quoted in Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons*, p. 63.

³⁸ See *Bosworth-Toller*.

³⁹ N.F. Blake, 'Originality in *The Phoenix*', *NQ*, n.s. 8 (1961), 326-27 (p. 326); Calder, 'The Vision of Paradise: A Symbolic Reading of the Old English *Phoenix*', *ASE*, 1 (1972), 167-81. For Paradise in Anglo-Saxon literature more

ænlic is þæt iglond
 [...]

þæt is wynsum wong, wealdas grene,
 rume under roderum.
 [...]

se wong seomað
 eadig ond onsund. Is þæt æþele lond
 blostmum geblowen.
 [...]

se æþela feld
 wridað under wolcnum, wynnum geblowen.
 [...]

þær lagustreamas,
 wundrum wrætlice, wyllan onspringað
 fægum flodwylmum. Foldan leccaþ
 wæter wynsumu of þæs wuda midle. (9a; 13-14a; 19b-21a; 26b-27; 62b-65)

That island is singular [...] It is a joyful place, with green woods spacious beneath the skies
 [...] The place remains blessed and perfect; that glorious land flowers with blossoms [...] The
 glorious field flourishes, flowers with joys, beneath the skies [...] There the waters, wondrous
 with ornaments, well, spring forth marvellously with flowing streams. The pleasant water
 irrigates the land of the middle of the wood.

In common with the Biblical and poetic depictions we have discussed, Paradise in *The Phoenix* is characterised by its fecundity, its beauty (emphasised by the repetition of *æþel*, 20b and 26b), the extensive woods that Nyssa sees as central to any depiction of Eden, and the pleasant flowing stream which *JDII* incorporates. There is also a common *lexis* between *The Phoenix* and *JDII*. Both poets describe the place as a *wong* (*The Phoenix*, 13a; *JDII*, 6b), use the same verb for the blossoming of the plants (*geblowen*, *The Phoenix*, 21a; *bleowon*, *JDII*, 5b), and apply the same adjective, related to *ana*, to emphasise its superlative quality (*ænlic*, *The Phoenix*, 9a; *ænlicum*, *JDII*, 6b). It is most likely, therefore, that we have presented to us in both *DDI* and *JDII* an invocation of Paradise, conforming to both Biblical and poetic definitions.

generally, see A.J. Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, CSASE, 32 (Cambridge, 2001), especially pp. 160-66, for a discussion of *The Phoenix*.

The descriptive links to the Garden of Eden do not constitute an attempt on the part of either poet to depict the narrator within this very setting, but merely allude to the idea of Paradise. It is now appropriate to discuss the possibility that the narrator is an eremite. As we discussed in Chapter 1, early medieval discussions of the hermit identified solitude as a defining feature of eremiticism (see *RB*, I, p. 32 above):

Anchorites (*anchorita*) are those who after a community life seek out deserted places and live alone in the wilderness. Because they withdraw far from people (cf. ἀναχωρεῖν ‘withdraw’) they are named with this name. Anchorites imitate Elijah and John (the Baptist). (Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VII.xiii.3-4)

In Anglo-Saxon hagiography, Cuthbert ‘also took to the hermit’s way of life, rejoicing to sit in solitude for no short time, and, for the sake of the sweetness of divine contemplation, to be silent and to hear no human speech’ (*VSC*, I). Similarly, after rejecting life as a soldier, Guthlac ‘ana ongan/beorgseþel bugan’ (101b-02a; ‘he went to retire alone to a mountain-dwelling’). The solitude of the narrator of *DDI* and *JDII* is emphasised at the outset of both poems: amongst the trees, the Latin narrator is *solus* (3), translated as *ana* (1) in the Old English version, an adjectival link to *Guthlac A*, 101b (*ana*). This serves to define the space they occupy, beautiful though it may be, as devoid of human company, and thus not cenobitic.

Our discussion of the setting of the Prologue in both poems as akin to Paradise is problematised by Benedict’s definition of eremitical space as a ‘desert’, echoed by Isidore’s ‘wilderness.’ However, this discrepancy in fact further suggests that the grove of the Prologue is a hermitage. The emphasis both Benedict and Isidore place on the eremite’s training is explained by the former: ‘having learned by the help of many brethren how to fight against the devil, [hermits] go out well armed from the ranks of the community to the

solitary combat of the desert' (*RB*, I). Retreating far from men means to enter hostile spaces inhabited by demons, and so the would-be recluse had to be trained in the art of vanquishing them.⁴⁰ That is, he had to learn how to harmonise the environment in which he willingly chose to dwell. The eremite's ability to redefine his environment in this way was a sign of his sanctity. Benedict, greatly influenced when writing his monastic rule by the accounts of the Desert Fathers, probably had saints such as Antony the Great in mind with regard to this definition.⁴¹ Having increasingly retreated from civilisation, Antony was beset by Satan:

The devil, the enemy of the word Christian, could not bear to see such outstanding virtues in a young man and so he attacked him with his old wiles [...] at last that most hideous serpent found that he was unable to destroy Antony even by this means and saw that he was always being driven back by Antony's thoughts. So gnashing his teeth (as it says in the Bible) and wailing, he appeared, as was fitting, in the form that revealed his true nature: an ugly black boy prostrated himself at Antony's feet, weeping loudly, and saying in a human voice, 'Many I have led astray, many I have deceived, but now I have been defeated by your efforts as I was by other holy people.' (Athanasius, *VSA*, trans. Evagrius of Antioch, 5-6)

Here we have the classic depiction of an eremite: away from other men, Antony is especially vulnerable to the devil, and only with tremendous strength of faith can he overcome him. The result of this victory is that Antony can now exist and pray in peace, and such is his sanctity after this immense test of his faith that the desert yields to him. In one especially memorable instance, Antony rids his new home of danger, merely through his sacred presence:

After crossing the river, he found there a deserted fort full of venomous animals (due to the length of time that it had lain abandoned, and because of its solitary location). There he settled, living as the fort's new tenant. Immediately upon his arrival, a huge number of snakes fled as if they had been chased out. Antony then blocked up the entrance with stones and remained there all alone. (12)

⁴⁰ See also Chapter 5, Sections XI and XIII, for a discussion of a conversation between an anchorite and a defeated devil.

⁴¹ For an account of the importance of the Desert Fathers in the formation of *RB*, see pp. 31-33 above.

Despite choosing to live in the most inhospitable place he could find, Antony's sanctity allows him to harmonise it, removing all threats and making it serve him. We see a similar pattern in *Guthlac A*, as the eremite travels to a location devoid of human habitation (101-02, see p. 86).⁴² Whether a Neolithic burial mound, disused fortress, or, broadly, a 'landscape of spiritual perfection', there are obvious parallels to Antony inhabiting his snake-ridden fort.⁴³ Like Antony, it is not long before Guthlac, too, is beset by demons, but having vanquished them, his once unpleasant home becomes pleasant:

Swa hy hine trymedon on twa healfa
 oþþæt þæs gewinnes weoroda dryhten
 on þæs engles dom ende gereahthe.
 Feond wæs geflymed; siþ þam frofre gæst
 in Guðlaces geoce gewunade,
 lufade hine ond lærde lenge hu geornor,
 þæt him leofedan londes wynne,
 bold on beorhge. (133-40a)

So they strengthened him on both sides until the Lord of hosts brought an end to the combat, according to the angel's judgement. The fiend was banished, after the spirit of consolation dwelt in support of Guthlac, loved him and instructed him ever more diligently, so that the joy of the land and the dwelling on the hill were pleasant to him.

After another attack by the demons, Guthlac's surroundings come to serve him, a sign that he has successfully redefined an environment so hostile to men that it was long deemed uninhabitable:

Hine bletsadon
 monge mægwlitas, meaglum reordum,
 treofugla tuddor, tacnum cyðdon

⁴² There is a clear influence of the Antony story upon the Guthlac legend. See B.P. Kurtz, 'From St Anthony to St Guthlac: A Study in Biography', *University of California Studies in Modern Philology*, 12 (1926), 103-46 (esp. p. 127); S. Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland: Land Tenure in *Guthlac A*', *ASE*, 40 (2011), 75-102. For the veneration of Antony in Anglo-Saxon England, see pp. 56-63 above.

⁴³ For more on the possible identification of Guthlac's *beorgseþel*, see L.K. Shook, 'The Burial Mound in *Guthlac A*', *MP*, 58 (1960), 1-10. Shook's identification of the *beorgseþel* as a burial mound is challenged by P.F. Reichardt, 'Guthlac A and the Landscape of Spiritual Perfection', *Neophilologus*, 58 (1974), 331-38 (p. 331), who believes it should be seen as a mountain, to align the text more firmly with the Desert Fathers.

eadges eftcyme. Oft he him æte heold,
 þonne hy him hungrige ymb hond flugon
 grædum gifre, geoce gefegon.
 Swa þæt milde mod wið moncynnes
 dreamum gedælde, dryhtne þeowde,
 genom him to wildeorum wynne, siþþan he þas woruld forhogde.
 Smolt wæs se sigewong ond sele niwe,
 fæger fugla reord, folde geblowen;
 geacas gear budon. Guþlac moste
 eadig ond onmod eardes brucan.
 Stod se grena wong in godes wære
 [...]

Hwylc wæs fægerra
 willa geworden in wera life,
 þara þe ylðran usse gemunde,
 opþe we selfe siþþan cupen? (733b-46; 748b-51)

The many forms, the offspring of the tree-haunting birds, blessed him with strong voices, proclaimed the return of the blessed one with signs. He often held food for them, when they hungrily flew around his hand, greedily rapacious, rejoiced in his help. Thus that gentle heart, separated from the joys of mankind, served the Lord: he found joy in wild creatures since he despised this world. The field of victory was peaceful, and the dwelling new, the voices of birds were beautiful, the field blossomed; cuckoos announced the year. Guthlac, blessed and courageous, was allowed to possess the land. The green place stood in God's protection [...] What was more pleasant, that came to pass in the life of men, which our ancestors remembered, or that we ourselves have since known?

The result of Guthlac's reformation of the environment is that nature takes on a paradisaal aspect: it is devoid of danger, its fecundity is signalled by its blossom and green hue, it is protected by God, and the section ends with the narrator signalling its incomparability.⁴⁴

These links to Eden can also be traced to our previous discussion of the description of Paradise in Old English texts. As well as its thematic resemblance to the Prologue of both *DDI* and *JDII*, there is a shared *lexis* between *Guthlac A*, *JDII*, and *The Phoenix*.⁴⁵ The poems' settings are designated by the noun *wong* (*The Phoenix*, 13a; *Guthlac A*, 746a; *JDII*, 6b), and are

⁴⁴ See C.A.M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700-1400* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 46. See also D.F. Johnson, who draws a comparison to the Israelites ridding the Promised Land of foes, in 'Spiritual Combat and the Land of Canaan in *Guthlac A*', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. V. Blanton and H. Scheck, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 334; *Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 24 (Tempe, 2008), pp. 307-18.

⁴⁵ See also H.G. Shearin, 'The *Phoenix* and the *Guthlac*', *MLN*, 22 (1907), 263.

said to blossom, employing the same verb, *geblowen* (*The Phoenix*, 21a; *Guthlac A*, 743b; *bleowon*, *JDII*, 5b).

Cuthbert similarly masters his eremitic landscape on Farne:

There is an island called Farne in the middle of the sea [...] it is shut in on the landward side by very deep water and on the seaward side by the boundless ocean. No one had been able to dwell alone undisturbed upon this island before Cuthbert the servant of the Lord, on account of the phantoms of demons who dwelt there; but when the soldier of Christ entered, armed with the 'helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, all the fires of the wicked one' were quenched, and the wicked foe himself was driven far away together with the whole crowd of his satellites. (*VSC*, XVII)

Like Antony and Guthlac, Cuthbert retreats to an inhospitable place, far from the habitations of men, where he must do battle with the devil before he can master the environment and make it serve him:

As soon as he had become monarch of the land he had entered and had overcome the army of the usurpers, built a city fitted for his rule, and in it houses equally suited to the city [...] water had been drawn from ground which before had been exceedingly dry and hard, through the prayers of the man of God. (*Ibid.*, XVII-XVIII)⁴⁶

Explicitly, it is through spiritual activity that Cuthbert turns the barren landscape of his hermitage fertile, an Edenic quality as previously discussed. As we saw in Chapter 1, hermits dwelt in unpleasant places like deserts, fens and islands, and the examples discussed in this section make it clear that their ability to transform an inhospitable environment into an earthly paradise was an indication of individual sanctity, since this victory over the powers of darkness and the natural world came from their own merit, indicating also the strength of their relationship with God.

Though the landscape of the Prologue to *DDI* and *JDII* is most obviously akin to Paradise, there are several other intriguing similarities to the dwellings of anchoritic

⁴⁶ For an archaeological discussion of Cuthbert's hermitage, see pp. 40-44 above.

hagiography. As discussed at the beginning of this section, the natural world of both poems is noticeably devoid of threat, and pleasant to an observer in the same way as Guthlac's *beorgseþel*. The eremites previously discussed, and especially Antony and Guthlac, forge something of an earthly paradise, defined against the characteristic hostility of nature and the demons it was thought to foster. Cuthbert's meagre cell on Farne (XVII; see pp. 40-41 above) derives its sanctity and paradisaical status from its contrast to the previous conditions on the island, and outside of this context would be unremarkable. In not supplying any contextual biographical detail of the narrator of *DDI* and *JDII*, the Latin and Old English poets perhaps resort to a form of literary shorthand, giving a superlative description of the setting which derives its definition from its contrast to common depictions of the natural world, to indicate the sanctity of the individual who dwells there.⁴⁷ The forest is traditionally a signifier of a space hostile to civilisation, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau notes: 'history tells us about the huge forests all over the earth which had to be cut down as it became populated and civilised.'⁴⁸ Anglo-Saxon England had several vast forests, such as the Weald in Southern England, in which wild beasts and criminals roamed in great numbers.⁴⁹ The woods were, unsurprisingly, not a hospitable place in Anglo-Saxon thought, as evidenced by *Maxims II*: 'wulf sceal on bearowe/earm anhaga' (18b-19a, 'the wolf must be in the grove, wretched and solitary'). The wolf — designated as a beast of Satan in the Bible (Matthew 7:15, 'ad tenebrae a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces'; 'beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but

⁴⁷ For an account of literary shorthand in the *Psychomachia* tradition, see J.P. Hermann, *Allegories of War: Language and Violence in Old English Poetry* (Ann Arbor, 1989). Hermann's thesis is that depictions of spiritual combat in Old English literature function with the interpretive context of the *Psychomachia*, the principal means of depicting allegorical warfare against Satan and the flesh. Rather than repeating the text at length, poets resorted to a condensed allusion to the *Psychomachia*, resulting in 'microallegories', or short allusions to Prudentius (p. 37).

⁴⁸ *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. F. Philip (Oxford, 1994), Note D, p. 90.

⁴⁹ P.H. Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1959; 1977), pp. 248-49.

inwardly they are ravening wolves'), and a ravenous devourer of corpses in Old English poetry as part of the 'Beasts of Battle' trope⁵⁰ — is the most appropriate inhabitant of the forest, not a man. Indicatively, *Maxims II* employs *bearowe* for the home of the wolf, a dative form of the same noun used to describe the setting of *JDII*, *bearwe* (1b). Just as Antony, Cuthbert and Guthlac are served by the environment they inhabit, so too the woods are not merely pleasant to behold, but provide the narrator in each poem with comfort, protecting him from the elements: *arboris umbriferæ [...] sub tegmine* (3); *mid helme beþeht* (2a). The depiction of the grove in both poems can only be appreciated fully in the context of the perceived hostility of the forest, just as Cuthbert's cell derives its singularity from comparison to the conditions on Farne before his arrival. As such, this depiction of an *ænlicum wonge* in a forest must be appreciated, just as the poet intends, as a 'singular place', which derives its peculiarity from its contrast to common depictions of the natural world. It is unusually pleasant, akin to the Biblical Paradise, and rather than regarding this feature as arbitrary, it is possible to relate this to the pious influence of an eremitic inhabitant.

Woods were also specifically associated with hermits in Anglo-Saxon England. Benedictine monastic sites would have been partially cultivated for agriculture, and cleared to make space for large communal buildings, excluding the possibility of a thick grove such as that of the Prologues within a cenobitic enclosure. There are records, however, of Anglo-Saxon hermits dwelling in the woods. As well as Guthlac, who dwells on a *beorg on bearwe* (148a), Herbert of Derwentwater, an eremitical friend of Cuthbert, was said by Bede to have lived on a wooded island in a Cumbrian lake (*VSC*, XXVIII; *HE*, IV.29). Other, little-attested, Anglo-Saxon hermits were also associated with woods, such as Ælfgar of Somerset, Ælfnōth

⁵⁰ Regarding the 'Beasts of Battle' *topos*, see M. Griffith, 'Convention and Originality in the Old English "Beasts of Battle" Typescene', *ASE*, 22 (1993), 179-99.

of Northamptonshire, and Wærstan, who fled from the Viking raid of Deerhurst to live as a recluse in the woods near Great Malvern.⁵¹ This suggests a strong link between eremiticism and the woods. If *DDI* and *JDII* begin in a monastic enclosure of some description, it thus seems overwhelmingly likely that it is supposed to be a hermitage.

We can also trace the eremitical influence on this depiction of a *locus amoenus* in its enclosed nature. As well as the aforementioned noun *gehæge* (4a), the language of immersion and protection is notable in both poems. In the Latin version, the prepositions *inter* (1) and *sub* (4) emphasise the sense of the narrator enclosed by his environment, which is amplified by the Old English translator: the *JDII* narrator is situated *innan* (1b), *beþeht* (2a), *tomiddes* (2b), *on middan gehæge* (4a). The demonstrative concealment of both narrators recalls the antisocial setting of monasteries at this period.⁵² In the early medieval church,

“enclosure” signified the legislated isolation and separation of both male and female religious from society; the boundaries of the cloister were as important for containing those within (active enclosure) as for keeping the rest of the world out (passive enclosure).⁵³

A hermitage, occupied by a single monk, therefore represents an intensification of the communal monastery’s physical and ideological enclosure from the world. Hence, Anglo-Saxon eremitic hagiography emphasises the enclosure of anchoritic saints. The natural isolation of Farne is not sufficient for Cuthbert, who encloses himself within a structure that limits his visual perception

The wall itself on the outside is higher than a man standing upright; but inside he made it much higher by cutting away the living rock, so that the pious inhabitant could see nothing except the sky from his dwelling, thus restraining both the lust of the eyes and of the thoughts and lifting the whole bent of his mind to higher things. (VSC, XVII)

⁵¹ See p. 57, footnote 155, above.

⁵² S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 38-41, provides an illuminating discussion of the monastery as a Foucauldian ‘total institution’, ruling not just the physical movements of the monk but exercising control over his intellectual mobility.

⁵³ S. Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Enclosure in Old English Literature* (Albany, NY, 2001), p. 7.

Cuthbert, as a result, dwelt in the midst of an enclosure, just as the narrator of the Old English poem says he is *on middan gehæge* (4a). Guthlac's retreat can also be interpreted as an enclosure, as the place in which he dwells is explicitly a manmade edifice, itself located within the natural enclosure of a forest:

Wæs seo londes stow
bimipen fore monnum, oþþæt meotud onwrah
beorg on bearwe, þa se bytla cwom
se þær haligne ham arærde. (*Guthlac A*, 146b-49)

That place of the land was concealed from men, until the Creator uncovered the hill in the grove, when the builder came, he who raised up a holy dwelling there.

Guthlac's *haligne ham* is visually and ideologically defined against the surrounding natural world, and in his long periods of prayer and demonic combat he can be said to be enclosed within it.⁵⁴ Likewise, the embedding of the narrator of *DDI* and *JDII* within the enclosure in the woods can be interpreted, along the same lines, as an unnatural version of the natural world, an instance of the eremite's shaping of the land. Whilst there is no suggestion of an edifice in the woodland, the designation of the space as an encircling *gehæge* carries the same spiritual sense of one enclosed, and thus protected, within a wilderness appropriated.⁵⁵

We have discussed the likelihood of the narrator being an eremite at length, and this seems the most practicable solution. Though there has been no scholarly discussion of the identity of the narrator, both poets provide a very specific context for the narrative in the Prologue, which in their minds at least must add something to textual meaning. Critics have failed to settle definitively the question of who actually wrote *DDI*, as divorced from the

⁵⁴ For more on the spiritual-inscribing of the landscape, see M. Sharma, 'A Reconsideration of the Structure of *Guthlac A*: The Extremes of Saintliness', *JEGP*, 101 (2002), 185-200.

⁵⁵ The extent of the forested areas in Anglo-Saxon England, previously noted, would also mean, on the literal level, that any enclosed space within the woods would have been created by man, at some stage in time, for cultivation or inhabitation.

text's narrator, and as a result many have neglected the text itself.⁵⁶ The Old English poet's expansion of the brief Prologue to *DDI* is sufficient justification for a lengthy analysis, since he evidently interpreted it as an important part of the Latin text. The probable identification of the narrator as an eremite is crucial to our analysis of both texts. If the narrator is a hermit who has successfully reappropriated the surroundings of his hermitage to resemble Paradise, this indicates that he is a contemplative who has had some communion with God. In the Garden of Eden, man had direct contact with the transcendent God: 'vocavitque Dominus Deus Adam et dixit ei ubi es' (Genesis 3:9, 'and the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Where art thou?').⁵⁷ Regarding these appearances of God, Gregory I explicitly states that 'man enjoyed the light of inward contemplation in Paradise' (*Moralia*, III.xi). In the same way, it is said of Paradise in *The Phoenix* that 'ðær bið oft open eadgum togeanes/onhliden hleoþra wyn, heofonrices duru' (11-12, 'there the door of the kingdom of heaven is often open, and the joy of pleasant sounds is revealed, together to the blessed').

We recall here the equivalence of eremites and contemplatives discussed in Chapter 1. An important part of eremiticism was the ability to distance oneself from the temporal desires and responsibilities, and focus solely on God, which links strongly to Cassian's definition of the contemplative (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3; see p. 11 above). The woodland isolation of the narrator, like the residence of Cuthbert on Farne, suggests one whose 'mind [is] purged of every carnal desire', permanently situated away from the company and communities of other men, and whose 'whole way of life and all the yearnings of [his] heart [have] become a single and continuous prayer' (*Ibid.*). Guthlac's pleasant environment, too,

⁵⁶ The issue of whether Alcuin or Bede wrote the poem remains unresolved. For a summary of the authorship debate, see Caie, *Judgement Day II*, pp. 32-34. For our purposes in this chapter, however, it is enough to say that at least one of the Old English poet and CCCC 201 scribe believed that the poem was by Bede, as the poem in the manuscript is preceded by the note: 'INCIPIUNT VERSUS BEDÆ PRESBYTERI. DE DIE JUDICII'.

⁵⁷ This reading of Eden was first suggested to me by Vincent Gillespie in private discussion.

is contingent on his withdrawal from earthly cares (*Guthlac A*, 739-41, see p. 89 above). This reading permits us to see the rest of the poem as the advice of a contemplative, whose narrative has a subsequent context of *auctoritas*, identifying himself as an inspirational figure whose piety we should aspire to emulate. Eremites, as previously discussed, were seen by Benedict as figures whose lives should be read to inspire cenobites (*RB*, XLII, see p. 9) and were celebrated in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy. This invitation to mimicry could potentially have a profound influence on the nature of reading, as Gregory I advises: ‘we ought to transform what we read into our very selves, so that when our mind is stirred by what it hears, our life may concur by practicing what has been heard’.⁵⁸ According to Gregory, we are to identify closely with the narrator, and so we must meticulously follow the narrator of *DDI* and *JDII* as he progresses through systematic negation. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this invitation for personal identification characterises the most contemplative of Anglo-Saxon texts, written for the contemplative audience discussed in Chapter 1. In the sections of the poem that follow, we see the narrator attempt to render the ‘mind purged of every carnal desire’ in order to prepare for contemplative ascent, which the reader must also attempt with him.

IV The Contemplative Turn

Despite the beautiful setting of each poem, the narrators react to their surroundings in a negative manner:

[...] subito planctu turbatus amaro,

⁵⁸ Quoted by M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 70 (Cambridge, 2008), p. 164. See also pp. 8-9 above.

Carmina prætisti cecini hæc lugubria mente
 Vtope commemorans scelerum commissa meorum,
 Et maculas uitæ, mortisque inamabile tempus,
 Iudiciiue diem horrendo examine magnum,
 Perpetuamque reis districti iudicis iram,
 Et genus humanum discretis sedibus omne,
 Gaudia sanctorum necnon poenasque malorum. (DDI, 4-11)

I was suddenly startled by a bitter lament. I sang these mournful songs, because my mind was sad, when I recalled my crimes committed and the stains of my life, and the hateful time of death, and the dreadful Day of Judgement with the great trial and the everlasting anger of the strict Judge towards the guilty, and all of the human race upon different seats, as well as the joys of the saints and the punishments of the wicked.

min earme mod eal wæs gedrefed.
 þa ic færinga, forht and unrot,
 þas unhyrlican fers onhefde mid sange,
 eall swylce þu cwæde, synna gemunde,
 lifes leahtra, and þa langan tid,
 þæs dimman cyme deaðes on eorðan. (JDII, 9-14)

My whole mind was miserably disturbed. Then, suddenly, afraid and dejected, I raised up this gloomy verse in song, (just as you said), mindful of sins, the vices of [my] life, and the long time of the wretched coming of death on earth.

The advent of this alteration in mood is marked by the adverb ‘suddenly’, *subito* (4), *færinga* (10a), suggesting a violent emotional reaction has taken place. Neither poem gives an explanation for this change, but the sudden shift in tone is emphasised by a coloured capital in CCCC 201 for the first word in the line introducing the change, *þa*, indicating the importance attached to the logically disconnected response. The manuscript reader’s attention is drawn to the alteration, and required to piece together of their own accord why the narrator responds in this way. Whitbread has suggested that the narrator’s thoughts turn

from the present of the temporal world to the coming of doomsday because of the wind which, in Bede's account of Saint Chad, is associated with the end of days:⁵⁹

If there was a violent storm of wind and rain, or if lightning and thunder brought terror to earth and sky, he would enter the church and, with still deeper concentration, earnestly devote himself to prayers and psalms until the sky cleared. When his people asked him why he did it he replied, 'Have you not read, "The Lord also thundered in the heavens and the Highest gave his voice" [...] [the Lord] thunders forth from heaven so as to rouse the inhabitants of the world to fear Him, to call them to remember the future judgement'. (*HE*, IV.3)

Though this reading is supported by Peter Darby's recent discussion of Bede's eschatology, in which he notes that Bede saw 'the appearance of severe storms or high winds [...] as overt reminders from God, sent to make us think about the final judgement',⁶⁰ the wind described in both poems is not of comparable strength to these or the storms interpreted by Chad as reminders of the apocalypse. In *DDI*, the wind is somewhat gentle, 'flamine uentorum resonatibus undique ramis' (2). Although *wolcn wæs gehrered*, and the strength of the wind seems greater in *JDII*, it is still not sufficient to constitute a storm.⁶¹ The verb applied to the wind's impact on the branches in *JDII*, *swegdon*, is also applied to the actions of the gentle stream (3b; 7b), drawing an implicit comparison of the two elements.⁶² We must look elsewhere, then, to explain the narrator's shift in focus.

Our identification of the narrator as an eremite is vital here. In *The Seafarer*, discussed in the next chapter as a text also demonstrating the contemplative life and the need to shun

⁵⁹ 'A Study', 213-14; 220.

⁶⁰ *Bede and The End of Time* (Farnham, 2012), p. 102.

⁶¹ For a comparison of the description of the two winds, see Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, p. 111.

⁶² *Swegdon* can signify varying levels of sound: *Bosworth-Toller* has numerous examples of the verb employed for quiet and loud sounds. However, in this context it seems best to interpret it as reasonably gentle, given that it translates *resonatibus* from *DDI*, and streams (*wæterburnan*, which is a hapax, and so cannot be elucidated outside of the *JDII* context), to which *JDII* applies it, are too shallow to be strepitous.

the delights of the world to ascend to a contemplative vision, a similarly paradisaal setting inspires the protagonist to leave the world behind:

Bearwas blostmum nimað, byrig fægriað,
wongas wlitigað, woruld onetteð;
ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne
sefan to siþe, þam þe swa þenceð
on flodwegas feor gewitan. (48-52)

The woods take with blossoms, the towns grow beautiful, the meadows brighten, the world hastens on; all that reminds the one eager of mind, the spirit to journey, for the one who thinks to depart far away on the flood-ways.

Several points of shared vocabulary suggest this passage as a suitable comparison. In both *The Seafarer* and *JDII*, the woods (*The Seafarer*, *bearwas*, 48a; *JDII*, *bearwe*, 1b) blossom (*The Seafarer*, *blostmum*, 48a; *JDII*, *bleowon*, 5b), and the result is that both characters strive to leave the environment. ‘Seafaring’ in the poem is interpreted in Chapter 3 as allegorical preparation for contemplative ascent. That is, the seafarer responds to his environment by turning his mind to things above, thus rejecting the temporal world, expressed through an allegorical change of place. The response of both narrators can be linked to Bede’s account of Cuthbert’s hermitage (VSC, XVII; see p. 93 above). Cuthbert’s gaze is directed towards the heavens, just as the narrator of *JDII*’s response to his environment comes after gazing upwards (8b-9). Cuthbert constructs his cell so as to prevent his mind from being distracted by the vanities of this world, so as ‘to direct the eye of his mind toward love alone’ (Bede, *Omeliarum euangelii*, I.9), which matches the seafarer’s desire to flee his beautiful surroundings (48-52), expressed in the present indicative to suggest that a permanent way of life is shunned, and the *DDI* and *JDII* narrator’s rejection of his environment, which is also permanent in terms of the poem’s development. The things of this world are defined explicitly against the divine, and so to shun them is to direct the mind towards God, as

Cassian's definition of the contemplative suggests (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3, see p. 11 above). The narrator of *DDI* and *JDII* is emphatic in providing no logical connection between the environment and his response, signalling the need for the contemplative audience to do likewise. The action of the narrator here is best interpreted as clearing the mind of images, a preliminary stage of contemplation.⁶³ Gregory I similarly discusses his own attempt at contemplation, a scheme in which the temporal world is thought to inhibit man's ability to experience the empyrean: 'I was trying every day to move outside the world, outside the flesh, to drive all corporeal images from my mind's eye [in order] to regard the joys of Heaven in an incorporeal way' (*Epistulae* I.5).⁶⁴ Like Gregory, the narrator's response to the natural world in both *DDI* and *JDII* can be seen as the attempt to leave behind the temptations of the flesh inspired by the 'corporeal images' of worldly pleasures, in order to contemplate the afterlife, a process started by the isolation of the narrator. Both poems end, ultimately, in a description of heaven: the response to the setting of the Prologue is the first step in preparation for its contemplation.

V Contrition through Penitence

After this opening section, both poems move on to a long penitential passage (*DDI*, 12-91; *JDII*, 16-175), which is an extension of the rejection of the temporal world in the previous section. The extent of this section has led many critics to define both poems as exclusively

⁶³ Clearing the mind of images is also a stage in the preparation for prayer in the thought of Evagrius Ponticus. For a reading of *The Wanderer* as a discussion of Evagrian *hesychasm*, see F. Leneghan, 'Preparing the Mind for Prayer: *The Wanderer*, *Hesychasm* and *theosis*', *Neophilologus*, 100 (2016), 121-42.

⁶⁴ *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, trans. J.R.C. Martyn, 3 vols, Medieval Sources in Translation, 40 (Toronto, 2004). Subsequent references are to this edition.

penitential texts.⁶⁵ However, the structure of the poems, with the long section of weeping and contrition preceding the consideration of the afterlife, matches the early medieval idea of contemplation. I will now suggest that *compunctio*, as a prelude to contemplation, is a plausible purpose for the poem's penitential tone.⁶⁶

Having signalled his distaste for earthly vanities, the narrator turns his gaze within (DDI, 6-11; JDII, 11-14; see pp. 96-97 above). The tone of contrition here continues the theme of *contemptus mundi*. Having resisted the temptations of the beautiful surroundings by rejecting the opportunity to revel in them, the narrator continues to renounce the world and its vices by considering his own worldly sins. The narrator's self-examination in these sections is thorough, comprised not just of a fear of Judgement Day itself, but of an emotional response and rhetorical self-questioning. Remembering his transgression, the narrator is inspired to tears, willing himself to weep and to mortify his own flesh:

Nunc rogo, nunc uenæ fontes aperite calentes,
 Dumque ego percutiam pugnīs rea pectora, uel dum
 Membra solo sternam, meritosque ciebo dolores,
 Vos, precor, effusis lacrimis non parcite statim,
 Sed mæstam salsis faciem perfundite guttis.
 Et reserate nefas Christo cum uoce gementi,
 Nec lateat quicquam culparum cordis in antro. (DDI, 13-19)

Now I ask, now, veins, open the hot springs, and while I will strike the guilty breast with my fists, or when I will spread the limbs on the ground, and I call for the suffering that I deserve, I beseech you, do not stop your tears falling out at once, but pour the salty drops on my sad face. And disclose the crime with a lamenting voice to Christ, do not hide any of the sins in the cave of the heart.

⁶⁵ See pp. 79-80 above, and Caie, *Judgement Day II*, pp. 65-72, for a summary. JDII is also commonly mentioned when the theme of dialogues of Soul and Body, texts intended to inspire a penitential mood, are discussed. See, again, *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65, for a summary, and the discussion of the influence of 'Soul and Body' literature on Vercelli IX, p. 260 below.

⁶⁶ In Chapter 4, the Prologue of *The Dream of the Rood* is also discussed as evidence of *compunctio*.

Nu ic eow, æddran, ealle bidde
þæt ge wylspringas wel ontynan,
hate of hleorum, recene to tearum,
þænne ic synful slea swiðe mid fyste,
breost mine beate on gebedstowe,
and minne lichaman lecge on eorðan
and geearnade sar ealle ic gecige. (*JDII*, 26-32)

Now I beg you all, veins, open your well-springs entirely for tears, hot down the cheeks. Then I, sinful, strike severely with my fist, beat my breast in the place of prayer, and lay my body down in the earth, invoking all the pain I have earned.

The narrator progresses in this psychological self-examination to catechise himself, subsequently:

Cur, rogo, mens, tardas medico te pandere totam?
Vel cur, lingua, taces, ueniat dum tempus habebis?
Auribus Omnipotens te nunc exaudit apertis.
Ille dies ueniet, iudex dum uenerit orbis,
Debebis qua tu rationem reddere de te.
Suadeo præuenias lacrimis modo iudicis iram.
Quid tu in sorde iaces, scelerum caro plena piaculis?
Cur tua non purgas lacrymis peccata profusis
Et tibi non oras placidæ fomenta medelæ? (33-41)

I ask you, mind, why are you slow to open yourself entirely to the doctor? Or why, tongue, are you silent when you will have the time that will come for pardon? The Almighty hears you now with open ears. That day will come when the Judge will come to the world and you must give an account of yourself. I urge you to anticipate the Judge's anger now with tears. Why are you lying in squalor, flesh replete with the sins of crimes? Why do you not purge your sins with overflowing tears, and pray for a remedy of gentle healing for yourself?

Ic acsige þe, la, earne geþanc,
hwi latast þu swa lange, þæt þu ðe læce ne cypst,
oððe hwi swigast þu, synnigu tunge,
nu þu forgifnesse hæfst gearugne timan,
nu þe ælmihtig earum atihtum,
heofonrices weard, gehyreð mid lustum?
Ac se dæg cymeð ðonne demeð god
eorðan ymbhwyrft; þu ana scealt
gyldan scad wordum wið scyppend god,
and þam rican frean riht agyldan.

[...]
 wæt ligst þu on horwe leahtrum afylled,
 flæsc, mid synnum? Hwi ne feormast þu
 mid teara gyte torne synne?
 Hwi ne bidst þu þe beþunga and plaster,
 lifes læcedomes æt lifes frean? (65-74; 77-81)

Lo, I ask you, wretched mind: why do you delay so long and do not confess yourself to the Physician, or why are you now silent, sinful tongue, now you have time available for forgiveness? Now the Almighty, guard of the heavenly kingdom, with pleasures will hear you with attentive ears. But that day is coming when God will judge the extent of the world. You, alone, shall render an account with words to God the Creator, and render an account to the mighty Lord [...] Why, flesh, do you lie in filth, filled with vices, with sins? Why do you not cleanse distressing sins with the shedding of tears? Why do you not ask the Lord of life for poultices and plaster, the medicine of life?

The increasing frequency of the rhetorical questions implies both the sense of urgency and disgust at the vices of the flesh, and the extent of the self-examination undertaken. Both texts also emphasise the need for the individual to repent, recalling the extensive lists of punishments for specific sins in Insular penitentials.⁶⁷ As in the 'Soul and Body' tradition, the interrogative sections, though directed to the poem's narrator, also appeal to the penitential sensibilities of the reader, thus extending the opportunity to repent outside of the text itself. No specific sin of the narrator is mentioned, making this catechisation a potentially universal process, inviting the sort of emotional identification with the narrator that hagiography inspired and Gregory I recommends as part of the reading process from the contemplative audience, who must undertake an analogous self-examination to follow the actions of the narrator. The theme of penitence, then, is perfectly visible, and it is not my intention to dispute its identification within the text. However, criticism has not gone far enough in discussing the theme within the poem, or explained why, if apocalyptic penitence is the purpose of the text, both poems go on to describe apophatically the afterlife at such

⁶⁷ See A.J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, 1983).

length after successfully inspiring penitential fear at the idea of doomsday. Below it is suggested that the penitential section of each poem is mutually supportive of the main purpose of these texts: to assist the contemplative audience in preparing for contemplative ascent.

It is widely attested within early medieval theories of contemplation that purity of heart is a pre-requisite for any possible ascent,⁶⁸ based upon a reading of one of the Beatitudes: 'beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt' (Matthew 5:8; 'blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God'). Thus Augustine discusses the contemplative:

He now purifies the eye by which God may actually be seen – to the extent that He may be seen by those who, to the best of their ability, die to the world, and to the extent to which they live in it they fail to see.⁶⁹ (*De doctrina Christiana*, II.vii.99, 22)

For Augustine, the contemplative's necessary purity is such that it represents a spiritual death. The rejection of happiness in temporal beauty to contemplate the terrors of doomsday in both poems corresponds to the contemplative's attempt 'to the best of their ability, [to] die to the world'. The link between shunning the vices of the flesh and rejecting worldly images is elaborated by Gregory I, whose autobiographical account of his own contemplation equates the two concepts (*Epistulae* I.5, see p. 100 above). Further, the need to exceed temporal desires and images is vital to contemplative preparation. Both definitions here harmonise with the extensive contemplative scheme of Cassian:

Once our mind has been planed by a careful filing, it will have passed over so far from every earthly affection and characteristic to those other things which are invisible, thanks to ceaseless meditation on divine realities and to spiritual *theoria*, that, intent on supernal and incorporeal things, it will not feel that it is bowed down by the fragility of the flesh and by bodily location. (*Conlationes*, III.vii.3)

⁶⁸ See p. 36 above.

⁶⁹ *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H Green (Oxford, 1997). Subsequent references are to this edition.

To undertake an extensive process of self-catechisation and rejection of worldly images, like the narrators of *DDI* and *JDII*, is to prepare oneself to be deserving of a celestial vision. Both poems advise that forgiveness can be achieved through confession: ‘cur tua non purgas lacrymis peccata profusis/Et tibi non oras placidæ fomenta medelæ?’ (40-41); ‘hwi ne feormast þu/mid teara gyte torne synne?’ (88b-89). In both quotations, achieving remission for sin is described through the imagery of cleanness, suggesting that the ideal, sinless state for contemplation may be achieved if the penitential advice is taken. This reading of the texts is supported by the Old English *Soliloquies*, which locates fallen man’s inability to see God in the desires of the flesh: ‘seo sawle [...] ne mæg god geseon swa swa heo wilnað for þæs licuman hefenesse and gedrefednesse, buton mið miclum geswince þurh geleafan and tohopan and þurh lufe’ (I, p. 67; ‘the soul [...] is unable to see God just as it wishes because of the body’s oppressiveness and tribulation, except with great effort through faith and hope and love’).⁷⁰ It is only after a period of extensive spiritual purgation, resulting in a state of purity, that the narrator and the contemplative audience can turn their minds towards a consideration of heaven and hell.

For Gregory the Great, self-examination and displaying sorrow for one’s sins are the first part of a well-defined and influential scheme of contemplation. It is a strong possibility that Gregory’s idea of compunction influenced the penitential passages of *DDI* and *JDII*, since both use the remembrance of Judgement Day as the starting point for contrition, of which he defines two types:

⁷⁰ *King Alfred’s Version of St. Augustine’s Soliloquies*, ed. T.A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, MA, 1969). Subsequent references are to this edition. There is considerable debate about Alfred’s authorship of the Old English texts attributed to him. See M. Godden, ‘Did King Alfred Write Anything?’, *MÆ*, 76 (2007), 1-23, and J. Batley, ‘Did King Alfred Actually Translate Anything?’, *MÆ*, 78 (2009), 189-215. It is thus best for our purposes to view the works traditionally attributed to Alfred as texts associated with the Alfredian court.

One that is afraid of eternal pains, the other that sighs for heavenly rewards; since the soul that is thirsty for God is first moved to compunction by fear, and afterwards by love. For in the first place it is affected to tears because, while recollecting its evil doings, it fears to suffer for them eternal punishments. But, when fear has died away in the anxiety of a long sorrow, a certain security has birth from a sense of pardon; and the mind is enflamed with love of heavenly joys. (*Epistulae* VII.26)

The same structure of compunction can be seen in both texts: the narrator's recollection of his sins inspires the fear of God's judgement, and the hell He has made as a reward for sinners, before he comes to joyful thoughts after considering heaven, ending with a yearning for the place, besides which the terrors of the temporal world are inconsequential.

Compunction serves to direct the mind towards God, the next step towards contemplation after purification, and so it is interpreted as sent by God, as Leclercq explains: 'compunction is an act of God in us, an act by which God awakens us, a shock, a blow, a "sting", a sort of burn.'⁷¹ Bede's exegesis indicates the same when he asserts that the ability of the contemplative to fix his mind on God requires God's assistance in the first place:

'The voice of the Lord prepares the deer' (Psalm 28:9); for surely He prepares the deer when He ministers gifts of virtues to the faithful, because it is not by their own power but by divine largess that they direct their mind's path to higher things. (*In Cantica canticorum*, I, re: Song of Songs 2:9)

If the contemplative audience follows the scheme of purification set out by the poem, their purity of heart may mean that they are fortunate enough to receive God's grace, and ascend 'to higher things.' To aid the contemplative audience on this path, however, the poem provides a nuanced depiction of both heaven and hell, to help the reader leave behind worldly images, and with God's permission to contemplate the empyrean.

⁷¹ *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 30.

VI The (Non-) Depiction of Hell

Spiritual purgation having been undertaken, the narrator turns his gaze to hell itself. The ordering here is appropriate to a contemplative scheme. If, as Gregory advises, it is first necessary 'to move outside the world, outside the flesh, to drive all corporeal images from [the] mind's eye [in order] to regard the joys of Heaven in an incorporeal way' (*Epistulae* I.5), then hell, which it is more possible, theologically, to communicate in words than heaven, must first be apprehended.⁷² Like the souls of the damned, language perishes in hell, after which heaven may be signified in the ineffable realm. This enables the poet to undertake a scheme of contrastive affirmation and negation in depicting heaven, the climax of the poem's contemplative scheme.

Both poems begin with narrative surrender. The description they are about to undertake is ultimately futile:

Ignea tu tibimet cur non tormenta timebis,
Dæmonibus dudum fuerant quae parta, malignis,
Quæ superant sensus cunctorum et dicta uirorum,
Nec uox ulla ualet miseras edicere poenas;
Ignibus æternæ nigris loca plena gehennæ. (*DDI*, 90-94)

Why will you not be afraid of the fiery torments, long ago given to the evil demons, which surpass the senses and words of all men? Nor is there any voice strong enough to declare the wretched punishments, the places of eternal hell filled with black fires.

⁷² This claim for the greater possibility of describing hell than heaven can be justified by Scriptural reference. Christ tells us far more about hell than heaven, and the former is far more similar to earthly existence than the latter: 'filii autem regni eicientur in tenebras exteriores ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium' (Matthew 8:12, 'but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'); contrast this to I Corinthians 2:9, 'oculus non uidit nec auris audivit nec in cor hominis ascendit quae praeparavit Deus his qui diligunt illum' ('eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him'). Hell is also a place wherein the damned are physically, as well as spiritually, tortured, making it far more comprehensible to man, whose imaginative frame of reference is based on external phenomena apprehended by the senses: 'potius eum timete qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam' (Matthew 10:28, 'fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell').

Hwi ne forhtas þu fyrene egsan,
 and þe sylfum ondræd swiðlice witu,
 ða deoflum geo drihten geteode,
 awyrgedum gastum, weana to leane?
 þa oferswiðað sefan and spræce
 manna gehwylces for micelnysse.
 Nænig spræc mæg beon, spellum areccan
 ænegum on eorðan earmlice witu,
 fulle stowa fyres on grunde,
 þe wæs in grimmum susle on helle. (*JDII*, 181-90)

Why do you not dread the fiery torment, and yourselves dread the great punishments that the Lord decreed for the devils, the cursed spirits, in reward for [their] evils? They exceed the understanding and speech of any man for greatness. There may not be any speech to raise up with stories to any men on earth, [about] the miserable torments, the foul places of the fire in the ground, the cruel torment which there was in hell.

The lengthy description of hell that follows (*DDI*, 94-123; *JDII*, 191-247), then, is inherently flawed. The possibility of describing, let alone understanding, hell is beyond human capabilities.⁷³ Nevertheless, the texts are forthcoming with lurid descriptions of hell, as the passages quoted below demonstrate:

Ignibus æternæ nigris loca plena gehennæ,
 Frigora mixta simul feruentibus algida flammis:
 Nunc oculos nimio flentes ardore camini
 Nunc iterum nimio stridentes frigore dentes.
 His miseris uicibus miseri uoluuntur in æuum
 Obscuras inter picea caligine noctes. (*DDI*, 94-99)

The regions of eternal hell filled with black fires and the freezing cold mixed together with the boiling flames: now the eyes weep from the excessive burning of the furnace, now the teeth gnash from the excessive cold. With these miserable changes the miserable are revolved eternally, among the pitch darkness and night's obscurity.

þær synt to sorge ætsomne gemenged
 se þrosma lig and se þrece gicela,
 swiðe hat and ceald helle tomiddes.

⁷³ This is a commonplace statement in Anglo-Saxon homiletic texts: see pp. 253-54 below for a discussion of Vercelli IX in this context, and footnote 77 below.

Hwilum þær eagan ungemetum wepað
 for þæs ofnes bryne (eal he is bealuwes full);
 hwilum eac þa teþ for miclum cyle manna þær gryrrað.
 Þis atule gewrixl earmsceapene men
 on worulda woruld wendað þær inne
 betwyx forsworcenum sweartum nihtum
 and weallendes pices wean and þrosme. (*JDII*, 191-201)

There, for sorrow, are the flames of vapours and the oppression of the cold mingled together, great heat and cold in the middle of hell. Sometimes the eyes there weep exceedingly because of the flame of the furnace – all is full of evil here; sometimes, also, the teeth of men chatter because of the great cold. In this dire alternation, miserable men in the world without end go between darkened swarthy nights and the boiling of pitch, the evil and smoke.

These descriptions derive from the third-century *Visio Pauli*. The Insular popularity of this text is testified by twenty-one of forty-seven manuscript witnesses being of Insular origin, and even an Old English version.⁷⁴ Specifically, here, it is the mixture of the elements, to increase the unpleasantness of hell's punishments, that give the clearest evidence for the influence of the *Visio*. Ice is not mentioned specifically as a condition of hell in Scripture, although at the End of Days the earth will be subjected to 'grando et ignis mixta in sanguine' (Revelation 8:7, 'hail and fire, mingled with blood'). In the *Visio*, as well as the presence of fire there are 'men and women with their hands and feet cut off and naked, in a place of ice and snow' (39).⁷⁵ The coexistence of fire and frost in the *Visio* permits diverse torments, the ice and snow functioning as a specific punishment for the cold-hearted 'that injured the fatherless and widows and the poor' (31).⁷⁶ The poems under discussion, however, mingle the two elements to create a diabolical punishment for transgressors, which is described as *miseris uicibus* (98) and *atule gewrixl* (198a). Likewise, though darkness is associated with hell

⁷⁴ T. Silverstein, *Visio sancti Pauli: The History of the Apocalypse in Latin, Together with Nine Texts*, Studies and Documents, 4 (London, 1935), p. 10. See also the discussion of *Visio* imagery in Vercelli IX, p. 265-68; 269-70 below. For the Old English version, see A. diPaolo Healey, ed., *The Old English Vision of St. Paul*, Speculum Anniversary Monographs, 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

⁷⁵ *The Apocalypse of Paul*, in M.R. James, trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁷⁶ See also the mingling of frost and fire in Vercelli IX, 114-17, discussed on pp. 269-70 below.

being unleashed in John's vision of Judgement Day, 'obscuratus est sol et aer de fumo putei' (Revelation 9:2, 'the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke of the pit'), the darkness of hell itself is asserted by the *Visio* where it is specifically associated with misery: 'there was no light in that place, but darkness and sorrow and sadness' (31). Darkness is repeatedly emphasised by both *DDI* and *JDII*, where its role is similarly to add to the misery of the damned: *æternæ nigris, caligine noctes* (*DDI*, 94; 99); *forsworcenum sweartum nihtum* (*JDII*, 200). Despite the opening statement of futility, there is enough in both poems to provide a terrifying account of hell, aided also by the allusions to the popular *Visio Pauli*.

Though less sophisticated readers of the text might be inclined to forget the statement of futility as a result of the descriptions of hell that follow it, for the contemplative audience schooled in *lectio divina*, this is a paradox that will be remembered throughout the reading process. The importance of this section to a proper understanding of the text is suggested by the translator and scribe of the Old English version. In the first place, the translator has both chosen to include and to amplify the section of *DDI* that renders his poetic exertions futile, doubling the length of the corresponding passage from five (*DDI*, 94-99) to ten lines (*JDII* 191-201). The second point to note is the importance of this section in the mind of the scribe. Lines 181-90 have been separated from the preceding text of *JDII* by a large blue capital for the interrogative *Hwi* (181a), and from the sections that follow by another, smaller, blue capital, now faded, on line 191a, *þær* (CCCC 201, p. 163). Palaeographically and textually, this section is of considerable importance. We must consider why, when this section undermines all descriptive efforts of the poem, which previous quotations demonstrate to be enthusiastic and lengthy, it is arranged and amplified to notify the reader of its shortcomings.

Denouncing the limitations of language to describe the torments of hell, and then proceeding to do so regardless, is primarily a means of descriptive magnification.⁷⁷ To announce the fundamental limitation of a vivid description of hell is to amplify the effect of the description itself. Having been shown the limitation of discourse through the superlative description of hell following the claim for its unsuitability, as readers we are then tasked with thinking beyond the sign to what cannot be signified. The aesthetic effect of magnification through demanding that the reader attempt to think beyond the limits of the sign is best explained as negation, and it is at this point that we can introduce the theme of apophasis in the poems. The emphasis laid upon the narrator's note that no one can ever encompass hell with words requires one to keep this context in mind, even whilst imagining the topographical features and torments that are said to characterise hell. This betrays explicitly a distrust of language to describe the ineffable, a tenet of apophasis. In essence, we can know nothing of hell from merely reading the descriptions given, such being the nature of language, and so the only way we can imagine it is to get beyond the signs which are applied to it. Augustine defines the memory as a collection of images derived from one's sense-perception of worldly phenomena (*Confessiones*, X.8; see p. 68 above). Like Augustine, we must 'summon' our perceptions of features such as fire, but then negate them in attempting to imagine a version of the feature that cannot be expressed in words, leading the mind into the realm of the ineffable.

This is a contemplative formulation: hell both is, and is not, communicable through man's discourse. The same principle is applied to God by Pseudo-Dionysius: 'He is rightly

⁷⁷ The lament for the inability of language to encompass the afterlife is a commonplace in Insular texts. An analogous technique in Vercelli IX is demonstrated in Chapter 5. For a list of other correspondences, see H.L.C. Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions of Heaven and Hell in Old English Prose and Poetry', *NM*, 79 (1978), 102-13 (p. 101).

nameless and yet has the names of everything that is' (*Divine Names*, I.596C).⁷⁸ Augustine demands the same denial of denial when discussing the unutterable nature of God: 'God is unspeakable. For this reason, God should not even be called unspeakable, for even when this word is spoken, something is spoken' (*Confessiones*, I.10). To assert and deny is to destroy the signification of language: these actions are mutually contradictory, and whilst on the textual level this means that nothing is signified, we must bear the paradox they produce in mind to imagine the ineffable hell in part. To assert that hell is ineffable, and then to provide a lurid description, is emphatically to guide the contemplative audience's mind from the terrestrial knowledge, logic, and images contained within discourse. This is a clear instance of the mind being 'planed by a careful filing' (*Conlationes*, III.vii.3), in preparation for potential contemplative ascent.

However, as well as assertion, the depiction of hell in these texts also employs direct negation through repeated anaphora:

Lucis ubi miseris nulla scintilla relucet,
Nec pax, aut pietas, immo spes nulla quietis
Flentibus arident. (*DDI*, 109-11)

Where not any spark of light shines on the miserable, nor peace or compassion or even any hope of rest are favourable to those who weep.

þær leohtes ne leoht lytel sperca
earmum ænig, ne þær arfæstnes
ne sib ne hopa ne swige gegladað
ne þara wependra worn wihte. (*JDII*, 219-22)

There is no little spark of light to give light to the wretched ones, nor is there goodness, nor peace, nor hope, nor silence appeases, nor anything there for the band of those lamenting ones.

⁷⁸ *The Divine Names*, in C. Luibshhead and P. Rorem, trans., *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (London, 1987). Subsequent references are to this edition.

Apophysis is a cumulative strategy to direct the mind progressively beyond the terrestrial sphere, and so the double negation in both texts is further evidence of a contemplative scheme. The narrator tells us of things that are not contained within something we cannot know through discourse. The opening negation of language is again negated, since to know what something is not requires knowing what it is in the first place, and so here we have another paradox to confront. We must carefully construct meaning from the silence of the contradictory signs employed, by thinking beyond our conceptions of its features imperfectly signified by discourse. We are told that no words can adequately describe hell, witness an attempt at such a description, and then are told what such a nebulous place does not contain. The conflicting assertion and denial create a fundamental paradox, and the insufficiency of language to describe hell is upheld by the text signifying nothing on the purely textual level. Ultimately, however, when the text is read through properly by the contemplative audience, the paradox of saying that hell is ineffable and then describing it negates the meaning of language, directing the reader's mind further from the terrestrial sphere. For anything to be signified by the text, the contemplative audience must continue to maintain intellectually the paradox that the narrative generates, to lead the mind beyond terrestrial reality in preparation for potential contemplative ascent.

In all of this passage, the reader is tasked with going beyond signs, discourse developed by man to describe the temporal home and experiences that he does not properly understand. The passages on hell, thus far described, can be seen in terms of the need for the contemplative to go beyond the images experienced in this world, as Gregory advises (*Epistulae* I.5; see p. 100 above). The conceptions we may have of fire, darkness, and cold must be negated along with language that can only adequately describe man's terrestrial

experience, when we think of the presence of these elements in hell. As Augustine says (*Confessiones*, X.8; see p. 68 above), these are images based upon our bodily senses, and so to further this process, in preparation for potential contemplative ascent, the depiction of hell also appeals directly to the bodily senses of the reader, in order that these may be negated in imagining hell, where all language ultimately fails.⁷⁹ This need for the negation of both sense and language is signposted explicitly by *DDI*: 'quæ superant sensus cunctorum' (92). The Old English *Soliloquies* discusses five bodily senses, through none of which can God be experienced: 'þu þe we ne magon lichamlice ongytan naþer ne mid eagum, ne mid swece, ne mid earum, ne mid smecce, ne mid hrine' (I, p. 51; 'we cannot know you bodily, neither with the eyes, nor the smell, nor the ears, nor the taste, nor the touch').⁸⁰ These senses must therefore be transcended by the contemplative mind, and the text, which is a dialogue about the desire of Augustine to know God, advises us to rely upon the images generated by reason instead.⁸¹

Gesceadwisnes - Me þincð nu þæt þu ne truwie ðam uttram gewitte, naðer ne ðam eagum, ne ðam earum, ne ðam stencce, ne ðam swece, ne ðam hrinunge, ðat þu ðurh ðara ænig swa sweotole ongytan mæge þæt þæt þu woldest, buton þu hyt on þinum ingeþance ongytae þurh ðin gesceadwisnesse.

Augustinus - þæt is soð; ne truwige ic him na. (I, p. 59)

Reason: 'it seems to me, now, that you do not trust the external understanding – neither the eyes, nor the ears, nor smell, nor taste, nor touch – or that you through any of them might understand as clearly that you wish, unless you comprehend it in your inner thoughts through your reason.'

⁷⁹ Vercelli IX is structured in the same way for the same purpose, and interestingly in 183-84 the narrator indicates that the text has been rearranged from its source so as to depict hell before heaven. This suggests this narrative arrangement was a common feature of contemplative texts: see pp. 283-84 below.

⁸⁰ Further evidence for the currency of the conception of five bodily senses, listed here by the *Soliloquies*, comes from the plastic arts. R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, 'Late Anglo-Saxon Disc Brooches', in *Dark-Age Britain: Studies Presented to E.T. Leeds, With a Bibliography of his Works*, ed. D.B. Harden (London, 1956), pp. 171-201 (174), interprets the Fuller Brooch as representing the five senses. See also A. Gannon, 'The Five Senses and Anglo-Saxon Coinage', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 13 (2005), 97-104.

⁸¹ On contemplative themes in the Old English *Soliloquies*, see J. Ritzche-Rutherford, 'Anglo-Saxon Antecedents of the Middle English Mystics', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at The Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Exeter, 1980), pp. 216-33 (224-25).

Augustine: 'That is true; I do not trust them at all.'

Augustine of the Old English *Soliloquies*, like Gregory I, wishes to see God, and to do so he must leave behind what can be apprehended by the senses. Both *DDI* and *JDII* situate the narrator in an eremitical setting, to signal the radical attempt to transcend the senses that will come, which begins with the Contemplative Turn (*DDI*, 4-11; *JDII*, 9-14). Within the scheme of negation that characterises the depiction of hell, each of the five bodily senses is appealed to, allowing each to be negated on the way to attempting to imagine heaven, which is even further beyond the sensory experience and understanding of man, later in the poem. I have recorded below the instances of descriptions appealing to each sense:

Sight

DDI:

'his miseris uicibus miseri uoluuntur in æuum/obscuras inter picea caligine noctes' (98-99, see p. 108 above)

'lucis ubi miseris nulla scintilla relucet' (99, see p. 112 above)

'non nisi tortorum facies ubi cernitur ulla' (101, 'where no face is seen except that of the torturers')

'lætitia facies iam nulla uidebitur illic' (113, 'no happy face will ever be seen there').

JDII:

'earmsceapene men/on worulda woruld wendað þær inne/betwyx forsworcenum sweartum nihtum' (198b-200, see p. 109 above)

'ne bið þær ansyn gesewen ænigre wihte/butan þara cwelra þe cwylmað ða earman' (204-05, 'nor is the face of any man seen there except of the torturers that torment the wretched ones')

'þær leohtes ne leoht lytel sperca/earmum ænig' (220-21a, see p. 112 above)

'ne bið þær ansyn gemet ænigre blisse' (225, 'nor is there any face found of any bliss').

Hearing

DDI:

'vox ubi nulla sonat, durus nisi fletus ubique' (100, 'no voice sounds there except the dreadful weeping everywhere').

JDII:

‘þær nan stefn styreð butan stearheard/wop and wanung, nawiht elles’ (202-03, ‘no voice stirs there except the violent weeping and lamentation, nothing else’)
‘ne swige gegladað’ (222b, see p. 112 above).

Smell

DDI:

‘fedor et ingenti complet putredine nares’ (103, ‘the stench of great rotting fills the nostrils’).

JDII:

‘hy mid nosan ne magon naht geswæccan/butan unstences ormætnesse’ (208-09, ‘they may not smell anything with their noses except the immense stench’).

Taste

DDI:

‘os quoque flammium lugen implebitur igne’ (104, ‘the sorrowful mouth will be filled with flaming fire’).

JDII:

‘þær beoð þa wanigendan welras gefylde/ligspiwelum bryne laðlices fyres’ (210-11, ‘the lips of the lamenting ones are filled there with vomiting flames of fire of the loathsome inferno’).

Touch

DDI:

‘frigora mixta simul feruentibus algida flammis’ (95, see p. 108 above)
‘nunc oculos nimio flentes ardore camini/nunc iterum nimio stridentes frigore dentes’ (96-97, see p. 108 above)
‘non sentitur ibi quicquam nisi frigora, flammæ’ (102, ‘nothing will be felt there except the cold and the flames’)
‘uermes lacerant ignitis dentibus ossa’ (105, ‘with fiery teeth the worms tear the bones’).

JDII:

‘þær synt to sorge ætsomne gemenged/se þrosma lig and se þrece gicela/swiðe hat and ceald helle tomiddes/hwilum þær eagan ungemetum wepað/for þæs ofnes bryne’ (191-95, see pp. 108-09 above)
‘ne bið þær inne aht gemeted/butan lig and cyle and laðlic ful’ (206-07, ‘nor is anything met within there, except fire and cold and loathsome impurity’)
‘hy wælgrimme wyrmas slitað/and heora ban gnagað brynigum tuxlum’ (212-13, ‘the cruel worms tear them and gnaw their bone[s] with burning tusks’)

‘þær synnge eac sawwle on lige/on blindum scræfe byrnað and yrnað’ (231-32, ‘in addition the sinful soul in there burns and runs in the fire in the dark pit’).

Each sense, then, is strategically alluded to in both poems, and in the context of the preceding statement of the futility of the description, they must be negated as part of the poem’s contemplative scheme. From imagining hell beyond sense and language, the contemplative audience, like the narrator shunning the beauty of the temporal world in the Contemplative Turn, can transcend the sensory world as part of the preparation for contemplation, should God’s grace allow it. Allied with the penitential section and the paradoxical affirmations and denials, the result of the sensory negation of hell is that, by the end of the passage, the reader is spiritually cleansed and has gone beyond the images and bodily senses of the temporal world. More importantly, along with the need to purify, this is a crucial step in preparing for the contemplation of heaven that follows, since we must ‘regard the joys of Heaven in an incorporeal way’ (*Epistulae* I.5): ‘þære saule hawung is gesceadwisnes and smeaug. Ac manige sawle hawiað mid ðam, and þeah ne geseoð þæt þæt hi wilniað, forðam þe hi næbbað ful hale eagan’ (Old English *Soliloquies* I, p. 67; ‘the soul’s gaze is reason and thought. But many souls look with these and yet cannot see that which they wish, because they do not have fully healthy eyes’). Pseudo-Dionysius recommends an analogous scheme of progressive negation and denial to the poems, the end result of which is contemplation of God:

We [should] be like sculptors who set out to carve a statue. They remove every obstacle to the pure view of the hidden image, and simply by this act of clearing aside they show up the beauty which is hidden.⁸² (*Mystical Theology*, II.1025B)

⁸² Trans. Luibshhead and Rorem in *The Complete Works*. Subsequent references are to this edition. Throughout this thesis, Pseudo-Dionysius is offered as an analogy to, rather than a direct source of, techniques employed by Anglo-Saxon authors. I will principally be using Patristic and Insular theology to explicate the apophatic schemes employed by the texts studied, several of which were drawn upon by Pseudo-Dionysius. For Pseudo-Dionysius’s

Language, temporal images, and bodily sensations have been annihilated in hell, like a damned soul, and as a result, the contemplative audience is enabled to think beyond these. However, before heaven, the most transcendent of all visions, can potentially be imperfectly contemplated, the poem continues its apophatic scheme of affirmation and denial.

VII The (Non-) Depiction of Heaven

The preceding negation of language and senses is of great importance to the depiction of heaven in both texts. The mind, having been cleared of images and bodily sensations through the destruction of the language used to denote these, can now begin to imagine heaven imperfectly with *gesceadwisnes and smeaug*. This section will present the depiction of heaven as a continuation of the apophatic scheme, through a complex system of assertion (kataphasis) and denial (apophasis) about heaven, the purpose of which is to enable the contemplative audience to ascend potentially to contemplation, beyond all knowledge, discourse, and sense-perception.

Neither depiction of heaven in *DDI* and *JDII* begins with a similar lament of semiotic limitation, as they do for hell. Instead, the poems begin their depiction of heaven with an emphatic contrast to the preceding discussion of hell, beginning with a red capital on *Eala* in CCCC 201:

Felix omnium, semperque in sæcula felix
Qui illas effugiet poenarum prospere clades,
Cum sanctisque simul lætatur in omnia sæcla. (*DDI*, 124-26)

possible influence in Anglo-Saxon England, see T. Flight, “‘Through a Glass, Darkly’: Evidence for Knowledge of Pseudo-Dionysius in Anglo-Saxon England” (*The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, forthcoming).

Most fortunate of all, and continually fortunate forever are those who will successfully escape from the punishments and the destruction, and are caused to rejoice together with the saints for eternity.

Eala, se bið gesælig and ofersælig
and on worulda woruld wihta gesæligost,⁸³
se þe mid gesyntum swylce cwyldas
and witu mæg wel forbugon,
and samod bliðe on woruld ealle
his þeodne geþeon, and þonne mot
habban heofonrice; þæt is hihta mæst. (*JDII*, 247-53)

Ah! He is blessed and exceedingly blessed, and the most blessed of men in the world without end, will be he that with prosperities may well overthrow such plagues and torments, and at the same time in all the world he enjoys his Lord and may then possess the kingdom of heaven: that is the best of joys.

Continuing the poems' apophatic scheme, heaven is defined here as the opposite of hell.

However, in the context of the preceding section, this is to say that heaven is the opposite of a concept that we cannot understand, which has been constructed through multiple paradox and contradiction so as to signify nothing. As a result, no statement of heaven's ineffability is required. This is evidence of a continuing apophatic scheme. The stratified negations of apophatic texts are cumulative, serving to direct the mind progressively further away from terrestrial images, knowledge, and sensations, as in Pseudo-Dionysius's sculptor image (*Mystical Theology*, II.1025B). The contrast between the two is continued, as the poem exhaustively lists the conditions excluded from heaven, based explicitly upon the assertions made about hell, in a rhetorically sophisticated section of anaphora:

Coniunctus Christo coelestia regna tenebit,
Nox ubi nulla rapit splendorem lucis amoenæ,
Non dolor aut gemitus ueniet, nec fessa senectus.
Non sitis, esuries, somnus et sed nec non labor ullus,
Non febres, morbi, clades, non frigora flammæ,

⁸³ The repetition of *-sælig* adjectives in 247-48 is also an emphatic sign that the narrator believes heaven to be ineffable.

Tædia, tristitiæ, curæ, tormenta, ruinæ
Fulmina, nimbus, hiemps, tonitrus, nix, grando, procelle,
Angor, paupertas, moeror, mors, casus, egestas. (DDI, 127-34)

United to Christ, he will possess the celestial kingdoms, where no night seizes the pleasant light, no suffering or groaning will come, nor feebleness of old age. No thirst, hunger, sleep, but there is no labour, no fevers, diseases, destruction, nor cold, flames, weariness, sorrow, care, torments, ruins, lightning, clouds, winters, anguish, poverty, lamentation, death, hail, storms, accidents, want.

þær niht ne genimð næfre þeostrum
þæs heofenlican leohtes sciman;
ne cymð þær sorh ne sar ne geswenced yld,
ne þær ænig geswinc æfre gelimpeð,
oððe hunger oþþe þurst oððe heanlic slæp,
ne bið þær fefur ne adl ne færlig cwyld,
nanes liges gebrasl ne se laðlica cyle.
Nis þær unrotnes ne þær æmelnys,
ne hryre ne caru ne hreoh tintrega,
ne bið þær liget ne laðlic storm,
winter ne þunerrad ne wiht cealdes,
ne þær hagulscuras hearde mid snawe,
ne bið þær wædl ne lyre ne deaðes gryre
ne yrmð ne agnes ne ænigu gnornung.⁸⁴ (JDII, 254-65)

There night with shadows never takes away the splendour of the heavenly brightness. Sorrow does not come there, nor pain, nor troublesome old age, nor does any toil ever happen there, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor abject sleep. There is neither disease, nor sickness, nor sudden plague, nor any crackling of fire, nor loathsome cold. Neither is there despair, nor loathsomeness, nor death, nor grief, nor sorrowful torments; neither is there any lightning, nor a loathsome storm, winter, nor thunder-crash, nor any cold, nor hail showers hard with snow there, neither is there poverty, nor loss, nor dread of death, nor misery, nor sorrow, nor any lamentation.

The negations of heaven, here, correspond precisely to the immediately preceding assertions about hell. Darkness is attested (*nigris*, 94, see p. 107 above; *sweartum nihtum*, 200b, see p. 109 above); lamentation (*dolor*, 'suffering', 114; *eagan ungemetum wepað*, 'eyes weep immensely', 194); anxiety (*timor horrens*, 'shuddering fear', 114; *bitere care*, 'bitter sorrow', 215a);

⁸⁴ For more on the rhetorical features of both poems, see Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, pp. 71-88.

feebleness and old age (*languor*, ‘tiredness’, 115; *æmelnes*, ‘weariness’, 230b); thirst (denial of *ebrietas*, ‘drunkenness’, 118; denial of *druncennes*, ‘drunkenness’, 235a); hunger (absence of *epulæ*, ‘banquets’, 118; cessation of *wistum*, ‘feasts’, 235b); labour (denial of *somnus*, ‘sleep’, 120; denial of *slæp*, ‘sleep’, 241b); injuries (‘*uermes lacerant ignitis dentibus ossa*’, ‘with fiery teeth the worms tear the bones’, 105; ‘*hy wælgrimme wyrmas slitað*/and *heora ban gnagað brynigum tuxlum*’, 212-13, see p. 116 above); fire and cold weather (‘*frigora mixta simul feruentibus algida flammis*’, 95, see p. 108 above; ‘*ætsumne gemenged/se þrosma lig and se þrece gicela*’, 191b-92, see pp. 108-09 above); death (*foetor* [...] *putredine*, 103, see p. 116 above; ‘*laðlic ful*/ [...] *unstences ormætnesse*’, 209, see p. 116 above);⁸⁵ need (‘*noxia tunc huius cessabunt gaudia sæcli*’, ‘the harmful pleasures of the past will cease’, 117; ‘*þonne deriende gedwinað heonone/þysse worulde gefean*’, ‘then the harmful joys of this world depart entirely from here’, 232-33a). Only conditions paradoxically asserted of hell are negated at this stage of the poem’s contemplative scheme, and we are to imagine the opposites of concepts stated to be insufficient in expression, strong evidence for the cumulative process of negation that characterises apophasis.

This descriptive mode has been briefly noted by several critics. Waller Deering notes how heaven is depicted ‘in striking contrast to the darkness and cheerless gloom of hell’.⁸⁶ Along the same lines, Tristram briefly notes how, with regard to heaven in Old English, ‘the enumeration of the negative attributes [of hell] presents a contrast which circumvents the

⁸⁵ Although the Old English equivalent of *foetor* [...] *putredine*, ‘*laðlic ful*/ [...] *unstences ormætnesse*’, does not carry the exact meaning of the reek of decay here, the semantic field of *ful* implies that the sense of death is intended by the translator. As a noun, *ful* can designate unconsecrated ground, specifically ‘a highway where criminals were buried’, and its adjectival form can mean ‘corrupt, rotten, stinking’ (see *Bosworth-Toller*). Given the usually faithful mode of translation employed by the Old English poet, I would suggest that the sense of putrefaction was intended here, as a direct translation of the Latin.

⁸⁶ *The Anglosaxon Poets on the Judgment Day* (Halle, 1890), p. 67.

necessity to describe the unmentionable (*unsaglichkeitstopos*).⁸⁷ Caie offers an explanation of this descriptive technique by quoting Emile Mâle's comment about late medieval French depictions of heaven: 'art confessed its inadequacy from the first.'⁸⁸ However, I will argue that this is part of a wider apophatic strategy in the poems: the descriptive process in the poems is far more complex than simple contrast.

The task for the reader here is to imagine the binary opposites of concepts which were explicitly said to have been insufficient to describe hell, a form of negation. Little, therefore, is actually stated, and the previous formulations of concepts whose true expression exceeds discourse and understanding must be again negated by the reader. Heaven's depiction through the oppositions of hell is once more analogous to the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius, here disseminated through John Scottus Eriugena:⁸⁹

The holy theologians honour the divine mysteries through true negations, that is, through negations that are said truly of the divine things. As was said before, in signifying the divine the negations are true, whereas affirmations are metaphorical, and, as it were, externally acquired, as altogether uplifting, that is, not appropriate. Just as the divine can be honoured more (that is, signified more clearly) through true negations than through affirmations used figuratively, so also these same divine things are introduced to human minds more, and more clearly, through incompatible similitudes and images of the lowest material things than through the beautiful forms of celestial and rational things. [...] For the foolish mind errs when it thinks beautiful things about God, for it supposes Him to subsist in this way. But it is not deceived when it deals with lowly or confused forms regarding Him. For, led by natural wit and true reasoning, it confidently says that He is not at all like this.⁹⁰ (*Expositiones*, II.52-53)

The dissimilitude of hell to heaven fulfils the role of the 'negations that are said truly of the divine things', as at this stage of the poem, heaven is described entirely through its

⁸⁷ 'Stock Descriptions', 101.

⁸⁸ *Judgement Day II*, p. 79.

⁸⁹ On the possible influence of Eriugena on the Old English *Soliloquies*, see Ritzke-Rutherford, 'Anglo-Saxon Antecedents', pp. 228-29.

⁹⁰ *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, ed. and trans. P. Rorem, Studies & Texts, 150 (Toronto, 2005).

opposition to the preceding depiction of the infernal region. Eriugena here expects the depiction through 'incompatible similitudes and images of the lowest material things' to be negated by the learned contemplative: 'in signifying the divine the negations are true, whereas affirmations are metaphorical'. What are denials in themselves must be negated by affirming their opposite, to lead the mind further into the realm of the ineffable. By creating an image of heaven through its exclusion of concepts previously deemed as characteristic, if insufficiently so, of hell, the poets lead the mind of the contemplative audience on an apophatic sequence of negated negations.

In a concise section dealing with the denial of affirmations, *DDI* and *JDII* remind the reader of their experience of the description of hell, necessitating that images created in reading be re-conjured and then instantly negated.⁹¹ That is, the functioning of the reading process means that such images are still applied, albeit briefly, in the imagination of heaven, before they are negated and the reader is left to contemplate the opposite of concepts inappropriately applied to the unspeakable. To imagine heaven as bereft of fire, we must first recall our imperfect image of fire more severe than its terrestrial equivalent and then negate it to imagine its opposite, leading the mind further from terrestrial things. As Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena recommend, heaven is manifested through the dissimilar, before the mind is 'provoked' to think beyond them in this section of contrasts.

Immediately after the end of the section of negations, in continuation of their apophatic scheme both poets switch to kataphasis, detailing directly what heaven does constitute:

⁹¹ We should be mindful here of the Anglo-Saxon theory of comprehension through visualisation, discussed on pp. 66-69 above.

Sed pax et pietas, bonitas, opulencia regnant,
Gaudia, letitiæ, uirtus, lux, uita perennis,
Gloria, laus, requies, honor et concordia dulcis. (*DDI*, 135-37)

But peace and compassion, goodness, opulence reign, joys, happiness, virtue, light, eternal life, glory, praise, rest, honour, and beautiful harmony.

ac þær samod ricxað sib mid spede,
and arfæstnes and ece god,
wuldor and wurðmynt,
swylce lof and lif and leoflic geþwærnes. (*JDII*, 268-71)

But peace with prosperity reign together there, and mercy and eternal good, glory and honour, great love, and life, and beloved peace.

The contrast in strategy here, from negation to affirmation, begins with a blue capital on *Ac* (268a) in *CCCC* 201. Concepts that have been negated in the depiction of hell are used as the starting point for further negation to construct an image of heaven, as the signification of the sign is undermined once again through affirmations linked illogically through a conjunction (*sed*, *DDI*, 135; *ac*, *JDII*, 268a).⁹² Since these assertions are made only in opposition to concepts inappropriately applied to hell, they are instantly negated, and heaven remains wordless. The contemplative audience, however, is to keep the paradox of affirmation and denial in mind to contemplate heaven, potentially.

Both poems embark on a further set of affirmations after this initial section, signalling the growth in knowledge as the poems proceed. These subsequent affirmations are made concerning the presence of God:

Insuper omne bonum cunctis Deus ipse ministrat.
Semper adest præsens, cunctos fouet, implet, honorat,
Glorificat, seruat, ueneratur, diligit, ornat,
Collocat altithrona, lætosque in sede polorum. (*DDI*, 138-41)

⁹² In Chapter 3, the use of the conjunction *forþon* to create apophatic paradoxes in *The Seafarer* is discussed.

Besides, God Himself ministers each good thing for all. God is always present, fosters, satisfies, honours all, glorifies, preserves, adores, loves, commends, and the joyful He sets at the high point of heaven's high throne.

Ufenan eal þis ece drihten
him ealra goda gehwylc glædlice ðenað,
þær a andweard ealle weorðað
and fehþ and geblyssað fæder ætsomne,
wuldrap and wel hylt,
fægere frætuað and freolice lufað
and on heofonsetle hean geregnað. (*JDII*, 273-79)

In addition to all of this, the Eternal Lord gladly serves them with each and every good; forever present where the Father honours all of them, and gladdens and blesses them all together, He glorifies and thoroughly honours, beautifully adorns and nobly loves, and exalts them on the high throne of heaven.

For the first time in the depiction of heaven, qualities which do not find a negation in the depiction of hell are asserted. This shift in technique is emphatically marked in CCCC 201 with a blue capital on *ufenan* (273a). Again, however, the poems' use of a conjunction (*insuper*, 138; *ufenan*, 273a) signals that we are to bear in mind that these affirmations are made as a result of the preceding affirmations derived from the negation of the features inappropriately asserted of the ineffable hell, and so nothing is again signified. It is also to be noted here that these qualities of heaven are related explicitly to the presence of the Lord, and are abstracts, contrasting to the concrete concepts of fire, ice, and physical torture inappropriately applied to conditions in hell.⁹³ As such, they require imaginative engagement from the reader, and derive their narrative signification from the preceding

⁹³ Against this claim, one might cite architectural features, such as *castra* and *senatum*, or *heofonsetle* from the Old English. However, these points are not to be taken literally: 'When you hear the words 'throne' and 'the seat at the right hand', you do not understand a throne nor a place nor a circumscribed place; from the expression 'throne' and 'the sharing of a place to sit', you must think of an honour which is precisely the same and equal' (John Chrysostom, Homily IV.28; trans. P.W. Harkins in *On The Incomprehensible Nature of God*, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 72 (Washington, D.C, 1984)). The contemplative audience which I have suggested for the poems studied in this thesis were well-aware of apophatic theology, and so would most likely have interpreted the features as metaphorical.

incomprehensible context of hell. Far from telling the reader about heaven, therefore, these assertions in fact continue the scheme of directing the mind towards the ineffable realm.

The poems then proceed to give detail of the companies of heaven, claims once more not derived in direct opposition to the affirmations of hell:

Præmia perpetuis tradens cælestia donis,
Angelicas inter turmas sanctasque cohorts,
Vatidicis iunctos patriarchis atque prophetis,
Inter apostolicas animis lætantibus arces,
Atque inter roseis splendentia castra triumphis,
Candida uirgineo simul inter [et] agmina flore,
Quæ trahit alma Dei Genetrix, pia uirgo Maria,
Per benedicta Patris fulgenti regna paratu,
Inter et Ecclesiæ sanctos natosque patresque,
Inter et ætherium cælesti pace senatum. (*DDI*, 142-51)

He gives eternal gifts and celestial rewards, between the angelic throngs and holy cohorts, joined to the prophetic patriarchs and prophets, between apostolic citadels and joyful spirits and between the shiny camps and rosy triumphs, the shining white virgins together between the crowds of flowers, which the kind Mother of God, the Holy Virgin Mary, draws through the blessed kingdoms in shining clothing, between the saints of the church, its fathers and sons, between the ethereal senate with celestial peace.

His sunu bliðe, sigores brytta,
sylð anra gehwam ece mede,
heofonlice hyrsta, þæt is healic gifu,
gemang þam ænlican engla werode
and þæra haligra heapum and þreatum.
þær hy beoð gepeode þeodscipum on gemang
betwyx heahfæderas and halige witegan,
blissiendum modum, byrgum tomiddes,
þær þa ærendracan synd ælmihtiges godes,
and betweoh rosena reade heapas,
þær symle scinað.
þær þæra hwittra hwyrfd mædenheap,
blostmum behangen, beorhtost wereda,
þe ealle læt ænlicu godes drut,
seo frowe þe us frean acende,
metod on moldan, meowle seo clæne.
þæt is Maria, mædena selast;
heo let þurh þa scenan scinendan ricu,

gebletsodost ealra, þæs breman fæder,
 betweox fæder and sunu, freolicum werede,
 and betwyx þære ecan uplicum sibbe
 rice rædwitan, rodera weardas. (*JDII*, 280-300)

His joyful son, dispenser of victory, gives eternal reward to each one of them, heavenly jewels - that is a sublime gift – among the singular company of angels with the troops and crowds of the holy ones. There they are joined with the people in the multitudes, between the patriarchs and the holy prophets, with joyful hearts, amidst the cities, where the apostles of the Almighty God are, and between the crowds of red roses, where they forever shine. There the maiden crowd of the white ones moves, hung around with blossoms, the brightest of hosts, are all led by the singular friend of God, the lady who brought forth the Lord for us, the Creator on earth, the pure virgin. That is Mary, the best of maidens; she, the most blessed of all, through the bright shining kingdoms of the glorious Father, between the father and sons, in a noble troop, and between the eternal peace in the heavens, leads the wise counsellors, the guardians of the heavens.

The depictions of heaven end with an enumeration of who will be present there. Nothing in the depiction of hell provides a direct affirmation to negate in order to come to this conclusion, aside from *JDII*'s assertion that 'ða deoflum geo drihten geteode' (183), meaning that only those who sin against God dwell therein. The presence of saints and patriarchs however takes us no further in imagining the actual appearance and sensation of heaven, which remains orthodoxly incomprehensible. We noted earlier that both texts likely had a wider audience than just the contemplative audience (p. 76 above), and this image can be interpreted as a compromise. For less educated audiences, the presence of Mary and the saints defines heaven as a pleasant place. Nevertheless, as with the previous section of assertion, the joys of heaven are inextricably linked to the presence of God, and receive no elaboration, hence leaving the contemplative scheme unharmed.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Just as the throne of heaven must be interpreted as metaphorical, we are not to take the references to the *rosena reade heapas* as literally meaning that heaven is full of red roses. The colour red is traditionally associated with martyrs, just as the colour white is associated with virginity, and Hoffman ('Structure and Symbol', 175) provides specific references to red roses symbolising martyrs from the writings of Hrabanus Maurus: 'significat autem rosa martyres' (*De universe*, CXI.528, 'the rose signifies the martyrs'); 'rosa est coetus martyrum [...] id est, perseverantia in mundo' (*Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam*, CXII.1040, 'the rose is the group of martyrs, that is, perseverance in the world'; translations here my own). The detail that *blostmum behangen* (291a) recalls the

The assertion of the features of heaven begins, in the first place, with the negations of the features of hell, from which point abstract concepts and the likely inhabitants are listed. As our preceding discussion demonstrates, these are arranged in a manner analogous to the contemplative scheme outlined by Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena. The tentative initial description of what does not characterise heaven is achieved through the preceding imagination of hell, after which assertions are made. As well as being abstract, these assertions cannot be divorced from the context of negation from which they are made, the self-proclaimed impossible attempt to depict hell, and remain in paradoxical opposition. This employment of both apophatic and kataphatic methodology, along with the negation of bodily senses, and the context of the ultimate failure of language to depict the otherworld in the description of heaven, takes the reader's mind to the ineffable space beyond the limitations of discourse. It is notable also that no bodily sensations are asserted in the depiction of heaven, by contrast to hell, the depiction of which entirely negates bodily senses: we are directed 'to regard the joys of Heaven in an incorporeal way' (Gregory, *Epistulae* I.5).

The beginning of the poem's conclusion in CCCC 201 is marked by a large red capital, and the final line of heaven's depiction filled by an elaborately long 's' on *weardas* (p. 165) so as to separate it from the next section.⁹⁵ This is unusual for the characteristically economical Scribe A:⁹⁶ the surrounding lines demonstrate that the conclusion could have been put on the same line as *weardas*, were it written normally, given also that the following

presence of blossom in *The Phoenix*, 21a, and more remotely the use of the verb *bleowon* for the flowering of the blossom in the Prologue (5b), *Guthlac A* (*geblowen*, 743b), and *The Phoenix* (*geblowen*, 21a), a signal that this is to be negated by the contemplative audience: 'the foolish mind errs when it thinks beautiful things about God, for it supposes him to subsist in this way' (Eriugena, *Expositiones*, II.52-55).

⁹⁵ See Appendix II.

⁹⁶ Caie, *Judgement Day II*, p. 4.

line of *JDII* and several lines of *Exhortation* below exceed the scribe's standard marginal width. This arrangement indicates a change of section, and it is here — between the final line of heaven's depiction, which ends the apophatic strategy of the text, and the opening capital of the more straightforwardly exhortative final section — I would tentatively suggest, that the contemplative audience, if assisted by Divine Grace, can ascend to contemplation. The complex descriptive scheme has climaxed, and the reader is at the peak of their understanding, and so here, with God's assistance, the contemplative audience can ascend to contemplate God.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the final section of the poems suggests that contemplative ascent has taken place for the narrator, as he implies longing for heaven:

Quid, rogo, quid durum sæclo censetur in isto,
 Vtque illos inter liceat habitare cohortes,
 Sedibus et superum semper gaudere beatis
 Ac domimum benedicere secla per omnia Christum. (*DDI*, 152-55)

What, I ask, what is conceived harsh in this age, to them who might be permitted to live amongst the cohorts, to rejoice always on the blessed seats anove, to bless the Lord Christ forever?

Hwæt mæg beon heardes her on life,
 gif þu wille secgan soð þæm ðe frineð,
 wið þam þu mote gemang þam werode
 eardian unbleoh on ecnesse,
 and on upcundra eadegum setlum
 brucan bliðnesse butan ende forð? (*JDII*, 301-06)

What may be so hard here in this life, if you speak the truth to him that asks, provided that you might dwell spotlessly in eternity among the company, and on the blessed celestial seats enjoy the bliss henceforth without end?

⁹⁷ This may not necessarily occur upon the first reading. I have interpreted *DDI* and *JDII* as contemplative apparatus, which can be used repeatedly by contemplative readers trained in the art of *lectio divina* (see pp. 64-66 above), a reading process which required texts to be (re)read slowly and in great detail, in order to uncover hidden meanings.

For the narrator, and the grace-assisted members of the contemplative audience whom he has instructed in contemplative preparation, nothing can compare to the vision of the divine, though only a slight intimation of it is available to man whilst alive, as Bede says of the contemplative: 'he begins, even in the present life, to gain a foretaste of the joy of perpetual blessedness which he is to attain in the future' (*Omeliarum euangelii*, I.9). The contrast of the ineffable conditions in heaven and the experience of earthly life here is demonstrative, given the surpassingly beautiful setting of the Prologue.

Bede's story of Drythelm provides further contextual evidence for the narrator's contemplative ascent. After being taken on a tour of upper and lower purgatory, Drythelm is never the same again:

The man was given a more secret retreat in the monastery where he could freely devote himself to the service of his Maker in constant prayer, and as his retreat was on the banks of the river, he often used to enter it in his great longing to chastise his body, frequently immersing himself beneath the water; he would remain thus motionless, reciting prayers and psalms for as long as he could endure it, while the water of the river came up to his loins and sometimes up to his neck [...] Those who saw him would say: 'Brother Drythelm,' — for that was his name — 'however can you bear such bitter cold?' He answered them simply, for he was a man of simple wit and few words, 'I have known it colder.' (*HE*, V.12)

Drythelm, having been shown an intimation of heaven and hell, no longer finds any comparable suffering whilst alive, resembling the stance of the narrators in the conclusions to *DDI* and *JDII*. This *contemptus mundi* usually manifests itself as contemplative longing, as demonstrated by all texts discussed in this thesis. Bede quotes Gregory on the subject of longing:

When spiritual pleasures are not possessed, they are loathed; on being possessed, however, they are desired, and the more hungrily they are sought after by the one who enjoys them, the more they are enjoyed by the one who hungers for them [...] spiritual pleasures increase desire in the mind while they satisfy, because the more greatly their flavour is apprehended,

the more it is perceived that there is something to be loved.⁹⁸ (*In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, re: Peter 1:12)

The result of contemplation, then, is to reinvigorate the desire to be granted another vision. The process undertaken in the first place, of divorcing oneself from the desires of the flesh, spiritually cleansing, and thinking beyond bodily senses and language, to ascend to a vision of heaven thus has the effect of increasing individual penitence: as stated earlier in the chapter, the concepts of contemplation and penitence are mutually supportive. To contemplate again, either in mental ecstasy or post-mortem, further penitence is necessary. The narrator has moved from fearing hell, to contemplating God, and desiring it all the more in the poem's conclusion, recalling again Gregory's discussion of compunction:

For the soul contemplates what are those choirs of angels, what is the very society of blessed spirits, what is the vision of the inward brightness of God; and laments more for the lack of unending good than it wept before when it feared eternal evil; and thus it comes to pass that the compunction of fear, when perfected, draws the mind to the compunction of love.
(*Epistulae VII.26*)

Contemplative longing inspires renewed spiritual purpose, as demonstrated in Bede's account of Dryhthelm, who subjects himself to such prayer and penitential mortification as a result of his vision that he 'was given a more secret retreat in the monastery'. Contemplation is therefore spiritually reformatory, and we see this scheme, mutually supportive of the penitential tone many have observed in the poems, in the conclusion of *DDI* and *JDII*. This buttresses Whitbread's theory about the relation of the poems in CCCC 201: the devotional poems that follow immediately supply the reader with the appropriate apparatus to embark on further penitence and devotion in order to receive potentially another contemplative vision.⁹⁹ The compunction of the narrator, and the members of the contemplative audience

⁹⁸ *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable*, trans. D. Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series, 82 (Kalamazoo, 1985). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁹⁹ 'Notes on Two Minor Old English Poems', 127-28. See also pp. 79-81 above.

able to follow the complex system of affirmation and negation and blessed by God's grace, has been transformed from *timor* to *amor* through a contemplative vision, manifest in the concluding longing for heaven.

VIII Conclusion: Where Language Goes to Die

We have seen how *DDI* and its Old English translation *JDII* function according to the well-defined contemplative theory available in Anglo-Saxon England discussed in Chapter 1. The texts have progressed from an immersive eremitical setting to contemplative ascent, through a complex system of negation and affirmation that locates the afterlife in the realm of the ineffable. Hell is employed for the aesthetic and contemplative purpose of taking the mind to the space beyond discourse, by revealing the limitation of language. This is based upon the common Anglo-Saxon belief that divine matters cannot be accurately represented by discourse, in the first place because no man has any referential experience of them, and secondly because of their ineffable nature. The link between apophasis and contemplation is clearly demonstrated by these texts: depicting heaven through a mutually-contradictory system of negation and affirmation takes the mind, which maintains these paradoxes, to the realm of the ineffable, wherein God is best, though imperfectly, signified. We have been able to identify that the texts' structure and content is designed for the contemplative audience hypothesised in Chapter 1, principally through the horizon of expectation suggested by such sophisticated texts. The accuracy of the Old English translation attests not only to the skill of the translator, but to the suggested contemplative purpose of the text, as the apophatic descriptive schemes are reproduced faithfully even when they are evidently harmful to

literal textual meaning. The care taken by the scribe of CCCC 201 further suggests that this text was not only highly-valued, but also interpreted as contemplative, based upon the sections designated by the manuscript capitalisation.¹⁰⁰ To translate is to understand better, and so we can perhaps see the endeavours of the Old English translator as a contemplative activity in itself.

We can give a final piece of evidence for our idea of *DDI* and *JDII* as learned apparatus for the contemplative audience by considering again the manuscript tradition of the Latin text. Patrizia Lendinara has suggested that *DDI* was used as a school text for novice monks.¹⁰¹ It was especially popular as a school text amongst the Anglo-Saxons, and seven of nine Insular manuscripts contain Latin glosses, in addition to our source manuscript, Cotton Domitian A.i, which has both Latin and Old English glosses.¹⁰² Lendinara explains this glossing by proposing that the text is didactically penitential, and a good model for Latin poetry.¹⁰³ This latter claim is problematised by the number of grammatical inaccuracies Lapidge identifies in the poem, and this thesis suggests that the former is part of a complex apophatic strategy employed by the poem.¹⁰⁴ I would, therefore, tentatively suggest a slight development of Lendinara's hypothesis. If *DDI* and *JDII* are contemplative texts, with a narrator intended to be seen as an eremite, might these texts

¹⁰⁰ Though both Scribe A (responsible for *JDII*) and Scribe B similarly employ coloured capitals for other texts to indicate internal divisions, the coincidence of such characters with what I have argued to be important moments in the text is indicative of the viability of the contemplative interpretation of the poem.

¹⁰¹ 'The *Versus De Die Iudicii*: Its Circulation and Use as a School Text in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in *Foundations of Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. R.H. Bremmer and C. Dekker, Mediaevalia Groningana, n.s. 9; Storehouses of Wholesome Learning, 1 (Paris, 2007), pp. 175-212.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 175; 192.

¹⁰⁴ 'Bede the Poet'; 'Bede and the *Versus de die iudicii*.'

represent part of the institutional learning outlined by Benedict, Isidore and Bede, that must precede the monk's undertaking of more ascetic practices?¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Even if we accept the hypothesis of the manuscript belonging to Wulfstan, his use of *JDII* as ascetical apparatus is still eminently possible. In Chapter 1 we discussed instances of high-ranking clergy with pastoral responsibilities retreating to isolated locations for contemplative purposes, most likely a reflection of the mixed life of action and contemplation advocated by Gregory and, later, Bede (see p. 80 above). I discuss a similar hypothesis regarding the Vercelli Book in Chapters 4 and 5.

3 Sailing the Ship of the Mind: *The Seafarer* and Contemplative Ascent

I Introduction

The interpretation of *The Seafarer* (hereafter referred to as *Seafarer*) has suffered from anachronistic analysis. Though *Seafarer* was generically defined as an Old English ‘elegy’ in the nineteenth century, along with eight other Old English poems in the Exeter Book (hereafter referred to as EB), these poems predominantly share a sense of melancholy and, to a lesser extent, loss, but vary greatly in theme and content.¹ Whilst it is important to situate *Seafarer* within its manuscript context, we should be careful not to neglect its links to broader Anglo-Saxon intellectual traditions. This chapter will argue that the poem is best understood with reference to the contemporary culture of eremiticism and contemplation with which the contemplative audience discussed in Chapter 1 would be conversant. I argue that *Seafarer* is a hortatory poem about the *vita contemplativa*, in which sailing the sea represents the contemplative way in the world, defined against the delusively pleasant but sinful land. In this reading, the voyage itself is not to be taken literally, but signifies the mind’s preparation to ascend to communion with God at 58-64a.² As is characteristic of the texts selected for this thesis, *Seafarer* invites members of the contemplative audience to follow its

¹ For a summary of critical debate about the Old English elegies, see A. Orchard, ‘Not What it Was: The World of Old English Elegy’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. K.A. Weisman (Oxford, 2010), pp. 293-318. For a comprehensive bibliography of writings on *Seafarer*, see C. Cucina, *Il Seafarer: La Navigatio Cristiana di un Poeta Anglosassone*, Biblioteca medievale, 2 (Rome, 2008), pp. 428-38.

² In Anglo-Saxon thought, mind, soul and heart were synonymous in the vernacular tradition. See M. Godden, ‘Anglo-Saxons on the Mind’, in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R.M. Luizza (New Haven, 2002), pp. 284-314. Godden’s work also informs L. Lockett’s longer study, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 8 (Toronto, 2011).

narrative nuances closely and so prepare themselves for a potential equivalent vision. This contextualised interpretation resolves the logical discrepancies of several instances of the conjunction *forþon*, and offers a practicable solution to the riddle of *Seafarer's* narrative structure. After analysing *Seafarer* as an allusive account of a vision of God, and simultaneously textual apparatus for the contemplative audience, I will end the chapter by providing a close parallel to the text as a whole from Julianus Pomerius' *De vita contemplativa*.

II Manuscript Context and Textual Structure

In anticipation of our reading of *Seafarer* as a contemplative text, it is important to discuss EB's other items, and how these relate to the poem. *Seafarer* is preserved on folios 81v-83r of Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501, more commonly known as EB.³ EB is a tenth-century codex which contains a sixth of the Old English poetic corpus, and other Old English poems commonly referred to as elegies.⁴ Of the 'elegies', we will be referring again to *The Ruin* (123v-24v), *The Wanderer* (76v-78r) and *The Wife's Lament* (115r-15v). It is likely that EB was a gift from Leofric, first bishop of Exeter, on the basis of what seems to be a reference to it in a list of sixty-six books bequeathed to Exeter upon his death in 1072 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Auct. D.2.16): 'i. mycel englisc boc be gehwylcum þingum on leoðwisan

³ All references to EB are to the digital facsimile, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry* (DVD), ed. B.J. Muir (Exeter, 2006).

⁴ Ker, no. 116, and G&L, no. 257, date EB to the second half of the tenth-century. A more precise date of 950-68 is given by P.W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History, 4 (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 94. Despite its geographical moniker, we should be cautious when assuming its South-Western provenance: see R. Gameson, 'The Origin of the Exeter Book of Old English Poetry', *ASE*, 25 (1996), 135-85. EB's other 'elegies' are *The Wanderer* (76v-78r), *The Rime Poem* (94r-95v); *Deor* (100r-100v), *Wulf and Eadwacer* (100v-101r); *The Wife's Lament* (115v-115r); *The Husband's Message* (123r-123v); *The Ruin* (123v-124r).

geworht' ('one large English book about many subjects composed in verse').⁵ This probable contemporary description of EB acknowledges the manuscript's varied contents, rather than identifying a common theme, and so any theory of its likely purpose must be necessarily vague. Indeed, EB may in fact represent a gathering of several booklets, though some critics suggest that it was written by a single scribe.⁶ Despite this variation, our reading of *Seafarer* as a contemplative text is supported by the manuscript's other items. Most obviously, the contemplative interpretation of *Seafarer* relates to the Old English Guthlac poems, *Guthlac A* and *B* (32v-53v). We have been hitherto discussing Guthlac as an exemplary eremitic saint, celebrated for his contemplative visions and life of solitary prayer. Though we will discuss the resemblances between the poems more thoroughly later in the chapter, for now it is worth observing that the presence of texts about Guthlac in the same codex as *Seafarer* buttresses the viability of a contemplative reading of the latter. We can also profitably relate *Seafarer* to other items making up Leofric's bequest to Exeter, all of which have a clear religious purpose. As well as several liturgical books, Leofric also left exegetical and theological texts, including Bede's *In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, one of many Bedan texts referred to in this thesis which include contemplative theory. EB itself is hence likely to have had a didactic — and possibly partially contemplative, as I argue in this chapter — purpose, and its varied contents perhaps reflect the practices of the Exeter church, since Leofric deemed EB a suitable gift to this particular community. To this scheme we can also feasibly relate the *Riddles*, which demand close engagement from readers to reconstruct their

⁵ Subsequent references to the list are to M. Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 33-90 (65-66).

⁶ On the multiple booklet interpretation, see Conner, 'The Structure of the Exeter Book Codex (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS. 3501)', in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*, ed. M.P. Richards, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (New York, 1994), pp. 301-15. The claim for a single scribe is most famously made on scribal and dialectic grounds by K. Sisam, 'The Exeter Book', in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 97-108 (see esp. pp. 101-05).

meaning, which the texts themselves attempt to inhibit through innuendo and equivocal narrative detail. As such, they could be related to the teaching of exegesis in which other items of the bequest would also assist.⁷ Furthermore, Leofric left .ii. *salteras* ('two Psalters') and 'se þriddan saltere swa man singð on Rome' ('the third Psalter such as men sing at Rome') to Exeter, which we previously discussed as texts memorised and read daily by monks, and whose use in individual devotion required identification with the first-person narrator (see pp. 8-9 above). In the light of these items, interpreting *Seafarer* as a complex text written for an educated audience, which requires the reader's close engagement and awareness of contemplative theory, makes it a suitable inclusion amongst other items donated by Leofric.

Before our analysis of the text begins, the structure of *Seafarer* must first be defined. EB is an austere decorated tome, which all but rules out defining the poem's structure on scribal grounds.⁸ There is however a clear segregation of line 116 from 117 in the manuscript (83r) to mark the start of the Epilogue, as Howlett notes, in the capitalisation of the verb *Uton* (117).⁹ 81v-83r is otherwise decorated with only an enlarged capital on the opening word (*Mæg*, 81v) and roughly two lines of separation from *Vainglory*, which follows on 83r. With few scribal clues for poetic arrangement, structural analysis must therefore be undertaken on a thematic basis.

⁷ S. Lerer supports this reading of the EB Riddles with reference to glossed Latin riddles from similar monastic contexts: see *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Lincoln, 1991), p. 110.

⁸ D.R. Howlett nevertheless separates *Seafarer* into five chiasmic units based upon manuscript arrangement in 'The Structures of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 47 (1975), 313-17. For a tripartite structure based upon a literal interpretation and relying upon 33b being interpreted as a literal present tense, see P. Orton, 'The Form and Structure of *The Seafarer*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 63 (1991), 37-55. A.A. Prins, 'The Wanderer (and *The Seafarer*)', *Neophilologus*, 48 (1964), 237-51, claims that EB is unreliable and that *Seafarer* ends at 64a, due to the shift in focus. Whilst identifying the clear division of tone and theme between Part I and Part II, A.A. Lee rejects this view of the composite nature of *Seafarer*, by tracing the 'broken-backed' structure across *The Wanderer*, *Christ II*, and *The Dream of the Rood*: 'The Unity of *The Dream of the Rood*', *Neophilologus*, 56 (1972), 469-86. Informed by Lee's argument, the analysis here functions on the assumption that *Seafarer* is a unified whole.

⁹ Howlett, 'Structures', 315.

Presented below is an interpretation of *Seafarer's* structure:

1-12a Prologue: The Sea-Voyage

12b-57 Part I: Meditational Contrast of Land and Sea

58-64a Central Image: Contemplative Ascent

64b-116 Part II: Homily on Preceding Events

117-24 Exhortation: The Interpretive Metonym.

Although this version of the structure lacks the numerological harmony of Howlett's, it is based on strong thematic evidence to be elucidated in the remainder of the chapter. This structure will be followed as chronologically as possible, but *Seafarer* does not have a linear logical progression.¹⁰ The Prologue (1-12a) cannot be understood fully until its context is suggested by reading the rest of the poem. To begin, we instead paradoxically refer to the concluding Exhortation which is an interpretive metonym for the preceding lines:

Uton we hycgan hwær we ham agen,
ond þonne geþencan hu we þider cumen,
ond we þonne eac tilien, þæt we to moten
in þa ecan eadignesne,
þær is lif gelong in lufan dryhtnes,
hyht in heofonum. (117-24)

Let us consider where we might possess a home, and then think how we may go thither, and then endeavour more so that we may be allowed to go into the eternal blessedness, in the place where life is present in the Lord's love, hope in the heavens.

The Exhortation maps the poem's trajectory when the text is rearranged chronologically: the seafarer, mindful of heaven, retreats in order to perfect himself spiritually and is presented with an incorporeal intimation of divine vision, which he hopes through prolonged endeavour one day to experience utterly. Beyond manuscript capitalisation, the Exhortation

¹⁰ *The Wanderer* lends itself well to such chronological analysis. See, for example, B.F. Huppé, 'The Wanderer: Theme and Structure', *JEGP*, 42 (1943), 516-38; R.M. Lumiansky, 'The Dramatic Structure of the Old English Wanderer', *Neophilologus*, 34 (1950), 104-12; W. Alfred, 'The Drama of *The Wanderer*', in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Honour of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. L.D. Benson and S. Wenzel (Kalamazoo, 1982), pp. 31-44.

is additionally marked by the modification of person from a singular to a plural pronoun (*IC* and *we*).¹¹ This shift in number urges the reader to search for meaning through a close reading of the text.

III The Contrast of Land and Sea

Seafarer relies upon a dichotomy of land and sea for the allegory of the sea voyage to function.¹² These contrasts comprise all of Part I, and as the working definition of the structure demonstrates, this occurs immediately as the section begins. 12a ends the Prologue, a description of conditions at sea, and 12b emphatically begins the contrast of citizenship with seafaring by introducing the land-dweller:

þæt se mon ne wat
þe him on foldan fægrost limpeð,
hu ic earmcearig¹³ iscealdne sæ
winter wunade wræccan lastum,
winemægum bidroren. (12b-16)

The man who lives most prosperously on land does not know how I, wretched and sorrowful, dwelt in the ice cold sea in winter in the paths of an exile, deprived of dear kinsmen.

Though it does not yet explain why these lives are contrasted, here the poem establishes life in the town as the antithesis of life at sea. More contrasts follow, culminating in apparent envy of the land-dweller: 'forþon him gelyfeð lyt, se þe ah lifes wyn/gebiden in burgum,

¹¹ Howlett, 'Structures', 315. S.B. Greenfield ('"Mīn", "Sylf", and Dramatic Voices in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', *JEGP*, 68 (1969), 212-20 (p. 219)) believes that an earlier shift in person occurs at 31-33 when the world's meteorological conditions are noted.

¹² E.G. Stanley similarly suggests that the figure of the seafarer represents *contemptus mundi*: 'Old English Poetic Diction, and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*', *Anglia*, 73 (1955), 413-66 (p. 466). An interpretation of the dichotomy as representing the narrator's psychological development is offered by D.G. Calder, 'Setting and Mode in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', *NM*, 72 (1971), 264-75.

¹³ *Earmcearig* also occurs in *The Wanderer*, 20a, another EB poem discussed below which emphasises the narrator's solitude: 'oft earmcearig' ('often wretched and sorrowful').

bealosipa hwon/wlonc ond wingal, hu ic werig oft/in brimlade bidan sceolde' (27-30; 'therefore he that has experienced life's joy in towns, proud and merry with wine, with few harmful journeys, little believes how I, weary, often had to remain in the seaway').¹⁴ These lines seem to imply that the narrator is forced to take to sea — which we know from lines 12b-16 to be an unpleasant experience — and is consequently envious of those who are spared the obligation. However, this intimation is undermined in the section that follows:

Nap nihtscua, norpan sniwde,
 hrim hrusan bond, hægla feol on eorpan,
 corna caldast. Forþon cnyssað nu
 heortan geþohtas, þæt ic hean streamas,
 sealtyþa gelac sylf cunnige;
 monað modes lust mæla gehwylce
 ferð to feran, þæt ic feor heonan
 elpeodigra eard gesece. (31-38)

The shade of night grew dark, it snowed from the north, frost gripped the land, hail fell on the earth, the coldest of grains. Therefore thoughts of the heart now toss, so that I myself venture upon the deep seas, the tumult of the salt waves; the mind's desire every time urges the spirit to journey, so that I seek the native land of foreigners, far away from hence.

The structure of this section suggests that the seafarer is compelled by the unpleasant conditions of the land to voyage, but also makes it clear that he willingly chooses life at sea — which is his *modes lust* — in preference to the land.¹⁵

The narrative logic here is that land-dwelling is something to reject in favour of the apparently undesirable sea:

Ne biþ him to hearpan hyge ne to hringþege,
 ne to wife wyn ne to worulde hyht,¹⁶

¹⁴ A. Harbus presents this section as evidence for the Anglo-Saxon idea of the self, in that the narrator's idiosyncratic experience is unknown to his land-dwelling counterparts: 'The Medieval Concept of the Self in Anglo-Saxon England', *Self and Identity*, 1 (2002), 77-97 (p. 87). I will offer an alternative reading later in the chapter, wherein the seafaring allegory is contextualised with the universal theme of man's mind as a ship in Patristic thought.

¹⁵ See also R.E. Bjork, "'Sundor æt rune": The Voluntary Exile of the Wanderer', *Neophilologus*, 73 (1989), 119-29.

ne ymbe owiht elles, nefne ymb yða gewealc,
ac a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað. (44-47)

The harp is not on his mind, nor the receiving of rings, nor the delight of women, nor the joy of the world, nor concerning anything else except the rolling of waves, but he that journeys on the sea always has longing.

In establishing the sea as the binary of the land, this section further elucidates the paradoxical situation: it is not that the seafarer cannot stay on land, but that he will not. It is not just literally being on land that is rejected, but the way of life it represents, as its pleasures are shunned in favour of a trying period at sea. Even the apotheosised conditions of 48-52 cannot convince him to stay ashore:

Bearwas blostmum nimað,¹⁷ byrig fægriað,
wongas wlitigað, woruld onetteð;
ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne
sefan to siþe, þam þe swa þenceð
on flodwegas feor gewitan.

The woods take with blossoms, the towns grow beautiful, the meadows brighten, the world hastens on; all that reminds the one eager of mind, the spirit to journey, for the one who thinks to depart far away on the flood-ways.

The use of the present tense in these lines implies that these are not merely seasonal changes, but a continuous mode of living readily available to every man on earth, which the seafarer rejects. Likewise, the scope of the register, incorporating both urban and natural spaces,

¹⁶ The use of the noun *hyht* to apply to sinful worldly joy here anticipates the use of the same noun for the joys of heaven: *hyht in heofonum* (124). For the monastic reader, memorising the text as it is read, this lexical echo serves as an implicit didactic contrast between the joys of the earth and heaven. The same technique can be seen in 41-43: see footnote 63 below.

¹⁷ Blossom is commonly used in Old English descriptions of the earthly Paradise, discussed at length on pp. 84-85 above. Most pertinently for our analysis, blossom was also associated with the transience of earthly life. In *The Riming Poem* of EB, blossom accompanies the narrator's account of his vain and carefree youth: 'glæd wæs ic gliwum, glenged hiwum/blissa bleoum, blostma hiwum' (4-5, 'I was glad with joys, adorned with hues, the colours of bliss, the hues of blossoms'). The link between homiletic content of *The Riming Poem* and *The Wanderer* is noted by W.S. Mackie, 'The Old English *Rhymed Poem*', *JEGP*, 21 (1922), 507-19 (p. 507). This contextual detail suggests that the blossoms in *Seafarer* represent the illusory pleasure of the land. See also Cucina, *Il Seafarer*, pp. 268-79, who similarly interprets the natural environment here as 'una sorta di "evil garden", illusoria immagine del paradiso che attrae e tenta, ma in verità distoglie dal perseguire con fermezza il recupero dello stato felice nella presenza di Dio perduto all'origine' (p. 276, 'a kind of "evil garden", an illusory image of Paradise that attracts and entices, but really distracts one from firmly pursuing the recovery of the lost, happy state in the presence of God').

demonstrates that the narrator is aware of all that the land has to offer, and yet he somehow makes the logical progression to reject these pleasures. It is with reference to Part II that we learn of the sinful nature of the townsman, as the two lives are morally contrasted:

Dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ; cymeð him se deað unþinged.
Eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ; cymeð him seo ar of heofonum,
meotod him þæt mod gestaþelað, forþon he in his meahte gelyfeð. (106-08)

Foolish is he who does not fear his Lord; death comes to him, unprepared. Blessed is he who lives humbly; the grace of heaven comes to him, the Creator makes steadfast his mind, because he believes in His power.

The townsman's life, spent *wlonc ond wingal* (29a), is far from humble, by contrast to the friendless and joyless seafarer, giving a clearer indication of why 'a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað' (47). The pleasures shunned by the seafarer in 44-47 can also be reinterpreted in the light of Part II. Whilst activities such as *hringþege* at first could be interpreted as part of the heroic idiom that characterises much of the Old English poetic corpus, and thus not condemnatory, the context of Part II suggests that the activity is to be interpreted as evidence for an immoderate love of material things: 'ne mæg þære sawle þe biþ synna ful/gold to geoce for godes egsan/þonne he hit ær hydeð þenden he her leofað' (100-02; 'for the soul that is full of sins, the gold he before hides while he lives here may not be of avail before the terror of God'). It is this worldly lifestyle which the seafarer shuns.

The tradition of the city as a haven of iniquity is basic to Christianity. Revelation 18:2 celebrates Babylon's apocalyptic destruction: 'cecidit cecidit Babylon magna et facta est habitatio daemoniorum et custodia omnis spiritus immundi et custodia omnis volucris immundae' ('Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen: and is become the habitation of devils and

the hold of every unclean spirit and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird').¹⁸ The theology of Augustine's *De civitate Dei contra paganos* operates likewise on the contrast between earthly city and heavenly conurbation, inspired by the sack of Rome in 410. From this tradition comes the broader Anglo-Saxon vernacular trope of contrasting the proud worldly citizen and those who apprehend the transience and vanity of civilisation.¹⁹ Two other texts in EB participate in the same tradition of moralistic contrast. In *The Wanderer*, the transience of civilisation implicitly contradicts mankind's hubris in a memorable *ubi sunt* passage:

"Hwær cwom maþþungyfa?
Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
Eala þeodnes þrym!
[...]
Eall is earfoðlic eorþan rice,
onwendeð wyrdas gesceaft weoruld under heofonum.
Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,
eal þis eorþan gasteal idel weorpeð!"²⁰ (92b-95a; 106-10)

Where did the giver of treasure go? Where did the seats of feasts go? Where are the hall-joys?
Alas, the bright cup! Alas, the mailed-warrior! Alas the majesty of the prince! [...] All is
fraught with hardship in the earthly kingdom, the ordained course of events changes the

¹⁸ Babylon was synonymous with the Tower of Babel, the symbol of man's arrogant opposition to God, in Anglo-Saxon thought. See P.J. Frankis, 'The Thematic Significance of *enta geweorc* and Related Imagery in *The Wanderer*', *ASE*, 2 (1973), 253-69 (p. 264).

¹⁹ There have been numerous attempts to identify the source of the trope of moralising upon a ruined city. Gordon suggests that it derived from the Latin works of provincial poets of the fourth to sixth centuries in her edition of *Seafarer* (Exeter, 1979; repr. 1996), p. 23. Carolingian writers have been suggested as analogues by Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 158, and Lapidge, 'The Anglo-Latin Background', in *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, ed. S.B. Greenfield and D.G. Calder (New York, 1986), pp. 5-37 (23). Links between texts of the monastic curriculum and the trope are suggested by P. Lendinara, 'The World of Anglo-Saxon Learning', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Godden and Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 264-81 (276). F. Leneghan suggests Isaiah 24 as a possible source: 'Preparing the Mind for Prayer', 134-35.

²⁰ The *ubi sunt* motif is relatively common in Old English literature: see Orchard, 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*: The Value of Cross-References', in *Via crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J.E. Cross*, ed. T.N. Hall, T.D. Hill and C.D. Wright, *Medieval European Studies*, 1 (Morgantown, 2002), pp. 1-26 (4-5); for an account of their classical heritage, with particular reference to Isidore of Seville, see C. Di Sciacca, *Finding the Right Words: Isidore's Synonyma in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 105-48.

world beneath the heavens. Here is property transitory, here a friend is transitory, here man is transitory, here a kinsman is transitory, all this earth's frame becomes desolate!

It is notable that the departed joys are ostensibly vanities, and no explicitly Christian virtues are mentioned at the once-proud dwelling.²¹ We can link this to a lengthier, if less rhetorically beautiful, passage in *Seafarer*:

Dagas sind gewitene,
ealle onmedlan eorþan rices;
næron nu cyningas ne caseras
ne goldgiefan swylce iu wæron,
þonne hi mæst mid him mærpā gefremedon
ond on dryhtlicestum dome lifdon.
Gedroren is þeos duguð eal, dreamas sind gewitene,
wuniað þa wacran ond þas woruld healdaþ,
brucað þurh bisgo. Blæd is gehnæged,
eorþan indryhto ealdað ond searað,
swa nu monna gehwylc geond middangeard. (80b-90)

The days, all the pomp of the earthly kingdom, are departed; there are neither now kings nor emperors, nor gold givers, such as there were before, when they performed the greatest of glorious deeds and lived in the most lordly renown. This whole body of men is fallen, joys are departed, those weaker ones live and possess this world, enjoy it by way of toil. Joy is humbled, the nobility of the earth grows old and fades, as now each man throughout the earth.

Both passages give a sense of the vanity of pride and earthly glory against the inevitability of death and God's judgement. To understand better the iniquitous nature of the vain denizen of a fleetingly great civilisation, we can refer to *The Ruin*, another EB text which is more explicitly condemnatory in tone.²² *The Ruin* imagines the former inhabitant of a once-proud city as 'glædmod ond goldbeorht gleoma gefrætweð/wlonc ond wingal' (33-34a; 'cheerful and bright with gold, adorned with splendours, proud and merry with wine'),

²¹ See also J.F. Doubleday, 'The Three Faculties of the Soul in *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 53 (1969), 189-94 (p. 192); J.L. Selzer, 'The Wanderer and the Meditative Tradition', *Studies in Philology*, 80 (1983), 227-37 (p. 236). For a longer study of the moralistic significance of the ruined civilisation, see Frankis, 'Thematic Significance'.

²² On *The Ruin* generally, see Orchard, 'Reconstructing *The Ruin*', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. V. Blanton and H. Scheck, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 334; *Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 24 (Tempe, 2008), pp. 45-68.

specifically repeating the adjectival formulation of *Seafarer's* townsman as *wlonc ond wingal* (29), and echoing a similarly didactic section of *The Wanderer*:

Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið,
þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
[...]
Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
dreame bidrorene,²³ duguþ eal gecrong,
wlonc bi wealle. (*The Wanderer*, 73-74; 78-80a)

A wise man must understand how terrible it will be when all of this world's wealth stands desolate [...] the winehalls moulder, the rulers lie, deprived of joys, the body of mature men all fall, proud by the wall.

The Ruin links this arrogant Epicurean figure with avarice, expressed in lust for gold, which *Seafarer* similarly sees as characteristic of the land-dweller (100-02; see p. 143 above). The lamentable self-indulgence of *The Ruin's* townsman extends also to bathing:

Stanhofu stodan, stream hate wearp
widan wylme; weal eall befeng
beorhtan bosme, þær þa baþu wæron,
hat on hrepre. (38-41a)

The stone-houses stood, the hot stream threw out a wide billow; a wall surrounded all in [its] bright bosom, where the baths were, hot in [its] breast.

Bathing was commonly used as an example of man's repugnant vanity in homiletic literature, and it seems likely that *The Ruin's* description of this elaborate device to satisfy the craving for fleeting beauty is participating in the same tradition.²⁴

In *Seafarer*, the sailor provides an emphatic contrast to the land-dwelling sinner, an allegorical method also used by the Old English *Exodus*.²⁵ In a bewilderingly arcane image,

²³ The verb *bidroren* (79b) is also employed by *Seafarer*: *winemægum bidroren* (16). The Old English *Daniel's* description of Nebuchadnezzar also includes the adjective *wingal*: 'þa onwoc wulfheort, se ær wingal swæf/Babilone weard' (116-117a, 'then the wolf-hearted one awoke, that before slept merry with wine, the Ruler of Babylon'). As well as ruling the sinful Babylonian civilisation, Nebuchadnezzar is of course subjected to nightmares because of the presumptuous nature of his heathen opposition to God (Daniel 2).

²⁴ Doubleday, 'The Ruin: Structure and Theme', *JEGP*, 71 (1972), 369-81 (pp. 378-81). Doubleday provides a convincing range of examples from both Old English and Patristic literature on bathing.

the desert-crossing Israelites, God's elect (Deuteronomy 7:6), are depicted as seafarers fleeing their land-dwelling oppressors, the Egyptians, whose offence to God has forced His divine infanticide (Exodus 11:1-12:36).²⁶ The pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21) is the *segle* (81b; 'sail') of a boat, and the Israelites are 'sæmen æfter/foron flodwege' (105b-06a; 'seamen [who] travelled, following the flood-way'), metaphorically sailing across the desert, protected by God, described as *flodwearde* (494a; 'the flood-guardian') and *mereflodes weard* (504b; 'the guardian of the sea-flood').²⁷ The term *flodwege* (*Exodus*, 106a) is also employed by *Seafarer* (52a), further evidence for the allegorical nature of sailing in the latter poem. However, *Exodus*'s distinction of urban Egyptian and seafaring Israelite is not as clear as has been implied. The time spent in the desert is a test of individual faith and piety, and not all of the *sæmen* successfully pass it. Confronted by the Pharaoh's vast army in the desert, some Israelites lose faith in God's protection: 'egsan stoda/wælgryre weroda' (136b-37a; 'terror arose, the troop's fear of death'). After the poem delivers an emphatically lengthy description of the army of the Pharaoh, Moses addresses his troops: 'ne beoð ge þy forhtran, þeah þe Faraon brohte /sweordwigendra side hergas/eorla unrim!' (259-61a; 'do not be more fearful, although the Pharaoh has brought broad companies of sword-warriors, innumerable men'). His faith is vindicated by God's intervention. The Old English *Exodus* ends shortly after the parting of the Red Sea (chapters 13-14 in Scripture), omitting twenty-six chapters of Exodus. In Scripture, Moses keeps his faith in the desert and is rewarded with divine vision,

²⁵ My reading here is shared with D. Dyas, 'Land and Sea in the Pilgrim Life: *The Seafarer* and the Old English *Exodus*', *ELN*, 35 (1997), 1-9, and J.E. Cross and S.I. Tucker, 'Allegorical Tradition and The Old English *Exodus*', *Neophilologus*, 44 (1960), 122-27 (p. 125). For a discussion of the *beacen* of the text as the Cross, see P.J. Lucas, 'Old English Christian Poetry: The Cross in *Exodus*', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 193-209; C.E. Karkov, *Text and Picture in Anglo-Saxon England: Narrative Strategies in the Junius 11 Manuscript*, CSASE, 31 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 117.

²⁶ Lucas, 'The Cloud in the Interpretation of The Old English *Exodus*', *ES*, 51 (1970), 297-311 (p. 300); Dyas, 'Land and Sea', 3.

²⁷ Dyas, *Ibid.*, 8, notes that the maritime imagery in this section of *Exodus* corresponds to the treatment of the sinful land-dweller and pious sailor in *Seafarer*.

whilst other Israelites who resort to idolatry (Exodus 32) are prevented from seeing Him. The differing behaviour of Patriarch and Israelite in the Old English text corresponds to Exodus 32-33, demonstrating the nature of the sailors to be not necessarily good and faithful by merit of their seafaring, but dependent upon their ability to think of God and avoid temptations in the wilderness, like Moses. It is not merely the inhabitation of the wilderness that makes one spiritually pure, but the correct and sinless mode of living therein. A tradition is evident, therefore, wherein seafaring is linked to forsaking the mortal world in search of spiritual perfection.²⁸

By including the moralistic dichotomy of land and sea, *Seafarer* defines the narrator's retreat from the land to the sea as inherently spiritual. Since the town and its denizens are defined as sinful, and the isolated sea is presented as its antithesis, we can redefine the voluntary retreat of the seafarer to voyage as a demonstration of eremitic spirituality.²⁹ There are several specific features of the seafarer's allegorical voyaging that resemble the eremitic mindset. As previously discussed, the eremite's retreat from other men was an inherently antisocial act, as in the case of Cuthbert (VSC, I; see p. 86 above).³⁰ Similarly, the EB text *Guthlac A* relates that after rejecting life as a soldier, Guthlac was trained in a monastery, before retreating alone to the wilderness (101b-02a; see p. 86 above). In *Seafarer*, the narrator is concerned to ensure that the reader is aware that he voyages alone (14-16; see p. 140 above). The pronoun here, and throughout Part I, is the first person singular, *Ic*, and the

²⁸ The implicit link drawn by the Old English *Exodus* between the sea and the desert is important, for in Northern Europe the sea functioned as a symbol of the desert of the East. See E.G. Bowes, 'The Irish Sea in the Age of Saints', *Studia Celtica*, 4 (1969), 56-71; C. McPherson, 'The Sea as Desert: Early English Spirituality and *The Seafarer*', *ABR*, 38 (1987), 115-26. For a theological discussion of their equivalence, see also B. McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition', *The Journal of Religion*, 74 (1994), 155-81.

²⁹ See also J.C. Shields, 'The *Seafarer* as a *Meditatio*', *Studia Mystica*, 3 (1980), 29-41, who suggests that the contrast of land and sea 'is to project an imaginative dramatisation of such an ascetic mortification of the body' (p. 33). My reading suggests, alternatively, that this asceticism is predominantly spiritual.

³⁰ The function of water in VSC has also been analysed as an eremitically-inscribed place: see J.C. Eby, 'Bringing the *Vita* to Life: Bede's Symbolic Structure of the Life of St Cuthbert', *ABR*, 48 (1997), 316-38.

detail that he is *winemægum bidroren* is especially emphatic. Later, the expression of isolation is more poetic, as the narrator describes his relationship with the birds:

Hwilum ylfete song
dyde ic me to gomene, ganetes hleoþor
ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
mæw singende fore medodrince.
Stormas þær stanclifu beotan, þær him stearn oncwæð
isigfeþera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal,
urigfeþra. (19b-25a)

Sometimes I made the swan's song amusement for myself, the gannet's cry and the sound of the curlew in place of men's laughter, the seagull singing in place of mead. There storms beat the stone cliffs, there the icy-feathered tern answered him; very often the dewy-feathered eagle screamed.

The narrator has substituted the sounds of the indifferent birds for the vanities of the world (*gomene, hleahtor, medodrince*), ideologically inscribing the sea as the antithesis of the sinful land. The birds in this section have invited a variety of interpretations, but in being actively substituted for wordly pleasures by the narrator, their primary function is to emphasise the stringent ascetism of the seafarer, and the spiritual purgation of his voluntary exile.³¹ This is important to note, as birds in eremitic literature are usually portrayed as positive entities whose pseudo-anthropomorphic behaviour testifies to the eremite's sanctity.³² Just as with the apparent lack of stasis in the seafarer's life, in which he voyages frequently (albeit allegorically) rather than remaining in one place, the behaviour of the birds indicates that the seafarer is not literally an eremite, but one whose spirituality is inspired by the example

³¹ J. Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 27 (Cambridge, 1999), p. 36. See C.H. Whitman, 'The Birds of Old English Literature', *JEGP*, 2 (1898), 149-98, M.E. Goldsmith, 'The Seafarer and the Birds', *RES*, n.s. 5 (1954), 225-35, and S.I. Sobiecki, 'The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*—A Re-Examination of the Pilgrimage Theory', *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008), 127-39, for a more ornithological approach. A discussion of the resemblance between the description of the birds and Bede's account of squawking demons is provided by A.L. Meaney, 'Exeter Book Riddle 57 (55) – a Double Solution?', *ASE*, 25 (1996), 187-200. For an interpretation of the birds in *The Wanderer* and *Seafarer* as the reincarnated ghosts of dead companions, see M. Osborn, 'The Vanishing Seabirds in *The Wanderer*', *Folklore*, 85 (1974), 122-27.

³² On bird-eremite friendships, see K. Jackson, *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 108, and M. Schapiro, 'The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross', *The Art Bulletin*, 26 (1944), 232-45 (p. 236). See also p. 60 above.

of hermits.³³ For, in rejecting the culturally-inscribed landscape of the town, the seafarer is distancing himself from iniquity and temptation, thus sharing in the contemplative ideology of the eremite, as described by Alcuin in his account of Cuthbert:

Wishing to gather the flowers of contemplation,
He strove to serve the one true God in isolation
That worldly honour might not sway his intent mind.
There, for a long time, he lived in sanctity as a hermit.
(*Versus de patribus*, 660-63)

We recall here the equation of the eremite and contemplative in Early Medieval spirituality, discussed in Chapter 1 (pp. 11-12 above): the retreat from the world is for spiritual perfection, a prerequisite for the contemplation of God for which the eremite strove. The isolation of the seafarer, like Alcuin's account of Cuthbert, is expressed as the willing detachment from worldly sins, as the dichotomy of land and sea demonstrates (12b-16; see p. 140 above). The voyage of the seafarer is allegorically a retreat from the sins and temptations of the earthly world: in the next section, we will discuss the spiritual heritage of this image, and its likely representation of the contemplative process.

IV The Sea in Christian Tradition

In this section, I will propose that *Seafarer* is best interpreted in the context of the contemplative sea-journey, in which seafaring equates to leaving the company of men and

³³ McPherson, 'The Sea as Desert', interprets the narrator as a literal eremite, drawing comparisons with the Desert Fathers. However, we can develop this reading by reference to the previously-discussed seasonal retreats of John of Beverley and Chad of Lichfield, which were undertaken in imitation of the anchorite for contemplation (see pp. 44-46 above). As such, *Seafarer's* detail of one who retreated on occasion for contemplation, and was otherwise full of longing for the practice whilst engaged in worldly affairs, would be fully comprehensible to a contemporary audience.

keeping the mind fixed on God.³⁴ This reading runs contrary to several other interpretations of the text, which suggest that the voyage described is a literal expedition. Seizing upon the ascetic mentality of the narrator, Dorothy Whitelock famously interprets the text as an account of an eremitical voyage commonly undertaken by Celtic monks, the *Perigrinatio pro amore Dei*.³⁵ Whilst there is certainly a relationship between the sea and eremiticism in the Celtic Church (see footnote 28 above), in the context of *Seafarer* the reading does not account for the poem's omission of the purpose of the voyage, about which activity Irish literature was forthcoming, or the implied returns to land. Further, as I argue in this chapter, *Seafarer* is not a text that invites literal interpretation.³⁶

Starting our analysis from the end of the poem, again, the protagonist retreats from the world to go on an arduous spiritual journey, mindful of the divine vision he seeks, a quest that he urges the reader to join (117-18; see p. 139 above). The poem's conclusion makes no reference to sailing, and the 'voyages' described have little to do with actual sailing. This is evident from the very opening of *Seafarer*:

Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan,
 siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
 earfoðhwile oft þrowade,
 bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe,
 gecunnad in ceole cearselda fela,
 atol yþa gewealc, þær mec oft bigeat
 nearo nihtwaco æt nacan stefnan,
 þonne he be clifum cnossað.³⁷ (1-8a)

³⁴ Shields ('*The Seafarer as a Meditatio*', 31), sees the sea journey as a 'dramatized part' of the narrator, to describe his isolation from God.

³⁵ 'The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', in *The Early Cultures of Northern Europe*, ed. C. Fox and B. Dickins (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 261-72.

³⁶ Whitelock's pilgrimage-theory is refined to be the lot of fallen man, exiled from heaven, and thus a pilgrim of sorts, by Cucina, *Il Seafarer*, pp. 279-330. Sobceki, 'The Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', 136-37, identifies the author as a fisherman, based upon the poem's catalogue of shore-dwelling birds.

³⁷ There is a similar passage in *Resignation B*: 'Ic bi me tylgust/ secge þis sarspel ond ymb siþ spræce/ longunge fus, ond on lagu þence/[manuscript damaged]/ hwy ic gebycge bat on sæwe/ fleot on faroðe; nah ic fela goldes/

I can utter a true lay about myself, relate journeys, how I often suffered harsh times in days of tribulation, have experienced bitter sorrows of the heart, experienced many sorrowful dwellings in a ship, the terrible rolling of waves, there the narrow night watch has often got me at the prow of a ship, when it tosses by the cliffs.

As previously discussed, the narrator is unequivocally alone on this voyage. This is unlikely to have been a common maritime practice in the Anglo-Saxon period, despite the plural *sipas*. Archaeological excavations of Anglo-Saxon boats have yielded vessels of far too large a size to be manned by a crew of one: *Seafarer* makes no mention of other sailors, accompanied by which the protagonist could not be ‘deprived of kinsmen’ (16).³⁸ Further evidence for the voyage’s metaphoricity is the employment of the verb *cnossað* (8a), later used to describe the vehemence of the heart’s desire to sail (33b-34a; see p. 141 above), which makes the ship and the narrator’s heart implicitly equivalent.³⁹ Likewise, the narrator’s reaction to his voyage emphasises spiritual misery above physical discomfort (4). The noun *breostceare* (4a) occurs in only one other Old English poem, *The Wife’s Lament* of EB, within a section of maxims: ‘a scyle geong mon [...] bliþe gebæro, eac þon breostceare/sinsorgna gedreag’ (42a; 44-45a; ‘a young man must [...] always appear cheerful, even though he has bitter sorrows of the heart, with a multitude of cares’). The noun has no discernible link to the practice of sailing, but expresses spiritual misery. Furthermore, there is no practical purpose given for visiting *cearselda fela*, and the sense of aimless, if expansive, voyaging is increased in *Seafarer* 14-16 (see p. 140 above). Full of sorrow, the seafarer is a *wræcca*, exploring *cearselda fela* alone.

ne huru þæs freondes, þe me gefylste/ to þam siðfate’ (96b-98; 100-03a; ‘I can most strongly relate this lament about myself, and speak about a journey, beset by longing, and thinking on the sea [...] why I might buy a boat on the sea, a ship on the waves; I do not have much gold, nor even a friend who might help me on that journey’).

³⁸ See, for instance, W.A. Oddy and P.C. Van Geersdaele, ‘The Recovery of the Graveney Boat’, *Studies in Conservation*, 17 (1972), 30-38. Pictures of the excavation on p. 33 give some visual idea of its scale.

³⁹ Harbus, ‘The Maritime Imagination and the Paradoxical Mind in Old English Poetry’, *ASE*, 39 (2010), 21-42, interprets the voyage as general thought, but stops short of discussing it as contemplation.

Our contemplative reading of *Seafarer*, which requires that the sea voyage be interpreted metaphorically, is advocated by the text.⁴⁰ That *Seafarer*'s voyages are not literal is further evidenced by the voluntary nature of the exile itself. The seafarer is not a permanent exile, but seems to return to land infrequently (48-52; see p. 142 above), which explains the use of the plural *sip̃as* (2a). Returning to land inspires the seafarer to voyage again, despite the evidently miserable and lonely existence at sea. As previously discussed, the urge to travel is best explained as a rejection of the ideologically-inscribed town in favour of its antithesis, the sea, to carry out spiritual purgation.⁴¹ In the poem's allegorical scheme, the narrator's return to land equates to his infrequent succumbing to the worldly temptation it represents, at which point he must begin his voyage again, and hence he speaks of *sip̃as* rather than a single expedition. We can gloss this with Augustine's equivalence of spiritual sight and dying to the world (*De doctrina Christiana*, II.vii.99, 22; see p. 104 above). The idea of purifying the eye of the mind to prepare for the potential contemplation of God is also employed by the Old English *Soliloquies* (I, p. 67; see p. 117 above).⁴² In rejecting the corporeal pleasures and temptations of the sinful world, the seafarer is likewise purifying *þare saule hawung*, preparing for the potential contemplation of God.

⁴⁰ For an allegorical interpretation of the voyage in *Seafarer*, which attempts to reconstruct Anglo-Saxon psychology, see Harbus, 'The Maritime Imagination'. Somewhere in between this approach and Whitelock's, A.R. Skemp believes that 'the sea possessed a special attraction for men who still remembered their tradition as "ocean-dwellers"': 'The Transformation of Scriptural Story, Motive and Conception in Anglo-Saxon Poetry', *MP*, 4 (1906-07), 423-70 (p. 441).

⁴¹ See also Cucina, *Il Seafarer*, pp. 185-203.

⁴² In addition to the discussion of clearing the mind of images so as to prepare for a potential contemplative vision of God throughout this thesis, see also M. Wilcox, 'Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors: *eagan modes* and *scip modes*', *ASE*, 35 (2006), 179-217 (pp. 180-85).

However, despite the clear dichotomy that *Seafarer* draws between land and sea, it is not all plain sailing once the narrator leaves the land behind (4-5; see pp. 151-52 above). In Christian thought, the sea is synonymous with temptation and sin, as in *Moralia*:⁴³

The vessel of our soul is lightly driven hither and thither without steadiness, in that we both call to mind the high state of Paradise with a remembrance of a sweet smell, and are subject to the troublesome waves of temptation arising from the flesh.⁴⁴ (II.ix.50)

In Gregory's image, the waves of the sea ('temptation arising from the flesh') can be overcome by fixing the mind ('the vessel of our soul') on man's former state of complete contemplative union with God ('the high state of Paradise').⁴⁵ The allegory of the sea as temptation and sin also has a related, though distinct, Insular tradition, exhibited by the Old English *Soliloquies*. To the original text are glossed *geleafan*, *tohopan*, and *lufe* (Book I; 'faith, hope [and] love') in God:

Ðæt sint þa þreo anceras, þe þæt scyp ðaes modes healdað on gemang ðam brogan þara yða.
Þæt mod þeah hæfð micle frofre on ðam þe hit gelyfð and geare wot þæt þa ungesælþa þisse
wurld ne beoð æce. Swa swa scyppes hlaford, þonne þæt scyp ungetæslicost on ancre rit and
seo sæ hreohost byð, þonne wot he gewiss smelte wedere towærd. (I, pp. 67-68)

These are the three anchors that hold fast the ship of the mind in the midst of the danger of the waves. The mind however has great consolation in that it believes and well-knows that the troubles of this world are not eternal. Just as the ship's lord, when the vessel moves most

⁴³ F.S. Holton also contextualises the poem with the metaphorical Patristic sea, but concludes that this renders the poem an examination of the Christian, exiled from heaven, rather than contemplative preparation: 'Old English Sea Imagery and the Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 12, Heroes and the Heroic Special Number (1982), 208-17. Brief mention of the image of the sea in Old English literature is also given by J. Bourke, *The Sea as Symbol in English Poetry* (Eton, 1954), p. 10, and T.D. Hill, 'The Anchor of Hope and the Sea of this World: *Christ II*, 850-866', *ES*, 75 (1994), 289-92.

⁴⁴ See also *Regula pastoralis*, I.9 and III.34. For a brief discussion of the ship metaphor in Latin poetry, from Horace to Dante, see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W.R. Trask, Bollingen Series, 36 (Princeton, 1973), pp. 128-30. In Anglo-Latin literature, Boniface perhaps most frequently uses the man-as-ship conceit: see the parallels highlighted in Orchard, 'Old Sources, New Resources: Finding the Right Formula for Boniface', *ASE*, 30 (2001), 15-38 (p. 21).

⁴⁵ For more on Paradise as a contemplative space, see p. 95 above.

unsteadily at anchor and the sea is most tempestuous, then knows of the truth that peaceful weather approaches.

In this image, *geleafan*, *tohopan* and *lufe* allow one to fix the mind on God and heaven, in which ‘hit gelyfð and geare wot’, *anceras* stabilising the ship against the crashing of the waves representing ‘þa ungesælþa þisse wurlde’.⁴⁶

Although the image in the examples of Gregory and the Old English *Soliloquies* has an universal character, defining all mankind as seafarers, *Seafarer* deals with the experiences of one individual, whose trip to sea represents a shunning of the temptations of earthly existence. As such, the poem is an adaptation of the common theological association of the sea with sin. To be an anchorite or contemplative, separated from the society of men to dedicate oneself to God, was an arduous lifestyle, as discussed in *RB* (I; see p. 32 above). To leave the world is not an end in itself, but a means to get closer to God. Post-Lapsarian man, born into sin — ‘ecce in iniquitate conceptus sum et in peccato peperit me mater mea’ (Psalm 50:7, ‘for behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me’) — is naturally prone to both sin and temptation. Hence, Benedict prescribes a long

⁴⁶ The ship as mind allegory is also used in the Preface to another text associated with Alfred’s court, the Old English translation of Gregory’s *Dialogi*: p. 5, ll.8-30 (page and line references are to H. Hecht, ed., *Bischofs Waerferth von Worcester übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen: über das leben und die wunderthaten italienischer Väter, und über die unsterblichkeit der seelen*, 2 vols, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, 5 (Leipzig, 1900-1907), I (1900)). For more on the prevalence of the anchor-image in texts associated with Alfred, see R. Frank, ‘Old English “anchor”: Transformation of a Latin Loanword’, in *Germanic Texts and Latin Models: Medieval Reconstructions* (Germania Latina IV), ed. K.E. Olsen, Harbus, and T. Hofstra, Mediaevalia Groningana, n.s. 2 (Leuven, 2001), pp. 7-27 (15-18). We can also draw a parallel to the mind as ship conceit from within EB, in *Resignation A*. Although the poem employs a larger allegory of the soul exiled from God, rather than an individual’s contemplative journey, the inclusion of texts subscribing in part to the allegory within the same manuscript is further justification for our reading of *Seafarer*: ‘forstond þu mec ond gestyr him, þonne storm cyme/ minum gæste ongeg; geoca þonne/ mihtig dryhten, minre sawle/ gefreopa hyre ond gefeorma hy, fæder moncynnes/ hædre gehogode, hæl, ece god/ meotod meahtum swiþ’ (*Resignation A*, 59-64a; ‘defend me, and when a storm comes in the direction of my spirit, steer him; help my soul then, Mighty Lord, guard her and harbour her, Father of Mankind, and save it as being intended for celestial light, Eternal God, Creator great in powers’). This excerpt recalls the sea allegory of the Old English *Soliloquies*: though there is no mention of the sea or a ship, the narrator prays to God to protect him from meteorological conditions we have seen as characteristic of the ship and sea allegory. This humble surrender to the will of God is an implicit act of faith, as recommended by the Old English *Soliloquies*.

period of cenobitism for anchorites, before they are prepared 'to fight single-handed against the vices of the flesh and their own evil thoughts', which due to man's inherently sinful nature and the wiles of Satan will naturally arise. In Jerome's *VSH*, Hilarion faces frequent carnal temptation in isolation: 'often naked women would appear to him as he lay resting, often the most splendid banquets would appear to him when he was hungry' (7).⁴⁷ It is the ability to overcome such temptations that defines the sanctity of the recluse. The seafarer, then, may have forsaken the sinful society of men, but still has his own sinful nature with which to contend. His struggle to overcome the temptations, which include immoderate carnal thoughts of women like Hilarion's, is signalled in 44-47 (see pp. 141-42 above). Shunning the pleasures of the world, which the positive register (*wyn; hyht*) demonstrates to be significant temptations, enables the seafarer to focus on their vanquishing. Hence, we can see in *Seafarer's* account of life at sea an adaptation of Gregory's 'troublesome waves of temptation arising from the flesh' (*Moralia*, II.ix.50).

We can further analyse the voyage as an allegory of the contemplative process by reference to *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (hereafter referred to as *Navigatio*), an analogous text dating from the eighth century.⁴⁸ Like *Seafarer*, the text can be read as a contemplative journey to God, and back again.⁴⁹ *Navigatio* uses the model of fixing the mind on the divine and crossing the waves utilised by Gregory and the Old English *Soliloquies*:

⁴⁷ *The Life of St Hilarion*, trans. C. White in *Early Christian Lives* (Harmondsworth, 1998).

⁴⁸ For the eighth-century dating of *Navigatio*, see G. Orlandi, ed., *Navigatio sancti Brendani* (Milan, 1968) pp. 141-46; D.N. Dumville, 'Two Approaches to the Dating of *Navigatio sancti Brendani*', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 29 (1988), 87-102.

⁴⁹ There have been many articles, nevertheless, striving to establish Brendan as a monastic Columbus; see for instance G. Ashe, *Land to the West: St. Brendan's Voyage to America* (London, 1962). By contrast, D.A. Bray, 'Allegory in the *Navigatio sancti Brendani*', *Viator*, 26 (1995), 1-10, conventionally interprets the text as a journey to the actual heaven, in the tradition of apocryphal out of body journeys.

Brendan travels with his brethren in search of 'God's Paradise' (1) over the seas.⁵⁰ Just as Gregory speaks of 'troublesome waves of temptation', the monks must not succumb to the temptation to eat excessively, even after starving for several days: 'to last us till Maundy Thursday – calculate one fish, one root, and one cupful of water per head per day' (13).⁵¹ That *Navigatio*, like *Seafarer*, is allegorical needs little more discussion than to mention what Brendan sees on his voyage: a choir of fallen angels turned into birds (11); hell on earth (23); Judas Iscariot enjoying a break from eternal torment (25). Indicatively, Brendan also addresses his brethren as 'my most beloved co-warriors in spiritual conflict' (2), in martial terms analogous to the definition of the anchorite as one engaged in 'the solitary combat of the desert' (*RB*, I) and the seafarer advising fame through 'deorum dædum deofle togeanes' (76; 'brave deeds against the devil').⁵²

In Gregory's image, and implicitly in Benedict's definition of the hermit, safety from the dangers of the waves comes from God: '[he can] call to mind the high state of Paradise with a remembrance of a sweet smell' (*Moralia*, II.ix.50); '[he is] able now, with no help save from God, to fight single-handed against the vices of the flesh and their own evil thoughts' (*RB*, I). In divorcing himself from other men to escape the vices of the land, the seafarer is at the mercy of God to help fight off the temptations associated with life amongst other men, detailed in 44-47. As such, we can detect a kenotic aspect of the seafaring allegory. Kenosis,

⁵⁰ *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, trans. J.F. Webb in *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth, 1965; 1983). Subsequent references are to this edition. See also A.J. Kabir's discussion of the equivalence of Paradise and Heaven in Anglo-Saxon thought: *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, CSASE, 32 (Cambridge, 2001). Brendan's maritime voyage links to the *perigrinatio pro amore Dei* tradition Whitelock discusses: see p. 151 above. Though doubtless influenced by this tradition, the text is allegorical in nature, since Brendan's intention is not to undertake a pilgrimage, as such, but to see 'God's Paradise'.

⁵¹ We recall here the severity of the eremitic diet: see pp. 36-37 above.

⁵² W.F. Bolton ('Alcuin and Old English Poetry', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 7 (1977), 10-22 (p. 14)) plausibly links lines 72-80 with Alcuin's *Epistolae*, 74.22: 'cogita, quod transitoria sunt haec omnia, quae in hoc saeculo habemus, et quia necessarium est unicuique hominum aeternam sibi per temporalia benefacta promereri gloriam' ('remember that because all these things that we have in this world will pass away, it is necessary for men to merit the eternal glory for themselves through good temporal deeds'; my translation).

as discussed throughout the thesis, was a familiar concept to the Anglo-Saxons, and Matthew 23:12 was quoted in the Old English gloss to Defensor's *Liber scintillarium*: 'eft he segð ælc soþlice se þe hine uppahæfþ byþ genyþerud 7 se þe hine genyþerud byþ uppahafen' (III, *be eadmodnysse*; 'concerning humility'; 'again he says: truly each of them that exalt themselves shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted'). This passage is elaborated by Philippians 2:5-9 (see p. ix above). Just as Christ's humility and obedience at the Crucifixion led directly to his glorification at the Ascension, so by submitting oneself entirely to the will of God one may also be glorified.

The kenotic element of the allegorical sea voyage is further elaborated in Bede's discussion of II Corinthians 11:26:

Peter, who walked with unimpeded steps over the waves which were stirred up by the wind but was raised up by Christ's hand when on account of fear he began to sink, signifies that with invisible faith those same elect overcome and regard as nothing all the efforts of the impious and the persecution thrown at them at the devil's instigation. So they cannot be submerged by the waves of the world at all, since they are encircled by the ever-present aid of their Maker. If they ever begin to falter – as they are human – they are immediately rescued by the one whom they are accustomed to call upon without ceasing, saying: 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'.⁵³ (*De octo quaestionibus*, Question III)

Although Bede speaks of walking upon water, rather than sailing upon it, the kenosis evident in having faith in Christ and so navigating the waves of sin and temptation by His direction and assistance is also applicable to *Seafarer* and *Navigatio*. The direction of *Navigatio*'s voyage comes explicitly from Brendan's submission to God's will, as he seeks His Paradise: 'is not the Lord our captain and helmsman? Then leave it to Him to direct us

⁵³ *On Eight Questions*, trans. A.G. Holder in *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany*, ed. W. Trent Foley and Holder, Translated Texts for Historians, 28 (Liverpool, 1999). See also Bede, Homily II.2. Bede also uses the image of the sea voyage to represent mankind's Post-Lapsarian exile from heaven: see *In Ezram et Neemiam*, I, re: Ezra 3:17; *In epistulas VII Catholicas*, re: James 3:4. The links between Anglo-Latin literature and the voyage of *Seafarer* are also noted briefly by Bolton ('Alcuin and Old English Poetry'), who links a passage of Alcuin's *Disputatio Pippini cum Albino* with *Seafarer*, lines 4b-8a (17): 'navis est domus erratica, ubilibet hospitium, viator sine vestigiis, vicinus harenae' ('the ship is a wandering house, everywhere a lodging, a traveller without tracks, near the beach', my translation).

where He wills' (15). Even when pursued by 'a creature of gigantic proportions', Brendan chastises those who wish to flee: 'do not be afraid, O you of little faith [...] God has always looked after us and He is sure to save us from this monster' (16). He is vindicated, like Moses in the Old English *Exodus*, as a larger monster arrives to slay the first. A similar acknowledgment of God's omnipotent influence on a voyage occurs in *Seafarer*: 'nis þæs modwlonc mon ofer eorþan/ [...] /þæt he a his sæfore sorge næbbe/to hwon hine dryhten gedon wille' (39; 42-3; 'therefore there is no man across the earth so proud of heart [...] that he does not always have sorrow on his sea voyage as to what the Lord might bring to him').⁵⁴ In seeking *elpeodigra eard* (38), the seafarer is seeking God, and since all contemplation takes places as God wills it, the direction of the voyage can be seen as likewise from God. In the examples of the sea in theological thought, faith and thinking on God enable the ship to avoid sinking or destruction, thus stabilising the mind against the waves of sin and temptation, which is echoed by another section of *Seafarer*, Part II:

Eadig bið se þe eapmod leofaþ; cymeð him seo ar of heofonum,
 meotod him þæt mod gestapelað, forþon he in his meahte gelyfeð.
 Stieran mon sceal strongum mode, ond þæt on stapelum healdan,
 ond gewis werum, wisum clæne,
 scyle monna gehwylc mid gemete healdan
 wiþ leofne ond wið laþne bealo. (107-12)

Blessed is he who lives humbly; the grace of heaven comes to him, the Creator strengthens his mind, because he believes in His power. A man must steer a strong mind and keep it in place, and be prudent with men, pure in [his] ways. Each man must hold evil in moderation towards a dear one and towards a hateful one.

The God-given steadfastness in this extract recalls the Three Anchors of the Old English *Soliloquies* (see pp. 154-55 above). Lines 107-08 also paraphrase Matthew 5:3 ('beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum'; 'blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is

⁵⁴ A literal example of God's beneficent influence on a voyage can be found in *Andreas*, 822-38, wherein God saves the saint from a storm at sea by sending His angels to transport him to land.

the kingdom of heaven'),⁵⁵ substituting *ar* for the vision of God, which in contemplative theory is equivalent.⁵⁶ This section of *Seafarer* indicates that it is the narrator's faith in God and humble surrender to His direction, implicit in the process of self-purification, that enables him to avoid sin and so navigate the allegorical waters, and the contemplative vision implicit in the coming of *ar of heofonum* is granted due to his humility. The final end of kenosis is of course glorification, which we see in both texts: just as Brendan's faith in God is rewarded by the successful navigation of the various trials on his voyage and ultimately his arrival at the island representing heaven, so too the seafarer's desire for the *elpeodigra eard* (38) and submission to God's will and law for men enables him to successfully navigate the tempestuous seas, and so ascend to a contemplative vision at the midpoint of the poem (58-64a).

Our allegorical interpretation of the voyage in *Seafarer* as the mind progressively fixing itself on God amidst 'vices of the flesh and [its] own evil thoughts' (*RB*, I) is buttressed by further reference to *Navigatio*. Just as Guthlac's temptations are envisioned as *earme aglæcan* (*Guthlac A*, 575a),⁵⁷ so Brendan's mind, wrestling with earthly vision and temptation to seek 'God's Paradise', enters different spaces of varying sanctity and allegorical meaning,

⁵⁵ The sentence structure here recalls the Beatitudes in the West-Saxon translation of Matthew 5:3, which also employs the adjective *eadig*: 'eadige synt þa gastlican þearfan, for þam hyra ys heofena rice' ('blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'; J.W. Bright, ed., *The Gospel of Saint Matthew in West-Saxon* (London, 1904), p. 14).

⁵⁶ My translation of *ar* as 'grace' is supported both by the contemplative context, and the sense of the noun in the Old English Corpus. The term is usually translated as 'honour', but there are two instances possibly referring to a state of contemplative unity (see *DOE*). In *Andreas*, *ar* is used to describe the state of heaven, which of course involves seeing God, face to face: 'gewat him þa se halga heofonas secan/ [...] / [...] þær is ar gelang/fira gehwylcum, þam þe hie findan cann' (977; 979b-80; 'the Holy One [Christ] departed to seek the heavens, [where] there is grace for each man who can find it'). Likewise, The Cambridge Psalter uses the term to refer to man's Pre-Lapsarian state: '& mann þa þe he in are wæs ne onget he' ('and man, when he was in grace, did not detect it', translating 'et homo cum in honore esset non intellexit' (Psalm 48:21). As discussed, man before the Fall lived in a state of contemplative union with God, which will be regained by those of sufficient merit to go to heaven, and so we can take the noun as an instance of God's grace, in the contemplative sense. *Ar* also occurs in *The Wanderer*, 1 (*are*), and is there convincingly interpreted by Leneghan as also meaning God's grace: 'Preparing the Mind for Prayer', 129-32.

⁵⁷ For more on contemplatives fighting sins and temptations allegorised as demons, see pp. 86-90 above.

corresponding to the stages of thought on the way to contemplation of God: the final destination of the voyage is the Paradise described by Barinthus at the start.⁵⁸ The mixed success of the *stiorere* in the Old English *Regula pastoralis*, an amplification of the Latin, in anticipating and avoiding nautical danger mirrors the passage of Brendan and his companions: ‘ac gif se stiora his stiorroðor gehilt, ðonne cymð he orsorglice to lande, hwilum ðeah ongear wind & ongear ða yða, hwilum mid ægðrum’ (LVI, ‘but if the steersman keeps his helm, then he comes securely to land, though sometimes against the wind, and [sometimes] against the waves, and sometimes against both’).⁵⁹ Should the text be interpreted as Brendan’s pious life culminating in post-mortem passage to heaven, this would be legitimised by the eschatological timescale. However, this image of heaven is an allegorical expression of the afterlife that may be glimpsed by the well-trained and pious contemplative. Indicative of its metaphoricity is the steward commanding the brethren to plunder the island’s treasure: ‘fill your ship brim-full with precious stones and return to the land of your birth’ (28). Heaven, ‘desiderabilia super aurum et lapidem pretiosum multum’ (Psalm 18:11, ‘more to be desired than gold and many precious stones’), in fact surpasses the beauty of jewels, which would preclude their presence in any attempted literal rendering of the afterlife. As a spiritual locality for souls rather than bodies, heaven would also not literally include delicious, ever-ripe fruit (*Navigatio*, 28). Such items are of great terrestrial value, and so merely provide a means to intimate the heavenly joy that Brendan and his crew witness. Furthermore, Brendan does not remain in ‘heaven’, but returns to a community ‘rapturous with joy at his return’ (29), to whom he describes his voyage before

⁵⁸ This narrative arrangement accords with the technique of meditational prayer expressed as visiting physical places in ascending to a vision of heaven that M. Carruthers identifies in early monastic rhetoric: see *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 60.

⁵⁹ *King Alfred’s West-Saxon Version of Gregory’s Pastoral Care, With an English Translation, The Latin Text, Notes, and An Introduction*, ed. H. Sweet, EETS, 45 & 50 (London, 1871).

being buried, implying that he returns corporeally, an axiomatic impossibility if he had travelled to heaven itself, as God advises: ‘non enim videbit me homo et vivet’ (Exodus 33:20, ‘for man shall not see me and live’). Rather than his soul journeying to heaven, it is more reasonable theologically to suggest that Brendan has partially glimpsed heaven through contemplation, as a result of his spiritual purgation on the waves and piety, after which vision he returns to earthly consciousness. In the final section of the chapter, we will discuss at greater length the allegorical voyage of *Seafarer* along the same lines.

V *The Seafarer* as Contemplative Text

As in *Navigatio*, the sea journey described in *Seafarer* should be interpreted as the preparation of the contemplative mind for a vision of God, albeit also potentially including the contemplative audience. As we saw in Chapter 1 and the discussion of *DDI* and *JDII* in the previous chapter, texts employing the first person singular pronoun, such as *Seafarer*, were seen as inviting an empathetic connection from readers, providing the reader with a reformatory script, as Gregory advises (*Homiliae in Hiezechielim Prophetam*, 1.7.8; see p. 65 above). Likewise, for Ælfwine, the Psalms were the principal means of personal spiritual expression, though written by another, which suggests that the texts were engaged with on a private, idiosyncratic level of understanding (*Ælfwine’s Prayerbook*, 53; see pp. 8-9 above). Indeed, that which is rejected by *Seafarer* is implicitly to be rejected by the audience: to share potentially in his vision, the audience is told to reject the iniquity represented by the allegorical townsman, not to value material things, and to keep the mind focused on contemplative preparation. This is especially evident in the concluding Exhortation’s shift to the first person plural (117; see p. 139 above). Like *DDI* and *JDII*, *Seafarer*, in inviting

personal identification with its protagonist, and furnishing the reader with a complex system of unresolved paradoxes, simultaneously provides the means for the contemplative audience to prepare for potential contemplative ascent.

Part I (12b-57) comprises the narrator's attempt to negate worldly images and temptations to be worthy of a partial vision of God. The urgency of this section may be attributed to this desire, since there are two mentions of the mind's restless intention to be granted contemplative union, at lines 37 and 50-51, as the moment of vision approaches. We have described at length the allegorical nature of the sea voyage as an explicit rejection of the world, but we should remind ourselves again at this point of the self-professed nature of the narrator's retreat (44-47; see p. 141-42 above). The decision to set sail is expressed in terms of spiritual purgation: in going on a voyage, the seafarer detaches himself from the vanities of the world, and fixes his mind on overcoming *yðra gewearlc*, which eventually results in the coming of God's grace. As we have seen, Pseudo-Dionysius provides the means for contemplation based on systematic negation (*Mystical Theology*, II.1025B; see p. 117 above). This contemplative negation is a creative process, leading the mind away from corporeal images to those which lie beyond all discourse and knowledge. Similarly, in following the cumulative negations of the terrestrial plane employed by the narrator, members of the contemplative audience are engaged also in progressively removing their minds from the material world to be closer to God. The purpose and success of this venture is outlined in lines 44-47 (see pp. 141-42 above): negating corporeal images and desires has enabled the narrator to focus exclusively upon the transcendence of such iniquity, *yðra gewearlc* (46). Just as the island representing heaven in *Navigatio* is distant and populated by a

mysterious young man (28), so too the seafarer seeks a distant land of people he has never met, heaven (37b-38; see p. 141 above).

There are several features of the narrative description of the journey in the first half of the poem that suggest *Seafarer* is a contemplative text. Each instance of the conjunction *forþon* in Part I is employed as a paradox, as in the narrator's reaction to the section on the seabirds (19b-25a; see p. 139 above).⁶⁰ Likewise, in lines 27-30 (see p. 141 above), there is no direct logical relationship between the conditions endured by the seafarer and the townsman's incredulity about the voyage. The connection can only be partially reconstructed by recalling the allegory of the sinful townsman and his seafaring antithesis: the implication is that the townsman's iniquity makes him spiritually blind to the contemplative life of the seafarer. Nevertheless, the logic remains ultimately unresolved, producing a paradox. This employment of *forþon* is most evident in the reasons given for the desire to travel in 31-38 (see p. 141 above). This is another disjunction in logic: conventionally, such meteorological conditions would be a discouragement to a potential seaman.⁶¹ For an ordinary individual, reacting to climatic changes in this way is perverse, and in fact renders the conjunction a disjunction in logic.⁶² *Seafarer's* use of *forþon* in this quotation is an attempt to disentangle the logic of response to the world's images. Fallen

⁶⁰ The disjunctive nature of *forþon* has inspired a variety of explanations. W.W. Lawrence, 'The Wanderer and the Seafarer', *JEGP*, 4 (1902), 460-80, argues that *forþon* represents a 'looser logical connection [...] [which serves] to bring new ideas into general relation with preceding statements' (p. 463). Along the same lines, Bolton comments that '*forþon* is adversative, and it serves to contrast the perils of the sea with the attractions of the land, or with the poet's undiminished desire to renew his voyaging', in 'Connectives in *The Seafarer* and *The Dream of the Rood*', *MP*, 57 (1960), 260-62 (p. 261). By contrast, N. Jacobs, 'Syntactical Connections and Logical Disconnection: The Case of *The Seafarer*', *MÆ*, 58 (1989), 105-13, argues for the essential incomprehensibility of the conjunction *forþon* in the first half of the poem, though he notes that 'the poet's persistent use [...] of a conjunction which implies some kind of logical connection suggests that he was at least aware of the desirability of such connections and probably thought he was making them' (p. 111).

⁶¹ In the next chapter, the use of another conjunction, *hwæðre*, in *The Dream of the Rood*, is demonstrated to be equally paradoxical, and similarly designed to assist the reader in their own contemplative preparation: see pp. 241-44 below.

⁶² Jacobs, 'Syntactical Connections', 113.

man is inclined to indulge in sinful worldly pleasures, and so has developed discourse which reflects this predilection, which in its turn prevents knowledge of the empyrean. Language must therefore be subverted in order to enable meditation of that which exceeds fallen discourse: responding to appalling conditions in the least conventional manner negates the semantic register of the sign. Following the same course of negation as the narrator, the contemplative audience, whose close engagement with the text would invite several readings in the attempt to understand the poem's logic, would recognise the employment of paradox as an apophatic technique. To follow the text, members of the contemplative audience must maintain the unresolvable paradoxes employed in order to access mentally the ineffable world to which the narrator is hoping to travel.

To prepare for potential communion at the midpoint, the text employs more negation of this kind. The arrogance of the land-dweller is undermined through an invocation of the Lord's power:

Forþon nis þæs modwlonc mon ofer eorþan,
ne his gifena þæs god, ne in geoguþe to þæs hwæt,
ne in his dædum to þæs deor, ne him his dryhten to þæs hold,
þæt he a his sæfore sorge næbbe,
to hwon hine dryhten gedon wille. (39-43)

Therefore there is no man across the earth so proud of heart, nor so generous of gifts, nor so vigorous in youth, nor so brave in his deeds, nor so friendly to his lord, that he does not always have sorrow on his sea voyage as to what the Lord might bring to him.⁶³

The *forþon* here is eminently more troublesome than its predecessor, but equally functions as part of *Seafarer's* contemplative scheme. In the first place, there is no logical connection

⁶³ I have interpreted *dryhten* in 41b and 43a in two senses, of earthly lord and the Lord God, respectively, since in the Christian sea allegory previously discussed power is wielded by God, not an earthly superior, and since the narrator is alone, there cannot be an earthly lord to influence the voyage. As well as fitting the poem's theme of contrast between the terrestrial and celestial best, *Seafarer* elsewhere employs repetition and punning, which supports my reading: 'ond gewis werum, wisum clæne' (110; see p. 159 above).

between these lines and the directly preceding passage about terrestrial conditions: this illogical section is linked to the preceding illogical section through a disjunctive *forþon*. As Pseudo-Dionysius discusses, negation is a cumulative process, of which the inclusion of several consecutive illogical passages linked with *forþon* is a demonstrative symptom. This is a clear indication that the narrator is attempting to detach himself from the images, logic and concepts of the fallen world in attempting to contemplate God, who exceeds all terrestrial knowledge and expression. The narrator here is not merely negating the words themselves, but the conventional wisdom and knowledge associated with the concepts they represent, which the disjunctive use of *forþon* implies. Closely engaged with the text, and recognising the apophatic technique employed by *Seafarer*, the contemplative audience may follow on the same path of cumulative negation as the poem proceeds, directing the mind beyond the terrestrial sphere to the ineffable by maintaining the poem's essential incomprehensibility.

In continuation of this apophatic scheme, it is not merely the worst conditions on earth that inspire the seafarer to leave the land, but the apotheosised conditions described later in the section (48-52; see p. 142 above). Again, the result of this section of negations is the mind's eagerness to journey to God, a clear link with the negations of 31-38, which provoke the same desire. Though *forþon* is not employed, that such delights inspire a journey to the harsh sea is a similar use of unconventional logic to destabilise language and further the incorporeal experience of the world. The logical reaction to the beautification of the land would be wishing to remain there, even if one had the occupation of literal sailing. However, the reaction of the seafarer is the same as to the worst conditions on land: he is inspired to voyage, taking to the lonely, tempestuous sea, with an unstated purpose. The same reaction being elicited to the very best and very worst of conditions on land makes it

evident that seafaring, the *vita contemplativa*, is the narrator's chosen mode of living. The negation of the responsive logic of the zenith and nadir of the earth's conditions is also beneficial to the contemplative audience following the text word for word, as the register effectively encompasses the entire spectrum of terrestrial beauty and desolation, with the same, illogical outcome.

The narrator's next paradoxical reaction follows directly: 'swylce geac monað geomran reorde/singeð sumeres weard, sorge beodeð/bitter in breosthord' (53-55a, 'likewise, the cuckoo in melancholy voice urges, the guardian of summer sings, announces sorrow, bitter in the feelings of the heart'). There are three mentions of cuckoos in EB. In *Guthlac A*, cuckoos announce spring as the eponymous saint returns from his journey to hell: 'fæger fugla reord, folde geblowen/geacas gear budon' (743-44a, 'the voices of birds [were] beautiful, the field blossomed; cuckoos announced the year'). Here the cuckoo is part of a longer section in which Guthlac's superlative piety comes to be reflected by his hermitage (see pp. 88-90 above), and so is unequivocally positive in this instance. Intriguingly, the cuckoo's song in *The Husband's Message*, 20b-25, inspires the same reaction as the narrator of *Seafarer*:

heht nu sylfa þe
 lustum læran, þæt þu lagu drefde,
 sibþan þu gehyrde on hliþes oran
 galan geomorne geac on bearwe.
 Ne læt þu þec sibþan sipes getwæfan,
 lade gelettan lifgendne monn.

Now he himself bids me gladly inform you that you should ply the ocean as soon as you have heard on the cliff's edge the melancholy cuckoo calling in the thicket. Thereafter let no man living deter you from the journey or hinder your voyage.

Like the seafarer, the narrator of *The Husband's Message* interprets the song of the cuckoo to be melancholy, even though it announces the end of winter. Thematic links between the two texts are few, given the more secular tone of *The Husband's Message*, and so it would be unwise to assume the reactions of the narrators to the same phenomenon to be equivalent. The motivations for the voyages in both poems differ greatly, but quite why the sound of the cuckoo, which announces the presumably joyful time for the message's recipient to return to her estranged lover should be interpreted as *geomorne* is unclear.⁶⁴ It is impossible to reconstruct the exact logic used here, as once again *Seafarer* strategically allies the lines to the preceding, illogical section, in this case by employing the conjunction *swylce*, as part of the scheme of cumulative negation. The poem explicitly states that the cuckoo is the herald of summer (54a), and so the expected, logical reaction would be joyful. Yet much like the sea voyage described in the Prologue, the birdsong leads to emotional misery: *sorge beodeð*.

We can draw a comparison to the poems of the preceding chapter, here, as the narrator of *DDI* and *JDII* paradoxically responds to the pseudo-paradisical conditions of his hermitage by engaging in a prolonged and complex meditation of heaven and hell, leading to the vision of God for narrator and, potentially, audience. In all three poems, the beauty of the earth – including the song of the cuckoo – is a distraction from contemplating heaven,

⁶⁴ The cuckoo here has inspired a variety of critical interpretations, mostly concerning folklore. O.S. Anderson, *The Seafarer: An Interpretation* (Lund, 1937), claims that in 'popular belief' the call of the cuckoo was seen as a harbinger of death (p. 26), and so repels the narrator. This particular claim seems to ignore the poem's own explanation of the cuckoo's symbolic role: *sumeres weard* (54a). H. Pilch refines Anderson's claim, by comparing the reaction of the narrator to that of the Welsh poem *Claf Abercuawg*, in which the cuckoo is both the announcer of a positive change in seasons and the inspirer of melancholy in the narrator. Pilch suggests that this is because the coming of another summer reminds the narrators of the transience of life: 'The Elegiac Genre in Old English', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 29 (1964), 209-24 (p. 217). Gordon (ed., *Seafarer*, p. 17) concurs with the likely Welsh literary heritage of *Seafarer*, but interprets the cuckoo as 'a bird of lament'. Along the same lines, see also S.C. Hoople, 'Stefn: The Transcendent Voice in *The Seafarer*', *In Geardagum*, 11 (1990), 45-55. For N.D. Isaacs, the cuckoo reminds the narrator of the coming danger of sailing: 'Image, Metaphor, Irony, Allusion, and Moral: The Shifting Perspective of *The Seafarer*', *NM*, 67 (1966), 266-82 (p. 277). A.P. Campbell believes that the cuckoo's call inspires the narrator with *wanderlust*, of thought rather than of literal journeying, to account for the narrator being *bitter in breosthord*: 'The Seafarer: Wanderlust and our Heavenly Home', *Revue de L'Université D'Ottawa*, 43 (1973), 235-47.

which must be resisted. Along the same lines, the paradoxical use of *forþon* and illogical reactions in Part I of *Seafarer* are symptomatic of contemplative endeavour: to contemplate God, who is by definition beyond words, one must attempt to think beyond the words and concepts that cannot contain His essence.

However, to be granted a vision of God of course requires His consent, which is given only to those of sufficient spiritual purity. Thus, the spiritual purgation of the allegorical sea-voyage works alongside the seafarer's employment of apophatic paradox in attempting to think beyond the terrestrial plane, as preparation for the potential gift of God's grace (107; see p. 143 above). The poet then employs a further contrast of land and sea, implying as in 39-43 the townsman's ignorance of the means of transcendence, and the piety of those who reject such a life: 'þæt se beorn ne wat/esteadig secg, hwæt þa sume dreogað/þe þa wræclastas widost lecgað' (55b-57; 'the man happy in luxuries does not know what those who take the furthest tracks of exile suffer').⁶⁵ Since the poem links place and ideology so closely, the furthest space from the land is one in which all of its attitudes are negated, suggesting that the sections of negation themselves (31-38; 48-52) lead to *þa wræclastas widost* (57), to which the contemplative audience must also travel. Again, language and logic are subverted, as what appears ostensibly a lament for hardships endured gives way to the seafarer's moment of triumph: communion with God.

The image of contemplative ascent in *Seafarer* is not the voyage itself, which signifies kenosis and the *vita contemplativa* culminating in the vision of the Central Image, but it is

⁶⁵ Greenfield interprets these lines, along with all of 39-57, as the narrator's yearning for the joys of the hall, and subsequent envy of those who continue to enjoy them: 'Attitudes and Values in *The Seafarer*', *Studies in Philology*, 51 (1954), 15-20. This is at odds with the poem's dichotomy of land and sea, and the context of other EB poems expressing distaste for worldly pleasures, discussed above. See also Stanley's penitential reading of the poem and implicit rejection of Greenfield's hypothesis in 'Old English Poetic Diction'.

important to note that the voyage preceding the ascent is characterised at times by darkness. The moment that Brendan reaches 'God's Paradise' in *Navigatio* is narrated in contemplative terms, after the significant period of forty days, corresponding to the time spent by the Israelites (Deuteronomy 2:7) and Christ (Mark 1:13) in the desert. 'On the evening of the fortieth day they were enveloped in darkness, so thick that they could hardly see each other' (28), which the steward explains 'swirls round that island which you have been seeking these seven long years' (*Ibid.*): heaven. Darkness is common in contemplative texts, representing man's ignorance of God, a tradition instigated by Paul: 'videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem' (I Corinthians 13:12; 'we see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face'). Augustine elaborates this myopia as 'clouds and darkness [that] are for the godless who have not understood Him' (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, re: Psalm 96:2), suggesting that these may be penetrated by the learned contemplative, should God grant him grace. Thus, spiritually pure and with his mind fixed on God, according to the Early Medieval definition of the contemplative, Brendan penetrates this cloud of unknowing: 'an hour later a brilliant light shone round them – their boat had reached the shore' (28). Whilst preparing for the potential coming of God's grace, the seafarer is 'nearo nihtwaco æt nacan stefnan' (7), like Brendan passing through the darkness to contemplation. This interpretation of the night is also applicable to a later section (31a; 33b-35; see p. 141 above). The calculated tautology of *nap nihtscua* (31a) here apophatically destabilises language to imply that this is the surpassing yet penetrable darkness that enshrouds the ineffable God. As previously discussed, literal nightfall would be an illogical motive for voyaging, but in the context of the divine darkness which must be penetrated through wisdom and purification to see God, the soul's ignorance of Him and subsequent desire to know more are plausible reasons for the contemplative to undertake a spiritual

quest. It is also important to note that since this detail precedes *heortan gepohtas* (34a) to travel, it is experienced whilst ashore, furthering the contrast of sinful land and potentially purgative sea: the land-dweller is inclined to love the transient world, as Part II glosses (80b-85; see p. 145 above). Whilst in the company of such men, the seafarer is further from God, and the temptations of society further this estrangement, as one must first ‘drive all corporeal images from [the] mind’s eye [...] to regard the joys of Heaven in an incorporeal way’ (Gregory, *Epistulae* I.5). Being on land, where the seafarer’s distance from God is greatest, as implied by *nap nihtscua*, is a plausible motivation for the seafarer’s desire to travel.

The moment of divine communion comes at the midpoint of the poem, and is paradoxically linked to the detail of the townsman’s ignorance of sailing (55b-57) by another disjunctive *forþon*:

Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,
 min modsefa mid mereflode
 ofer hwæles eþel hweorfeð wide,
 eorþan sceatas, cymeð eft to me
 gifre ond grædig, gielleð anfloga,
 hweteð on hwælweg⁶⁶ hreþer unwearnum
 ofer holma gelagu. (58-64a)

Therefore my mind now journeys across the breast-locker, my spirit travels widely along the sea’s flood, across the whale’s kingdom, the expanses of the earth, comes again to me eager and greedy, the solitary flyer cries, incites the mind irresistibly on the whale-route, across the expanse of ocean.

The logic here is once again unresolvable: there is no logical relation between the townsman’s ignorance of seafaring and the narrator’s contemplative ascent, despite the conjunction *forþon*. Again, however, this paradox is purposefully unresolvable, as it leads

⁶⁶ *Hwælweg* is an emendation of EB’s *wælweg* (‘the slaughter-route’), and is usually preferred by editors on alliterative grounds: see A.L. Klinck, ed., *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal, 1992), p. 139.

directly into the ineffable moment of union with God. The Central Image has been discussed on numerous occasions in scholarship, predominantly as a soul departing post-mortem to the next life.⁶⁷ However, the sequence of events narrated closely corresponds to Early Medieval theories of contemplation. In the immediate Anglo-Saxon context, the travels of the mind/spirit recall the Old English *Soliloquies*' cliff-image for contemplation:

And swa ylce be þære oðerre sunnan þe we ær ymbe specon, þæt is, wysdom. Se ðe hyne myd hys modes ægum geseon wele, he sceal of swiðe lytlum hyt ongynnan, and þonne lytlum and lytlum stigan near and near stæpmelum swilce he on sume hlædre stige, and wylle weorðan uppe on ðam clife wyrð, þonne mæg he locian egðer ge ofer þone warað ge ofer þa sæ, þe hym ðonne benioðan byð, ge æac ofer þæt þe hym ær bufan wæs. (Old English *Soliloquies*, I, p. 78)

And so the same with that other sun that we spoke of before, that is, wisdom [God].⁶⁸ He who wishes to see it with his mind's eyes shall begin very gradually, and then little by little, gradually mount nearer and nearer, just as if he were climbing on a ladder and wished to come to be on top of a cliff; then may he look both over the shore and over the sea, which are now beneath him, and also the land that was formerly above him.

Specifically locating the cliffs by the sea serves to link them explicitly to the discussion of the Three Anchors earlier in the Old English *Soliloquia* (I, pp. 67-68; see pp. 154-55 above), steadying the mind against the temptations and tribulations of the fallen world,

⁶⁷ C. Harrison-Wallace interprets ll.58-64a as the separation of soul and body at the moment of death: 'The Central Crux of *The Seafarer*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 68 (1996), 177-84. This reading however is problematic, since the *anfloga* returns to the narrator, and the poem continues in the first person for almost sixty lines, which suggests strongly that the narrator has not died at this point of the poem, much like Brendan's return to his monastery at the end of *Navigatio*. For the journey and return of the soul, see N. Hultin, 'The External Soul in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', *Folklore*, 88 (1977), 39-45, and Howlett, 'Structures', 315. Regarding the suggestion that the body and soul have been temporarily separated, however, Lockett points out (*Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 35) that the specific term for soul, *gast*, is emphatically not used by either *Seafarer* or *The Wanderer*. P. Clemoes interprets the *anfloga* as the soul on the basis of links to accounts of the soul's ability to leave the body and see distant earthly things by Alcuin and Boethius: '*Mens absentia cogitans* in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G.N. Garmonsway*, ed. D.A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron (London, 1969), pp. 62-77. For a full summary of critical debate surrounding the Central Image, see Cucina, *Il Seafarer*, pp. 90-93.

⁶⁸ The Old English *Soliloquies* equates God with knowledge on several occasions – 'seo gesyhð þe we God myd geseon scylon is angyt' (I, p. 67; 'the vision with which we shall see God is understanding') – and hence we should read *wysdom* as a signifier for Him here.

simultaneously enabling it to transcend the iniquitous waves. This image is adopted for the heightened perspicacity — associated with knowledge in the simile — derived from scaling such a terrestrial altitude. The travels of the seafarer's mind are expressed in the same way: the purification of the *modes æagum* means that the seafarer's mind/soul may travel across the earth in the beginning of its ascent to divine communion (60-61a).

The journey of the contemplative mind across the earth in the early stages of ascent in *Seafarer* also has Patristic precedent, familiar of course to the contemplative audience.

Augustine's soul takes the same path to celestial contemplation:

As the flame of love burned stronger in us and raised us higher towards the eternal God, our thoughts ranged over the whole compass of material things in their various degrees [...] at length we came to our own souls and passed beyond them to that place of everlasting plenty, where you feed Israel forever with the food of truth. (*Confessiones*, IX.10)

Augustine's account here implies that contemplation and negation of the totality of earthly things is the beginning of contemplative ascent. We see the same pattern again in Gregory I's account of Benedict's contemplative vision in *Dialogi*, II.35:

Standing there, all on a sudden in the dead of the night, as he looked forth, he saw a light, which banished away the darkness of the night, and glittered with such brightness, that the light which did shine in the midst of darkness was far more clear than the light of the day. Upon this sight a marvellous strange thing followed, for, as himself did afterward report, the whole world, gathered as it were together under one beam of the sun, was presented before his eyes, and whiles the venerable father stood attentively beholding the brightness of that glittering light, he saw the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua, in a fiery globe to be carried up by Angels into heaven.

Benedict's apotheosis involves such extensive contemplation of the world that it is shrunk before his contemplative gaze. To drive out material images presupposes knowledge of them in the first place: hence, the whole material world and its images must be seen to be negated, in order to be granted partial knowledge of the ineffable God, as Gregory I attempted (*Epistulae* I.5; see p. 100 above). Likewise, in the Old English *Soliloquies*, the sea-

cliff representing the beginning of contemplative ascent emphatically overlooks the sea that has just been transcended, which shrinks below as a result of the height of the cliff: 'þonne mæg he locian egðer ge ofer þone warað ge ofer þa sæ, þe hym ðonne benioðan byð' (I, p. 78).

If *Seafarer* 58-61a is an account of the mind or soul leaving the body – as scholarship has widely seen it – then in the suggested context for the text's interpretation its return in 61b is strongly indicative of contemplative ascent having taken place. We have related the mind/soul's departure from the narrator across the earth to the early stages of contemplative ascent discussed by Augustine and Gregory, and it is this detail of the return which allows us to suggest tentatively that a contemplative vision takes place in line 61. Where *Seafarer* differs from the Patristic accounts is in its omission of any detail about the celestial vision implied in the Central Image. Whilst Augustine and Gregory give an allusive indication of what was seen, *Seafarer* is silent on the matter of the vision, which occurs in the *cæsura* between 61a (the encompassing of the material world) and 61b (the mind's return).⁶⁹ This is a strong declaration of apophatic influence: visions of God are by nature ineffable, as Paul discusses in II Corinthians 12:2; 4: 'scio hominem in Christo ante annos quattuordecim sive in corpore nescio sive extra corpus nescio Deus scit raptum eiusmodi usque ad tertium caelum [...] raptus est in paradysum et audivit arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui' ('I know a man in Christ: above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven [...] he was caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter'). To

⁶⁹ This palaeographical arrangement recalls Chapter 2's discussion of the visual presentation of *Judgement Day II* on CCC 201, p. 165, which leaves a space wherein contemplation, God-willing, is intended to take place. See pp. 128-29 above.

circumvent the problem of describing ‘*arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui*’, the author of *Seafarer* opts instead for narrative silence, as advocated by Gregory I (*Moralia*, IX.xii.19; see p. 70 above). The narrative silence about all but the earliest stages of contemplative ascent strongly implies that the seafarer’s mind has been granted communion with God. The fact that the mind/ soul returns almost immediately to the narrator is similarly indicative, for the mind stays only briefly in such a state, according to Gregory: ‘not even in the sweetness of inward contemplation does the mind remain for long, in that being made to recoil by the very immensity of the light it is called back to itself’ (*Moralia*, V.xxxiii.58). This is echoed in the poem’s structure, as the moment of contemplative union receives only the silence of the *caesura* between two half lines, and the entirety of the travelling and return of the mind encompasses only seven of *Seafarer*’s one hundred and twenty five lines, or roughly five per cent of the narrative. As we have seen, visions of God are by nature ineffable, and so this silence would be a clear marker of contemplative union for the contemplative audience, capable not only of recognising the ineffable event implied by the *caesura* but re-reading the text to uncover the means to prepare for their own potential ascent.

The events related in the rest of the Central Image also suggest that a vision has taken place in this section of the poem. The curious detail that the *gielleð anfloga* is also best interpreted according to ideas of communion with God. In *Moralia*, Gregory describes the terror associated with the soul’s journey:

The higher the elevation, whereat the mind of man contemplates the things that are eternal, so much the more terror-struck at her temporal deeds, she shrinks with dread, in that she thoroughly discovers herself guilty [...] the mind being enlightened entertains the greatest fear, as it more clearly sees how much it is at variance with the rule of truth. (V.xxx.53)

The shriek of the soul (*anfloga*) may thus be ascribed to the fear experienced at the moment when God is glimpsed, and the seafarer realises his sinful, Post-Lapsarian state, an

interpretation which also concurs with Augustine's description of his 'soul as it cries from the depths' (*Confessiones*, XI.2), yearning for God's comfort and direction in a sinful world that torments the pious mind. This sentiment is repeated in Part II, as the contemplative event comes to inform the narrator's preaching (100-02; see p. 143 above). Interpreting *gielleð* as a terrified cry is facilitated by reference to the Old English *Exodus*, wherein it is associated with fear: 'he manegum gesceod/gyllende gryre' (489b-90a; 'He [God] slew many of them shrieking with terror').⁷⁰

When the soul *cymeð eft*, it is *gifre ond grædig*.⁷¹ The contemplative context elucidates these adjectives, for when the soul has glimpsed God once, it is filled with an insatiable hunger to see Him again: 'when [the soul] tastes that inward sweetness, it is on fire with love, it longs to mount above itself' (*Moralia*, V.xxxiii.58). Cassian believes that attaining this vision should be a frequent occurrence for the eremite, arising from the way of life outlined above (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3; see p. 11 above). The longing for God is thus another contemplative marker in the text. The eroticism of The Song of Songs was commonly interpreted in the Early Medieval Period as the soul's desire for contemplative union, as in Bede's discussion of verse 5:6 ('pessulum ostii aperui dilecto meo at ille declinaverat atque transierat anima mea liquefacta est ut locutus est quaesivi et non inveni illum vocavi et non respondit mihi'; 'I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved: but he had turned aside, and

⁷⁰ *Gellan* itself has a narrow range of meanings, dependent upon context. Most pertinently, in *Solomon and Saturn*, the verb is used for the dejected cry of the bird Solomon calls *Vasa Mortis*: *gilleð geomorlice* (282a, 'he shrieks sadly'). See *gellan* in DOE.

⁷¹ P.R. Orton, 'The Seafarer 58-64a', *Neophilologus*, 66 (1982), 450-59 (pp. 454-55), attributes the *gifre ond grædig* state of the soul here to the desire to journey again, but does not provide a Patristic context, instead linking it to the cuckoo of ll.53-57. The formulation *gifre ond grædig* occurs in several other texts, to imply insatiable hunger (following examples are from DOE): in both *Soul and Body I* and *II* it describes the actions of grave-worms (*I*, 74a; *II*, 69a); in both *Genesis B* (792) and *Christ and Satan* (189) it describes hell's boundless gluttony for the damned.

was gone. My soul melted when he spoke: I sought him, and found him not: I called, and he did not answer me’):⁷²

She opens the bolt of the door to her beloved who is knocking when a sudden inspiration inflames her desire for celestial things and she endeavours to open wide the bosom of her mind in order to receive a taste of His heavenly sweetness. (*In Cantica canticorum*, III, re: Song of Songs 5:6)

The specific term *longunge* is used once in *Seafarer*: ‘a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað’

(47).⁷³ Aside from the context of *Seafarer* elucidating the signification of the term, the link

with the contemplative exegesis of The Song of Songs allows us to support our

interpretation with the use of term to describe the sentiments of the Apostles at Christ’s

Ascension in Blickling Homily XII, l.66: ‘ða myclan byrþenne aberan ðære mycclan langunga

heora ðæs leofes Hlafordes’ ([they had] to carry the great burden of the great longing for

their dear Lord’).⁷⁴ Having had communion with the Lord made flesh, the Apostles are filled

with longing at His departure, much like Bede’s interpretation of the bride’s longing as

desire for contemplative union. The term is also used in this sense in the EB text, *The Wife’s*

Lament:

Ongunnon þæt þæs monnes magas hycgan
þurh dyrne gepoht, þæt hy todælden unc,
þæt wit gewidost in woruldrice
lifdon laðlicost, ond mec longade. (11-14)

The man’s kinsmen began to consider through secret thought that they would separate us two, so that we two would live as far apart as possible in the worldly kingdom, most hatefully, and longing afflicted me.

⁷² For a selection of exegetical texts on The Song of Songs, see D. Turner, ed. and trans., *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis on the Song of Songs*, Cistercian Studies, 156 (Kalamazoo, 1993).

⁷³ Cucina, by contrast, (*Il Seafarer*, pp. 81-82) interprets *longunge* as related to the narrator’s lament for the transience of earthly joy: ‘*longung* esprime qui [...] sia il doloroso rimpianto per tutto ciò che allietta ma non dura nel mondo, sia il desiderio pressante e inappagato di una ricerca di alterità, necessaria ma difficile’ (p. 82, ‘here *longung* expresses the painful regret for everything in the world that gives joy but does not last, the urgent, unfulfilled, desire and search for otherness, which is necessary but difficult’).

⁷⁴ R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS, o.s., 58, 63 & 73 (London, 1874-1880; repr. 1967). Subsequent references are to this edition.

The longing for the company of an absent beloved matches the insatiable contemplative yearning for union in *The Song of Songs*, and so supports translating *longunge* (*Seafarer*, 47a) as longing for union with God. This overwhelming desire is palpable elsewhere in *Seafarer*. The mentions of many journeys undertaken (2b-3), and ardent, overpowering urge to voyage frequently (36-7a), are all symptomatic of the soul's desire to see God again, having tasted 'inward sweetness' and feeling, subsequently, *hungor innan* (11b).⁷⁵ Indeed, the desire to travel again is instantaneous, as the soul's return immediately reawakens the seafaring urge (63b-64a). The mention of longing both before and after the contemplative ascent of the Central Image implies that the narrator is a seasoned contemplative, whose continuing purpose, as Cassian recommends, is 'to begin to taste the pledge of that heavenly way of life and glory in this vessel' (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3; see p. 11 above).⁷⁶

Another consequence of the soul being 'on fire with love' is disgust with itself and the world it inhabits: 'terror-struck at her temporal deeds, she shrinks with dread, in that she thoroughly discovers herself guilty' (*Moralia*, V.xxx.53).⁷⁷ Appropriately, Part II of the poem is markedly more condemnatory of the world of man than the rest of the poem. The centrality of the image of the soul's ascent is crucial: the line immediately following the image of transcendent union and half-line detailing the desire to travel again castigates the sinful world, 'forþon me hatran sind/dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif/læne on londe' (64b-66a; 'thus the Lord's glories are warmer to me than this dead life, transitory on earth'). We see in these lines, also, the transformation that has occurred in the narrator, for this

⁷⁵ As Cucina points out (*Il Seafarer*, p. 53), the noun *hungor* is also used in Adam's first speech after being exiled from Eden in *Genesis B*, 802b-03a, linking it firmly with man's regret at being exiled from the presence of God: 'nu slit me hunger and þurst/bitre on breostum' ('now hunger and thirst tear me, bitter sorrows of the heart').

⁷⁶ See also the discussion of *langunghwila* in *The Dream of the Rood*, pp. 217-19 below.

⁷⁷ See J.M. Palmer, 'Compunctio and the Heart in the Old English Poem *The Wanderer*', *Neophilologus*, 88 (2004), 447-60, for a discussion of Gregorian *contemptus mundi*.

instance of *forþon* represents the first comprehensible use of the conjunction in the poem, implying the intellectual change that has taken place as a result of the vision. This transformation is also emphasised by the narrative arrangement, as the conjunctive enclosure of the Central Image consists of an illogical *forþon* to introduce it, and a logical *forþon* to mark its ending, which brings the conjunctions into contrast. Contemplative visions were thought to bring about permanent changes in those who were granted them, as in the case of Dryhthelm (*HE*, V.12; see p. 130 above). Dryhthelm's spiritual purpose is reignited, and he comes to loathe the body and the sensory world, the source of his spiritual corruption, just as the seafarer comes to reject *þis deade lif*. As Gregory describes, a strong sense of *contemptus mundi* was expected to follow the contemplation of God: identifying *forþon* as a logical connective here is thus permissible when *gielleð anfloga* is interpreted as a soul repulsed by the world and itself, having glimpsed the surpassing radiance of God.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, the contemplative in the Early Medieval period had a strong sense of social responsibility (see pp. 54-55 above), and was expected to impart such knowledge as was gained through any visions granted. Thus, Bede allegorically interprets the slanting windows of I Kings 6:4 as

holy teachers and all the spiritual people in the Church to whom when in divine ecstasy it is granted more specially than to the others to see the hidden mysteries of heaven. And when they reveal publicly to the faithful what they have seen in private, they fill all the inner recesses of the temple as windows do with the sunlight they let in.⁷⁸ (*De templo Salomonis*, I.7.1)

In this definition, it would not be acceptable for *Seafarer* to end with the allusive account of the contemplative journey. For, whilst all visions of God are by definition ineffable, the sentiments felt after the vision provide the contemplative with better understanding of the

⁷⁸ *On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly, Translated Texts for Historians, 21 (Liverpool, 1995). Subsequent references are to this edition.

state of heaven and earth, with which he is tasked to educate others.⁷⁹ Certainly, we can trace a discernible alteration in the narrator's discourse and knowledge after the contemplative ascent, which as previously discussed is linked to the Central Image itself with the poem's first logical *forþon*.⁸⁰ The explicit condemnation of the land-dweller is delayed until after the vision, implying that the heightened knowledge resulting from divine contemplation facilitates the reinterpretation of townsmen as *dol* (106a) and avaricious (100-02; see p. 143 above).⁸¹ The narrator's intellectual transformation by the vision at 58-64a is most latent in the section of beatitudes in Part II (66b-116), which bear such a strong affinity to wisdom literature that one of the statements of Part II is near-identical to a line of *Maxims I* of EB: 'dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat, to þæs oft cymeð deað unþinged' (35, 'foolish is he who does not know his Lord; often death comes to him unprepared'); 'dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ; cymeð him se deað unþinged' (*Seafarer*, 106).⁸² Adopting the narrative style of wisdom literature here is a demonstrative indication of the narrator's intellectual transformation. We also discussed earlier how the seafarer's realisation of his own sinful state, and subsequent fear of punishment, in the Central Image comes to inform the condemnation of the avaricious, who will one day stand in terror before God (100-02). As a

⁷⁹ The same structure of purgation, negation, ascent, and homiletic exhortation, characterises each text selected for this thesis.

⁸⁰ Bolton argues that 'in the second half *forþon* is causal, and it serves to unify rather than to contrast the elements of the exposition: it assists the resolution of the earlier contrast' of the sinful land and the sea ('Connectives in *The Seafarer* and *The Dream of the Rood*', 261). The alteration in the poem's tone has lead several critics to suggest that *Seafarer* in fact comprises two separate poems, rudimentarily combined by the EB scribe. For a summary, see Doubleday, 'Two-Part Structure in Old English Poetry', *Notre Dame English Journal*, 8 (1973), 71-79, and Lee, 'The Unity of *The Dream of the Rood*', *Neophilologus*, 56 (1972), 469-86 (p. 470). See also p. 138, footnote 8 above.

⁸¹ *Dol* occurs several times in the Old English Corpus (see DOE); the most emphatic parallel to the use of the term in *Seafarer* is *Genesis B*, wherein it is used to describe Satan's opposition to God: 'þa spræc se ofermoda cyning, þe ær wæs engla scynost/hwitost on heofne and his hearran leof/drihtne dyre, oð hie to dole wurdon' (338-40, 'then spoke the king of pride, he who was the most shining of angels, the whitest in heaven and his superior's beloved, dear to God until they came to folly'). This context fits *Seafarer*'s scheme of contrasting the pious life at sea with the iniquity of life on land.

⁸² For a longer discussion of the poem in the sapiential context, see T.A. Shippey, 'The Wanderer and The Seafarer as Wisdom Poetry', in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. H. Aertsen and R.H. Bremner Jr (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 145-58. For more on the structure of such gnomic phrases in Old English poetry, see H. Momma, 'The "Gnomic Formula" and Some Additions to Bliss's Old English Metrical System', *NQ*, 234 (1989), 423-26.

result of his vision, the seafarer now has experiential understanding of these truths, rather than merely learned knowledge of them, which gives him the requisite *auctoritas* to adopt the gnomic style and deliver the homily and the Exhortation (117-24). However, visions of God in themselves are only partial, and what is seen exceeds earthly discourse: ‘many have seen, but what His will chose to show they saw, not what formed His nature’ (Augustine, *De videndo Deo*, XX).⁸³ Appropriately, then, even after glimpsing God, the narrator still maintains His ineffability: ‘meotud meahtigra þonne ænges monnes gehygd’ (116; ‘the Creator is more almighty than the thought of any man’).⁸⁴

Some time ago, John C. Shields suggested Julianus Pomerius as a likely influence on *Seafarer*, albeit without providing any specific correspondences.⁸⁵ Building upon this suggestion, I will now highlight the extraordinary correspondence of the structure of the Central Image, and its relation to the other parts of *Seafarer*, to a specific section of Pomerius’ *De vita contemplativa*:

Far removed from the noise of worldly concerns, let him ardently ponder those things whereby he may inflame his soul to a desire of his future reward. Let him be intent on spiritual studies, which may make him better and better from day to day; let him love holy leisure, in which he may conduct the business of his soul. Let him count the earth as dead to him, and let him show himself crucified to the enticements of an alluring world. Let him place the vision of his Creator incomparably above delight in present spectacles. Always let him raise himself by advancing stages to the summit of divine contemplation; never, not even for a moment, let him turn from the consideration of promises for the future to look back upon things of earth. Let him constantly direct the gaze of his mind to the place he desires to attain; let him place before the eyes of his soul the happiness of the future life, and let him love it. Let him neither dread nor desire anything temporal; let neither fear of losing temporal possessions nor greed of gaining them weaken the resolution of his mind. Let not prosperity corrupt nor adversity shake him. Let not favourable opinion arouse his vanity nor unfavourable opinion depress him; let not misplaced criticism or praise increase his

⁸³ Augustine, ‘Letter 147’, trans. M.T. Clark in *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings* (London, 1984). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁸⁴ 115b also recalls the fatalistic tone of *The Wanderer*, 5b: ‘Wyrd bið ful ared!’ (‘fate is fully fixed!’).

⁸⁵ ‘*The Seafarer as a Meditatio*’, 30.

happiness or take away from it. Let him not rejoice at all in temporal matters, nor grieve. Unconquered in joy and sorrow, let him preserve the mien of a steadfast soul; let nothing the world promises or threatens shake the stable firmness of his heart; but, remaining always the same and natural, let him not feel the loss or the gain of this world. (VIII.i)

The seafarer's enactment of the contemplative life is very close to Pomerius's definition here.

In the first place, we can see the narrator as 'crucified to the enticements of an alluring world' in forsaking the land for the sea (44-45; see pp. 141-142 above). The entirety of Part I equates to 'rais[ing] himself by advancing stages to the summit of divine contemplation', as the seafarer leaves the world behind, and after progressive spiritual purification is receptive to the coming of God's grace. Also in Part I, the seafarer's equivalent reaction to both the nefarious (31-38; see p. 141 above) and beautiful (48-52; see p. 142 above) aspects of the world equates to Pomerius's demand for complete terrestrial apathy: 'let him not rejoice at all in temporal matters, nor grieve'. Indeed, this equivalence testifies to the narrator's steadfastness, that comes from his apprehension of the transience of the earth contrasted to the eternity of heaven: 'let nothing the world promises or threatens shake the stable firmness of his heart; but, remaining always the same and natural, let him not feel the loss or the gain of this world'; (106-08; see p. 143 above). Having ascended to divine contemplation, the seafarer is reinvigorated by the desire to do so again, and consequently counts the world as naught. Indeed, designating mortality as *his deade lif* (65b) even echoes the advice 'let him count the earth as dead to him'. This reaction comes from the narrator fixing his mind on God and the future reward, as in the closing exhortation of the poem, which again echoes this section of *De vita contemplativa*: 'let him constantly direct the gaze of his mind to the place he desires to attain; let him place before the eyes of his soul the happiness of the future life, and let him love it'; *Seafarer* 117-24 (see p. 139 above). The clear links with *De vita contemplativa* emphatically buttresses a reading of *Seafarer* as an account of the life of a

contemplative, whose voyage is a mental journey, and whose spirituality can be reconstructed by reference to Early Medieval theories of contemplation. The taxonomic resemblance between *Seafarer's* narrative structure and this section of *De vita contemplativa* is a further marker to members of the contemplative audience, whose familiarity with contemplative theology and its techniques would enable them to recognise the theme of the poem, and so return to the beginning of the poem to search for the means of contemplative ascent.

VI Conclusion

In *The Wanderer*, the protagonist's enlightenment is manifested in the shift from the first person singular to the first person plural, as he realises that his experience of the world is not personal but universal, which is simultaneously a reformative script for the reader.⁸⁶ There is a similar shift in *Seafarer*, but its interpretation is far more demanding. There is no link between literal sailing and the travels of the mind to union with God, and the allusive allegorical method, which only becomes clear by the end of the poem, is a sign for members of the contemplative audience amongst the educated readership of EB to re-read the poem and reconstruct the events leading up to the Central Image. Indeed, the shift to direct exhortation, which necessitates the use of the plural *uton* (117a), demands referral back to the preceding one hundred and sixteen lines to uncover the means to share the protagonist's vision. The poem's narrative arrangement serves to exceed the limits of the poetic form, for its style requires that it be read typologically, like a Biblical text, a heightened textual

⁸⁶ M.G. Champion, 'From Complaint to Praise: Language as Cure in *The Wanderer*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 69 (1997), 187-202; Orchard, 'Re-Reading *The Wanderer*'.

engagement that forces the reader to join in the quest for meaning from the negations, and so reconstructs the contemplative audience as seafarers themselves, searching for truth within the text and exhorting them to engage on their own voyage of contemplative preparation.⁸⁷ In reading the text and following the schematic negation of images we too are engaged in contemplative preparation with the protagonist. The use of the first person plural *we* rather than the second person plural *ge* indicates that the process of seafaring has not ended with the poem for the narrator, who, like Cassian's idealised eremite (*Conlationes*, 10.VII.3; see p. 11 above), must repeat his contemplative journey again and again, just as his textual self must every time the poem is (re)read by a member of the contemplative audience.

⁸⁷ This reading of *Seafarer* links the poem strongly to the riddle tradition and other contents of Leofric's legacy to Exeter. See pp. 136-38 above.

4 *The Dream of the Rood*, a Neglected Contemplative Text

With the exception of *Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood* (hereafter referred to as *DOTR*) is perhaps the most discussed of all Anglo-Saxon texts. The paradox of *Rood* criticism is that whilst the text continues to be frequently analysed by Old English scholars, it has rarely been interpreted as a contemplative text. As it exists in the Vercelli Book (hereafter referred to as VB), *DOTR* is best read as the account of a contemplative event, and yet limited critical attention has been paid to this crucial aspect of the poem's interpretation.¹ R.B. Burlin interprets the poem and the Ruthwell Cross as a celebration of the contemplative life outlined by Gregory I, concluding that the poem is 'a literary imitation of the contemplative experience, [which] has for its dramatic content the celebration of a mystery which is itself a precise theological coordinate of that experience'.² Paavo Rissanen³ and W.F. Bolton⁴ similarly link certain features of the poem to the contemplative definitions of Gregory I's *Moralia*. Rissanen also contextualises the poem with the later visions of Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich, and the theories of the *Cloud* Author. Robert Boenig discusses the paradoxes in the cross's narrative as evidence for the currency of Pseudo-Dionysius in Anglo-Saxon thought.⁵ These paradoxes are essential to all accounts of the crucifixion, though they are emphasised more so in the poem than in other accounts of the event. I

¹ For an extensive bibliography on *DOTR*, see P.G. Remley, 'The Vercelli Book and its Texts: A Guide to Scholarship', in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. S. Zacher and A. Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 318-416 (357-78).

² 'The Ruthwell Cross, *The Dream of the Rood* and the *Vita Contemplativa*', *Studies in Philology*, 65 (1968), 23-43 (p. 42).

³ *The Message and Structure of The Dream of the Rood*, Missiolgian Ja Ekumenikan Seuran Julkaisuja, 52 (Helsinki, 1987).

⁴ 'The Book of Job in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Mediaevalia*, 6 (1980), 87-103.

⁵ 'Pseudo-Dionysius and *The Dream of the Rood*', *Studia Mystica*, 19 (1998), 1-7.

extend Boenig's analysis of the paradoxes later in the chapter, and discuss a manuscript witness to this specific part of Pseudo-Dionysius's theology. In this chapter I will examine minutely the visionary framework and the narrator's activity in a broad contemplative context to reveal and analyse the nature of the event described in the poem, and how this moment is communicated textually. It will be suggested ultimately that the narrator adopts a kenotic position in imitation of the anthropomorphised cross, and that the vision of the talking cross is a theophany providing further evidence for the influence of apophysis on Anglo-Saxon spirituality. The final section will draw these thematic strands together to demonstrate how the text is arranged to be used by members of the contemplative audience.

I *DOTR* in VB

We begin with the assumption that *DOTR* is a complete text as it exists in VB. VB is a collection of Old English poetry and prose, made up of six poems (*Andreas*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Soul and Body I*, *Homiletic Fragment I*, *DOTR*, and *Elene*) and twenty-three prose texts, which is commonly dated to the second half of the tenth century.⁶ There have been several hypotheses about the nature and definition of the collection. Celia Sisam demonstrated long ago that VB was not copied consecutively, but transcribed piecemeal by one person across a period of time.⁷ As such, VB represents the tastes and interpretations of an individual: Samantha Zacher believes that it 'provides some kind of reading book for

⁶ Ker, no. 394; G&L, no. 941; D.G. Scragg, 'The Compilation of the Vercelli Book', *ASE*, 2 (1973), 189-207; G.P. Krapp, ed., *The Vercelli Book*, *ASPR*, 2 (London, 1932), p. xvi. This dating is also shared by S. Zacher, the most recent critic to have written at length on VB: see *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 1 (Toronto, 2009), p. 5.

⁷ *The Vercelli Book: A Late Tenth-Century Manuscript Containing Prose and Verse*, *Vercelli Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 19 (Copenhagen, 1976), p. 37.

individual devotion'.⁸ This broad definition is shared by Kenneth Sisam and D.G. Scragg, who called VB 'a collection of pious reading'.⁹ Éamonn Ó'Carragáin is more precise in discussing the manuscript as an ascetic *florilegium*, an individual's compilation of texts for personal, monastic devotion.¹⁰ Identifying the hand of a single individual in VB's compilation however has obscured the question of the prose texts' purpose in the manuscript. Thus, these readings do not account for what appear obviously populist features — such as the use of homiletic address and the frequent interjections of the narrator — which strongly imply the broad audience to which the Vercelli prose texts sought to appeal. This apparent contradiction leads Francis Leneghan to propose that VB manifests the tension between action and contemplation in the life of a preacher, and by embracing both in its content it reflects the 'mixed life' of Gregory's ideal preacher.¹¹ My own reading of VB builds upon this article, and I will further suggest that *DOTR*, and Vercelli Homily IX in the next chapter, can be interpreted as contemplative apparatus. We can link this discussion of VB as a manuscript compiled by a religious figure whose attempt to balance action and contemplation is reflected in manuscript contents to CCCC 201 (see pp. 78-81 above). Comparing these manuscripts, we can perhaps suggest that the compiler of CCCC 201, whether Wulfstan or not, held a higher position in the church than the VB compiler, given the inclusion of law codes and other items suggesting an administrative function. The

⁸ *Preaching the Converted*, pp. 32-42. For earlier definitions of VB's prose items as homilies, see Ker no. 394; Krapp, *Vercelli Book*, p. xvi.

⁹ K. Sisam, 'Marginalia in the Vercelli Book', in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 109-118; Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, EETS, O.S. 300 (Oxford, 1992), p. xix. This interpretation is developed by M.McC. Gatch, 'Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies', *Traditio*, 21 (1965), 117-65 (pp. 137-46; 158-60).

¹⁰ See 'Crucifixion as Annunciation: The Relation of *The Dream of the Rood* to the Liturgy Reconsidered', *ES*, 63 (1982), 487-505 (p. 490); for features that suggest the influence of one man on the compilation of VB, see 'How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?', in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. P.M. Tilling (Coleraine, 1981), pp. 63-104. A lengthy discussion is given in *The Vercelli Book as an Ascetic florilegium* (Queen's University of Belfast, 1975).

¹¹ 'Teaching the Teachers', 632-36.

specific role of the VB homilies in a private collection of texts is elaborated in the next chapter.

DOTR features from ff.104v-106r in the manuscript, and runs continuously across two separate gatherings, numbered 'XIII' (sic) and 'XV', which coupled with the strong likelihood that VB is written by one scribe suggests that *DOTR* was copied from a single exemplar onto a pre-existing sequence of quires, rather than created piecemeal over time.¹² Similarly, the poem is introduced visually by a small capital *H*, separated from the preceding *Homiletic Fragment I* by line spacing, and the Homily following the poem begins on f.106r, all suggesting that the text as it exists was copied into the manuscript at one time and from a single exemplar.¹³ This latter separation is consistent with scribal practice, since all leaves, except f.104v which is shared with *Homiletic Fragment I*, contain 32 lines.¹⁴ It is, of course, possible to make a case for the poem being composite at some point of its creation, perhaps from the merging of two or more sources, but palaeographical evidence suggests that it was assumed to constitute a whole at the time when it was copied into VB. There is some debate nevertheless about the compilation of the manuscript. Kenneth Sisam and Éamonn Ó'Carragáin believe that the quires containing *DOTR* were a later addition to the manuscript, on codicological grounds, and that VB was rearranged to situate the poem in the most thematically harmonious place in the manuscript, providing evidence of a discerning collector arranging material to match his own personal devotional practice and his belief that *DOTR* constituted a whole text.¹⁵ This latter observation is a viable hypothesis,

¹² Krapp, *Vercelli Book*, p. xiv.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁵ Sisam, 'Marginalia'; Ó'Carragáin, 'How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?'. The hypothesis of VB representing an individual's devotional piety is especially viable in the context of the rise of

and one that will be supported throughout this chapter as key themes of *DOTR* are demonstrated to be concerns shared by other texts in the manuscript. My hypothesis of VB's purpose is concluded in the next chapter.

Despite the relative certainty of VB version's age, the unusual nature of the other temporally disparate witnesses to the Crucifixion narrative, the Ruthwell Cross and the later Brussels Cross, problematises our understanding of its compositional history.¹⁶ Whether or not *DOTR* constitutes an adaptation of the Ruthwell Cross Poem into a new narrative or a literate tenth-century version of a now-lost text that preceded the inscription on the cross, the palaeographical discussion above suggests that the poem has been copied from a single exemplar, and so at the time of copying it must have been assumed to constitute a whole.¹⁷

private prayer in later Anglo-Saxon England. See A.J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, 1983).

¹⁶ The Ruthwell Cross and its inscription are dated most convincingly by Ó'Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of The Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), to the decade 730-40, on liturgical evidence, pp. 284; 290. S.T.R.O. d'Ardenne ('The Old English Inscription on the Brussels Cross', *ES*, 21 (1939), 145-64 (p. 149)) is less precise when giving the Ruthwell Cross the broad date range of c.670-750 based on 'artistic, epigraphic and archaeological evidence'. Ó'Carragáin refutes E.G. Stanley's earlier hypothesis that the runic inscription is a later addition to the older cross; 'The Ruthwell Cross Inscription: Some Linguistic and Literary Implications of Paul Meyvaert's Paper "An Apocalypse Panel on the Ruthwell Cross"', in *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature*, ed. E.G. Stanley, Publications of the Dictionary of Old English, 3 (Toronto, 1987), pp. 384-99 (396). Ó'Carragáin's dating simultaneously refutes A. Breeze's claim, influenced by Stanley, for a ninth-century date, when 'Ruthwell was free from Viking and British attacks, and a patron might wish to add an inscription to the cross and have the means to do so' ('The Date of the Ruthwell Cross Inscription', *American Notes & Queries*, 16 (2003), 3-5 (p. 4)). A.S. Cook dates the inscription on the Brussels cross to no earlier than 1000 on philological grounds ('The Date of the Old English Inscription on the Brussels Cross', *The Modern Language Review*, 10 (1915), 157-61 (p. 158)). d'Ardenne ('Brussels Cross') comes to the same conclusion based on the inscription that he translates as 'This cross Æthelmær and Athelwold his brother ordered to be made, to the glory of Christ, for the soul of Ælfric, their brother' (148).

¹⁷ Certain critics see the poem as a composite which divides at line 78, at which point the cross discusses its post-Passion role. In much earlier Old English criticism, this is entirely based on aesthetic taste and the assumption that it is possible to accurately define Anglo-Saxon poetics, which may not have been as concerned as modern audiences with originality. J.V. Fleming, 'The Dream of the Rood and Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', *Traditio*, 22 (1966), 43-72 (p. 54), summarises critical discussion of this position. Notable discussions of the poem's hybridity include B. Dickins and A.S.C. Ross, eds., *The Dream of the Rood* (London, 1934), p. 18: 'the last few lines, referring to the Harrowing of Hell, have all the appearance of an addition'. Cook's edition (*The Dream of the Rood: An Old English Poem Attributed to Cynewulf* (Oxford, 1905)) goes even further, and sees this concluding section as detrimental to the whole, p. xlii: '[it] seriously mars the unity of impression.' On the contrary, addition or not, the Harrowing of Hell section (148a-56) deals with the theme of redemption, and so fits in perfectly with a poem discussing the cosmological role of the cross. In defence of the poem's unity see A.A. Lee, 'The Unity of *The Dream of the Rood*',

Besides this, the Vercelli text is thematically and structurally harmonious, both with the other content of the manuscript and within the poem itself. The discussion of verbal parallels within the poem and across other texts in the manuscript, and the subtle theological and artistic technique of the poem analysed throughout the chapter should indicate beyond reasonable doubt the unity of composition: any additions to an older version of the text have been slavishly altered to fit the scheme of the poet.

II.i Biblical dream/vision, not medieval dream-vision

The poem's given title, *DOTR*, is based upon equivocal textual evidence.¹⁸ In another case of nominative determinism in Old English criticism, most discussions of the poem assume that the poem is about a dream in an anachronistic sense, making the narrator the source of the vision. *DOTR* has even been interpreted as the genesis of the later medieval genre of dream-vision, which produced some of the most profane love lyrics of the period.¹⁹ I will demonstrate here that *DOTR* is best studied amongst biblical dreams and visions, rather than with the *Roman de la Rose* or *The Book of the Duchess*.

Neophilologus, 56 (1972), 469-86; F.H. Patten, 'Structure and Meaning in *The Dream of The Rood*', *ES*, 49 (1968), 385-401.

¹⁸ NB that M. Clayton entitles her recent translation of the poem 'The Vision of the Cross', adopting an earlier, and in my opinion more accurate, title more common in the nineteenth century. See *Old English Poems of Christ and his Saints*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 27 (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

¹⁹ See, for instance, Lee, 'The Unity', and T.J. Napierkowski, 'A Dream of the Cross', *CL*, 11 (1978), 3-12, who assume the existence of a dream-vision genre resembling that of the later middle ages. A. Savage, one of the few critics to have discussed Anglo-Saxon spirituality in more than a single article, maintains that there is no evidence that the poem represents more than a dream; 'Mystical and Evangelical in *The Dream of the Rood*', in V.M. Lagorio, ed., *Mysticism: Medieval & Modern* (Salzburg, 1986), pp. 4-11 (6). Though convinced that the poem is about a dream, C. Heatt rejects the claims for the equivalence of dream-vision and *DOTR* in 'Dream Frame and Verbal Echo in *The Dream of the Rood*', *NM*, 72 (1971), 251-63. See also p. 83 above for *DDI* and *JDII* as forerunners of the Dream-Vision genre.

The given title and subsequent interpretation hinge entirely upon the opening of the poem, and so it is important to analyse closely the section's grammar and lexical choices:

Hwæt! Ic swefna cyst secgan wylle,
hwæt me gemætte to midre nihte,
syðþan reordberend reste wunedon!
Puhte me þæt ic gesawe syllicre treow
on lyft lædan, leohte bewunden,
beama beorhtost.²⁰ (1-6a)

Lo! I intend to relate the best of visions, what came to me at midnight when speech-bearers were at rest! It seemed to me that I saw a tree more wonderful carried in the heavens, surrounded by light, the brightest of beams.²¹

'Hwæt me gemætte to midre nihte' (2) is commonly translated as 'what I dreamed at midnight'.²² This rendering is influenced by the noun *swefna* (1a), which is commonly used elsewhere in the Old English Corpus to mean 'dream'. Cook refers to line 157 of the Old English *Daniel* to support this rendering: 'swa his mandryhten gemæted wereð'.²³ However, the broader context of the quotation reveals that *mandryhten* ('lord'), which refers to Nebuchadnezzar, is in the accusative, and hence is the direct object of the sentence. Likewise, where *swefn* is used in other texts, it commonly requires an accusative,²⁴ and in Constantine's vision of the cross in *Elene* of VB the emperor sees a vision of a cross in a dream: 'þa wearð on slæpe sylfum ætywed/þam casere, þær he on corðre swæf/sigerofum gesegen swefnes woma' (69-71; 'then a tumult of a dream [or vision] was revealed to the emperor's self in sleep for him to see, where the victorious one slept in the troop'). This

²⁰ There is a clear resemblance to the vision of Constantine in *Elene* 88b-92a, which is probably based on *DOTR*: see Orchard, 'The Dream of the Rood: Cross References', in *New Readings*, pp. 225-53 (248-51). Orchard convincingly demonstrates that Cynewulf likely adapted this part of *DOTR* for *Elene* – which importantly suggests that he interpreted the poem as an account of a celestial dream/ vision — and so I will defer from analysing its similarities, and instead look elsewhere in the Old English corpus.

²¹ The justification for my translation of *swefna* as 'of visions' rather than the conventional 'of dreams' will be made clear as this section proceeds.

²² This is standard practice amongst editors. See M. Swanton's notes to the line in his edition of *DOTR* (Manchester, 1970), p. 99, and glossary, p. 140; Dickins and Ross's edition, p. 45; Cook's edition, p. 59.

²³ Cook, *The Dream of the Rood*, p. 11.

²⁴ See Bosworth-Toller's entry for *swefen*.

sense of receiving a dream is at odds to the modern understanding of dreaming, in which the primary agency comes from the dreamer's subconscious brain activity.²⁵ The verbs *gemæted wereð* are a further source of potential confusion. *Wereð* is the third person past indicative of *weorþan*, 'to happen, come to pass'. *Gemæted* is the past participle of *gemætan*, which though usually translated as 'to dream' shares a close lexicographical relationship with *metan* 'to measure out; to paint; to design', which requires an accusative from the noun to which it refers. A literal translation of *Daniel* 157 would thus read 'as to his lord happened, was painted'. Whilst Nebuchadnezzar unequivocally does fall asleep and see or dream in both the biblical and Old English versions of *Daniel*, to render this as the idiomatically preferable 'as his lord had dreamed' thus obscures the literal sense of receiving a vision. This contention is supported by the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's dream *com on sefan* (110a, 'came into his mind').²⁶ In using *gemætan*, the equivalent passage in *DOTR* also necessarily places the narrator in the accusative, making it clear that this is a received vision, in which he plays only the role of observer: *me gemætte*. Contrary to Cook's intention, comparison with *Daniel* 157 suggests that rendering *me gemætte* as 'what I dreamed' inaccurately makes the narrator the source of his own vision.²⁷ For this reason, I have translated *me gemætte* as 'what came to me', reproducing the accusative of the Old English

²⁵ J.A. Hobson, *Dreaming: An Introduction to the Science of Sleep* (Oxford, 2002), p. 5.

²⁶ For a broader discussion of the receptive nature of Anglo-Saxon dreams, with reference both to *Daniel* and *DOTR*, see B. Mize, 'The Mental Container and the Cross of Christ: Revelation and Community in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Studies in Philology*, 107 (2010), 131-78. Along the same lines, A. Harbus has also written a series of articles and a book discussing dreams in Old English. See *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 2012).

²⁷ For the same reasons, Scragg translates the line as 'I wish to relate the best of dreams which came to me in the middle of the night' (*Hwæt/pæt* in *The Dream of The Rood*, line 2', NQ, 213 (1968), 166-68 (p. 167)). Note however that he translates *swefna* as 'dreams' rather than 'visions', the latter of which I will support below. E. Treharne also preserves the suggested sense of line two in her translation: 'I will tell the best of visions that came to me in the middle of the night' (*Old and Middle English C.890-c.1400: An Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2004)).

and the Isidorean/Macrobian sense, of receiving the matter of a dream or vision rather than imagining it oneself, discussed below.²⁸

The most influential medieval discussion of dreams comes in Macrobius's early fifth-century commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* which was truncated into Isidore's *Etymologiae*, the more numerous surviving manuscripts of which suggest that this was the most likely reference point for the Anglo-Saxons.²⁹ Discussing prophecy, Isidore describes two types which are especially relevant to our discussion:

The second kind [of prophecy] is vision (*visio*), as when Isaiah says (Isaiah 6:1), "I saw (*videre*, ppl. *visus*) the Lord sitting upon a high throne." The third kind is dream (*somnium*), as Jacob while sleeping saw the ladder reaching up to heaven. (*Etymologiae*, VII.viii.34)

Isidore's whole discussion in this section is to define God's appearances and communications with mankind, and so within the potential source of dream-theory in the third category the concept of God giving visions to men is tacitly acknowledged, by reference to God appearing in a dream to advise Jacob of his coming inheritance (Genesis 28:13, 'terram in qua dormis tibi dabo et semini tuo'; 'the land, wherein thou sleepest, I will give to thee and to thy seed'), as manifested in the use of the accusative in the aforementioned Old English texts. The example of Isidore demonstrates a strong equivalence between visions of waking and sleeping in the Early Medieval mind, which informs the technique of *DOTR*.

Although there is no doubt that *Daniel's* Nebuchadnezzar dreams in the Isidorean sense of sleeping and seeing something, *DOTR* lacks this interpretive context, and so it is

²⁸ B.F. Huppé is unusual in retaining the same sense in his translation of lines 1-2: 'I will reveal the extraordinary vision that came to me' (my emphases), *The Web of Words: Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems: Vainglory, the Wonder of Creation, the Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany, NY, 1970), p. 65. However, he perhaps mirrors the uncertainty of the poem's definition too accurately when he reverts to calling the vision a dream in the rest of his chapter.

²⁹ G&L list six manuscript witnesses of *Somnium Scipionis*, compared to twenty-two for *Etymologiae*.

uncertain whether or not this is a dream, even within the Anglo-Saxon sense. Jane Roberts further notes that there is no mention of falling asleep or waking after the vision, refuting again the common unequivocal definition of this event as a dream.³⁰ The debate in modern scholarship about the nature of the vision is not entirely anachronistic, however. The first line describing the vision conveys the uncertain definition of the event by employing a double subjunctive: ‘þuhte me þæt ic gesawe’ (4, ‘it *seemed* to me that I *saw*’, literally ‘*might have seen*’). This tense is not maintained, however, as the narrator thereafter shifts to the indicative, stressing his certainty about the matter of the received vision: ‘eall þæt beacen wæs/begoten mid golde’ (6b-7a, ‘all of that sign was covered with gold’). An eleventh-century illustration of Genesis 28:13 conveys the same reluctance to distinguish between dream and vision: Jacob lies prostrate when having his vision of the ladder to heaven, his eyes closed, and yet the orientation of his head towards the ladder suggests that he is actively viewing the scene.³¹ Despite the context of line 4, the narrator in *DOTR* is certain of what he saw: the only confusion rests on the genesis of the vision as it appeared to him. Furthermore, the cross itself describes the event as a vision later in the poem: ‘nu ic þe hate, hæleð min se leofa/þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum’ (95-97a, ‘now I command you, my beloved man, to narrate this vision to men’). In this uncertain context, therefore, it is prudent to translate *swefna* (1) as ‘of visions’, rather than ‘of dreams’, since visions could be sent during sleeping or waking in the Early Medieval definition.

³⁰ ‘Some Relationships between *The Dream of the Rood* and the Ruthwell Cross’, *Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature*, 15 (2000), 1-25 (p. 7).

³¹ See Appendix III.i.

The equivocal definition of the event as either dream or vision situates the poem in the tradition of prophetic biblical dream.³² The narrator's uncertainty about the cause of his own vision, by contrast to the certitude about what was actually seen reflected in the use of tenses, recalls Paul's account of his contemplative ascent (II Corinthians 12:2; see p. 174 above). Like the poem's narrator, Paul professes to be unsure about the genesis of his vision, giving no mention of his conscious state at the time, and yet asserts that he travelled *ad tertium caelum*. Whether describing a dream or not, *DOTR* explicitly emphasises the time of the vision (2-3). Traditionally, this was a period associated with the coming of grace: 'per somnium in visione nocturna quando inruit sopor super homines et dormiunt in lectulo tunc aperit aures virorum et erudiens eos instruit disciplinam' (Job 33:15-16, 'by a dream in a vision by night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, and they are sleeping in their beds: then He openeth the ears of men, and teaching instructeth them in what they are to learn'). Bolton reasonably suggests that the specific detail of the midnight setting is given not to indicate the narrator's unconscious state but to validate the vision by referring to Job.³³ However, in addition to Bolton's observation, we can see that in mentioning *reordberend reste wunedon* the narrator draws a parallel with Job 33:15, 'quando inruit sopor super homines': whilst men are asleep, grace comes to some in the form of instruction, reflected again in line two's accusative case.³⁴ The contextualised setting and equivocal definition of the poem as dream

³² Harbus describes the framework as 'a structural device which facilitates an exegesis of the cross as a Christian symbol in a narrative, personal style'; 'Dream and Symbol in *The Dream of The Rood*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 40 (1996), 1-15 (p. 1). This chapter's analysis will propose that the framework in which the cross's narrative is embedded has a far more expansive role than Harbus suggests.

³³ Bolton, 'The Book of Job', 87. See also the brief discussion of *Moralia* in this context by A. Galloway, 'Dream-Theory in *The Dream of the Rood* and *The Wanderer*', *RES*, n.s. 45 (1994), 475-85 (p. 478).

³⁴ Another link to Job comes in the VB poem *Andreas*, when the followers of the titular disciple witness Christ whilst asleep: 'þa comon earnas ofer yða wylm/ faran on flyhte, feðerum hremige/ us ofslæpendum sawle abrugdon/ mid gefean feredon flyhte on lyfte/ brehtmum bliðe, beorhte ond liðe' (863-67; 'then came eagles over the surging of the waves, travelling in flight, exultant in feathers, withdrew our souls from us while asleep, carried them with joy across the air in flight, happy in revelries, bright and gentle').

or vision, along with the content of the vision itself, thus situate *DOTR* in this biblical tradition.

In a further similarity with Job, it is noteworthy that 'He openeth the ears of men' (33:16) in such visitations, and relays instruction verbally, rather than granting the dreamer a vision in the style of Revelation. This definition of such events as verbal can equally be applied to other Old Testament visions in which the visionary is awake. In Exodus, 'loquebatur autem Dominus ad Moysen facie ad faciem sicut loqui solet homo ad amicum suum' (33:11, 'the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend'), just as Isaiah relates that 'audivi vocem Domini dicentis quem mittam et quis ibit nobis' (6:8, 'I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us?'). *DOTR* similarly describes the vision only of a talking cross: no ecstatic glimpses of heaven or the Last Things are granted. Paul's vision bridges the gap between seeing and hearing, as although 'raptus est in paradisum', no description of a vision is provided, but he mentions only that 'audivit arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui' (II Corinthians 12:4; 'he was caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter'). The deliberate confusion of dream and ecstatic vision must be seen as an aesthetic feature intended to situate the poem in the context of biblical dream/vision. Just as the corporeal or spiritual nature of Paul's vision is less important than the vision itself, the status of the event in *DOTR* as a dream or vision, in the light of their equivalence, is not at issue for our analysis. This deliberate uncertainty in both texts adds to the esotericism of the narrative, implying the mysterious agency of God's grace, and lending the Anglo-Saxon poet *auctoritas* for relating a contemplative moment.

II.ii The Cross as Theophany

The biblical context of received verbal visions also enables us to view the talking cross as the object of the celestial vision itself.³⁵ The cross acts, with theological orthodoxy, as an emanation of God's essence, to the extent that it takes on Christ's redemptive role by the end of its account.

In Exodus 33:11 (see p. 196 above), it is related that God speaks to Moses face-to-face. Interpretation of the incident is however complicated by the Lord's reported words to Moses whilst speaking *facie ad faciem*, which undermine the earlier description of the encounter: 'non poteris videre faciem meam non enim videbit me homo et vivet' (Exodus 33:20, 'thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live'). This apparent contradiction poses a theological problem, of which the most influential discussion is Augustine's Epistle 147, commonly referred to as *De videndo Deo*:

it was Himself, then, under that aspect in which He willed to appear, but He did not appear in His own nature which Moses longed to see because that is promised to the saints in the next life. [...] Many have seen, but what His will chose to show they saw, not what formed His nature. (XX)

God, then, chooses to reveal Himself at times but only to the degree possible to incarnate men: Moses merely saw Yahweh 'per speculum in enigmatē' (I Corinthians 13:12, 'through a glass in a dark manner'). Gregory I adopted the same stance on God's appearances: 'it is plain that while they still bear the weight of this corruptible flesh, they are unable to behold the light of eternity such as it is' (*Moralia*, IV.xxiv.45). The link between predominantly

³⁵ Rissanen (*Message and Structure*, p. 52) hints at the same belief when he describes the poem as 'something of the infinite world [...] conveyed through a finite medium'.

verbal visions such as *DOTR* and the manifestations of God discussed by Augustine is articulated by the fragmentary exegetical works from the school of Theodore and Hadrian:

‘And they saw the God of Israel: and under His feet as it were a work of sapphire stone, and as the heaven, when clear.’ Understand: in the way that a man can see; but we are simply to believe that they only heard voices, and took these voices to be a vision.³⁶ (*Canterbury Commentaries*, re: Exodus 24:10)

Whilst Augustine and Gregory allow that a limited vision of God is possible, the Canterbury glossator boldly restricts ‘vision’ only to ‘hearing’, in a further link to the narrative vision of *DOTR*. Though Andreas is ferried safely across the sea by the Lord, in the person of a captain, the text is similarly concerned to stress that even the Apostle cannot see Him properly, but only hear His speech: ‘Ic his word oncnēow/þēh he his mægwlite bemiðen hæfde’ (*Andreas*, 855b-56, ‘I knew His speech, though He had hidden His form’). God is only knowable as far as He is willing to be, and not in His full essence, manifesting Himself through an intermediary according to Augustine, and when He does appear it is primarily vocal, not visual, according to the *Canterbury Commentaries*: with this Anglo-Saxon intellectual context in mind, we can now discuss the cross of *DOTR* as a theophany.

Theophany, or epiphany, comes from the Ancient Greek *θεοφάνεια*, *theophania*, meaning ‘the appearance of a god’, which in specifically Christian usage is ‘any manifestation of Christ as the revelation of God to the world’.³⁷ Before God appeared as the incarnate Christ, the Lord came to man through intermediaries such as the burning bush of Exodus 3:2: ‘apparuitque ei Dominus in flamma ignis de medio rubi’ (‘the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush’). Exodus is especially rich in such theophanies, another instance being the pillar of cloud (13:21-22). In the Old English *Exodus*,

³⁶ B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, ed. and trans., *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, CSASE, 10 (Cambridge, 1994).

³⁷ P. Murray and L. Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford, 1996), p. 165.

the pillar of cloud is rendered as *heofonbeacen* (107b). The compound *heofon-beacen* unequivocally ascribes the guiding pillar to God, which recalls the description of the cross as *beacen* (6b) in *DOTR*, strongly suggesting that the rood should be interpreted as a theophany. Further evidence of the cross as a divine manifestation comes in lines 9b-10: 'beheoldon þær engel dryhtnes ealle/fægere þurh forðgesceaft' ('all beheld the Angel of the Lord there, beautiful through created things').³⁸ Critical discussion has broadly seen the *engel dryhtnes* as a specific link of the cross to Christ, and building upon these arguments I will now interpret this section as evidence of the cross as theophany.³⁹ The Angel of the Lord is mentioned several times in the Old Testament, appearing to men as a representative of God and thus as a theophany. For instance, in Judges 6:12, the Angel of the Lord visits Gedeon to inform him of his coming victory against the Midianites: 'apparuit ei et ait Dominus tecum virorum fortissime' ('the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said: The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men'). In this example, and in all instances of the *angelus Domini* in the Old Testament, the angel represents God, and brings with it a message. The link between *engel dryhtnes*, Christ, and the cross in this context is consolidated by the cross taking on the Son's role as the redeemer of mankind. In the Gospels, Christ advises His disciples that 'ego sum via et veritas et vita nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me' (John 14:6, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me'). This is the function that the

³⁸ I follow here Swanton's reading, which makes *ealle* the subject of the sentence (see his edition, p. 103, for a lengthy discussion), rather than Krapp's *engel*, since *behealdon* requires a plural subject, and so in this context an emendation of VB's text, and 'correcting' *engel* to *engla* on this basis makes the translation a rather more mysterious 'the angels of the lord beheld all there', the only mention of the presence of angels in the vision.

³⁹ See Bolton, 'The Dream of the Rood 9b: 'Engel= Nuntius?', *NQ*, 213 (1968), 165-66. Several other critics see the term as employed to closely identify the cross with Christ. W. Helder, 'The Engel Dryhtnes in The Dream of The Rood', *MP*, 73 (1975), 148-50 (p. 149), supports the hypothesis with the observation that *angelus Domini* is glossed in the Vespasian and Salisbury Psalters as *engel drihtenes* and *engel drihtnes*, respectively. Boenig, 'The Engel Dryhtnes and Mimesis in The Dream of the Rood', *NM*, 86 (1985), 442-46, suggests that the internal evidence of the cross's imitation of Christ supports the equivalence of cross and Christ in the term *engel drihtnes*. T.E. Pickford, 'Another Look at the Engel Dryhtnes in The Dream of the Rood', *NM*, 77 (1976), 565-68, interprets the reference as defining the cross as a messenger sent to give the poetic matter to the narrator.

cross claims for itself: 'ic him lifes weg/rihtne gerymde, reordberendum' (88b-89, 'I righteously opened up the way of life for the speech-bearers'). In taking on Christ's role, the cross is an emanation of divine power, further suggesting its status as a theophany.

The cross in *DOTR* is testament to a culture which strove to preserve the concept of God's ineffability: in no other literary account of a celestial vision does a cross speak, indicating that this is a unique manifestation of God's grace amongst contemplative visions.⁴⁰ The cross functions in the poem as a surrogate for an actual vision of God or the Trinity, hence avoiding the impossibility of depicting ineffable divinity directly. The narrator is permitted a vision through the manifestation of a talking cross that takes on the structural role played by God in the Old Testament visionary narratives, with which the poem aligns itself, in delivering the substance of the vision. Some have related this feature to the Ruthwell and Brussels crosses, which display inscriptions, and so in a limited sense could be said to have the faculty of speech.⁴¹ However, we can also relate the anthropomorphic rood of the vision to another talking theophany which in its ordinary state lacks oracular capacity, the burning bush. *DOTR* and the account of the burning bush in Exodus share a close structural resemblance. Just as the cross is observed by the narrator for a period until it speaks - 'hwæðre ic þær licgende lange hwile/beheold hreowcearig hælendes treow/oððæt ic gehyrde þæt hit hleoðrode' (24-26, 'however, lying there for a long time, I beheld contritely the Saviour's Tree, until I heard it made a sound') - likewise we are told that 'videbat quod rubus arderet et non conbureretur dixit ergo Moses vadam et videbo visionem hanc magnam quare non conburatur rubus' (Exodus 3:2-3, 'he saw that the bush

⁴⁰ The only other account of this phenomenon that I have found is from mid-nineteenth-century Mexico, where a talking cross appeared to rebels in the Caste War. See D.E. Dumond, 'The Talking Crosses of Yucatan: A New Look at Their History', *Ethnohistory*, 32 (1985), 291-308.

⁴¹ H. Maring, 'Toward a Ritual Poetics: *Dream of the Rood* as a Case Study', *Oral Tradition*, 26 (2011), 391-410; Swanton also gives instances of inscribed crosses in his edition of the poem, p. 66.

was on fire, and was not burnt. And Moses said: I will go, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt'). Like the cross, the bush then speaks, and neither text is concerned with explicating how the object emits the word of God: 'cernens autem Dominus quod pergeret ad videndum vocavit eum de medio rubi et ait Moses Moses' (Exodus 3:4, 'and when the Lord saw that he went forward to see, he called to him out of the midst of the bush and said: Moses, Moses'); (*DOTR*, 26; see p. 200 above). The import of the burning bush is that God spoke to Moses, giving instruction through a mundane object. Similarly, God's word in *DOTR* comes through an intermediary, the cross, which summarises the theology of Incarnation and Redemption, and then warns of the coming Judgement. The cross then should be seen as a manifestation of God, not as a separate entity, as the synonymies *engel dryhtnes* and *beacen* indicate.

II.iii Apocalypse Now and Then

It is also useful to consider the poem and the biblical visions within the genre of apocalypse, which has a close relationship with contemplative ascent. Isidore defines apocalypse as revelation when discussing the Book of Revelation in *Etymologiae*:

John the Evangelist wrote the Apocalypse during the period when, exiled for his preaching of the Gospel, he was sent to the isle of Patmos. *Apocalypsis* is translated from Greek into Latin as 'revelation' (*revelatio*), and a revelation means a manifestation of things that were hidden, as John himself says (Apoc. 1:1): "The Revelation (*Apocalypsis*) of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants".⁴² (VI.ii.49)

An apocalypse, like contemplation, is divinely conferred and involves some form of communion through verbal instruction or a vision. In *DOTR*, the cross's narrative provides

⁴² Revelation is an instance of a vision sent by God which carries with it an evangelical mandate, much like *DOTR*: see the discussion of Ezekiel below.

‘a manifestation of things that were hidden’, and as an instance of the word of God revealed to man, can be eminently defined as apocalyptic.

The closest scriptural parallel in this apocalyptic context is to the book of Ezekiel. Although Ezekiel explicitly communes with God whilst awake, there are several other thematic links between the account of this event and *DOTR*. Once again, despite seeing ‘visio similitudinis gloriae Domini’ (2:1, ‘the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord’), the ‘vision’ is predominantly verbal: ‘audivi vocem loquentis’ (*Ibid.*, ‘I heard the voice of one that spoke’). Ezekiel hearing God was nevertheless defined as a vision by commentators such as Bede, which again suggests the contemplative nature of the cross’s narrative in *DOTR*: ‘certain people of the elect [...] having purified the eye of the heart, deserve to contemplate in some part all those joys that the Church is to gain in the future. As did Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets’ (*In Ezram et Neemiam*, III, re: Nehemiah 12:43).⁴³ Ezekiel says that upon hearing this voice, ‘cecidit in faciem meam’ (2:1, ‘I fell upon my face’), similar to the posture of the awestruck narrator in *DOTR* as the cross begins to speak (24; see p. 200 above).⁴⁴ Rather than as evidence for his dormancy, this should be seen as a specific link to Ezekiel, for the texts coincide in other important detail. In Ezekiel’s vision the Lord discusses at length the nature of Judgement Day — ‘oculus meus nec miserebor et cum clamaverint ad aures meas voce magna non exaudiam eos’ (8:18; ‘my eye shall not spare them, neither will I shew mercy: and when they shall cry to my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them’) — but tempers this with the consolation, ‘convertimini et agite paenitentiam ab omnibus iniquitatibus vestris et non erit vobis in ruinam iniquitas’ (18:30, ‘be converted, and do

⁴³ *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, trans. S. DeGregorio, Translated Texts for Historians, 47 (Liverpool, 2006). Subsequent references are to this edition.

⁴⁴ Lying prostrate may also be a devotional posture encouraged by the Ruthwell Cross, a partial manuscript witness to *DOTR*. In Ó Carragáin’s (*Ritual and the Rood*, p. 109) reconstruction of the monument, the Crucifixion panel is orientated nearest to the ground, requiring one to crouch or lie down in order to see it properly.

penance for all your iniquities: and iniquity shall not be your turn'). Likewise, after it has finished describing the Crucifixion, the cross's narrative takes on an eschatological character: 'ne mæg þær ænig unforht wesan/for þam worde þe se wealdend cwyð' (110-11, 'none may be fearless, because of the words that the Ruler speaks'). However, like God in Ezekiel the cross offers hope by outlining its own salvific role at the End of Days: 'ne þearf ðær þonne ænig anforht wesan/þe him ær in breostum bereð beacna selest' (117-18; 'none who before bear the best of signs in their breasts need be frightened').

Furthermore, both the Lord and the cross outline an evangelical role for Ezekiel and the narrator to relate their visions in order to help others to redemption: 'fili hominis speculatorem dedi te domui Israhel et audies de ore meo verbum et adnuntiabis eis ex me' (3:17, 'son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: and thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth, and shalt tell it them from me'); *DOTR*, 95-97a (see p. 194 above). The responsibility of the contemplative to relate their visions for the instruction and benefit of others is an evident tenet of the Pre-Conquest Church, as Bede discusses (*De templo Salomonis*, I.7.1; see p. 179 above). In Bede's exegesis, accounts of contemplative events provide an essential service to the universal church, providing understanding for others less blessed: despite their exalted position, contemplatives retain a fundamental pastoral obligation.⁴⁵ That the narrator of *DOTR* is ordered by the cross to relate his vision to others, like Ezekiel, strongly suggests that this is a communion with God bestowed upon a worthy recipient that brings with it strict responsibility.

⁴⁵ For more on the pastoral duty of contemplatives in Anglo-Saxon Christianity, see pp. 54-55 above.

III The Contemplative Structure of the Poem

DOTR divides neatly around the embedded narrative of the cross. The Prologue (1-27) describes the sequence of events leading up to the cross's narrative. The cross's narrative (28-121) subdivides into two sections: the account of the Crucifixion and its discovery (28-77), and the implications of the cross for mankind in the present and future (78-121). The visionary recommences his narrative at line 122, which again can be subdivided into a short section dealing with the immediate aftermath of the vision (122-26a), and then extended details of his consequent hope for the future (126b-56). I have included in the latter the disputed passage on the Harrowing (148a-56), since there are no palaeographical grounds for omitting it, and moreover it is a section which explains why the visionary can foster hopes of joining the celestial homeland. This structure is reproduced below for convenience:

I: 1-27 Narrator's Prologue

IIa: 28-77 Cross's Crucifixion Narrative

IIb: 78-121 Cross's Discussion of its post-Passion role

IIIa: 122-26a Narrator's reaction to the Cross's speech

IIIb: 126b-56 Narrator's reinvigorated hope for the future.⁴⁶

The rest of the chapter will justify my categorisation as the analysis proceeds.

Certain details of the Prologue were related to biblical visions in the previous section, and with the structure in mind a more specific comparison with the vision of Benedict of Nursia in Gregory I's *vita* can be made:

⁴⁶ For an alternative reading of the structure, see D.R. Howlett, 'The Structure of *The Dream of The Rood*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 48 (1976), 301-06. Howlett bases his structural analysis on verbal repetition and manuscript capitalisation, to reproduce the structure 'as a redactor, if not the author, meant it to appear on a written folio' (301). This approach results in splitting the text into a greater number of shorter units to make up three fits (302).

The man of God, Benedict, being diligent in watching, rose early up before the time of matins (his monks being yet at rest) and came to the window of his chamber, where he offered up his prayers to almighty God. (*Dialogi*, II.35; my emphases)

Here we see an immediate contextual parallel with *DOTR*. Although there is no explicit textual evidence of devotional activity at the beginning of the poem, the narrator, like Benedict, is awake, or at least more conscious and receptive, than others, and draws attention to this state (3; see p. 191 above). The cross's sudden appearance in the Prologue recalls the beginning of Benedict's vision (*Dialogi*, II.35; see p. 173 above). As well as to link the vision of Benedict to those of the Old Testament which occur at night, Gregory here employs darkness for the aesthetic purpose of emphasising the brightness of the vision. The appearance of this luminescence in the darkness of night matches the appearance of the cross in the Prologue (4-6a; see p. 191 above). The superlative adjective *beorhtost* (6a), emphasised by the nocturnal setting, matches the sense of Benedict's vision of a light 'far more clear than the light of the day'. Just as the detail of the cross's arrival *leohte bewunden* (5b) precedes its speech, for Benedict a marvellous vision follows the light, and the world appears small to his gaze (*Dialogi*, II.35; see p. 173 above). The vision of *DOTR* does not at first seem to incorporate a vision of anything more than a talking cross, but its astonishing intellectual scope is indicated by a link to the Gregory-narrator's discussion of Benedict's vision in *Dialogi*. Asked by his interlocutor Peter how the world could appear in miniature, Gregory explains that

We say that the world was gathered together before his eyes, yet were not heaven and earth drawn into any lesser room than they be of themselves, but the soul of the beholder was more enlarged, which, rapt in God, might without difficulty see that which is under God, and therefore in that light which appeared to his outward eyes, the inward light which was in his soul ravished the mind of the beholder to supernal things, and showed him how small all earthly things were. (*Dialogi*, II.35)

According to Gregory, the vision is a metaphor for intellectual enlightenment, as Benedict comes to understand temporal matters in a God-like manner. This vision is essentially Boethian in scope. Lady Philosophy's discussion of God's perpetual vision of all things, at all times, in *De consolazione Philosophiae* strongly recalls the expansive vision of Benedict:

Since, therefore, all judgment comprehends those things that are subject to it according to its own nature, and since the state of God is ever that of eternal presence, His knowledge, too, transcends all temporal change and abides in the immediacy of His presence. It embraces all the infinite recesses of past and future and views them in the immediacy of its knowing as though they are happening in the present.⁴⁷ (V.vi)

This discussion of God as the 'eternal presence' indicates that the divine perspective of earth granted to Benedict is thus in fact surpassed by that given verbally to the protagonist of *DOTR*. Whilst Benedict is merely granted an apotheosised view of the earth, the vision of *DOTR* encompasses past, present, and future, making it in fact more divine in the Boethian sense. The bejewelled cross of the Prologue is the cross in its present form, 'gimmas hæfdon/bewrigene weorðlice wealdendes treow'⁴⁸ (16b-17, 'the gems had splendidly concealed the Lord's Tree'), yet the past, elaborated upon by the cross in Part IIa, is also manifest in the opening vision: 'hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold ongytan meahte/earmra ærgewin' (18-19a, 'however, through that gold I could understand the former strife of the wretched ones'). The scope of the vision is completed in Part IIb, the 'Cross's Discussion of its post-Passion role', during which the cross reveals its salvific role at the End of Days (117-18; see pp. 203 above). The glorified appearance of the cross may also recall its appearance on Judgement Day, based on a reading of Matthew 24:30 - 'et tunc parebit signum Filii hominis in caelo' ('and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven')⁴⁹ - which suggests

⁴⁷ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. V.E. Watts (Harmondsworth, 1969).

⁴⁸ *Wealdendes* is an editorial emendation of the manuscript's *wealdes*: see Swanton's discussion in his edition, p. 23.

⁴⁹ B.W. Hawk, 'Id est, crux Christi: Tracing the Old English Motif of the Celestial Rood', *ASE*, 40 (2011), 43-73.

that just as the whole world is seen by the mind of Benedict within a single sun beam, so too the course of Christian history is contained within the vision of the cross in *DOTR*. Although the knowledge derived from the vision of the cross is purely narrative in nature, this matters not in definitions of the biblical verbal visions with which the poem aligns itself. The predominantly intellectual foundation of visions is discussed equivalently by the Old English *Soliloquies* (I, p. 67; see p. 117 above). The God-like vision of past, present and future in the poem thus makes apparent the scale of the intellectual enlightenment provided by the cross. Benedict apprehending ‘how small all earthly things were’ can thus be compared to *DOTR*’s narrator seeing the cross and hearing its narrative, which aids his understanding of the nature of earthly existence: the greater comprehension afforded by the vision leads directly to his revised form of devotion, ‘gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode’ (122, ‘I myself prayed to the beam with a joyous spirit’).

As discussed at length, Early Medieval theories of contemplation demand that the mind must first be brought beyond earthly things, as Bede explains (*In Ezram et Neemiam*, III, re: Nehemiah 12:43; see p. 202 above); ‘the more they free themselves from desiring things below, the more capable they become of contemplating things above’ (*In Cantica canticorum*, I.2.8). Bede’s contemplative theory may explain a troubling detail of *DOTR*. The poem contains no mention of place when the vision arrives, unlike the account of Benedict’s contemplative vision in *Dialogi*, II.35, and other Anglo-Saxon accounts of visions so forthcoming in topographical detail that they have been studied as evidence for Pre-Conquest architecture.⁵⁰ Whether the vision takes place in a mental landscape or a worldly

⁵⁰ The architectural historian H.M. Taylor, for instance, is able to sketch the church described by Æthelwulf in an account of his vision of angels worshipping in his monastery. See ‘The Architectural Interest of Æthelwulf’s *De Abbatibus*’, *ASE*, 3 (1974), 163-73. See also Gatch, ‘Miracles in Architectural Settings: Christ Church, Canterbury

setting is entirely uncertain: we are merely told the time of the vision and that a beautiful cross was seen (4-5a; see p. 191 above). As with the reluctance to define the poem as a dream or a vision, the omission here is once again stratified: it situates the vision beyond the mundane, and demonstrates the extent of the narrator's shunning of the temporal world, to the point that it is irrelevant to the narrative of the event. Augustine describes the contemplative in similar terms as one who severs all links to the temporal world (*De doctrina Christiana*, II.vii.99, 22; see p. 104 above). This attitude is analogous to the narrative strategy common to the texts selected for this thesis. Whilst the other texts strive to negate the knowledge, images, and sensations of the world through progressive negation, in addition to this strategy *DOTR* resorts to total omission of its worldly context. The only detail of the vision's setting given by *DOTR* is that the cross is seen *on lyft lædan* (5a), minimising the relation of the event to terrestrial reality: this suggests that the narrator has separated his thoughts from 'things below', to the extent that he has chosen to mention nothing of the vision's earthly context.

This structural analysis can be supported by scrutinising the narrator's reactions to the vision at different points of the poem. An emotion strongly associated with purifying the mind of worldly things is compunction, sorrow at one's sinful state. Gregory I defines two types of *compunctio* in his correspondence (*Epistulae* VII.26; see p. 106 above). The compunction of fear serves to direct the mind towards God, the first step towards contemplation, and so it is interpreted as sent by God: 'compunction is an act of God in us, an act by which God awakens us, a shock, a blow, a "sting", a sort of burn.'⁵¹ Bede's exegesis

and St Clement's, Sandwich in the Old English *Vision of Leofric*, *ASE*, 22 (1993), 227-52, which discusses elements of the vision regarding architecture and liturgy of the building in which Leofric is worshipping when grace is given to him.

⁵¹ J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p. 30.

indicates the same when he asserts that the ability of the contemplative to fix his mind on God requires God's assistance in the first place (*In Cantica canticorum*, I.2.8; see p. 207 above). We should expect, then, evidence of *compunctio* in an Early Medieval text about a vision sent by God, which *DOTR* indeed provides.⁵² The beautiful appearance of the cross inspires the narrator's psychological self-examination, manifest in lines explicitly contrasting their spiritual states: 'syllic wæs se sigebeam, ond ic synnum fah/forwunded mid wommum' (13-14a, 'the Beam of Victory was wondrous, and I was stained with sins, grievously wounded with transgressions'). Gazing upon the cross enables the narrator to draw contrasts between their states, explicitly a psychological development in the poem as no biographical detail is provided to establish the narrator's pre-existing penitence. This is later intensified into *timor*, as more details of the cross's beauty are given: 'forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe' (21a, 'I was afraid before that beautiful vision'). Line 21a is an esoteric statement that makes little sense outside of the context of compunctive *timor*. The appearance of the cross, the universal symbol of Christianity and its message of hope, which bears a strong resemblance to the bejewelled crosses of the Anglo-Saxon period,⁵³ would not generally be an occasion on which to feel afraid, and so this *timor* is best explained by reference to the penitential contrast of 13-14a. The reaction of the narrator to the cross may profitably be compared to Adam and Eve's reaction to the appearance of God, after committing the Original Sin, of which they are guiltily conscious in *Genesis A*: 'þa gangan geomermode/under beamsceade blæde bereafod/hyddon hie on heolstre, þa hie halig word/drihtnes gehyrdon, and ondredon him' (858-61, 'then they walked, sad of mind, beneath the shadow of the beams,

⁵² Ó'Carragáin (*Ritual and the Rood*, p. 143) relates the penitential themes of the Ruthwell Cross to the Lenten emphasis on repentance, the period during which the cross is most prominent, suggesting an interesting link to the current discussion, should one assume the inscription on the monument to be the origin of *DOTR* textual tradition.

⁵³ The resemblance of the cross to those familiar in Anglo-Saxon sculpture of the time is discussed on pp. 231-32 below.

deprived of glory; they hid themselves in the darkness, when they heard the Lord's holy word, and were afraid of Him'). Like the newly-sinful Adam and Eve, the narrator, conscious of turpitude, is fearful before a celestial appearance. This initial fear, which the soul feels 'while recollecting its evil doings, [because] it fears to suffer for them eternal punishments' (*Epistulae* VII.26), can be linked to the initial presentation of the cross.

Anticipating its later discussion of eschatology (IIb: 78-121 Cross's Discussion of its post-Passion role), the cross appears *on lyft lædan* (5b), which is how it will appear at Doomsday, according to a reading of Matthew 24:30.⁵⁴ This image serves as a reminder of the last things, and can therefore be read as the cause of the narrator's *timor* and lament of his sinful state.

The sight of the perfect tree, *fægere þurh forðgesceaft* (10a), thus inspires compunction in the visionary, who grows acutely aware of his sinful state. Loathing one's sins liberates one from the temporal world, and so when the cross speaks the narrator becomes one of 'the elect, who, having purified the eye of the heart, deserve to contemplate in some part all those joys that the Church is to gain in the future' (Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, III, re: Nehemiah 12:43). We recall again here the protagonist of *Seafarer*, who in purging his mind of all earthly things liberates himself from sinful, terrestrial desire, to be deserving of the vision at the midpoint of the poem (44-47; see pp. 141-42 above). Likewise, just before the cross speaks in *DOTR* and the vision begins in earnest, the narrator gives one last mention of his compunction (24-26, see p. 200 above).⁵⁵ These lines concisely suggest the narrator's

⁵⁴ See pp. 206-07 above.

⁵⁵ I have translated *hreowcearig* as 'contritely' to evoke the Gregorian context of sorrow and self-examination, a reading closely related to the literal meaning of the adverb, which is a composite of *hreow* ('sorrow') and *cearig* ('anxious'). C.A. Butcher, 'The Dream of the Rood and Its Unique, Penitential Language' (South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference, November 2003), translates *hreowcearig* as 'penitent', and comments that 'the emphasis on the inwardness of repentance, inherited by the Anglo-Saxon church from the private, Celtic penitential practice, is one theme of *The Dream of the Rood*' (9). See also pp. 100-06 above for penitence in *DDI* and *JDII*.

penitence and immense effort of self-catechising that he undertakes before the vision proceeds. The narrator, having displayed extensive contrition, receives grace directly in the form of the cross's celestial narrative.

Other details of the Prologue indicate that the vision of the cross is a contemplative event. Whilst the cross, as a celestial vision, comes to the narrator, in beholding what is before him he nevertheless has some agency. Having identified the matter of the vision as a *sylicre treow* (4b), the narrator describes its appearance (6a-7b; see p. 194 above). The employment of *beacen* (6b) to describe the cross here recalls Augustine's definition of a sign:

What I now call things in the strict sense are things such as logs, stones, sheep, and so on, which are not employed to signify something; but I do not include the log which we read that Moses threw into the bitter waters to make them lose their bitter taste, or the stone which Jacob placed under his head, or the sheep which Abraham sacrificed in place of his son. These are things, but they are at the same time signs of other things [...] from this it may be understood what I mean by signs: those things which are employed to signify something else. So every sign is a thing, since what is not a thing does not exist. (*De doctrina Christiana*, I.4)

All signs are, on the fundamental level, things. Thus, the cross is first understood on the literal level of its appearance, in 6a-7b. Further, 'gimmas stodon/fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron/uppe on þam eaxlegespanne'⁵⁶ (7b-9a, 'the beautiful gems stood at the earth's corners, just as there were five upon the cross-beam'). As a thing, the cross is primarily a beautiful object worthy of adoration. From this position, the narrator progresses to apprehend that it is 'employed to signify something else':

Geseah ic wuldres treow,
wædum geweorðode, wynnnum scinan,
gegyred mid golde; gimmas hæfdon
bewrigene weorðlice wealdendes treow. (14b-17)

⁵⁶ Though the compound *eaxlegespanne* is a hapax, the *DOE* entry for *eaxl* ('shoulder') lists several instances of the latter being used for man and beast. This matches the anthropomorphised nature of the cross in *DOTR*.

I saw the tree of splendour honoured with garments, shining beautifully, adorned with gold;
the gems had splendidly concealed the Lord's Tree.

This shift in the narrator's understanding is reflected in the redefinition of the actions of the gems: at line 15, they merely decorate (*gegyred*), and then at line 17 they hide (*bewrigene*) the *beacen*. That is, they inhibit the narrator's contemplation of the cross as a sign. The narrator's increasing comprehension of the cross means that he contemplates it as a sign, and not just as a thing, as both an object of beauty and a memorial of the the Crucifixion: 'hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold ongytan meahte/earmra ærgewin, þæt hit ærest ongan/swætan on þa swiðran healde' (18-20a, 'however, through that gold I could understand the former strife of the wretched ones, so that it first began to bleed on the right hand side'). The visionary's understanding increases with his heightened perspicacity, and the link between seeing and understanding is discussed extensively in the Old English *Soliloquies* (I, p. 67; see p. 117 above). Thus, the longer the cross reveals itself to the narrator, the better his understanding. This discussion of vision in the Old English *Soliloquies* makes it eminently possible to trace the distinction between seeing and understanding the cross in *DOTR*, manifested in a verbal hierarchy of vision which indicates the growth of the narrator's understanding from passive observation (*gesawe*, 4a) to active thought (*ongytan*, 18b). This in turn implies that the vision is seen through the *saule hawung* (Old English *Soliloquies*, I, p. 67; see p. 117 above) and so is a phenomenon witnessed mentally. The shift from seeing (*gesawe*) to understanding (*ongytan*) the cross means that, like Benedict, although the narrator is seeing something presented to him this is primarily through his intellectual capabilities, and so what is seen corresponds to what is understood.

It is pertinent that the cross's bleeding (19b-20a) follows directly the intensification of contemplative activity: this is the first action of the cross which separates it from other

crosses seen in everyday life.⁵⁷ In the shifting perspective of the vision, 'hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed/beswyled mid swates gange' (23-24a, 'sometimes it was drenched with fluid, imbued with the flow of the blood'). This anticipates the cross's narrative in line 48b-49a: 'eall ic wæs mid blode bestemed/begoten of þæs guman sidan' ('I was completely drenched with blood, begotten from the man's side'). This confirms that the blood on the cross – (19b-20a), which corresponds John 19:34's detail that Christ was pierced on His right hand side, as in the depiction of Harley 2904⁵⁸ – is a vision of the blood of Christ, a recurrent feature of contemplative events.⁵⁹ The narrator of *DOTR* progresses to the point that the cross appears in both of its aspects interchangeably, as both a thing and as a manifestation of the event which it signifies: 'geseah ic þæt fuse beacen/wendan wædum ond bleom; hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed/beswyled mid swates gange, hwilum mid since gegyrwed' (21b-23, 'I saw that noble sign change clothing and colours; sometimes it was drenched with fluid, imbued with the flow of the blood, at other times it was adorned with jewels').⁶⁰ In the context of our equation of sight and knowledge, this detail of the cross shifting from beautiful object to lowly gallows in the vision signifies the narrator's understanding that the two aspects of the cross are inseparable, introducing the employment of paradox in the

⁵⁷ The jewelled appearance of the cross has been linked to Anglo-Saxon plastic arts. The essential discussion of this is B.C. Raw, 'The Dream of the Rood and its Connections with Early Christian Art', *MÆ*, 39 (1970), 239-56, and 'The Cross in *The Dream of the Rood*: Martyr, Patron and Image of Christ', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 38 (2007), 1-15. Several critics interpret the cross as a reliquary containing a fragment of the true cross. A.E. Mahler discusses this with reference to the instances of True-Cross relics in England in 'Lignum Domini and the Opening Vision of *The Dream of the Rood*: A Viable Hypothesis?', *Speculum*, 53 (1978), 441-59, concluding that 'it is possible that the opening vision was composed to celebrate the arrival of the piece of *lignum domini* around the year 885, and that it envisions the wood in its precious covering' (p. 459).

⁵⁸ See Appendix III.ii.

⁵⁹ For example, Byrhtferth, *VSO*, I.5 (see p. 5 above). We should note in this extract the compunctive reaction of Oda to the vision, 'struck with fear, troubled in the heart'.

⁶⁰ W.O. Stevens notes a parallel in the changing of clothing here to the liturgy of the *Regularis concordia*, from which the Vercelli poet may well have borrowed the image, assuming a tenth-century date for *DOTR*. See *The Cross in the Life and Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, Yale Studies in English, 23 (New York, 1904), p. 307. The changing of the cross's adornment is also linked to an extra-liturgical activity, by definition harder to prove, in a short article by D.P. Farina, 'Wædum Geweorðod in *The Dream of the Rood*', *NQ*, 212 (1967), 4-6. See also Orchard, 'Cross References', who notes the resemblance of the cross's changing appearance to the cross described in Tatwine's *enigma* 9 (p. 244).

poem which is to be continued in the cross's speech. The narrator remains contemplating the cross in this manner until grace is sent, again as a direct consequence of the devotional activity (24; 26; see p. 200 above). It is pertinent that it is only after the true signification of the cross has been recognised that it begins to speak, which is the most important part of the vision in the same way as in the Ezekiel and Corinthians passages with which we contextualised *DOTR*. The use of *hwæðre* in 24a again demonstrates the link between seeing both aspects of the cross and the heightened understanding that comes from the cross's narrative. The poem makes it clear that the two roles of the cross are inseparable, and must be understood together. The cross is presented, with orthodox theology, as both a thing to be adored and as a sign of Christ's crucifixion. However, only once its dual nature has been apprehended and linked can the cross be infused with redemptory power for the individual, and so prayer to the cross is delayed until its speech has ended (122; see p. 207 above). Contemplating the dual aspects of the cross leads directly into the main part of the event, the cross's speech, brought about through the sublime coming of grace, revealing the poem's preoccupation with the proper understanding and hence recognition of the cross as a sign.

This growth in the narrator's understanding is matched by the number of variant terms for the cross in the Prologue. As the vision progresses up to the cross's speech, the rood is referred to by no fewer than nine signifiers: *syllicre treow* (4, see p. 191 above), *beacen* (6; 22, see pp. 194; 213 above), *engel dryhtnes* (9, see p. 199 above), *sigebeam* (13, 'Beam of Victory'), *wuldres treow* (14, 'tree of splendour'), *wealdendes treow* (17, 'the Lord's tree'), *fæggran gesyhðe* (21a), *hælendes treow* (25b, 'the Saviour's tree'), *wudu selesta* (27b, 'the best of wood'). This is more than merely a register of superlative descriptions of the cross, and can be understood as a contemplative process. Pseudo-Dionysius constructed a contemplative

treatise, *The Divine Names*, from biblical synonyms for God, meditation upon which increases one's comprehension of Him. In the same way, the more terms that the narrator gives for the cross, the better he understands the vision: after stating these names in mutual contradiction, and so undermining earthly logic, the narrator can take his mind beyond terrestrial perception, and so the cross begins its narrative. It is simultaneously all of the terms applied to it, at all times a tree and yet also the means to salvation: *sigebeam*, *hælendes treow*. The cross's narrative utilises these terms in relating the Crucifixion and its redemptory role, at which point the narrator reaches the zenith of his understanding. This can again be related to the Old English *Soliloquies*' equation of sight and knowledge (I, p. 67; see p. 117 above). The more the tree reveals, the longer the vision has gone on, and the more the narrator understands, his mind expanding as in Benedict's vision of the world.

In Gregory's definition, the first type of compunction, *timor*, aids contemplation and is then transformed into *amor* after any vision received (*Epistulae* VII.26; see p. 106 above). This can be illustrated by the VB poem *Elene*, in which the recently converted Judas, who has been sent divine portents to identify the location of the buried True Cross, is explicitly described in such terms when faced with the furious Satan:

him wæs halig gast
befolen fæste, fyrhat lufu,
weallende gewitt þurh witgan snyttro. (935b-37)

The Holy Spirit was quickly given to him, fire-hot love, intellect welling, through the wisdom of the wise man.

Having contemplated a mysterious appearance of God, Judas displays no fear but only love as a result, even when engaging in demonic spiritual combat. In *DOTR*, the cross itself gives the narrator 'a sense of pardon', as it advises him that it will save its followers on Judgement

Day (117-18; see pp. 203 above). The narrator displays a definitive shift from the *timor* of the Prologue (*forht*, 21a) to *amor* (*bliðe mode*, 122b, see p. 207 above) after the vision, as ‘it is perceived that there is something to be loved’ (Bede, *In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, re: Peter 1:12; see pp. 130-31 above). Gregory explains further how this process transforms the nature of compunction (*Epistulae* VII.26; see p. 106 above). Delighting in the idea of heaven, ‘the very society of blessed spirits’ (*Ibid.*), is a clear sign of this transformation. In *DOTR*, the narrator displays equivalent *compunctio amoris* in discussing extensively the joys of heaven after the vision ends, suggesting that ‘the mind is enflamed with love of heavenly joys’ after receiving a contemplative vision:

ic wene me
daga gehwylce hwænne me dryhtnes rod,
þe ic her on eorðan ær sceawode,
on þysson lænan life gefetige
ond me þonne gebringe þær is blis mycel,
dream on heofonum, þær is dryhtnes folc
geseted to symle, þær is singal blis,
ond me þonne asette þær ic syþþan mot
wunian on wuldre, well mid þam halgum
dreames brucan.⁶¹ (135b-44a)

I look forward each day to when the Lord’s Cross, that I before contemplated here on earth, fetches me from this transitory life and might bring me then where there is great joy, delight in the heavens, where there is the Lord’s people seated at the feast, where there is perpetual bliss, and might place me where I might dwell thereafter in splendour, to partake of joy abundantly with the holy ones.

Enumerating the wonders of heaven in this way is the clearest demonstration that the narrator is infused with the second stage of compunction after having received a celestial vision.

⁶¹ The anaphora of *þær is* in this passage serves to emphasise the superlative quality of heaven. See also the *anaphora* for things excluded from heaven in *DDI* and *JDII*, pp. 119-20 above.

The result of the love experienced after a contemplative vision is usually expressed as longing, another concept evident in *DOTR*. After the cross's narrative ends, so does the vision. Evidence of its completion, though not explicitly mentioned, is clear from the narrator's reactions in Section IIIa.

Gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode,
 elne mycle, þær ic ana wæs
 mæte werede.⁶² Wæs modsefa
 afysed on forðwege, feala ealra gebad
 langunghwila. (122-26a)

I myself prayed to the beam with a joyous spirit, great courage, where I was alone with a small company. My mind was urged on a journey, I endured many times of longing.⁶³

The sentiments expressed after the narrator's revised form of devotion has been revealed correspond to the Early Medieval definition of contemplation. Once mental ecstasy has ended, the effect on him who undergoes it is to reinvigorate the desire to undergo it again, as Bede demonstrates in quoting Gregory (*In Epistulas VII Catholicas*, re: Peter 1:12; see pp. 130-31 above). The narrator's *langunghwila*, therefore, in coming directly after the end of the cross's narrative, can be related to the restless desire to be granted again the vision of the cross. The preceding statement (124b-25a) suggests the same, and together the lines demonstrate the mindset of the narrator, who having been granted a vision longs to see it again: 'is me nu lifes hyht/þæt ic þone sigebeam secan mote/ana oftor þonne ealle men' (126b-28, 'it is now my life's hope that I might seek the Beam of Victory alone more often

⁶² The narrator's reference to *mæte werede* here is slightly perplexing, as in the Prologue his isolation is emphasised. However, even in this section the narrator maintains that he was *ana* (123b), even with the *mæte werede*. The poem offers no clue as to the identity of this group, but we should bear in mind that contemplative ascent was believed possible in company: see the vision of Alcuin quoted on p. 72 above.

⁶³ Rissanen, who does not view the talking cross as a vision in itself, sees this as the moment that the narrator's mind ascends to contemplation: *Message and Structure*, p. 41. Fleming links *langunghwila* to a different concept altogether: '*accidia* is a sapping of spiritual energy which comes from anxiety about the *vita peregrini*, the life of exile [...] the Cross has revealed in its narrative that it, too, experienced incomprehension about its role; in this it is paralleled by the Dreamer who has suffered *langunghwila*' ('Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', 63). The noun however follows the vision of the cross, an ecstatic contemplative event, in response to which it is unlikely that the narrator would feel anxiety or lack of enthusiasm about his assumed monastic profession.

than all men'). The journey of the mind described in 124b-25a is a powerful image of contemplation in Anglo-Saxon texts, as we have seen in *Seafarer*, where the moment of sublime contemplation is described in such terms (58-60; see p. 171 above). Likewise, after the seafarer's mind returns from contemplative ascent, the result is renewed longing for heaven, which as in *DOTR* is expressed as a journey (*Seafarer*, 61b-63a; *Ibid.*).⁶⁴ As well as the employment of the journey trope, the use of *modsefa* in both texts (*DOTR*, 124b; *Seafarer*, 59a) suggests that an analogous type of event is being described. We recall also here Cassian's definition of the contemplative life as one comprised of repeated attempts to contemplate God (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3; see p. 11 above). *DDI* and *JDII*, *Seafarer*, and Vercelli IX (the subject of the next chapter), all conclude with a statement of contemplative intent, evidencing spiritual reinvigoration. In the same way, the narrator's desire to seek the cross again (127) denotes a life now directed towards being granted another vision of the cross. This desire is intrinsically linked to the celestial vision of the cross, and so necessitates the use of the subjunctive *secan mote*: the cross of the vision can be sought again, but since it is a theophany, the narrator's success in this endeavour is subject to God's will. In this context, there is a discernible ascetic urge manifest in lines 126b-27. Similarly in *Elene*, Judas is spiritually invigorated having found the True Cross after extensive, grace-assisted searching:

þa wæs modgemynd myclum geblissod,
 hige onhyrded, þurh þæt halige treo,
 inbryrded breostsefa, syððan beacen geseh,
 halig under hrusan. (839-42a)

Then his mind was greatly gladdened, his purpose encouraged, through that holy tree, and his breast uplifted, after he had seen the sign, holy beneath the ground.

⁶⁴ On the use of the term *longunge* for contemplative longing in *Seafarer*, see pp. 176-78 above.

The structure of *DOTR*, therefore, corresponds very closely to the Early Medieval theory of contemplation, which would be recognised by the contemplative audience. The arrangement of the narrative for their use in preparing for potential contemplative ascent is discussed below.

IV.i *The Dream of the Rood* and the Contemplative Audience: *Imitatio*

Crucis* and *Kenosis

As discussed in Chapter 1 and throughout the thesis,⁶⁵ texts using the first person singular pronoun were seen as inviting personal engagement from the reader. The pronoun *Ic* is used forty-three times in *DOTR*, by both the narrator and the cross. We have, therefore, two subjective views presented to us, through which textual meaning is conveyed.⁶⁶ The paradox of the pronoun is that, as noted previously, no detail is provided to give the poem a sense of place or the narrator's identity, though other Anglo-Saxon texts provide a biographical and geographical context for the visions they describe.

Further than our preceding examples in other chapters of texts using the first person, given the poem's subject matter there is an especially strong biblical context for *DOTR*'s invitation. The adoption of the identity of Christ is a central component of Christianity:

⁶⁵ See especially pp. 95-96 above.

⁶⁶ R.R. Edwards suggests that the consequent narrative distance is to convey our remoteness from God, which harmonises with the poem's evident tenet that God remains unknowable to us, despite Christ's Incarnation: 'Narrative Technique and Distance in *The Dream of the Rood*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 6 (1970), 291-301 (p. 297).

ego enim per legem legi mortuus sum ut Deo vivam Christo confixus sum cruci vivo autem iam non ego vivit vero in me Christus quod autem nunc vivo in carne in fide vivo Filii Dei qui dilexit me et tradidit se ipsum pro me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me.

Paul here discusses Christian spirituality as the loss of personhood, as faith in Christ becomes his sole identity. Since Paul is 'dead' and Christ lives, his conception of reality is mediated through Christ. The first phrase of this verse is recalled explicitly by the cross's narrative, when it offers something akin to a survival manual for Doomsday, to suggest the currency of this Pauline spiritual tenet: 'frineð he for þære mænige hwær se man sie/se ðe for dryhtnes naman deaðes wolde/biteres onbyrgan, swa he ær on ðam beame dyde' (112-14, 'before the hosts He asks where that man might be, he that would taste of the bitterness of death for the Lord's name, as He before did on the beam').

Likewise, in reading the poem, we take on the *Ic* of the narrator, which is facilitated by textual anonymity, as the reader may proceed in this identification unburdened by the trappings of biography latent in the other Anglo-Saxon visions. The vision of *DOTR* is universal in character, in displaying no mention of place or person. Though the opening lines (1-3; see p. 191 above) might seem to establish narrative distance between narrator and audience, this is undermined by what follows: in being related sequentially, the poem ensures that our understanding does not exceed or fall behind that of the narrator, inviting personal identification with him. Indeed, the opening three lines do nothing to anticipate the actual substance of the vision: we know from this section only that we are to learn of *swefna cyst*. There is no mention that the vision will concern a talking cross, and the linear development of the vision dictates that we, too, are just as surprised as the narrator when in

the re-enactment of the event the cross begins to speak: ‘ongan þa word spreca wudu selesta’ (27, ‘then the best of trees began to speak words’). In terms of the poem’s contemplative development, we previously noted how the growth in the narrator’s understanding precedes the speech of the cross (16b-19a; see p. 206 above). The linear sequence of the narrative development means that, in the same way as the narrator, it is only when the reader also understands that the cross represents hope and sorrow that he is rewarded with hearing the mystical speech of the cross. For the contemplative audience, this understanding would come from a lengthy process of re-reading and asserting the mutually negating concepts, discussed in Section IV.ii below. Briefly disregarding the appearance of the cross itself, it is self-evident that the contemplative audience is potentially permitted the same narrative vision as the poem’s narrator: the cross’s primary actions, and the most important part of the vision, are verbal, and are provided in addition to the Prologue, in reading which the reader shares in the narrator’s consciousness in the vision.

The stratified links between the visionary’s narrative and that of the cross attest both to the deliberation in including the cross’s narrative, which possibly came from another source at some point in the poem’s compositional pre-history before it was copied into the VB, and the instruction to mankind to imitate the cross in order to share in the delights of heaven. More specifically, the narrative’s instruction to the contemplative audience to prepare for their own potential contemplation will be discussed as kenosis. Although this chapter is the first specific discussion of kenosis as a contemplative strategy in *DOTR*, several others have noted some of the symptoms of the kenotic ideology. Raw sees the cross as a model to be imitated to be deserving of heaven,⁶⁷ and Napierkowski discusses the

⁶⁷ Raw, ‘*The Dream of the Rood*’, 249.

poem's redefinition of 'victory' to mean 'surrender like the Lord to ignominy and death'.⁶⁸

Ó'Carragáin discusses kenosis as a devotional instruction on the Ruthwell Cross and in *DOTR*, noting that the 'heroism' of the crucifixion narrative is 'not based on pride or simply courage but on the humility central to Christianity', the poem being the 'transformation of aristocratic Germanic values into a new heroic humility based on self-giving',⁶⁹ and later identifies 'kenotic heroism' in the links between Christ, Cross, and narrator.⁷⁰ Ó'Carragáin further provides evidence for the teaching of kenosis in the Collect for the Sunday before Easter, and links this to the first *titulus* on the Ruthwell Cross.⁷¹ Below I will build upon Ó'Carragáin's discussion of kenosis in *DOTR*, and suggest that it can also be read as a contemplative strategy in the poem.

The cross itself identifies explicitly the clear links between itself and the narrator:⁷²

Hwæt, me þa geweorðode wuldres ealdor
ofer holmwudu, heofonrices weard!
Swylce swa he his modor eac, Marian sylfe,
æلميhtig god for ealle menn
geweorðode ofer eall wifa cynn.
Nu ic þe hate, hæleð min se leofa,
þæt ðu þas gesyhðe secge mannum. (90-96)

Lo, the Prince of Glory, the Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven, esteemed me above ocean-trees! Just as His mother also, Mary herself, Almighty God esteemed above all womankind for all mankind. Now I command you, my beloved man, to narrate this vision to men.

Here, the cross aligns itself with the Virgin Mary.⁷³ Just as Mary was exalted 'ofer eall wifa cynn' in being chosen for the task of conceiving the Son of God, so too the cross is chosen

⁶⁸ 'A Dream of the Cross', 10.

⁶⁹ *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 94.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-66.

⁷² Several critics have noted these links. See E.B. Irving, Jr., 'Crucifixion Witnessed, or Dramatic Interaction in *The Dream of the Rood*, 101', in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. P.R. Brown, G.R. Crampton, and F.C. Robinson (Toronto, 1986), pp. 101-14; M.D. Faber, 'The Dream of The Rood: A Few Psychoanalytic Reflections', *Psychoanalytic Review*, 73 (1986), 183-90 (p. 185).

especially from a large group of its peers: ‘ic wæs aheawen holtes on ende’ (29, ‘I was cut down on the edge of the forest’). The Gospel accounts offer no indication of whence the crosses of Christ and the two criminals were sourced, and so the detail in *DOTR*’s account emphasises the cross’s exaltation in being selected for the task. The specific blessing of the cross is again stressed by the use of a plural in its account of the aftermath of the Crucifixion: ‘we ðær greotende gode hwile/stodon on staðole, syððan stefn up gewat/hilderinca’ (70-72a, ‘we stood in position there lamenting for a good while, after the voice of the men went up’). Other trees were hewn as crosses, having been selected for their suitability as gallows, but only the cross that delivers the narrative was chosen as blessed enough to crucify Christ. Just as Mary and the cross were specially chosen to receive grace, so too the narrator must be seen as glorified above other men who are asleep (3b), in having received the vision, as the adverb *nu* (95a) suggests by signalling the shift from past to present tense in the history of temporal exaltation.⁷⁴ The cross’s command that its narrative be told to others (95a-96; see p. 194 above) is also contextualised as a redemptory one. Mary and the cross are fundamental in the redemption of mankind, in bringing forth and slaying Christ respectively, and now the visionary must complete the redemptory process by relating his vision of the cross and the substance of its narrative. The cross goes on to explain its redemptory role on Judgement Day, and it is this feature of mankind’s salvation that the narrator is specifically ordered to

⁷³ The relationship between the Virgin and the cross is articulated by the liturgy. The classic discussion of this, with application to *DOTR*, is Ó Carragáin, ‘Crucifixion as Annunciation’. See also Breeze, ‘The Virgin Mary and *The Dream of the Rood*’, *Florilegium*, 12 (1993), 55-62, who discusses the link between Virgin and cross in the scheme of redemption. To Breeze’s history of mankind’s redemption, we may add the visionary of the poem, as discussed below.

⁷⁴ The three individuals linked by lines 95-97 are all exalted by meeting with a theophany. Both Mary and the cross have congress with a celestial intermediary, the *angelus Domini* and *imago Dei* respectively, which further suggests that the cross of the vision is intended as a theophany. In *Andreas*, the divinely assisted sea journey is seen explicitly as an act of exaltation: ‘þa wæs modsefa myclum geblissod/haliges on hreðre, syððan hleoðorcwide/gingran gehyrdon, þæt hie god wolde/onmunan swa mycles ofer menn ealle’ (892-95, ‘then the heart of the holy one was greatly gladdened in his breast, after he heard the disciple’s speech, that God wished to esteem them so greatly above all men’). NB the similar register to signal this exaltation: ‘ofer eall wifa cynn’ (*DOTR*, 94a), *ofer menn ealle* (*Andreas*, 895b).

relate: ‘onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres beam/se ðe ælmihtig god on þrowode/for mancynnes manegum synnum/ond Adomes ealdgewyrhtum’ (97-100, ‘reveal with words that it is the beam of splendour that the Almighty God suffered upon, for mankind’s many sins and Adam’s ancient deeds’). This evangelical commission makes the narrator the next stage in the scheme of mankind’s redemption, linking him with the two previous stages, Mary and the cross. The reasons for the narrator deserving the vision he is given, and being exalted in the same way as the Blessed Virgin and Holy Rood, are discussed below.

The similarities between cross and narrator, as established through verbal parallels, are most appropriately analysed as kenotic. As discussed throughout the thesis, kenosis, from the Greek *κένωσις*, *kénōsis*, ‘emptiness’, was primarily used to describe the self-abasement of God in the person of Christ.⁷⁵ The term in this context originates in Philippians 2:5-9 (see p. ix above). In a spiritual context, kenosis as demonstrated by Philippians is a mixture of self-abasement and obedience, the end of which is to be rewarded, as Christ was exalted by God after His willing humiliation and suffering. Another VB text, *The Fates of the Apostles*, elaborates the theme of exaltation through being obedient to the Lord’s will:

æðele sceoldon
 ðurh wæpenhete weorc þrowigan,
 sigelean secan, ond þone soðan gefean,
 dream æfter deaðe, þa gedæled wearð
 lif wið lice, ond þas lænan gestreon,
 idle æhtwelan, ealle forhogodan.⁷⁶ (79b-84)

The noble men had to suffer pain through armed hate, to seek the reward of victory and that true happiness, joy after death, when life was separated from the body, and they despised all of these fleeting riches, the empty wealth.

⁷⁵ D. Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London, 2011), p. 1.

⁷⁶ For more on kenosis in VB, see p. 262 below.

DOTR links this willing martyrdom more explicitly to Christ, whose eschatological line of questioning will seek to identify those who, like Himself, have suffered willingly for the Lord (112-14; see p. 220 above).⁷⁷ That this sacrifice is explicitly in imitation of Christ in the poem is further suggested by the verbal repetition of *onbyrigan* (114a), which is also used to describe the Crucifixion itself: ‘*deað he þær byrigde*’ (101a, ‘he tasted death there’). This recalls Paul’s equation of kenosis with the Crucifixion in Galatians 2:19 (see p. 220 above). In *DOTR* both visionary and cross are exalted, by a vision and as a result of the Crucifixion respectively, and so our focus will now be upon how and why this exaltation is given, demonstrated by the similarities between cross and visionary.

The kenotic context offers another motive for the cross’s Marian parallel. The abiding feature of both narrators is their obedience to the task they are given by a celestial intermediary, much like Mary at the Annunciation: ‘*dixit autem Maria ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum et discessit ab illa angelus*’ (Luke 1:38, ‘and Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word’). As previously discussed, since the cross in the poem is a vision sent by God, we can draw a parallel between the cross and the visionary, both of whom are chosen like Mary to fulfil the will of God. For both, such obedience runs contrary to their wishes. In the Prologue, the narrator describes his emotional reaction to the cross: ‘*forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe [...]* /*hwæðre ic þær licgende lange hwile*’ (21a; 24, ‘I was afraid before that beautiful vision, however, lying there for a long time’). This section serves to link the visionary to the cross

⁷⁷ Aside from missionaries to the continent such as Boniface, Christians of the post-Diocletian age would more commonly suffer martyrdom of the spirit, in the form of the *vita monastica*, to which Christ’s interrogation here most likely refers: see p. 261, footnote 23 below. A concise discussion, relating the Ruthwell Cross’s liturgical resonance to this form of devotion is provided by Ó’Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, p. 195. Burlin links the life recommended by *DOTR* to imitating the life, and death, of Christ: ‘the Perfect Life requires both a renunciation of self and an imitation of Christ Who on the Cross carried renunciation to the utmost limit of perfection’ (‘The Ruthwell Cross’, 34).

emphatically, as 24 recalls the cross's actions at 70 (see p. 223 above). Like the visionary — who is presented with a vision, is greatly afraid, and yet endures what God has ordained for him — the cross must endure the agony of the Crucifixion in accordance with God's foreordained plan: 'bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte. Ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan/feallan to foldan sceatum, ac ic sceolde fæste standan' (42-43, 'I trembled when the man embraced me. However, I dared not bend to the earth, to fall to the ground's surface, but I had to stand fast'). Elsewhere, the cross is more emphatic in portraying its obedience, enumerating the other actions available to it during the Crucifixion: 'þær ic þa ne dorste ofer dryhtnes word/bugan oððe berstan/ [...] ealle ic mihte/feondas gefyllan, hwæðre ic fæste stod' (35-36a; 37b-38, 'there I dared not to bow or break against the Lord's word: I could have defeated all of the enemies, however I stood fast'). Both narrators receive the cause of their exaltation obediently, simultaneously defeating their own wills in the process.

Implicit in kenosis is the spiritual purification required as a prerequisite for contemplation. To be obedient to God's will and self-abnegate to the point that 'vivit vero in me Christus' (Galatians 2:20) requires that one is sinless; to be aware of one's moral shortcomings is also an implicit act of humility. Like the narrator, therefore, when thinking of the cross as symbol the contemplative audience too must be contrite and aware of their iniquity. Like *DDI* and *JDII*, *Seafarer*, and Vercelli IX, *DOTR* is strategically arranged so as to encourage the contemplative audience to undergo spiritual purgation as part of its contemplative scheme. Hence, another unifying feature of visionary and cross linked to the denial of self is the evident compunction felt by the visionary at his sinful state in contrast to the vision of the cross that exalts him. The link between the visionary's state in the Prologue and the cross's self-portrayal in its narrative is illustrated by a syntactical and lexical

repetition, italicised in the following quotations. The visionary laments how at the sight of the cross ‘eall ic wæs *mid sorgum gedrefed*’ (21b, ‘I was completely *afflicted sorely with griefs*’). This anticipates the cross’s state at the Crucifixion, ‘sare ic wæs *mid sorgum gedrefed*’ (59, ‘I was *sorely afflicted with griefs*’), at the sight of the Lord. This state on both occasions contrasts with the adjective *fæger*, thrice used to describe the cross in the Prologue (8a; 10a; 21a; see pp. 211, 199, and 209 above) and applied to Christ in the Crucifixion narrative, ‘*fæger feorgbold*’ (73a, ‘beautiful corpse’). The accuracy of this repetition suggests that this is a certain link in the penitent reactions of visionary and cross to the beautiful rood of the Prologue and Christ respectively, and explicit instruction for the contemplative audience tasked with being worthy of a similar manifestation of God’s grace. To imitate the narrator, as invited by the *Ic* pronoun, the contemplative audience must also embrace kenosis: to be sinless, humble, and entirely obedient to God’s will.

This equivalence in the attitudes of visionary and cross as they receive their exaltation reveals the ends of kenosis. Just as the cross obediently slays Christ, and becomes the celebrated instrument of redemption — ‘iu ic wæs geworden wita heardost/leodum laðost, ærþan ic him lifes weg/rihtne gerymde, reordberendum’ (87-89, ‘long ago, I became the harshest of torments, the most loathsome to people, before I opened up the right way of life for the speech-bearers’) — so too the visionary’s obedience and humility in the Prologue are rewarded by the vision of the cross *proper*, as it begins to speak. The narrative makes it clear that the visionary’s obedient passivity in beholding the vision is crucial to its commencement (24-26; see p. 200 above). As we have seen, the most important aspect of Old Testament dream/visions is the received narrative. Thus, before the cross’s narrative begins and the vision takes its fundamental shape, the visionary’s self-denial of will is again

mentioned, as he opens himself up to receive the will of God in the form of the vision. The importance of the narrator's passivity in receiving the vision is confirmed by the comparison to the cross that the narrative invites. The cross must passively accept its role, for were it *bugan oððe berstan* (36a), Christ could not be crucified, and thus there could be no redemption of mankind. Likewise, were the narrator to flee the vision of the cross, there would be no redemptory narrative to tell, which as the cross's command to spread the words of his vision demonstrates is the important part of the vision. Again, this would be clear to the contemplative audience reading the narrative meticulously, whose knowledge of contemplative theory would make such concepts familiar, and hence would be capable of imitating the obedience and humility of the cross and narrator in order potentially to be exalted in the form of a vision.

Consideration must also be given to the contrast in narrative technique between the visionary and the cross. Whilst the cross is unabashed in describing itself as the True Cross and instrument of redemption (97b-100; see p. 224 above), all sense of the narrator's identity is subsumed in the delivery of the narrative. As previously noted, we have not even any idea of where the vision takes place. The motivation for this aesthetic choice in *DOTR* may in part lie in kenosis: in assuming the form of man, Christ subsumed His true identity as part of the Trinity to become the image of God, *Imago Dei* (Philippians 2:7-9; see p. ix above). Likewise, in adopting kenosis as a spiritual tenet, the visionary suspends all detail of self in his narrative, emphasising the self-emptying required to be receptive to God's will. The cross, however, which is extensively kenotic throughout the Crucifixion, in its present state repeatedly proclaims its sense of identity to the visionary. This contrast to the visionary's

narrative technique is best explicated in reference to the cross's description of its present state:

Nu ðu miht gehyran, hæleð min se leofa,
þæt ic bealuwara weorc gebiden hæbbe,
sarra sorga. Is nu sæl cumen
þæt me weorðiað wide ond side
menn ofer moldan, ond eall þeos mære gesceaft,
gebiddaþ him to þyssum beacne.⁷⁸ (78-83a)

Now, my beloved man, you can hear that I have endured the deeds of evil people, of grievous sorrows. Now the time has come when men across the world esteem me far and wide, and all of this excellent creation prays to this sign.

The cross's role in mankind's redemption is complete: in accepting the role of *banan* (66a, 'slayer'), the cross has permitted mankind to enter heaven. As a result, it has been exalted, as it unequivocally relates 'on me bearn godes/þrowode hwile. Forþan ic þrymfæst nu/hlifige under heofenum, ond ic hælæn mæg/æghwylcne anra, þara þe him bið egesa to me' (83b-86; 'the Son of God suffered on me for a while. Thus, now I stand high beneath the heavens, glorious, and I can save each one of those in whom there is fear of me'). As the final line of this quotation suggests, the onus is now on all mankind to deserve redemption, by being mindful of the cross's symbolism. Thus, despite the vision with which he has been rewarded, the visionary has only been exalted in terrestrial terms: he must first obediently complete the evangelical mission to inform his fellow man of the cross's redemptory role, and of course live piously. Having received the vision he must now spread the word, or face the consequences, as in Ezekiel 3:18:

si dicente me ad impium morte morieris non adnuntiaveris ei neque locutus fueris ut
avertatur a via sua impia et vivat ipse impius in iniquitate sua morietur sanguinem autem
eius de manu tua requiram.

⁷⁸ This passage closely resembles *Elene* 511-16: see footnote 20 above.

If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand.

Hence, in recounting his hopes for heaven, the narrator can do so only in the subjunctive tense (135b-40a; see p. 216 above). Though he has received the highest terrestrial accolade that God is willing to give in the form of the theophany he beholds, the visionary is yet to be exalted in eternity, and so he must maintain his kenotic spirituality, encapsulated in the lack of evident biographical detail, just as the cross obeyed the Lord's will until the bitter end of the Crucifixion. Appropriately, then, as the cross's narrative ends, the narrator's immediate reaction is to pray humbly to the cross, his desire to see the cross again buttressed, but still with no sense of identity given: 'gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode/elne mycle [...] /me is willa to ðam/mycel on mode, ond min mundbyrd is/geriht to þære rode' (122-23a; 129b-31a, 'I myself prayed to the beam with a joyous spirit, great courage [...] the will in me to this end is great in mind, and my protection is directed towards the cross'). Though he intends to be more thorough in devotion than others (126b-28; see pp. 217-18 above), from his example and the cross's narrative, which encourages all men to direct their devotion to itself, the contemplative audience, too, can share the same objective. The vision is potentially as universal in its significance as it is inherently personal to the anonymous narrator, fulfilling the role that Bede outlines for all contemplatives: 'on account of the mysteries they have learned in secret so that they can declare them openly, and so that these things they have received in secret meditation they may administer manifest nourishment to holy church by teaching' (*In Cantica canticorum*, III, re: Song of Songs 7.4). The function of the text as a universal apparatus for contemplatives to attempt to ascend to a vision of God is further elaborated in the final section, below.

IV.ii *The Dream of the Rood* and the Contemplative Audience:

Apophatic Discourse

The appearance of the cross in the vision, though beautiful, would be fairly unremarkable in appearance to its contemporary audience, based on survivals from the Anglo-Saxon plastic arts: it is *begoten mid golde* (7a), and adorned with gemstones, ‘gimmas hæfdon/bewrigene weorðlice wealdendes treow’ (16b-17; see p. 206 above).⁷⁹ Mahler provides the most intriguing parallels of the visionary cross to Anglo-Saxon art, suggesting that we should imagine the cross to resemble the Brussels and Rupertus Crosses.⁸⁰ These processional crosses are of Anglo-Saxon manufacture, despite their current continental locations, and match many aspects of the physical description of the cross in *DOTR*, being golden and bejewelled, though the Brussels cross in its current state has been plundered of its adornments.⁸¹ Appendix III.iii, an eleventh-century manuscript illumination from Stowe 944 also shows King Cnut and Queen Ælfgifu presenting a similar jewelled cross to Hyde Abbey. Besides its ability to speak and textual evidence that it is a theophany, the only descriptive feature of the cross in *DOTR* that suggests that it is different from other crosses is that ‘hine þær beheoldon halige gastas/men ofer moldan, ond eall þeos mære gesceaft’ (11-12, ‘the holy souls beheld it there, men throughout the world and all this splendid creation’). Yet even this feature can be related to contemporary belief in events such as the angels seen worshipping in the church of Lindisfarne by Æthelwulf, and familiarity with iconography

⁷⁹ See footnote 57 above. Orchard notes the resemblance of the cross in the *DOTR* to one described in Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, 723-25: ‘a venerable shining cross rises up on a lofty stem from the edge of the altar, with very brilliant emerald; a golden layer grows yellow with tawny gems’ (quoted from ‘Cross References’, p. 246).

⁸⁰ ‘*Lignum Domini*’, 455.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

such as the gaze of Christ and the angels on Cnut's cross in Stowe 944 (Appendix III.iii). The bleeding of the cross (19b-20a, see p. 212 above), though a common feature of contemplative narratives, also finds a parallel in the artistic tradition. Rissanen suggests the Cross of Lothair, another processional cross of c.1000, one side of which is gold and bejewelled, the other a depiction of the Passion, as a cognate.⁸² Whilst we cannot ultimately prove any relation of this specific artefact to the poem, the existence of a cross physically presenting both symbolic aspects of the cross suggests that the form of apophatic devotion that characterises *DOTR* was not an isolated activity in the period, and it would likewise be foolhardy to rule out the possibility that other crosses of a similar design existed.

It may at first seem curious that the object of the *swefna cyst* is a cross, whose appearance would be familiar to many, but this aesthetic choice can be profitably related to a contemplative scheme. The very accessibility of the vision of the celestial cross, the lack of biographical detail, and the use of *Ic*, together can be interpreted as an invitation to the contemplative audience to join in the vision of the poem. The familiarity of the cross's appearance means that all may meditate upon the appearance of the cross of the vision, like the narrator, from the description of the Prologue. This phenomenon is discussed as schemata theory by modern psychologists: 'when comprehended in context, the meanings of the words in an utterance are further articulated in a process of inferential interpolation based on "schemata" which embody one's knowledge of the language and world'.⁸³ By using images stored in the memory, or schemata, therefore, contemporary audiences of the poem could readily bring to mind a reasonably accurate mental image of the cross described

⁸² *Message and Structure*, p. 13.

⁸³ R.C. Anderson, J.W. Pichert, E.T. Goetz, D.L. Schallert, K.V. Stevens, and S.R. Trollip, 'Instantiation of General Terms', *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 15 (1976), 667-79 (p. 667). See also pp. 68-69 above.

in the poem from personal experience. Linking words to mental images, of course, harmonises with Bede's phenomenological theory of image-processing in reading (*HA*, 6; see p. 67 above). It is possible, therefore, that this scheme of familiar imagery was intended by the author of *DOTR* to allow the reader to share in the visual aspect of the event. That an object such as a cross could be the starting point of contemplative ascent for the contemplative audience is articulated by Evelyn Underhill:

Since mystics have, as a rule, the extreme susceptibility to suggestions and impressions which is characteristic of artistic and creative types, it is not surprising that their ecstasies are often evoked, abruptly, by the exhibition of, or concentration upon, some loved and special symbol of the divine. Such symbols form the rallying-points about which are gathered a whole group of ideas and intuitions. Their presence—sometimes the sudden thought of them—will be enough, in psychological language, to provoke a discharge of energy along some particular path: that is to say, to stir to life all those ideas and intuitions which belong to the self's consciousness of the Absolute, to concentrate vitality on them, and introduce the self into that world of perception of which they are, as it were, the material keys. Hence the profound significance of symbols for some mystics: their paradoxical clinging to outward forms, whilst declaring that the spiritual and intangible alone is real.⁸⁴

Beyond the devotional context, the idea that a 'symbol of the divine' could, by verbal association, be the starting point of contemplative ascent, is also justified by reference to the modern psychological theory of schemata. Anglo-Saxon crosses also demanded physical interaction from their observers: Ó'Carragáin describes in detail the arrangement of iconography on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses, which require one to walk around the monuments, and to engage with them textually.⁸⁵ Such crosses were not merely to be glanced at, and the contemplative audience would be familiar with the physical and textual interaction demanded by such crosses. The cross of *DOTR*, then, is presented in such a way as to allow readers to share more fully in the vision: the cross can easily be accessed in the

⁸⁴ *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 12th edn. (London, 1931; 1967), p. 364.

⁸⁵ Ó'Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 107-09. In the light of this reading, and the age of the version in VB, it is possible to suggest that *DOTR* was written initially as a response to the visual experience of the Ruthwell Cross itself.

reader's schemata, and Anglo-Saxon reading theory suggests that such visual imaginings would be the result of comprehending a text. As a result, the growth in understanding for narrator and reader are equivalent, directing the contemplative audience to consider the meanings of different parts of the cross's appearance and experience compunction, until, like the narrator, they are prepared to receive the substance of the cross's narrative.

Thus far, we have seen how the visions of narrator and reader are almost equivalent. This analysis will now be extended to include the cross's narrative, the apophatic discourse of which comprises the vision *proper*, and provides the means for the contemplative audience to contemplate potentially something of God, whose actions are implicit in the Crucifixion story.⁸⁶ Boenig suggests that *DOTR* is comprised of a series of affirmations and denials about Christ and the cross, under the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius.⁸⁷ *DOTR* certainly displays the nuanced undermining of language associated with the apophatic school of thought, as all paradoxical elements of the cross, Crucifixion and Christ are unresolved, and merely allowed to co-exist in mutual opposition. We can relate this technique firmly to Pseudo-Dionysius's thoughts on Christ from *Divine Names* II.9.648A, which circulated in Anglo-Saxon England through a Latin translation made at the 649 Lateran Council, familiar to, and quoted by, Bede:⁸⁸

⁸⁶ The use of paradox in the poem has not gone unnoticed by scholarship. Rosemary Wolf, 'Doctrinal Influences on *The Dream of the Rood*', *MÆ*, 27 (1958), 137-53, praises the poem's theological aesthetic in terms of these contrasts: '*The Dream of the Rood* [...] was written at a time when both Christology and soteriology laid [a] double stress on the Crucifixion as a scene of both triumph and suffering, and the author has succeeded in fulfilling what might seem to be an artistically impossible demand' (143). Ó Carragáin (*Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 309-10) links the structure of antithesis in the cross's description of its transformation from instrument of death to instrument of life (78-83a; 83b-86) to the antitheses in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) delivered by Mary at the Annunciation.

⁸⁷ Boenig, 'Pseudo-Dionysius', 4. Boenig's principal focus is on the uncertainty over whether the cross or Christ suffers in the Crucifixion narrative, and building on this reading here I offer an interpretation of the text as more broadly apophatic.

⁸⁸ For an analysis of the manuscript of the 649 Lateran Council's English circulation, and a consideration of Pseudo-Dionysius's influence in Anglo-Saxon England, see T. Flight, "'Through a Glass, Darkly': Evidence for

nam Dionisius egregius inter ecclesiaticos scriptores in opusculis de diuinis nominibus hoc modo loquitur: Ignoramus enim qualiter de uirgineis sanguinibus alia lege præter naturalem formabatur et qualiter infusis pedibus corporale pondus habentibus et materiale onus deambulabat in humidam et instabilem substantiam. (*In Marci Evangelium Expositio*, II.1135-41)

For Dionysius, outstanding amongst ecclesiastical writers, in the works Concerning the Divine Names says this: 'We are ignorant even of how He was formed, beyond natural law, from virgin's blood, and how He had feet infused with bodily weight and material burden and [yet] walked on the wet and unstable substance'.

Here Pseudo-Dionysius highlights the ineffability of Christ, meditating upon the mystical imbuing of His human and divine natures into one will. Emphatically, Pseudo-Dionysius references biblical accounts, and then signals their contrariness to man's understanding of nature: in so doing, he demonstrates the limits of terrestrial knowledge of Christ. All that we can know of Christ are the indisputable facts of His life given in Scripture, which we cannot understand: these thus pose an unresolvable paradox. It is this ineffable aspect of Christ's person that *DOTR* exploits, along with the inherently paradoxical Crucifixion, for the contemplative audience.

The most obvious negation comes in the cross's descriptions of Christ: 'eall ic wæs mid blode bestemed/begoten of þæs guman sidan [...] /geseah ic weruda god/pearle þenian' (48b-49a; 51b-52a, 'I was completely drenched with blood, poured over from the man's side. I saw the God of Hosts cruelly stretched out'). The cross asserts that Christ is both God and Man, simultaneously, but neither in isolation of the other, recalling the Nicene Creed: 'We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God [...] of one Being with the Father [...] He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and

became truly human'.⁸⁹ Whilst the Nicene Creed offers some explanation of the person of Christ, in *DOTR* there is no attempt to resolve the two terms used to describe Christ, but instead they lie in opposition, conveying the mystery of the Incarnation, as in Bede's quotation of *Divine Names* II.9.648A. The essential orthodoxy of the poem's theology, however, is not at issue, as mentioning both personhoods of Christ emphasises the Nicene Creed's assertion that Christ was divine and yet 'truly human': 48b-49a; 51b-52a; 'Crist wæs on rode/hwæðere þær fuse feorran cwoman/to þam æðelinge. Ic þæt eall beheold' (56a-58b, 'Christ was on the cross. However, the eager ones came there from afar to the nobleman. I beheld all of that'). Though the cross maintains 'Ic þæt eall beheold', it sees and yet does not entirely understand what is before it, and so makes no attempt to represent Christ by a single sign. This betrays a distrust of language to describe the ineffable, a tenet of apophysis. To imagine God, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, is 'to deny that which is beyond all denial' (*Mystical Theology*, III.1033c) to create semiotic nothingness, since to know what God is not presupposes knowing what He is. Augustine, a profound influence on both Pseudo-Dionysius and Anglo-Saxon theology, demands the same denial of denial when discussing the unutterable nature of God: 'God is unspeakable. For this reason, God should not even be called unspeakable, for even when this word is spoken, something is spoken' (*Confessiones*, I.10). Thus even negative statements about Christ must be denied to achieve the most adequate divine signification, which the poem achieves, like Pseudo-Dionysius, by describing Christ as two contradictory persons with no attempt at reconciliation. To assert that Christ is both God and man without an explanation of how this is possible, therefore, is to affirm and negate both concepts and thus to signify nothing, resulting in a more accurate depiction of Christ, whose ineffable essence is demonstrated to lie beyond the semantic

⁸⁹ Quoted from J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn. (London, 2006), pp. 215-16.

range of the words applied. The reader encounters eighteen signifiers used for Christ in IIa, excluding third-person singular pronouns and descriptions of His corpse. Fourteen of these are divine in import, and four are essentially human (39a, *geong hæleð*, ‘the young warrior’; 42a, *beorn* ‘man’; 49a, *guman*, ‘man’; 63a, *limwerigne*, ‘the limb-weary one’). In each case, no resolution with the other signifiers is attempted, and the regularity with which the essentially human terms occur, corresponding roughly with the beginning, middle and end of the cross’s description of the Crucifixion in IIa, ensures that the context of Christ’s humanity is never forgotten by the reader. For the contemplative audience, the negations offered by each signifier are cumulative, progressively leading the mind further from earthly discourse to the ineffable divinity, as Pseudo-Dionysius discusses (*Mystical Theology*, II.1025B; see p. 117 above). ‘Every obstacle’, in the context of the poem, refers to the inhibiting logic and limited understanding of fallen man. In strategically contradicting its own assertions about Christ, *DOTR* is essentially silent descriptively, but nevertheless provides unresolvable paradoxes which must be maintained intellectually by members of the contemplative audience, so as to direct the mind beyond the signification of words and terrestrial knowledge. Though terms are positively applied to Him, because of their mutually opposing nature Christ is thus depicted for the contemplative audience in the poem only through negation.

To further the contemplative scheme of the poem, there is a lexical shift in the cross’s narrative between Parts IIa and IIb, reflecting the proposed structure of the poem. When describing the return of the glorified Christ in IIa, the cross ceases to describe Christ as a

man, and uses only divine signifiers for the purpose.⁹⁰ Whereas before Christ was described as *geong hæleð*, *beorn*, *guman* and *ðær limwerigne*, after the account of the Crucifixion ends He is now exclusively divine, signified by twelve terms for God (83b, *bearn godes*, 'Son of God'; 90b, *wuldres ealdor*, 'Lord of Glory'; 91b, *heofonrices weard*, 'Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven'; 93a, *æلميhtig god*, 'Almighty God'; 98a, *æلميhtig god*, 'Almighty God'; 101b, *dryhten*, 'Lord'; 105b, *dryhten sylfa*, 'The Lord Himself'; 106a, *æلميhtig god*, 'Almighty God'; 107b, 'se ah domes geweald', 'He that possesses Judgement'; 111b, *se wealdend*, 'The Ruler'; 113a, *dryhtnes*, 'Lord'; 116a, *Criste*, 'Christ'; 121a, *wealdende*, 'Lord').⁹¹ This narrative shift brings with it a new intellectual task for the contemplative audience. Having attempted to reconcile the persons of Christ, it is now necessary to resolve the discrepancy between the man slain ignominiously (48b-49a) and the almighty ruler who will return all-powerful at Judgement Day (110-11). How this transformation was achieved is entirely unknowable: the contemplative audience is thus tasked with keeping the paradox of Christ's exaltation in mind, in order to consider God's unknowable actions more accurately.

Conveying God in this manner is a characteristically contemplative technique. To affirm and negate aspects of the One is to open up the logical gap between what is asserted and denied about Him. The cross's narrative, in affirming contradictory aspects of Christ but leaving them unresolved, makes this narrative space available to the narrator and the contemplative audience, and so though neither sees Christ or the Crucifixion with bodily eyes, both are given the preparatory means to contemplate God through the person of Christ

⁹⁰ Wolf similarly highlights the 'balance between the effects of triumph and suffering, and their paradoxical fusion in the Crucifixion' in *DOTR*, which she contextualises with contemporary Christology: 'Doctrinal Influences', 137.

⁹¹ This register again omits third person singular pronouns, and it should also be noted that the nature of the Holy Trinity means that it is impossible at times to decide which member is being described by a term which applies to them all.

as depicted in the Crucifixion narrative with the mind's eye, should grace be sent. This is implied when the cross glosses its description of the Crucifixion almost in terms of a riddle:

Ne þearf ðær þonne ænig anforht wesan
þe him ær in breostum bereð beacna selest,
ac ðurh ða rode sceal rice gesecan
of eorðwege æghwylc sawl,
seo þe mid wealdende wunian þenceð. (117-21)

Nobody who already bears the best of signs in their breasts need be fearful, but through the cross each soul of the earth-journey which thinks to dwell with the Ruler shall seek the Kingdom.

Through the cross, one may better understand the Crucifixion, since it embodies, though fails to explain, the shame and glorification of Christ, to keep them in apophatic relation. Thus, 'in breostum bereð beacna selest' (118) means to be mindful of the Crucifixion, and to arrange one's spiritual life accordingly, since the cross is presented as the means by which slight knowledge of God can be achieved, should God's grace allow it. The narrator's response to the narrative strongly suggests this reading, as he immediately prays to the cross with renewed vigour (122; see p. 207 above). Should the contemplative audience carefully follow the text and react accordingly, they can share in this renewed spirituality.

The description of the Crucifixion itself operates on the same apophatic basis. In the Prologue, the narrator asserts of the vision before him, 'ne wæs ðær huru fracodes gealga' (10b, 'truly it was not the gallows of a criminal'). Yet, in the cross's narrative, this observation is explicitly undermined: 'gestah he on gealgan heanne' (40b, 'He [Christ] climbed on the lowly gallows'). Neither narrator is incorrect: the cross was intended as the gallows of a criminal, and Christ deliberately suffered an ignominious death, yet it is simultaneously the means of Christ's glorification and the universal symbol of Christian hope in Christ's redemptory death, and so signifies the victory of Christ, *se sigebeam* (13a).

The central paradox of the cross is that it is simultaneously the symbol of Christ's lamentable death and the joyous symbol of everlasting life, since through the cross mankind was redeemed. This enigmatic quality is encapsulated in the cross's self-portrayal (83b-86; see p. 229 above). It is glorified *because* it was the slayer of Christ. This central paradox of the Crucifixion narrative is orthodox, and yet unresolvable, which the text embraces in assisting the contemplative audience to prepare for potential contemplative ascent. *DOTR* does not seek to explain this theological complexity, but instead embraces and emphasises the inherent paradox of the Crucifixion and the person of Christ to communicate the inscrutability of the event and Him who permitted it to occur. As we saw in the previous chapter, like *DOTR*, *Seafarer* employs *forþan* on several occasions to imply a logical connection between two statements with no logical relationship, and so *forþan* in fact serves to undermine language.⁹² Just as it is illogical to yearn for the sea when the weather is abominable, so too it is incomprehensible that the instrument used to kill the Son of God should be glorified *forþan* it killed Him. Since the Bible maintains that this was the act and foreordained plan of God, Christians have to assume that there was an underlying logic to the Crucifixion. The emphatic conjunction *forþan* here demonstrates the limits of terrestrial knowledge: no man can interpret this *forþan* as logical and understand the relation between the two sentences. The interpretation of *forþan* will only be available to man post-mortem: 'nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum' (I Corinthians 13:12, 'now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known'). The destruction of narrative logic in this statement, therefore, preserves the mystery of God, which is simultaneously conveyed to the narrator and the contemplative audience as the means to direct the mind beyond the terrestrial realm to the ineffable divine.

⁹² See pp. 164-69 above.

The conjunction *hwæðre*, which occurs nine times in sections I-IIb, is also applied disjunctively. Judith N. Garde observes that every use of *hwæðre* ‘signals the inconclusive nature of the situation or action just recounted’.⁹³ My analysis here will alternatively suggest that when it is used, *hwæðre* operates as a disjunction, and it is not the conclusive nature of the actions indicated that is altered but the logic behind them. In the Prologue, the first use of the conjunction articulates the paradox of the cross as symbol (16-19a; see p. 206 above). The gems here inhibit the cross’s signification of the agony of Christ’s Passion, yet the narrator is able to get beyond its appearance to understand its other meaning. Despite the use of *hwæðre* in 18a, there is no conventional logical connection here between the bejewelling of the cross and the narrator’s ability to see it as a symbol of strife, which serves both to convey the mystery of the vision and to undermine terrestrial logic and discourse for the contemplative audience, who must maintain the paradox of the cross’s symbolism to direct the mind toward the ineffable mystery it signifies. The second instance was previously analysed as kenotic: ‘forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe/ [...] /hwæðre ic þær licgende lange hwile/beheold hreowcearig hælendes treow/oððæt ic gehyrde þæt hit hleoðrode’ (21a; 24-26, ‘I was afraid before that beautiful vision [...] however, lying there for a long time, I beheld contritely the Saviour’s tree, until I heard that it made a sound’). The coming of God’s grace in the form of the cross’s narrative is presented as a direct consequence of the visionary’s kenosis and penitence, but in itself this development is a paradox. Despite the conjunction, there is no logical link between the narrator’s continuing prostration and contrition and the cross beginning to speak, which as in the case above both signals the inherent ineffability of the contemplative event and signals to the contemplative audience the need to maintain the paradoxical connection facilitated by the conjunction.

⁹³ *Old English Poetry in Medieval Christian Perspective: A Doctrinal Approach* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 104.

Hwæðre (38a) functions in the same disjunctive manner in the cross's Crucifixion narrative (35-36a; 37b-38; see p. 226 above). The cross here shares in the action of Christ: like Him, it chooses to be wounded, since it could escape from its torment if it wished. The cross's willing passivity only makes sense in terms of Crucifixion theology, since no logical connective or explanation is provided, to demand contemplative preparation from the narrator. Yet, as discussed, the Crucifixion is an inherently paradoxical event: the narrative strategy here is to exploit this paradox, so that the more asserted about the event, the less comprehensible it becomes to earthly logic. Later on, the conjunction is once again employed paradoxically: 'sare ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed, hnag ic hwæðre þam secgum to handa/eaðmod elne mycle' (59-60a, 'I was sorely afflicted with griefs, however I bowed to the hands of the men, obedient with great courage'). There is no indication as to why this is a brave act, since *secgum* here denotes the followers of Christ, whose will the cross has followed throughout its ordeal. Presumably, too, being *mid sorgum gedrefed* would also make the cross more acquiescent to the will of others than if it was in good health. As in 35-36a and 37b-38, here the contemplative audience is being taken beyond the signification of words and terrestrial knowledge through the undermining of discourse and logic. Another instance of *hwæðre* being applied disjunctively comes later in the immediate post-Crucifixion scene: 'reste he ðær mæte weorode/hwæðere we ðær greotende gode hwile/stodon on staðole, syððan stefn up gewat/hilderinca' (69b-72a, 'He rested there with a small company. However, we stood in position there lamenting for a good while, after the voice of the men went up'). There is again nothing to suggest that the two events are linked, and the logic is once more irresolvable: Christ's prostration has no logical bearing on whether the cross remains erect.

The conjunction is employed for the last time in the Cross's Discussion of its post-Passion role, when it briefly describes the Resurrection: 'deað he þær byrigde, hwæðere eft dryhten aras/mid his miclan mihte mannum to helpe' (101-02, 'He tasted death there, however the Lord rose again with His great power to help men'). The lines accurately convey the fact that Christ, 'eternally begotten of the Father', cannot die, but again the mystery behind His actions remains unexplained. The unanswerable question posed, and again left to the reader to resolve, is how death necessitates resurrection and exaltation, and how Christ can be said to have died. This is a contemplative prompt, as in the cross's self-portrayal: the mysterious nature of God is implied and contained within the self-negating apophatic statements of the cross's narrative. God, despite His self-manifestation into Christ, remains essentially unknowable, and yet the means to achieve (should His grace be awarded) an imperfect understanding, or glimpse, of Him, is paradoxically contained within the text. As in the use of *forþan*, the narrator is impossibly tasked with comprehending how the conjunction *hwæðre* can make sense in this context, knowledge that will be perfected post-mortem but may for the present be glimpsed or partially understood by the elect among the living. The illogical application of *hwæðre* is, like the mutually negating descriptions of Christ as both fully man and fully God, to preserve the mystery of Christ's ineffable divinity and agency, whilst simultaneously providing the paradox required to direct the mind beyond terrestrial knowledge in contemplative preparation.

In demonstrating the essential failure of human discourse to describe even the Incarnate Christ through the use of paradox and encouraging penitence through the narrator's display of *compunctio* in the Prologue, *DOTR* enables contemplatives to clear the mind's eye of all terrestrial logic and knowledge contained within the medium of language,

and so prepare for a potential ecstatic vision themselves. The Old English *Soliloquies* explicates the need for this mental purgation, again equating seeing and understanding (I, p. 67; see p. 117 above). *DOTR* is structured and executed for the very purpose of giving the contemplative audience the *ful hale eagan* that the Old English *Soliloquies* sees as a prerequisite for contemplation.

V Conclusion

Despite the majority of criticism focussing upon the account of the Crucifixion, the surface meaning of the cross's narrative in *DOTR* is more properly seen as an account of its role in the history of mankind, from its genesis to its redemptory function. In so doing, the cross is unequivocal about its manmade nature, giving detail which the Gospels omit about its origin (29; see p. 223 above).⁹⁴ It is, like all imitative crosses after it, a manmade object. In a bold statement about the potential ends of art, man will be redeemed through an object created by man: 'ic hælæn mæg/æghwylcne anra, þara þe him bið egesa to me' (85b-86, 'I can save each one of those who live in fear of me'). Amongst such manmade creations is VB, and the evangelising *DOTR* itself, and so we have here a clue as to part of the poet's, and manuscript compiler's, intent for the narrative's use. In reading the poem, and being directed to devotion to the cross, we are led from one aesthetic object to another, and simultaneously to redemption. Ælfric equates all crosses for being signs of the same thing:

⁹⁴ This is also an aesthetic characteristic of crosses in late Anglo-Saxon art, and so perhaps the symptom with a wider fixation upon the synthetic nature of the cross. See J. O'Reilly, 'The Rough-Hewn Cross in Anglo-Saxon Art', in *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500-1200: Proceedings of a Conference at University College Cork 1985*, ed. M. Ryan (Dublin, 1987), pp. 153-58.

Cristene men sceolon soðlice abugan to gehalgodre rode, on ðæs Hælendes naman, forðan ðe we nabbað ða ðe he on ðrowade, ac hire anlicnys bið halig swa-þeah, to ðære we abugað on gebedum symle to ðam Mihtigan Drihtne, þe for mannum ðrowade; and seo rod is gemynd his mæran þrowunge, halig ðurh hine, ðeah ðe heo on holte weoxe. (*Sermones catholici* II.XIX, 'Inventio sancti Crucis')

Christian men should truly bow to the sanctified rood, in the name of Christ, because we have not the one on which He suffered, but its likeness is nevertheless holy, to which we bow in endless prayers to the Mighty Lord, who suffered for men; and the rood is a memorial to declare His Passion, holy through Him, though it grew in a forest.

As signifiers of the Crucifixion recorded for the benefit of mankind in the Gospels, all crosses, in being signs of the same thing, are in a sense theophanies, like that of the poem. As instances of what God is willing to reveal about Himself, like the visionary readers may all learn eschatological things from devotion to any version of the cross, in their mind's eye or physically before them, and so hunger for heaven. The homiletic message is clear: all men can reform their lives to achieve a place in heaven amongst the elect, through thinking on the symbolism of the cross. The message for the contemplative audience, however, is twofold, and we have a visual depiction of this other concept in the eleventh-century Stowe 944.⁹⁵ Here, King Cnut and Queen Ælfgifu are depicted presenting a jewelled cross, like that of the Prologue, to Hyde Abbey. Unambiguously, this object provides a link to heaven: it is acknowledged by two angels, emanating from the depiction of Christ in majesty at the top of the page. The sense here is that heaven may be partially known through the cross, which is depicted as an intermediary between heaven and earth, even though no detail or surrounding text suggests its particular sanctity or status as a relic. The poem functions in the same way as the cross of Stowe 944, equivalently a heavenly conduit in providing the potential means to contemplate heaven whilst still in the flesh. Hence, in the narrative vision of *DOTR*, as well as being instructed in the redemptory need to venerate the cross, we are

⁹⁵ See Appendix III.iii.

shown a potential means to know something of God and the heaven that His presence essentially defines, through contemplating the paradox of the cross as symbol. Whilst the poem's apophatic presentation of the cross firmly circumscribes the limits of man's divine knowledge, by simultaneously providing the contemplative audience with the means to be prepared for the coming of God's grace in the form of a similar vision it provides the potential means for greater knowledge.

5 A Contemplative Reading of Vercelli Homily IX, ‘The Devil’s Account of the Next World’

In this chapter, we move from Insular poetic works to a seldom-discussed prose text.¹

Vercelli Homily IX (hereafter referred to as V.IX) is one of the twenty-three prose works contained in VB, the codex that also contains the poem discussed in the previous chapter, *DOTR*.² Aside from its obvious difference in form, however, we shall observe in V.IX narrative techniques with which we have become familiar over the course of this study, suggesting the wide-reaching influence of contemplative practices on Anglo-Saxon literature. In content, therefore, the text does not differ greatly from the poems previously discussed in this thesis, for as we shall see, V.IX is structured to offer a schematised textual apparatus for a mixed audience including members of the hypothesised contemplative audience.³ It will be demonstrated how the text guides the reader to negate bodily senses and temptations, through sustained narrative paradox, mnemonics, and nuanced

¹ Aside from brief mentions in books and articles, which will be addressed at relevant points in the discussion, V.IX has been discussed at length by two scholars. D.G. Scragg analyses the relationship of other homilies to V.IX in ‘Napier’s ‘Wulfstan’ Homily xxx: its Sources, its Relationship to the Vercelli Book and its Style’, *ASE*, 6 (1977), 197-211, and ‘“The Devil’s Account of the Next World” Revisited’, *American Notes & Queries*, 24 (1986), 107-10. C.D. Wright discusses V.IX at length, on both occasions tracing its relationship to Irish homiletic material, in ‘The Irish “Enumerative Style” in Old English Homiletic Literature, Especially Vercelli Homily IX’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 18 (1989), 27-74, and *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, CSASE, 6 (Cambridge, 1991), the latter of which also contains a translation and edition of the homily. For a full list of articles referencing V.IX, see P.G. Remley, ‘The Vercelli Book and its Texts: A Guide to Scholarship’, in *New Readings in the Vercelli Book*, ed. S. Zacher and A. Orchard (Toronto, 2009), pp. 318-416 (392-415).

² V.IX occurs at ff.61r–65r in VB. A full description of the manuscript is provided above at pp. 186-90. V.IX occurs at a damaged part of the manuscript, and our present version is missing a leaf, and so in Scragg’s edition, which I will follow (*The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, EETS, O.S. 300 (Oxford, 1992)), the gaps at lines 125-50 and 164-67 are from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 340 ff.35v-40v, and 151-63 from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 113 ff.75v-76r. Both manuscripts are discussed below.

³ Although the other texts selected for this thesis have features readily comprehensible to a wider audience, V.IX appears in variants in homiletic manuscripts (see footnote 5 below), which means that we have a clearer idea of its intended wide audience.

structuring of material, to potential contemplation of the ineffable heaven and hell. In so doing, we will both consider other manifestations of the 'Theban Legend' of the discussion of the devil and the anchorite, and engage with the notion of V.IX's intended audience, suggesting, ultimately, a mixed demographic comprised of the contemplative audience and laymen.

I The Place of V.IX in VB

In the Christian context, a homily is aesthetically an exhortative text expounding a point of doctrine or pericope, to a generally populist audience.⁴ Homilies have a clear liturgical context, generally explaining a verse or subject of a particular day's mass. Whilst the texts thus far discussed - *DDI* and *JDII*, *Seafarer*, and *DOTR* - have demonstrable, if infrequent, homiletic features, such as the use of the first person plural and associated exhortation, none can be called a homily in the sense of the latter definition. V.IX, on the other hand, though it does not have a stated liturgical occasion in its VB form, has several other manifestations in homiletic manuscripts, and is thus unequivocally a homily.⁵ Much fascinating research on

⁴ M. Clayton, 'Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. P.E. Szarmach and D.A. Oosterhouse, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 5 (New York, 2000), pp. 151-98 (152).

⁵ The relevant homilies of this kind are CCCC 303 pp. 223-26 (Ker 57 s.xii¹; omitted by G&L); CCCC MS 419, pp. 38-73 (Ker no. 68, s.xi¹; G&L no. 108, s.xi¹); London, BL MS Cotton Tiberius A. III ff.87-88v (Ker no. 186, s.xi^{med}; G&L no. 363, s.xi^{med}); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 114 ff.111r-114v (omitted by Ker and G&L); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 340 ff.35v-40v (Ker no. 308, s.xiⁱⁿ - xi^{med}; G&L no. 569, s.xiⁱⁿ - xi^{med}); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 113 ff.75v-76r (Ker no. 331, s.xi^{3/4}; G&L no. 637, s.xi²); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 115 ff.140-7 (Ker no. 332, s.xi²; G&L no. 639, s.xi^{3/4} or xi²). Scragg's edition conveniently prints the relevant portions of the homilies to demonstrate the potential influence of V.IX, alongside the Vercelli text itself. For full editions of the analogous homilies, see, variously, the Cotton Tiberius version in F.C. Robinson, ed., 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', *NM*, 73 (1972), 362-71; CCCC 303 as Homily IV, and MS Hatton 114 as Homily XI, are printed in J. Bazire and J.E. Cross, eds., *Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies*, Toronto Old English Series, 7 (Toronto, 1982); CCCC MS 419 as Wulfstan Homily XLIII, and MS Hatton 113 as Wulfstan Homily XXX, are printed in A.S. Napier, ed., *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, Sammlung englischer Denkmäler in kritischen Ausgaben, 4 (Berlin, 1883). An analogous version of the text, MS Bodley 340, gives the text the liturgical context of the First or Second Sunday after Epiphany (Scragg,

homilies in Anglo-Saxon England has been undertaken, which supports the reading of VB as a personal reading book suggested in the previous chapter, and explicates the presence of contemplative texts within a manuscript containing homilies. Mary Clayton highlights the issue of diversity amongst homiletic material: although some homiliaries provided texts primarily for preaching to the laity, certain collections provided texts to be read out as part of the monastic office, and others private reading material.⁶ Although Clayton suggests that the sources of the Vercelli Homilies ‘seem to have been designed for preaching to the laity at Mass’, she further demonstrates the diversity and flexibility of the homiletic genre when she concludes that ‘the Vercelli Book itself is intended for private reading’.⁷ The idea of a private reader assembling homiletic texts fits our hypothesis that *DOTR* and V.IX are contemplative texts included in a manuscript compiled by one person for both individual devotion, a part of which was an interest in contemplative material, and preaching. In the same way that the inclusion of penitential material in CCCC 201 supports the contemplative themes of *JDII* (see pp. 79-81 above), the prose texts which also make up VB are supportive of the contemplative scheme that I will subsequently read into V.IX. Gatch sees an interest in eschatology and penitence on the part of the compiler of VB, for ‘about half of the homilies are directed to penitential and eschatological themes appropriate to the two chief seasons of repentance: Lent and Rogation’.⁸ Immediately we should note that Lent was both a time when certain Anglo-Saxon religious figures isolated themselves in retreat houses for contemplation in partial imitation of the eremite (see pp. 44-46 above), and that Lent was seen as part of the preparation for the celebration of Easter, the events of which are of course

Vercelli Homilies, p. 152). However, this version is heavily amended, and of a later (eleventh century) date, and so does not give any decisive evidence as to the text’s liturgical purpose.

⁶ ‘Homiliaries and Preaching’, pp. 153; 156-57.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁸ M.McC. Gatch, ‘Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies’, *Traditio*, 21 (1965), 117-65 (p. 144).

narrated in *DOTR*.⁹ As in CCCC 201, the penitential homilies in VB support the lengthy process of spiritual purgation which *DOTR* and V.IX seek to assist, and those with eschatological themes work to help focus the reader's mind on the next world, the starting point of contemplative preparation used by the *DDI* and *JDII* narrators in my reading (see pp. 96-100 above). Simultaneously, however, these homilies could be used for preaching.

This reading of the duality of VB's homiletic texts as material for both private reading and public preaching supports Francis Leneghan's theory discussed in the previous chapter (see p. 187 above). Whilst VB is principally a private reading book, the inclusion of homilies alongside contemplative material such as *DOTR* and V.IX does equally suggest an individual engaged in the 'mixed life' of action and contemplation. Thus, although my discussion of V.IX will demonstrate how carefully nuanced the text is in providing contemplative apparatus for a section of the intended mixed audience, I will also highlight the inclusion of simpler material, and its likely purpose. An analogue for this comes in Gregory I's discussion of the two types of *compunctio* (*Epistulae* VII.26; see p. 106 above). The soul, according to Gregory, may come to yearn for heaven either through fear (*timor*) or love (*amor*), and so be inspired to penitential activity to achieve celestial habitation. A text capable of inspiring both emotions, therefore, should ultimately be able to inspire yearning for heaven amongst a broad audience sensitive to one emotion or the other. In Gregory's theology, however, *compunctio amor* comes specifically from divine contemplation (*Epistulae* VII.26; see p. 131 above). Whilst *timor* is an emotion readily available to the laity, the 'inward brightness of God' comes only when the mind has been divorced from earthly things, and through divine grace permitted a partial vision of the ineffable. V.IX effectively fulfils both

⁹ For a detailed examination of Lent in Anglo-Saxon England, see Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 120-79.

aspects of Gregory's theology of compunction, by preparing the contemplative mind for divine union, and terrifying the lesser-educated audience, to inspire in the audience as a whole penitential remorse for earthly deeds and vanities. This allows us to refine further our definition of V.IX as a homily taken from its liturgical context due to its contemplative features, which the compiler deemed suitable for personal devotion. We discussed in the previous chapter VB's inclusion of the radically contemplative poem, *DOTR*, and V.IX offers a similar apparatus for divine contemplation, providing evidence for the compiler's interests. This chapter will thus contribute to the hypothesis of VB's purpose, in presenting V.IX as a devotional text requiring close personal engagement for its fullest signification, though also comprehensible through its vivid infernal imagery when its paradoxes go unnoticed.¹⁰

II Proposed Structure of the Text

I will be discussing V.IX in detail, and so it is appropriate here to outline the proposed structure of the text, to give an easily-referenced guide to the structure of the chapter:¹¹

- 1-18: The Purpose of the Text Explained
- 18-31: The Preliminary Depiction of Heaven
- 32-62: The Separations of Death and Contemplative Practice
- 62-108: Contemplation of Hell Facilitated through Sensory Negation
- 108-13: The Men with Iron Voices
- 114-17: A Practical Demonstration of Feeble Earthly Logic
- 117-30: The Senses are again Negated
- 131-43: More Assertions about Hell, and a Homiletic Reminder of the Passage to Hell

¹⁰ Gregory's own homilies were in fact intended for just such a mixed audience of lay and educated. See R.A. Markus, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool, 1996), pp. 52-53.

¹¹ For a discussion of lists as V.IX's structural principal, see Szarmach, 'The Vercelli Homilies: Style and Structure', in *The Old English Homily and its Background*, ed. Szarmach and B.F. Huppé (Albany, 1978), pp. 241-67 (242-44).

144-63: 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', Part I: Hell
164-82: Heaven is Depicted, in the Same Way as Hell
183-205: 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', II: Heaven
206-21: A Final Invocation of Hell, and Exhortation
222-28: A Hortatory Conclusion

III Lines 1-18: The Purpose of the Text Explained

V.IX's first section provides a clear introduction as to its purpose: to inspire men to consider the last things, and imagine heaven and hell incorporeally:

We habbað micle nydþearfe, þa hwile þe we her syndon on þys lænan life 7 on þyssum gewitedlicum, þæt we þonne on þær toweardan worulde mægen 7 moton becuman to lifes þæs heofoncundan rices 7 to þam wuldre þære ecean eadignesse þær we moton siððan orsorglice lybban 7 rixian butan ælcra onwendednesse mid him, emne swa ure dryhten hælende Crist 7 mid eallum his halgum, gif we hit earnian willað mid urum godum dædum.¹² (8-15)

We have a great need, while we are here in this transitory and fleeting life, so that we then in the future world may be able and allowed to attain to the life of the Heavenly Kingdom and the glory of the eternal blessedness, where we can afterwards live and reign without any change with Him, just as our Lord Saviour Christ, and with all His saints, without anxiety, if we desire to earn it with our good deeds.

V.IX exhorts us to consider the afterlife, and so perform 'good deeds' to gain access to heaven. This is a basic Christian tenet, and one that would be familiar to any Anglo-Saxon Christian.¹³ However, at this point in the text, we have been supplied with little detail about heaven to which we can aspire: we learn only that God and Christ, along with the blessed,

¹² V.IX recalls *DDI* (152-55) and *JDII* (301-06), *Seafarer* (117-24), and *DOTR* (135b-44a) in its expression of the need to desire heaven, and so consider one's spiritual well-being. However, V.IX begins with such a statement, whereas the preceding examples from this thesis end with a similar instruction (though note in *DOTR*, it marks the beginning of the final section). We can perhaps relate this to this idea of a wide audience: by situating the section on desiring heaven so early, V.IX announces its purpose, and signals that it is worth listening to or reading.

¹³ For a representative collection of theological texts demonstrating the currency of this idea, see B. McGinn, ed., *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola* (New York, 1979).

are there, and that heaven is characterised by *ecean eadignesne*. This depiction is orthodox, corresponding to the Nicene Creed's detail that Christ 'ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father', and that God's 'kingdom shall have no end'.¹⁴ Theologically, the possibility of contemplating the Trinity post-mortem was the principal wonder of heaven, and thus sufficient encouragement to reform one's earthly life, for 'videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum' (I Corinthians 13:12; 'we see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known'). However, this orthodox reticence about heaven's appearance and nature in a populist, hortatory text is nevertheless a demonstrative marker of apophatic influence.

The problem facing the author of V.IX, having established the presence of God and Christ as the chief glory of heaven, is that which troubles all texts written under the influence of apophatic thought: 'deum nemo vidit umquam unigenitus' (John 1:18; 'no man hath seen God at any time'). The author's awareness of this difficulty is confirmed as V.IX proceeds almost to excuse its narrative reticence on the glory of heaven:

nis þonne næniges mannes gemet þæt he mæge asecgan þara goda 7 þara yðnessa þe God hafað gearwod eallum þam þe hine lufiað 7 his bebodu healdan willað 7 gelæstan. (16-18)

It is not within any man's ability that he might express the good and pleasant things that God has prepared for all those that love Him and are willing to hold and keep His commands.

The limited depiction of heaven, to live in which we are supposed to reform our lives, is not an act of unwilling on the part of V.IX, for mankind is simply unable to say anything. This is a concept taken up on many occasions by Gregory I (for example, *Moralia*, IX.xii.19; see p. 70 above). Whilst the V.IX author is not entirely silent on the matter of heaven, having

¹⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, trans., *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn. (London, 2006), pp. 215-16. This section also recalls the echoes of the Nicene Creed in *DOTR* (48b-49a; 51b-52a; 101-03a); see pp. 235-36 above.

paraphrased aspects of the Nicene Creed, he has asserted all that may be applied to heaven whilst remaining orthodox. However, V.IX 16-18 at this point is self contradictory, for having given a limited description of heaven, it immediately undermines all direct description that has come before with the statement of semiotic futility, and thus nothing is signified. As Gregory advises, the V.IX author thus says nothing. Even with the proposed hierarchy of audience for V.IX, the inclusion of this statement can at first appear curious: more educated members would be aware of the biblical tenet of God's ineffability, and the lesser-educated element would be content with direct assertions about heaven. In the context of a contemplative reading, however, the inclusion is more comprehensible, for this unresolved paradox is our first contemplative marker in the text, and begins a stratified discussion of the afterlife, to fulfil the initial purpose of the homily: to think of, or contemplate, heaven and hell and thus repent.

IV 18-31: The Preliminary Depiction of Heaven

Having asserted the ineffability of heaven, V.IX proceeds to emphatically contrast heaven and hell:

Gif þæt þonne bið þæt we willað wyrcean his willan 7 on his lufe þurhwunian, þonne magon we ægðer ge us heofonrice geearnian ge ðonne eac þæt we magon gesæglice befleon þa stowe 7 þa dimman tintregan þær helle dioflu on syndon, mid eallum hyra weagesiðum.¹⁵ (18-22)

¹⁵ This particular description of hell recalls Wulfstan, Homily XLV (Napier, ed., *Wulfstan*, pp. 225-26): 'ða deorcan and ða dimman stowe helle tintrego, ðe deofol an wunaþ mid his weagesiþum and mid ðám awergdum saulum' ('the dark and shadowy place in hell-torment, where the devil dwells alone with his companions in torment and with the cursed souls'). Though the term *weagesiþum* used by both V.IX and Wulfstan XLV is relatively rare, it occurs again in Wulfstan Homily XXX (*Ibid.*, p. 145), suggesting that the term may have been a common feature of depictions of hell in homiletic literature, and so may have mnemonically linked diverse homilies together for a learned audience.

If it then will be that we will do His wishes and persevere in His love, so that then we may both earn the kingdom of heaven and then also so that we may happily escape that place and the dark torments in which are the devils of hell with all their companions in torment.

The definition of heaven, which V.IX cannot express, is buttressed here by the contrast of hell: heaven, put simply, is the place which is not hell. This tasks the audience with attempting to imagine the opposite of hell, thereby providing a negative depiction. As yet, this cannot be a very thorough imagining, since only the *dimman tintregan* and the presence of devils has been offered as a description of hell. Having tasked the audience with contrasting heaven and hell, V.IX appeals to an authority, once more giving details about hell to characterise heaven negatively:

Swa se halega lareow cwæð: ‘Wa, la, ðam mannum þe sculon mid dioflum habban geardungstowa, for ðam þær is sar butan frofre, 7 þær is yrmð butan are, 7 þær is weana ma þonne hit ænig man wite to asecgan.’ (24-27)

As the holy teacher said: ‘Woe, alas, to those men who must have dwelling places with devils, because there is pain without consolation, and there is misery without mercy, and there is greater evil than any man knows how to express.’

The repeated anaphora of ‘x butan y’ emphatically gives the audience a hellish concept and a contrasting pleasant quality, which we can surmise is characteristic of heaven.¹⁶ At this early stage of the text, wherein we have just been told of heaven’s inexpressibility, and required to use affirmations made about hell to deduce what characterises heaven, V.IX makes the contrasts for us, and from this passage we can, initially, learn that heaven is merciful and provides consolation for its denizens. However, the audience is not long with such direct assistance in starting to contemplate heaven, for the *halega lareow*¹⁷ quoted then professes

¹⁶ This particular formulation is common in homiletic literature: see H.L.C. Tristram, ‘Stock Descriptions of Heaven and Hell in Old English Prose and Poetry’, *NM*, 79 (1978), 102-13 (pp. 104-05) for instances of its use regarding heaven. V.IX uses the formula again to describe heaven (173-75), to recall strategically this section of the text; see p. 281-82 below. Anaphora is also used by Vercelli X: see Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series, 1 (Toronto, 2009), pp. 121-22.

¹⁷ There is no source identified for this anonymous authority in *Fontes* or elsewhere.

that 'þær is weana ma þonne hit ænig man wite to asecgan'. At this point, the descriptions of hell are rendered as inert as those of heaven: just as the glory of heaven is inexpressible, so, too, is the evil of hell. Here we have another paradox: the unknowable heaven, we are told, is not like the unknowable hell. We are now no longer in a position to say what heaven is not, since what has been said to be absent based on its presence in hell is now revealed to be insufficiently expressed. Nothing is signified on the literal level, as in 1-18, but the negation of negation is another recognised contemplative technique. To say what God or heaven are not presupposes knowing what they are in the first place, and so negations such as these must themselves be negated to prepare for the truly ineffable contemplation of God, as Pseudo-Dionysius discusses:

There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth – it is none of these. It is beyond every assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its pre-eminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial. (*The Mystical Theology*, V, 1048A-48B)

Pseudo-Dionysius here links semiotic limitation with both assertion and denial of God's attributes, which matches V.IX's contrast of two unknowable states. After being told what characterises hell, and thus does not characterise heaven, we are told that nothing can be asserted about hell, and so the denials about heaven are themselves denied. That which we have been told is characteristic of hell, therefore, requires close engagement on the part of the audience to be signified.

V 32-62: The Separations of Death and Contemplative Practice

Lines 32-62 comprise a lengthy discussion of the three likenesses of death in this world. The tone of this section is mostly homiletic, emphasising the need for worldly repentance, but the first likeness gives us a clue as to the underlying contemplative purpose of the text: 'se æresta deað her on worulde is þæt is se man mid manegum synnum oferhealden bið' (32-34, 'the first death here in this world is when a man is overcome with many sins').

Theologically, sin and temptation can be ascribed to the devil, as articulated by Gregory: 'sin is committed in three stages, namely, the suggestion of it, the pleasure experiences, and the consent. The first is an act of the enemy [ie, the devil], the second that of the flesh, the third that of the spirit' (*Regula pastoralis*, III.29). We can explain this by reference to the Gospels: 'qui facit peccatum ex diabolo est quoniam ab initio diabolus peccat' (I John 3:8; 'he that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning'). The devil, whilst not entirely responsible for each individual's sin, provides the temptation to commit the iniquity in the first place, as in the Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness:

Iterum adsumit eum diabolus in montem excelsum valde et ostendit ei omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum et dixit illi haec tibi omnia dabo si cadens adoraveris me. (Matthew 4:8-9)

Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.

It is Christ's will not to commit the sin, the temptation to do which is provided by Satan.

Thus, the man who is 'mid manegum synnum oferhealden' has been tempted by the devil, and succumbed by sinning. This theology of V.IX here again characterises a later part of the text, wherein the devil is presented as an archer, an image deriving from Psalm 7:13 ('non convertenti gladium suum acuet arcum suum tetendit et paravit illum'; 'except you will be

converted, he will brandish his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready’): ‘se nama is to geþenceanne ælcum men butan hwæs heorte sie mid diofles stræle þurhwrecen’ (117-18; ‘that name [hell] is to be remembered by each man except those whose heart is pierced by the devil’s arrow’).¹⁸ In these lines, sinfulness is an inhibition to thinking about the afterlife, which recalls a tenet of contemplative theory. Along with God’s grace, to contemplate one must overcome sin and temptation: ‘beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt’ (Matthew 5:8; ‘blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God’). As previously discussed, this need for a clear mind was systematised by Cassian for the West (*Conlationes*, III.vii.3; see p. 104 above). He who has been overcome by mortal sin cannot contemplate: the first likeness of death thus strongly implies the process by which the mind is ‘planed by a careful filing’, to overcome sin, temptation, worldly images and discourse, in order to contemplate heaven incorporeally, which V.IX purposes to assist.

The need to contemplate heaven ineffably is again addressed at the end of this section, in two sentences beginning with an exhortation to reform oneself:

For ðan we sculon ure sawle georne tilian 7 hy geornlice Gode gegearwian. Ne mæg þonne eall manna cyn mid hyra wordum ariman þa god þe God hafað soðfæstum sawlum gearwod togeanes for hyra gastlicum worcum. (59-62)

Therefore, we must thoroughly tend to our souls and prepare them eagerly for God. The entire race of men may not with their words enumerate the good that God has prepared for righteous souls in exchange for their spiritual works.

V.IX once again advises its audience to aspire to heaven, though it is unable to provide a direct description of *þa god* which lies beyond the signification of words. On the literal level

¹⁸ As Zacher notes (*Preaching*, p. 202), the devil as archer also appears in Vercelli IV, 308-21, and Vercelli XXIII, 17-24 and 50-53. For the image of the devil as an archer in Anglo-Saxon culture more generally, see M. Atherton, ‘The Figure of the Archer in *Beowulf* and the Anglo-Saxon Psalter’, *Neophilologus*, 77 (1993), 653-57; Abraham Lenore, ‘The Devil, the Yew Bow, and the Saxon Archer’, *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval, and Renaissance Conference*, 16-17 (1992-93), 1-12.

of textual meaning, we are being tasked with yearning for a state about which V.IX can tell us almost nothing. To understand imperfectly what heaven entails, the reader must continue to imagine hell from the self-professed insufficient narrative, and then make negations about the nature of heaven from asserted, albeit insufficient, characteristics of hell.

VI 62-108: Contemplation of Hell Facilitated through Sensory

Negation¹⁹

Lines 62-108 continue to provide likenesses of death and damnation. The inevitability of death is a continuing theme in this section, as a further urge for mankind to repent and reform whilst still in the flesh. Within this section, lines 68-82 continue the discussion of the man to whom death is unpleasant because of the sins he commits (32-34). We discussed this state of iniquity as a type of spiritual blindness, preventing the individual from thinking of the afterlife, and in 68-82, the discussion of the four separations of the souls condemned to hell serves to direct the mind away from bodily images and sensations in imagining hell:

Ponne is þæt æreste gedal wið eallum his freondum, for ðam him nænig æfter ne wendeð þæt him ænig to cyme. Æghwylcre sawle bið onsundrum toscyred, 7 sio bið swylce hyre se lichoma ær geworhte. Þonne hreowað hyre swyðe þa yfelan dæda, 7 þonne hie hit awendan ne magon þonne nellað hie [...] [lacuna in manuscript] 7 þonne is þæt þridde gedal wið eallum eorðw[el]um, for þan he næfre eft to eorðw[el]um ne gehwyrfeð. Ne bið funden beforan him ne huru æfter boren nan god, buton he ær his gast mid godum weorcum gefrætewod hæfde, þa hwile þe he wære mid mannum. Ðonne bið þæt feorðe gedal þæt hine man dedæle wið þyssum eorðlicum þrymme 7 plegan 7 blisse, 7 him for þyssa nænegum ne bið gleng witod. Þonne bið hit swa egeslic for þære biternesse þe on him bið gecyðed, for þan

¹⁹ Gatch ('Eschatology', 149-50) questions whether V.IX is in fact discussing purgatory, based on the use of *nehstan* line 2, but is ultimately undecided, and attributes this confusion to the composite nature of the homily: "'ures þæs nehstan dæges" evidently refers to the day of death, but 'nehstan' can as well refer to the Last Day, the day of judgment.' For our purposes, the similarities between V.IX's imagery and the description of what is explicitly termed hell in *DDI* and *JDII* leave little doubt about what is meant to be signified.

he betyneð þa eagan fram gesyhðe 7 þa earan fram gehyrnesse 7 þa weloras fram spræce 7 þa fet fram gange 7 þa handa fram weorce 7 þa næsðyrelu fram stence.²⁰ (68-82)

The first separation is from all his friends, because no one comes to him afterwards in order to reach him. Each soul is separately segregated, and it will be as the body before earned for it. Then she [the soul] greatly regrets the evil deeds, and then they will not be able to change it when they do not wish [...] and then that third separation is from all worldly riches, because he never again returns to worldly riches. No good is found before him, nor is any good brought to him, unless he before had adorned his spirit with good works, whilst he was with men. Then the fourth separation is that man is separated from this earthly glory and games and bliss, and in place of these nothing will be brought to him there. Then it is so terrible because of the bitterness that is manifest in him, because it closes the eyes from seeing, and the ears from hearing, and the lips from speaking, and the feet from walking, and the hands from working, and the nostrils from smelling.

This section is an adaptation of the popular ‘Soul and Body’ trope in Old English literature, a common penitential motif in the homiletic tradition.²¹ V.IX represents a unique adaptation of the tradition, however, in its employment of cumulative sensory negation, and so its presence supports our hypothesis of a homily copied into a private devotional manual for its contemplative resonance.²² The cumulative nature of sensory negation is indicated by the repetition of the rhetorical structure of the previous section on the Separations of Death: ‘se æresta deað her on worulde is þæt [...]’ (32); ‘þonne is þæt æreste gedæl’ (62). It is notable that all separations here are from terrestrial sensation: loss of community, pleasure, and

²⁰ Wright identifies the Irish *Catechesis Celtica* as an analogue to this section of terrestrial likenesses: “‘Enumerative Style’”, 65.

²¹ For the ‘Soul and Body’ tradition, see D. Moffat, ed. and trans., *The Old English Soul and Body* (Woodbridge, 1990), and for its presence in VB, see Zacher, *Preaching*, pp. 140-78, who lists eighteen passages in eight Vercelli Homilies ‘that address various aspects of the nature and condition of the the human body and soul, and the fate of both entities after death’. See also the discussion of ‘Soul and Body’ in *DDI* and *JDII*, p. 103 above.

²² The progressive nature of V.IX’s discussion of the separation of soul and body with regards to the aging process is noted by Zacher, *Preaching*, p. 140. V.IX 68-82 is also structurally different from the ‘Soul and Body’ texts which it adapts. Conventionally, ‘Soul and Body’ texts take the form of a commentary on the subject, intermingled with the wrathful soul blaming its eternal damnation on the sinful nature of the body, and thus castigating it with direct speech: ‘eardode ic þe on innan. Ne meahte ic ðe of cumin/ flæsce befangen, ond me fyrenlustas/ þine geþrunon. þæt me þuhte ful oft/ þæt hit wære XXX þusend wintra/ to þinum deaðdæge’ (*Soul and Body I*, 33-37a; ‘I lived within you. I could not come out of you, surrounded by flesh, and your luxuries oppressed me, so that very often it seemed to me that it might be thirty thousand winters until your death-day’). As is evident from this example from elsewhere in VB, ‘Soul and Body’ literature was most often straightforwardly penitential in theme, and so we can view V.IX’s adaptation as a nuanced contemplative take on the tradition.

physical movement. Since ‘him for þyssa nænegum ne bið gleng witod’, the contemplative reader must think of nothing, and so enter the darkness of unknowing, wherein the signification of the afterlife exists. We can also draw a parallel with the earlier chapter on *DDI* and *JDII*. In both of these texts, bodily sensations are strategically negated in attempting to depict hell (see pp. 113-18 above), and it is evident that the same process is being explicitly carried out here. In imagining hell in V.IX, we must imagine the departure of all worldly joys and images, together with the negation of the senses, as the text signposts: ‘he betyneð þa eagan fram gesyhðe 7 þa earan fram gehyrnesse 7 þa weloras fram spræce 7 þa fet fram gange 7 þa handa fram weorce 7 þa næsðyrelu fram stence’ (see p. 260 above). This amounts to clearing the mind of images, as Cassian recommends (*Conlationes*, III.vii.3; see p. 104 above). Through negating these images and sensations in imagining hell, we are in a position to contemplate both hell and heaven incorporeally, should God’s grace allow it. Contemplation is often described as dying to the world, in the same sense of ceasing to think of worldly things in attempting to contemplate the Divine incorporeally.²³ For example, Augustine speaks of the inextricability of spiritual sight and dying to the world (*De doctrina Christiana*, II.vii.99, 22; see p. 104 above). Since God can only be seen post mortem, as per I Corinthians 13:12, to gain an imperfect vision of Him whilst still in the body the reader must enact a form of death by shunning the conventional modes and pleasures of terrestrial existence. For Augustine, our ability to contemplate God is contingent on the extent to which we ‘die to the world’. There is also an illuminating analogue to V.IX’s description of dying to the world and contemplation in Gregory’s *Moralia*:

²³ Eremiticism is itself often referred to as ‘white martyrdom’, a form of living death. As such, in following the terrestrial negations we are tasked with enacting a form of white martyrdom, which links to the later ‘Devil’s Account of the Next World’ sections (144-63; 183-205), in which we must share in the experience of the anchorite. For more on white martyrdom, see C. Stancliffe, ‘Red, White and Blue Martyrdom’, in *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick, and D. Dumville (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 21-46.

As the grave is that place wherein the body is buried, so heavenly contemplation is a kind of spiritual grave wherein the soul is buried. For in a certain sense we still live to this world, when in spirit we roam about therein. But we are buried in the grave as dead, when being mortified in things without, we secrete ourselves in the depths of inner contemplation. (V.vi.9)

Like Augustine, Gregory describes contemplation as a form of death, in which the individual becomes unresponsive to 'things without', achieved in a similar manner to V.IX's portrayal of damnation as the exile from all worldly images and sensations.²⁴ Imitating death in this way is a form of kenosis, the surrender of will to be receptive to God's grace: just as in death man is subject to God's will, so, too, in life, the contemplative makes himself receptive to God, by suppressing personal agency, here achieved through imagining death in this unusual manner. An interesting parallel to this kenotic section is *DOTR*'s presentation of cross and protagonist as embodiments of kenosis (see pp. 219-30 above). Both texts employ apophasis and demand humility, so as to permit the reader potentially to be granted a similar vision to the protagonist, the first-person narrator of *Rood* and the anchorite of V.IX.²⁵ By tasking the audience to imagine death, then, V.IX guides the reader's mind beyond worldly concepts and sensations, in preparation for the depiction of heaven and hell to follow.

True to his statements of semiotic futility, in the next passage the author discusses 'onlicnæssa be helle gryre' (84-85, 'likenesses of hell-torment') rather than actual features of

²⁴ For more on Augustine's influence on Gregory's thought, see R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 17-51.

²⁵ These thematic links between the texts suggest that VB's compiler was interested in the practice of contemplation. This matches the compilation theories of F. Leneghan ('this relatively portable book would remind [the implied reader] of the simple virtues of the contemplative life, which he may have been forced to leave behind in order to take up office, and to which he could still aspire', 'Teaching the Teachers', 653) and ÓCarragáin, who says that the compiler 'collected texts which had a clear ascetic significance, and he ensured throughout his collection a regular recurrence of texts describing the Last Judgement [...] [which] provided the strongest possible motivation for responding to the advice to be found in the intervening ascetic material' ('How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?', pp. 66-67. V.IX fulfils both parts of this convincing reading of the manuscript: through its descriptions of Judgement and damnation, urges for spiritual purification, and negation of worldly images and discourse, the text both inspires the reader to asceticism, and provides the means to undertake it. For more on asceticism in the manuscript, see Gatch, 'Eschatology', 144-46.

hell. The first and second likenesses of hell continue the process of ridding the mind of corporeal thought, by emphatically repeating the contemplative process seen in 68-82:

Sio ærest onlicnes is nemned wræc, for ðan se wræc bið miceles cwelmes ælcum þara þe he to cymeð, for ðan hine sona ne lysteð metes ne drynces, ne him ne bið læten gold ne seolfor, ne ðær ne bið ænig wuldor mid him þæt he fore wynsumige, þeah him syndon ealle wuldordreamas to gelædde. Þonne is þære æfteran helle onlicnes genemned oferylðo, for þan him amolsniað þa eagan for ðære oferylðo ða þe wæron gleawe on gesyhðe, 7 þa earan adimmiað ða ðe ær meahton gehyran fægere sangas, and sio tunge awlispað þe ær hæfde gerade spræce, 7 þa fet aslapað þe ær wæron ful swifte 7 hræde to gange, 7 þa handa apindað þe ær hæfdon ful hwate fingras, 7 þæt feax afealleð þe ær wæs on fullere wæstmne, 7 þa teð ageolewiað þa þe æ] wæron hwite on hywe, 7 þæt oroð afulað þe wæs ær swete on stence.²⁶ (85-97)

The first likeness is called suffering, because suffering is a great affliction to each that it comes to, because all at once neither food nor drink pleases him, nor gold or silver remain for him: there is not any glory with him that he might rejoice in, even if all the joyful pleasures were brought before him. Then there is a second hell-likeness called old age, because the eyes weaken due to old age that previously were keen in sight, and the ears dim that previously could hear beautiful songs, and the tongue lisps that previously had skilful speech, and the feet sleep that previously were very swift and quick to walk, and the hands swell up that previously had wholly nimble fingers, and the hair falls out that previously was fuller in growth, and the teeth grow yellow that were previously white in hue, and the breath stinks that was previously sweet in scent.

As with the 'Soul and Body' trope previously mentioned, we can trace in this section of V.IX the penitential tone intended to inform the text's original audience when used as a homily. However, there is also a clear contemplative dimension to the description. Pain is, of course, an elementary bodily sensation, and here it is defined as something turning the mind away from pleasure. This is more than descriptive idiosyncrasy, however, as it clearly continues the process of ridding the mind of temptations, images, and sensations. The second likeness, literal old age and death, is expressed in terms of dislocation from worldly sensation, similar to the contemplative death discussed by Augustine and Gregory. The contemplative reader must willingly turn away from that which is forcibly taken in death from all who pass away,

²⁶ The five likenesses of hell here are identical to those given in the *Catechesis Celtica*, as noted by Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 96-97.

and so also die to the world in attempting to contemplate hell and heaven incorporeally. The fifth likeness of hell employs a disjunction in logic, to further this process of negation:

‘þonne is þære fiftan helle onlicnes tintrega genemned, for ðænne nis nænig man þæt mæge mid his wordum asecgan hu mycel þære fiftan helle sar is’ (106-08; ‘then the fifth likeness of hell is called torment, because there is no man who may express with his words how great the fifth pain of hell is’.) The conjunction *for ðænne*, much like the use of *forþon* in *Seafarer* and *hwæðre* in *DOTR*, here serves to provide an unresolvable paradox. The fifth likeness of hell is called *tintrega*, because it is inexpressible: the logical connective here ceases to function, due to the paradoxical nature of the sentence, undermining terrestrial discourse. The inability of language to express hell adequately means that even calling the fifth likeness *tintrega* is impossible, as no words can describe it. This recalls Augustine’s apophatic musing in *De doctrina Christiana*:

Have I spoken something, have I uttered something, worthy of God? No, I feel that all I have done is wish to speak; if I did say something, it is not what I wanted to say. How do I know this? Simply because God is unspeakable. But what have I spoken would not have been spoken if it were unspeakable. For this reason God should not even be called unspeakable, for even when this word is spoken, something is spoken. (I.vi.13)

In depicting God, Augustine begins by saying that He is unspeakable, in itself a negation of language. However, even applying the term is paradoxically inappropriate, as he explains, and so this negation must itself be negated so that nothing is asserted about God. Likewise, V.IX wishes to describe hell as terrible, but realising the impossibility of the endeavour, it names a likeness of hell, and then negates it, utilising a conjunction to emphasise the impossibility of the task. Within this short sentence, the method of depicting hell is encapsulated: inappropriate features of hell, derived like all earthly discourse from worldly experience, are asserted, and then negated, to guide the reader to contemplate the nature of

hell ineffably through the undermining of discourse. The unresolved paradox of *for ðænne* means that the fifth likeness of hell is both *tintrega*, and not *tintrega*: whilst on the literal level, nothing is signified, the most accurate description it is possible to glean from V.IX lies in the logical discrepancy between the elements, wherein hell must be contemplated incorporeally. This likeness is further explicated by the rhetorical trope that follows directly.

VII 108-13: The Men with Iron Voices

The first of V.IX's elaborate images of inexpressibility is an established literary trope, and so first we must discuss its heritage.²⁷ The 'Men with Iron Voices' image is found in its earliest form in Virgil:

If I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths and a voice of iron, I could not encompass all their different crimes or speak the names of all their different punishments.²⁸ (The Sibyll responds to the city encircled by the rivers Phlegethon and Tartarus; *Aeneid*, VI.625-27)

Not that I could ever hope to feature all things in my verses – not even if I had a hundred mouths, as many ways of speech, and a voice as strong as iron.²⁹ (*Georgics*, II.42-44)

Virgil's use of this trope of inexpressibility is to signal his humility about his own narrative powers when compared to those of Homer.³⁰ It is especially important to note the use of this trope in *The Aeneid*, as the rivers described are two of the five rivers in the infernal part of the underworld, suggesting the likelihood of Virgil's influence on later descriptions of the Christian hell.³¹ The next stage in the trope's evolution is, indeed, found in the Apocryphal

²⁷ For a discussion of the rhetoric of inexpressibility from the time of Homer onwards, see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W.R. Trask, Bollingen Series, 36 (Princeton, 1973), p. 159.

²⁸ *The Aeneid*, trans. D. West, Rev. edn (London, 2003).

²⁹ *The Georgics*, trans. P. Fallon (Oxford, 2009).

³⁰ P. Courcelle, 'Histoire du Cliché Virgilien des Cent Bouches', *Revue des Études Latines*, 33 (1955), 231-40 (p. 232).

³¹ *Ibid.* Virgil's works were popular as school texts across the Early Middle Ages. For their Anglo-Saxon influence, see the list of citations in Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), and the entry at *Fontes*. See also G.

Visio Pauli's account of hell, where its purpose is more immediately similar to that in V.IX.³²

Several of the extant Redactions (I, IV, V and VIII) of the text have versions of the trope, again employed to declare the impossibility of describing hell:

And if there were a hundred men speaking from the beginning of the world, and each of them had had four iron tongues, they could not have numbered up the other punishments of hell.³³ (*Visio Pauli*, Redaction V)

The image, here, has been transformed into an apophatic statement, concerning the impossibility of mankind knowing about the next world. The rhetorical device seems to have been especially popular amongst the Anglo-Saxons, whose writings, as we have seen during the course of this thesis, were infused with semiotic pessimism.³⁴ When it appears in Old English homilies, the trope is more elaborate than in either the Virgil or *Visio Pauli* versions. However, in this stage of the trope's evolution, the iron quality of the voices has been subsumed to enumeration. For example, in Hatton 114, an analogue to V.IX, the voices are not iron at all:

And ðær is wanunga and wita ma þonne æniges mannes earan ahylstan magon ne nanes mannes tunga nis to þam swyft, þeah þe he hæbbe XII heafdu and ðæra heafdu æghwylc hæbbe XII tungan and ðæra tunga æghwylc hæbbe XII stefna and ðæra stefna gehwylc hæbbe snyttro Salomones; ne magon hi þeahhwæðere ealle þe wean and ða witu ariman ne arrecan þe þa earman and ða werigan sawla gefafian and þrowian sculon.³⁵ (89-95)

And there is more howling and torments than any man's ears can listen to, nor is any man's tongue quick enough: even if he had twelve heads, and each had twelve tongues, and each of

Knappe, 'Classical Rhetoric in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 27(1998), 5-29; J. Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto, 2008); D. Anlezark, 'Poisoned Places: The Avernian Tradition in Old English Poetry', *ASE*, 36 (2008), 103-26.

³² For a discussion of the entire tradition, used to interpret an Old English text, see R. Hasenfratz, 'Eisegan stefne (Christ and Satan 36a), the *Visio Pauli*, and *ferrea vox* (*Aeneid* 6, 626)', *MP*, 86 (1989), 398-403.

³³ T. Silverstein, ed., *Visio Sancti Pauli: The History of the Apocalypse in Latin, Together with Nine Texts*, Studies and Documents, 4 (London, 1935). The 'Men with Iron Voices' trope is only present in Redactions of the *Visio Pauli*, and so it is absent from the Old English translation of a long Latin version.

³⁴ Alcuin and Byrhtferth both employ the trope, albeit without specific reference to hell; both passages are quoted by Courcelle, 'Histoire du Cliché', 238-39. The device was also popular amongst Early Medieval Irish writers: for a list of examples, see Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 151-56.

³⁵ 'Homily XI' in Bazire and Cross, eds., *Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies*.

the tongues had twelve voices, and each of the voices had the wisdom of Solomon, however he may not count nor narrate all of the evils and the torments the wretched and accursed souls have to suffer and endure.

The repetition of the number twelve in this passage gives us an indication of why the voices are more numerous, but no longer iron. Discussing the various multiples of twelve amongst heads, mouths, tongues and voices, leads to both an inconceivable number for most and an image of an aberration of nature, and as such is a more emphatic register of inexpressibility. In V.IX, though the voices are once again iron, the number of voices continues to be the predominant factor:

Peah .vii men sien, þara hæbbe æghwylc twa hundsiofontig gereorda, swa feala swa ealles þysses middangeardes gereorda syndon, and þonne sy þara seofon manna æghwylc to alife gesceapen, hyra hæbbe æghwylc siofon heafdu, þara heafdu ælc hæbbe siofon tungan,³⁶ þara tungena ælc hæbbe isene stemne, þonne hwæðre ne magon þa ealle ariman helle witu.³⁷ (108-13)

Even if there were seven men, and each had seventy two languages, as many as there are in all the earth, and then each of the seven men were created eternal, and they each had seven heads, and each head had seven tongues, and each of the tongues had an iron voice, yet still they could not count all of the torments of hell.

Although the numbers are different in V.IX, the effect of cumulative numerical inexpressibility is the same. V.IX extends the semiotic pessimism of the trope to include all worldly languages, even in combination, and adds eternity to the metaphorical conditions: *to alife gesceapen*. The cumulative effect of the passage is overwhelming, serving again to negate all worldly sensation, abilities, and knowledge, and thus continuing the process preparative of the later description of heaven. Another interesting feature of the passage is

³⁶ This is also the number of tongues said to be possessed by the book in the riddle from *Solomon and Saturn*: see p. 1 above.

³⁷ T.N. Hall notes that this passage is 'paradoxically both unimaginably great and precisely measurable': 'Old English Religious Prose: Rhetorics of Salvation and Damnation', in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. D.F. Johnson and E.M. Treharne (Oxford, 2005), pp. 136-49 (145). Parallel descriptions of hell using the formula *peah þe* from CCC MS 303, MS Hatton 114, and MS Cotton Tiberius A.III are quoted by Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions' (107-08), and Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*.

its mnemonic quality. Repeating the number of mouths, voices, *et cetera*, serves to aid memorisation in the reading process, and thus makes the terrestrial negation represented by the image more accessible when reading the subsequent paradoxical assertions regarding hell.³⁸ Indeed, the number seven may have been chosen purely because of its alliteration with *twa hundsiofontig*, which was the number of worldly languages suggested by Early Medieval sources to have existed after the fall of Babel.³⁹ This rhetorical feature perhaps was also intended, therefore, to be readily accessible in all future contemplative endeavours, even when the individual did not have immediate recourse to the text of V.IX.

VIII 114-17: A Practical Demonstration of Feeble Earthly Logic

This section of V.IX begins by asserting a tangible feature of hell in direct contradiction of the preceding images of inexpressibility:

³⁸ Zacher offers a different reading when she discusses this feature in Vercelli X, 67-100, as ‘incremental repetition’ which ‘isolates this group of passages from the rest of the homily’ (*Preaching*, p. 117; see also pp. 121-22). In V.IX, however, the frequent use of the number seven serves to link passages containing the number together, as discussed below.

³⁹ V. Izmirlieva, *All the Names of the Lord: Lists, Mysticism, and Magic* (Chicago, 2008), p. 85. Although it was not an especially well-articulated field in theology at this time, it is also possible that the number seven is employed (and hence the number of terrestrial languages arbitrarily given to provide alliteration) because of its association with God. In a letter, Ambrose defines seven as a divine number: ‘The number seven is good, but we do not explain it after the doctrine of Pythagoras and the other philosophers, but rather according to the manifestation and division of the grace of the Spirit; for the prophet Isaias has enumerated the principal gifts of the Holy Spirit as seven’ (Letter XLIV, to Horontianus, A.D.389. Text is quoted from Ambrose, *Letters*, trans. M. Melchiar Beyenka, The Fathers of the Church, 26 (Washington, DC, 1967)). There is also strong evidence that the Anglo-Saxons believed in the sanctity of the number. Aldhelm’s *Epistola ad Acircium* contains a section on the number seven, *De septenario*, which traces the recurrence of the number seven throughout Scripture, from the Creation onwards, deeming that it ‘came to be sacred from the very first beginning of the new-born world’. See *Epistola ad Acircium* I-II, in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and M. Herren (Cambridge, 1979). Likewise, also, the epigraph in Chapter 1 from *Solomon and Saturn* employs the number: see p. 1 above. If the intention of V.IX here is to exploit the belief in the the number’s sanctity, it is most likely for emphasis, giving the hypothetical situation a quasi-sacred context to magnify yet further the unknowable torments of hell. For a specific discussion of the interest exhibited by V.IX in numbers, see Wright, “‘Enumerative Style’”.

7 emne swa mycel swa fram heofenes hrofe is to þysse eorðan, þonne is leornod on halgum bocum þæt sio helle sie swylc twa deop, 7 nis na unwidre. Þæt hus is mid swiðe ongristlice fyre afylled, 7 helle hus hafað forcilas micle. (114-17)

And, even as far as from heaven's roof is to this earth, it is learned in holy books that hell is twice as deep, and no less wide. That house is filled with such terrible fire, and the hell-house has great cold.

Though we have just been provided with the 'Men with Iron Voices' image, we are presented with what appears, at first, a tangible measure of hell. However, it is to be noted that no man knows the distance 'fram heofenes hrofe is to þysse eorðan': to calculate the size of hell, one must double the length of the distance which one does not know, and reckon the unknown width of the horizon. The size of hell is thus inexpressible: we must attempt to imagine it as larger than a measurement which we do not, nor cannot hope, to know. We are thus tasked again with negating bodily senses in imagining hell: the image of hell is beyond what is unknowable to fallen man, and which is thus inexpressible by him. Like Augustine wrestling with the idea of ineffability (*De doctrina Christiana*, I.vi.13; see p. 264 above), V.IX initially provides a comparison of an unknown concept, and then requires that this be extended, thus undermining the signification of the sign by demonstrating its limitations. The final line of the above quotation also confronts the Anglo-Saxon perception of terrestrial reality. Although the coexistence of frost and fire derives from the *Visio Pauli*, wherein Paul relates how he 'saw there a river of fire burning with heat, and in it was a multitude of men and women sunk up to the knees' (31), and yet saw others, for whom 'even if the sun rose upon them, they would not be warmed, because of the excessive cold of this place, and the snow' (42), their coexistence is still a mystical paradox, especially, it seems, for the Anglo-

Saxons.⁴⁰ *Solomon and Saturn*, an enigmatic collection of aphorisms and riddles with several extant manuscript witnesses, asserts that the two cannot coexist:

Ne mæg fyres feng ne forstes cile,
snaw ne sunne somod eardian,
aldor geæfnan, ac hira sceal anra gehwylc
onlutan and onliðigan ðe hafað læsse mægn. (386-89)

Neither the grip of fire and the chill of frost, nor snow nor sun, may dwell nor endure life together, but either one of them that has less strength shall bend down and submit.

Although we cannot assert with certainty that all Anglo-Saxons refuted the suggestion that fire and ice could exist together, wisdom literature such as *Solomon and Saturn* does represent cultural norms and values,⁴¹ and so we can suggest that the intended effect of the inclusion of the two elements in the depiction of hell, whilst having a semi-orthodox heritage, was to provide a paradox. Certainly, in the light of the various claims for the insufficiency of language in the text, it is likely that the existence of frost and fire together is yet another incomprehensible, and moreover insufficient, attribution, and so by definition an unresolvable paradox, of something that is named and yet is beyond naming.

IX 117-30: The Senses are again Negated

This section begins with the previously discussed sentence demanding purity of mind from the audience, without which the contemplation of hell would not be possible (117-18; see p. 258 above). In the light of our preceding analysis, this sentence seems to be implying that the

⁴⁰ See also *DDI* 95-97 and *JDII* 192-97, pp. 108-09 above.

⁴¹ For an appreciation of the value of wisdom literature, see L.D. Benson and S. Wenzel, eds., *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honour of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo, 1982); C.D. Wright, F.M. Biggs, and T.N. Hall, eds., *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill* (Toronto, 2007).

continuing influence of worldly images and sensations, which the text has hitherto attempted to assist the audience in negating, will prevent the incorporeal contemplation of hell, a position of course in harmony with the demands of Cassian and others: ‘once our mind has been planed by a careful filing, it will have passed over so far from every earthly affection and characteristic to those other things which are invisible’ (*Conlationes*, III.vii.3). To assist in this process, V.IX provides yet another image designed to negate terrestrial sensation and images:

For þan gif hwylc man bið on helle ane niht, þonne bið him leofre, gif he þanon mot, þæt he hangie siofon þusend wintra on þam lengestan treowe ufweardum þe ofer sæ standeþ on þam hyhstan sæclife, 7 syn þa fet uprihte, 7 him sige þæt blod ut þurh þone muð, 7 hine ælc þæra yfela þe æfre on helle sy, 7 hine ælc yð gesece mid þam hehstan þe seo sæ forðbringð, 7 þeah hine ælc tor gesece þe on eallum clyfum syndon, þonne wile he eall þis luflice þrowian wið ðan þe he næfre eft helle ne gesece.⁴² (122-30)

For if any man was in hell for one night, then it is better for him, if he might escape from there, that he hang seven thousand winters on top of the highest tree that stands over the sea on the highest sea-cliff, and that his feet should be bound to the highest branch, so that the head hangs down, and the feet upwards, and blood flows out from him through the mouth, and each of the evil ones that ever were in hell came to him, and each wave afflicts him with the highest the sea sends forth, and even if each rock afflicts him from all of the cliffs that are, then he will gladly endure all of this, as long as he never again visits hell.

The first point of interest in this image is the use, again, of the number seven, *siofon þusend wintra*. Although a somewhat arbitrary figure primarily serving to emphasise the level of torment, the number recalls the ‘Men with Iron Voices’ trope previously employed, a signal for the continuing need to negate terrestrial sensation. Terrestrial negation is a cumulative process, which the implicit link between these two images serves to indicate, for the superlative punishment described in this section, once again, brings with it the negation of

⁴² For a discussion of the hanging sinner-image’s heritage, see Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 114-15. Wright also makes a convincing case for the *Visio Pauli*’s likely influence on V.IX’s cliff image, but does not discuss the apophatic adaptations made by the Old English text (*Ibid.*, pp. 115-21). Alternatively, Zacher claims that the repetition of the verb *gesece* serves to highlight ‘the duration and monotony of the affliction’ (*Preaching*, p. 221).

the senses with which we experience earthly phenomena. The sea, as we saw in Chapter 3's discussion of *Seafarer*, is commonly compared to the sinful Post-Lapsarian world in Patristic literature (see pp. 154-55 above), and so perhaps functions here as the most evil aspect of the natural world, the nefarious characteristics of which must be negated in imagining a fate worse than being battered by its waves. It is noteworthy, too, that in this image only natural evils are depicted, besides the physical restraining of the unlucky man subjected to them, which supports the general hypothesis of the natural world as both hostile to, and far stronger than, mankind in Old English literature.⁴³ More importantly, we are tasked with imagining something worse than the most severe of terrestrial physical pains: exposure to the elements, bleeding, the afflictive work of the sea and rocks.⁴⁴ The detail of *siofon þusend wintra* provides a double negation: to understand the torments of hell, we must imagine what we cannot, the passing of such a long period, and surviving the aforesaid-punishments under such conditions, and then imagine something worse. The solution to this riddle of imagining something worse than what we cannot imagine in the first place lies in the conflict between words: hell, as V.IX is at pains to remind us, is ineffable, and so its signification lies in the paradoxical contrast of words and phrases.

⁴³ For a lengthy discussion of this, see J. Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, CSASE, 27 (Cambridge, 1999).

⁴⁴ The punishment of hanging from a cliff has a clear analogue in the description of hell in Blickling Homily XVI: 'ond he geseah þæt on ðæm clife hangodan on ðæm isigean bearwum manige swearte saula be heora handum gebundne' (201-03; 'and on the cliff he saw many black souls hanging from the icy trees, bound by their hands'). In V.IX, this apparently infernal punishment has been recast as a terrestrial punishment preferable to the ineffable pain of hell, exploiting the image's appeal to the bodily senses. The Blickling homilist's description derives from the *Visio Pauli*, which is perhaps also a description which *Beowulf* (1355b-65) draws on for Grendel's mere: see Wright, 'Beowulf, Blickling Homily XVI, and the *Visio Pauli*', *Old English Newsletter*, 22 (1989), Appendix A, 29-30; Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions' (112-13) suggests V.IX is 'a remote echo' of the tradition. Note, however, Anlezark's suggestion of *Aeneid*, VI.577-84, as another source for Grendel's mere: *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 314-15.

X 131-43: More Assertions about Hell, and a Homiletic Reminder of the Passage to Hell

This part of V.IX opens with a conventional homiletic appeal to the audience: ‘wa bið þe beoð geteohhode to ðære stowe’ (131, ‘woe to those men who are assigned to that place’).

This lament suggests that the author of V.IX is confident that enough has been asserted about hell, despite the lengthy reminders that language and knowledge cannot encompass the nature of hell. To have asserted enough about hell, in the light of V.IX’s claims for semiotic futility, suggests that it is possible for some to fear hell appropriately, who have followed the stratified negations thoroughly. This recalls the impossibility of one who ‘sie mid diofles stræle þurhwrecen’ (118) understanding hell. The characterisation of hell that follows contains further obstacles to a clear, literal understanding:

For ðan þær is wop butan frofre, 7 hreow butan reste, 7 þær bið þeowdom buton freodome, 7 þær bið unrotnys buton gefean, 7 þær bið biternnys buton swetnysse,⁴⁵ 7 þær bið hungor 7 þurst, 7 þær bið granung 7 geomrung 7 micel wroht. (131-35)

[One should fear hell] because there is weeping without consolation and grief without rest, and there is slavery without freedom, and there is sadness without joy, and there is bitterness without sweetness, and there is hunger and thirst, and there is groaning and lamentation and great misery.

This section again employs the ‘x *butan* y’ anaphora, recalling the syntactical arrangement of lines 24-27 (see p. 255 above). As well as being written in the considerable shadow of the statements and images of the futility of human knowledge and language, rendering this entire section paradoxical, the existence of a concept without its opposite seems to have been thought an impossibility by the Anglo-Saxons. In addition to the quotation from *Solomon and*

⁴⁵ *Fontes* lists a Latin parallel from Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 25 (omitted by Ker; G&L no. 131, s.xi^{ex}, or xi²) to this part of the section.

Saturn about the impossibility of fire and ice coexisting, in the *Durham Proverbs* contrary states are shown to be mutually-defining: ‘ne wat swetes ðanc se þe biteres ne onbyrgeð’ (29, ‘he knows not the pleasure of sweetness, who tastes not of bitterness’).⁴⁶ The idea, therefore, that in hell ‘þær bið biternnys buton swetnysse’ is most likely a further paradoxical statement, requiring the audience to imagine a superlative concept without the contrastive element that defines it. The section ends with a final piece of homiletic rhetoric, as the damned ‘onginnað singan swið sorhfulne sang’ (137-38, ‘begin to sing a very sorrowful song’), lamenting the role of their sins in condemning them to eternal torment. My hypothesis of a mixed audience of lay and contemplative is supported by V.IX’s assertion here, and the contrast of what follows in the text. For, immediately, this populist comment is followed by the longest and most elaborate image of the inadequacy of terrestrial language and discourse, the section known as ‘The Devil’s Account of the Next World’.

XI 144-63: ‘The Devil’s Account of the Next World’, Part I: Hell

We move on now to discuss what is perhaps the most famous passage in V.IX, ‘The Devil’s Account of the Next World’. V.IX implies that this is a familiar tale: ‘sægeð hit eac on bocum þæt sum deofles gast sæde anum ancran ealle helle geryne 7 þara sawla tintrega’ (144-45, ‘it also says in books that a certain devilish spirit explained to an anchorite all of hell’s mystery, and the souls’ torments’).⁴⁷ Certainly, it seems to have been a familiar trope in Old English

⁴⁶ O. Arngart, ed., ‘The Durham Proverbs’, *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 288-300.

⁴⁷ V.IX harmonises with the ascetic tone of VB itself in including an anchorite: ‘the saints’ days’ homilies and the poetry in the collection also have penitential, eschatological and pictorial emphases, but their approach is largely by way of a glorification of the ascetic way of life’ (Gatch, ‘Eschatology’, p. 144).

homiletic texts, as there are extant versions of varying quality in several other homilies.⁴⁸

The precise origin of the story itself is now uncertain, but as discussed at length in Chapter I, anchorites such as the Desert Fathers have frequent contact with devils, as in Benedict of Nursia's definition (*RB*, I; see p. 32 above).⁴⁹ Indeed, although V.IX omits a geographical reference for the incident he found *on bocum*, the MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii version of the text locates it in Thebes, an area synonymous with anchorites in this period, making it likely that it is one of the many anecdotes of the Desert Fathers circulating in the Early Middle Ages: 'he wæs se ancra in Þebeigdan lande' (2, 'he was an anchorite in the land of Thebes').⁵⁰ VB also contains an abbreviated translation of Felix's VSG in Vercelli XXIII, an eremite celebrated for his battles with devils: 'sona þæs þe he þæt westan eardigan began [...] se ealda feond mancynnes gengde geond þæt græswang swa grymetende leo, þæt he his costnunga attor wide geondstrengde' (Vercelli XXIII, 13; 15-17; 'soon after the time that he began to live in the wilderness [...] the ancient enemy of mankind went through that grassy plain like a roaring lion, so that he scattered the poison of his temptations widely').⁵¹ We should also be mindful, at this point, of the contemplative purpose of eremiticism that Cassian identified from his time in the Thebaid (*Conlationes*, X.vii.3; see p. 11 above). The equivalence of anchoritism and contemplation in Cassian's definition is especially emphatic when we recall that Cassian's spiritual instruction was derived from what he learned from the recluses he encountered whilst living as a hermit in the Thebaid. The presence of an anchorite in V.IX is thus an indication of the contemplative purpose of the text. Indeed,

Guthlac has several visions of the afterlife, defining him as a contemplative and evidencing

⁴⁸ See footnote 5 above, and *Fontes* for a list of sources for this section.

⁴⁹ See also p. 87-91 above, for more on anchorites and devils in hagiography.

⁵⁰ For more on the influence of the *Vitas Patrum*, see P. Jackson, 'The *Vitas Patrum* in Eleventh-Century Worcester', in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. Hicks, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 2 (Stamford, 1992), pp. 119-34.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the text as a translation of Felix, see Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, p. 381.

the VB compiler's familiarity with the equivalence of eremites and contemplatives: 'hie ða sona þone halgan wer gelæddon to ðam sweartum tintregas gomum helle dures. Ða he ðær geseah þa smicendan þismas þara byrnendra liga' (Vercelli XXIII, 121-25; 'they soon led the holy man to the dark jaws of torment, of the door of hell. Then he saw there the smoking fumes of the burning fires').⁵² Hereto, V.IX has worked to assist the would-be contemplative in clearing the mind of images, which allows for this section of the audience to be tasked with sharing in the experience of an anchorite, whose life is typically characterised by the same process. Here we can see a clear link between the texts discussed in previous chapters and V.IX: in each of *DDI* and *JDII*, *Seafarer* and *DOTR*, the contemplative reader is tasked with sharing in the experience of the protagonist or narrator, and to follow the same processes employed by the text to be able to receive God's grace in the same manner as the model contemplative.⁵³ This is precisely what V.IX demands from its audience, and the preceding parts of the text leading up to the 'Devil's Account' have been preparative for sharing the anchorite's contemplative endeavour.

V.IX boldly claims here that the devil told the anchorite 'ealle helle geryne 7 þara sawla tintrega' (145); in equivalent terms, what the text itself could not tell us. The devil is of course in an enviable position to describe both heaven and hell, having once been an angel in heaven before being condemned to eternal punishment in the infernal regions. In the MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii version of this section, the importance of the devil's position for commenting on heaven and hell in this way is made explicit:

⁵² As Leneghan notes on the importance of contemplation to the manuscript, 'the compiler's decision to end his collection with the life of a hermit [Vercelli XXIII], who achieves sanctity through a life of contemplative withdrawal rather than active teaching, is particularly striking' ('Teaching the Teachers', 648).

⁵³ See, again, Ó'Carragáin's discussion of asceticism in VB, quoted in footnote 24 above.

He cuþe swiþe wel and he mihte eaþe hit secgan, forþon he wæs hwilan scinende ængel an heofena rice. [...] ealle hi wurdan of þan englican hiwe to deoflum awende, and gefeollan þa heom an helle diopnesse. [...] forþon is eghwilcun deofle swiþe cuþ hwilc hit is an heofona rice mid Criste on þære ecan myrhþe. (48-49; 52-54; 55-57)

He knew very well, and he might tell it easily, because, for a while, he was a shining angel in the kingdom of the heavens. [...] All of them were changed from the angelic-kind to devils, and they fell in hell's deepness. [...] Thus, it is well-known to each of the devils how it is in the kingdom of the heavens with Christ in the everlasting joy.⁵⁴

V.IX's quotation of such an eminent source as a devil, then, seems sensible. With his unrivalled knowledge, it is likely that the devil will provide the anchorite, and thus readers of V.IX, with an accurate depiction of hell. What follows, however, signifies little to all but those capable of following the progression of negations:

7 he wæs cweðende þæt eall þes middaneard nære þe mare dryges lands ofer þone micclan garsecg þe man ænne prican aprycce on anum brede, 7 nis þes middaneard swilce se sefoða dæl ofer þone micclan garsecg, se mid micclum ormætnyssum ealle þas eorðan utan ymbligeð. 7 lytel dæl is under heofonum dryges landes þæt hit ne sy mid garsecge oferurnen.⁵⁵ (144-50)

And he was saying that on all this earth there is no more dry land across the great ocean than if a man pierced a prick on a tablet. And this earth is not even the seventh part over the great ocean, which with great immensity encircles this earth outside. And there is a little part of dry land under the heavens that is not overcome with the ocean.

We note again, here, the repetition of the number seven (*sefoða dæl*), recalling the Men with Iron Voices and the man hanging from the tree for seven thousand years. These latter

⁵⁴ In his edition, Robinson posits that the MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii version of the text is the original from which other editions derive, on the basis of 'The Devil's Account of the Next World' making up the entirety of the MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii prose text. This hypothesis has been questioned several times. In the first place, Ker (no. 186) and G&L (no. 363) date MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii to the eleventh century, and VB to the second half of the tenth century (Ker no. 394; G&L no. 941). On lexical grounds, Scragg also believes that the Vercelli version is earlier: see "'The Devil's Account of the Next World' Revisited'. Zacher concurs with Ker and G&L on the dating of VB, and highlights that the manuscript was clearly used as an exemplar for other manuscript collections (*Preaching*, p. 15). With both manuscripts being of South-Eastern origin, and VB being the older of the two, it seems most likely that V.IX is the earlier version of the text, as the exemplars are preserved. However, Robinson's point that nowhere else does 'The Devil's Account of the Next World' circulate as an independent item does make it plausible that the scribe had access to an earlier version of the text. For our purposes, however, it is enough to see that both texts draw upon the same tradition, and to use MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii as an analogue to the Vercelli version.

⁵⁵ *Fontes* lists four correspondences to this geographical image, including Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophiae*, and its Old English translation.

images were provided to assist in clearing the contemplative's mind of worldly images and sensations, which gives an obscure indication of what is to come. For the devil is not merely giving the anchorite a lesson in oceanography, but preparing for an elaborate image of negation:

And he, se deofol, þa gyt cwæð to þam ancran: 'Gyf ænig mann wære ane niht in helle 7 he eft wære æfter þam oflædd, 7 ðeah man þone garsecg mid isene utan ymbtynde, 7 þonne ealne gefylde mid fires lige up oþ ðone heofonas hrof, 7 utan embsette hine þonne ealne mid byligeon 7 heora æghwylc oðres æththrinan mihte, 7 to æghwylcum þæra byligea wære man geset 7 se hæfde Samsones strengðe (se wæs ealra eorðwarena strengest þe ær oððe siððan æfre gewurde) 7 þeah man þonne gesette an brad isen þell ofer þærs fyres hrof, 7 þeah hit wære eall mid mannum afylled 7 ðæra æghwylc hæfde ænne hamor on handa, 7 þeah man bleowe mid eallum þam byligeon 7 mid þam hameron beote on þæt isene þell and se lig brastlode, ne awacode he næfre for eallum þisum, to ðam werig he wære for þære anre nihtwile.'⁵⁶ (151-63)

And he, the devil, again said to the anchorite: 'If any man had been one night in hell, and afterwards he was led from there, and if someone surrounded the ocean with iron walls, and entirely filled up with the fire's flame to heaven's roof, and then surrounded with smiths' bellows so that each of them touched the others, and at each of the bellows a man was sat who had the strength of Samson (he was the strongest of all earth dwellers that ever lived before or after), and if someone then placed a broad iron plate over the fire's roof, and if it was all filled with men, and each of them had a hammer in his hands, and one blew all the bellows and beat on the iron cover with the hammers, and the fire crackled, he would never awaken despite all this, so weary would he be for the one night time [in hell].'

For this image to achieve its fullest effect, the devil had to explain at length the vastness of the ocean compared to the land. Like the human author of V.IX, the devil has recourse to an evasive image to explain the conditions of hell. Likewise, also, his tactic is to inspire complete sensory negation on the part of the anchorite, to help him to imagine hell incorporeally. The man who has escaped from hell, despite enduring the most cacophonous din conceivable on earth, has had his senses obliterated by experiencing hell, even for a single night. Nevertheless, as with the image of a man hanging from a cliff for seven

⁵⁶ Wright (*Irish Tradition*, pp. 194-206) provides a list of analogues to this image from Irish literature.

thousand winters, the devil's image here requires contemplation of an unknown concept, which again must itself be negated. Just as the idea of seven thousand years of punishment must be imperfectly imagined, before being negated in imagining hell, so, too, the possibility of encircling the ocean with iron walls which reach to heaven – the distances of which are inconceivable – must be imagined, and then negated in attempting to understand hell.

Terrestrial sensation is thus doubly negated, here: to imagine the devil's image of the ocean, we must negate all previous sensations of noise to have an imperfect understanding of an inconceivable sound, and yet again negate this image and imagined sensation to consider a noise beyond the noise that we cannot imagine. The limitations of terrestrial knowledge, based of course on sensory experience, are exposed, and the audience is tasked with thinking beyond them, to do which requires an incorporeal engagement with the idea of hell.

With this image ends the devil's account of *ealle helle geryne*. On the literal level, the devil's account is something of a disappointment: all the devil has done is to provide an evasive account of how miserable hell is, by implying that it is worse than any torment in the world, yet without explaining why it is so much more unpleasant. However, the link between the anchorite, whose way of life is geared towards terrestrial negation, and the contemplative audience, who in the process of reading V.IX have undertaken an analogous process of negation, is important here. The possibility of negating terrestrial images and sensations means that the devil has, indeed, told all about hell: audience and anchorite are provided with all that they need, save God's grace, to gain an imperfect understanding of hell. If one has followed the stratified negations of bodily sensations and terrestrial images, *helle geryne* is, in part, revealed. By guiding the contemplative mind away from the terrestrial

sphere, V.IX permits the incorporeal contemplation of hell, to varying and subjective extents amongst the audience.

XII 164-82: Heaven is Depicted, in the Same Way as Hell

After the devil's account of hell, V.IX again resorts to homiletic address:

Ac utan we, men ða leofestan, nu we syndon gegaderode on ðysne drihtenlican dæg [...] gearwian us nu ða mid inweardum gebedum 7 mid gæstdome, þæt we ne weorðan aslidene innon þa fyrenfullan þystro þæt synfullum sawlum is gearwod in helle togeanes. (165-71)

But let us, dearest men, now we are gathered on this day of the Lord [...] prepare ourselves now with inward prayers and with spirituality, so that we do not come to fall into the fire-filled darkness that is prepared for the sinful souls together in hell.

This shift in address, and ambiguous reference to *ðysne drihtenlican dæg*, coming after the devil's elaborate, incorporeal image of hell, are further evidence for the text's mixed audience. The extent to which the uneducated audience, for which most would ascribe many Anglo-Saxon homiletic texts, would be capable of spiritual reformation through *inweardum gebedum* is, most likely, limited, but the detail of the *fyrenfullan þystro* assists in inspiring repentance amongst this section of the audience. In this sense, both parts of the audience are catered for, and this mixture of styles recalls again the hierarchy of audience implicit in the image of the man with his heart pierced by the devil (117-18; see p. 258 above), unable to contemplate hell like others. The nature of the contemplative audience for this homily is evident; the identity of those being appealed to in simpler terms remains nebulous.

V.IX now turns its focus to heaven, once again by initially employing a homiletic form of address, which is immediately undermined by a statement of semiotic pessimism:

Ac utan þydan us to þam uplican rice, for ðan þær is þæt wuldor, þæt nænig ne mæg mid his wordum asecgan ða wynsumnesse þæs heofoncundan lifes. (171-73)

But let us submit ourselves to the lofty kingdom, because there is such glory that no man might narrate with his words the joys of the heavenly life.

The logic here is inexplicable: we should desire heaven, because (*for ðan*) it is ineffable. This sentence renders the conjunction a disjunction, undermining terrestrial discourse and logic. This initial detailing of heaven is markedly similar to the depiction of the fifth likeness of hell, in the illogical use of the conjunction and structure (106-08; see p. 264 above).⁵⁷ The repeated vocabulary and syntax here seem designed to invite the recollection of the earlier depiction of hell, ensuring that heaven, like hell, is contemplated incorporeally, and inviting an emphatic contrast between the two places. This of course is a paradox in itself, for we must derive a negative portrayal of heaven based on something we are told we cannot understand: thus, we must negate the negations, as Pseudo-Dionysius recommends, and so enter into the darkness of unknowing. Furthermore, as it was for hell, the compound *for ðan* is again applied illogically to heaven: we must yearn after something we have no hope of understanding, or being accurately told about, because it lies beyond the signification of words.

The invitation to contrast the newly introduced concept of heaven with the preceding non-depiction of hell is continued immediately after the quotation above. Having asserted that heaven is inexpressible, V.IX forges another paradox by proceeding to assert characteristics of heaven:

Ðær bið lif butan deaþe 7 god butan ende 7 eld butan sare 7 dæg butan nihte, and þær bið gefea butan unrotnesse 7 rice butan awendednesse. (173-75)

⁵⁷ *Forþan* is also used disjunctively to form unresolvable paradoxes in *Seafarer* and *DOTR*: see p. 240 above.

There is life without death, and good without end, and age without pain, and day without night, and there is joy without sadness, and kingdom without change.

The repeated anaphora of 'x *butan* y' recalls, as in the preceding lines, the earlier depiction of hell (24-27; 131-35), thus encouraging a contrast of the two descriptions.⁵⁸ Unlike in *DDI* and *JDII*, the implicit contrast brought here between heaven and hell is not perfectly stratified in every contrasting respect, although the phrase 'þær bið gefea butan unrotnesse' does directly reverse the phrasing of the opposite condition in hell, where 'þær bið unrotnys buton gefean' (133). Several lines later, though, an analogous tactic of stratified contrast is employed: 'ne þær ne bið hungor ne ðurst ne cyle ne bryne ne nænig unwynsumnes gemeted' (181-82, 'there is no hunger, nor thirst, nor cold, nor fire, nor any unpleasant thing met with').⁵⁹ Several of the elements said to be absent from heaven were previously said to be present in hell: 'þær bið hungor 7 þurst, 7 þær bið granung 7 geomrung 7 micel wroht' (134-35; see p. 273 above). The contrast brought here by this repeated syntactical arrangement therefore functions so that we are to imagine heaven through the same means as hell, by negating terrestrial sensations and images, as the paradox of asserting heaven's ineffability, and then stating its characteristics in direct confrontation with the earlier statement, demands. Hell, as in *DDI* and *JDII*,⁶⁰ functions to provide negations to vivify the nebulous assertions about heaven, such as *þæt wuldor*, and the contemplative reader is guided to mark these contrasts through repeated syntax and vocabulary. Yet, even these

⁵⁸ The 'x *butan* y' formula applied to heaven here also recalls *Christ III*, 1652-60. As well as noting the employment of the same technique, we should also note the lexical echoes in *Christ III*: *lif butan endedeaðe* (1652b); *hælu butan sare* (1654b); *dæg butan þeostrum* (1656b). Additionally, as T.D. Hill notes ('The Seven Joys of Heaven in *Christ III* and Old English Homiletic Texts', *NQ*, 214 (1969), 165-66), the technique of this section of *Christ III* also recalls Vercelli V (199-203 in Scragg's edition), from which I will also quote verbal correspondences to V.IX: *rice butan ende* (199-200); *lif butan deaðe* (201); *leoht butan þeostrum* (201); *hælo butan sare* (201); *bliðe butan unrotnesse* (202); 'we bioð lifgende butan deaðe' (203). This context suggests that all three texts were drawing on a common stock of imagery for describing heaven, which V.IX exploits as part of its contemplative scheme: see Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions', 104-06.

⁵⁹ Texts describing the afterlife using the negative participle *ne* are quoted by Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions', 104 ('Pattern II').

⁶⁰ See pp. 119-23 above.

negations must be negated: hell is ineffable, and the text contains several elaborate images to ensure its incorporeal contemplation. The negations made of terrestrial images and sensations to imagine hell must, therefore, be negated again to imagine the superlative experience of heaven, which is in direct opposition to what characterises hell. Within the narrative silence created by these contrasts, heaven is imperfectly signified, and it is to this darkness of unknowing that the contemplative audience's minds are guided. With these contrasts established, and the incorporeal image of hell once more negated, V.IX proceeds to provide the devil's account of heaven.

XIII 183-205: 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', II: Heaven

The devil's account of heaven is, again, written in the light of the claim that the devil will provide a detailed description of the otherworld:

Ponne swa ðæt dioful sæde þam ancran be helle geryne, swa he him ær sæde be heofena rices wuldre. (183-84)

Then, just as the devil told the anchorite all about hell's mystery, so he had told him before about the glory of the kingdom of heaven.

Before we discuss *heofena rices wuldre*, it is worth noting that the anecdote about the devil has been re-arranged, with heaven first being described in the source text.⁶¹ We must consider why the V.IX author has chosen to reverse the structure of his source material in this way. In terms of content, the text has a far lengthier discussion of hell than of heaven, and both derive their definition from a series of nuanced contemplative negations. Theologically, heaven is most frequently called ineffable by scriptural and Patristic authors, to which this

⁶¹ NB that there is no surviving variant of the 'Devil's Account' episode which places heaven first.

greater reticence about the features of heaven can be attributed. The principal reason for this apparent rearrangement, however, is clear from V.IX itself. Whilst hell receives a long section on its likenesses in the terrestrial world (84-113, which do, of course, have to be negated), heaven receives no such description, and remains conceptually amorphous on the literal level. The only definition provided by the text, beyond superlatives, comes from hell, which as we saw in the previous section of the chapter is placed into direct contrast with the description of heaven through verbal and syntactical repetition. In this way, the restructuring of V.IX is best explained by a comparison with *DDI* and *JDII*, which are arranged so that hell provides the semiotic and sensory negations from which one may come to contemplate heaven incorporeally.⁶² V.IX, likewise, employs the description of hell to rid the sensitive contemplative mind of terrestrial sensations and images, and thus prepare to ascend to incorporeal contemplation of heaven. This restructuring reveals the skill of the V.IX author in adapting his source material to serve the ultimate, contemplative purpose of the text.

We move now onto the substance of the devil's account of heaven:

Swa ðæt dioful cwæð to ðam ancran: 'þeah þær sy eal smætegylden mor æt sunnan upgange on neorxnawange, 7 se oferhlifige ealle iorðan, 7 se man mote sittan swa dyre swa cynebearn ofer ðam gylden an more, 7 hæbbe Salemanes wite 7 wisdom, 7 him sie eal middangeard on geweald geseald, mid ðam gestreonum þe geond ealne middangeard syndon, 7 him sy ælce niht niwe bryd to bedde gelæd 7 sio hæbbe Iunone wite, Saturnes dohtor, 7 ælc stan sy gylden, 7 ealle þa streamas hunige flowen, 7 him þonne ne sie ofer eorðan nænig wiðbreca, 7 þeah þe him syn ealle sundercræftas 7 wuldorsangas in gesamnode, 7 þeah þe hiene ealle frefran, 7 him sien ealle swetnessa to gelædde mid þam fægerestan gestreonum, 7 him þonne sy singal sumor butan ælcra onwendednesse, 7 he mote alybban butan sare, 7 þonne gif he wære ær ane niht on heofona rices wuldre, þonne forlete he þæt ær on þyssum wuldre gelyfede, þe ic ær bisæde, ofer þæt heofena rices wuldre. 7 him þær ne bið nanes gefean to lytel, for þan he mot þær alybban on wite 7 on wuldre 7 on wiorðunge butan ælcra onwendednesse mid þa nigon endebyrdnessa engla 7 heahengla þe þær wæron Gode

⁶² See pp. 113-18 above.

gecweme. Þær bið eallum halgum alif sceapen betweox englum 7 heahenglum 7 heahfædrum 7 witegum 7 apostolum 7 mid martyrum'.⁶³ (184-205)

So that devil said to the anchorite: 'If there were a mountain all of gold at the sun's rising in Paradise, and it towered over all the earth, and a man might sit over the golden mountain, as splendid as a king's son, and might have Solomon's beauty and wisdom, and all the earth would be given to him in power, with the treasures that are throughout all the earth, and each night a new bride would be brought to his bed, and she would have Juno's beauty, the daughter of Saturn, and each stone would be golden, and all the streams would flow with honey, and across the earth there would be no enemies for him, and if all special powers and glorious songs would be united in him, and if all comforted him, and all sweetnesses with the fairest treasures would be lead to him, and for him there would be an eternal summer without any change, and he might live without sorrow, and then if he were one night in the glory of the kingdom of heaven, then he would give up that which he loved in this world, which I described before, for that of the kingdom of heaven that he had before been in for one night, even if he could not return again to the glory of the kingdom of heaven. And there is not too little of joy for him there, because he might live in beauty, and in glory, and in honour, without any change and with the nine orders of angels and archangels that were pleasing to God. There eternal life is made for the holy ones between the angels and archangels, and patriarchs and prophets, and apostles and among martyrs'.

So ends the devil's account of the next world, that V.IX promised would be so extensive: that a transcendent being who has lived in both heaven and hell cannot say anything directly about either place is in itself an emphatic declaration of apophatic influence. Yet, although on the literal semantic level, little is signified, the devil's account of heaven continues the process of clearing the mind of images and sensations, and as for hell, he does provide an illuminating account for the contemplative audience and the anchorite. To imagine what is infinitely preferable to the hypothetical scenario, we must effectively die to the world by separating ourselves from the worldly riches, knowledge, physical beauty, and idealised weather, in order to contemplate heaven incorporeally. The joys of heaven are superior to these concepts, and far-beyond human discourse: to contemplate them, the reader must empty their mind of images, and, with God's grace, guide their mind to the realm that lies

⁶³ J.M. Kemble briefly notes the relation of this passage to the *Solomon and Saturn* tradition, and reasonably suggests that the Cotton Tiberius A.iii version mistakenly attributes *wlite 7 wisdom* to Samson, rather than Solomon: *The Dialogues of Salomon and Saturnus With an Historical Introduction*, Ælfric Society 8, 13, 14 (London, 1848), pp. 84-86.

beyond the scope of terrestrial language and understanding.⁶⁴ To this end, the account of the terrestrial joys to be shunned is intensely lyrical in places, with internal rhyme and alliteration⁶⁵ (*geweald geseald; wlite 7 wisdom; 'ælce niht niwe bryd to bedde gelæd'*), a creative effort producing a hapax (*wuldorsangas*): enumerating the glorious existence of the man on the *gylden* *more* with consciously stylised discourse⁶⁶ is a further emphatic indication of the limitations of fallen discourse, since even the higher-end of expression falls far short of describing heaven. Further evidence that V.IX is attempting to help guide the reader's mind beyond terrestrial images and sensations, to purify the mind so that it may contemplate heaven incorporeally, comes in the lascivious detail about the nocturnal supply of women: '7 him sy ælce niht niwe bryd to bedde gelæd 7 sio hæbbe Iunone wlite, Saturnes dohtor' (189-91). Although such a lustful image in a religious text is initially surprising, lechery is of course a worldly temptation that in causing sin distances the perpetrator from God, and so must be shunned in preparing for contemplative activity, which demands purity of heart.⁶⁷ Attributing *Iunone wlite* to the brides is a further indication of the hostility of lust to contemplation, as Juno was a member of the Roman pantheon of pagan gods, and so represents misguided opposition to the One God. Juno appears elsewhere in two late Old

⁶⁴ Zacher (*Preaching*, p. 218), notes how 'through a surfeit of comparisons that invoke "human" pleasures, the homilist paradoxically reveals the impossibility of delimiting the glory of heaven to the confines of "human" experience'.

⁶⁵ The Vercelli Homilies generally are replete with stylish rhetoric. D.R. Letson discusses the rhetoric and style of Vercelli II, and traces its poetic features to Latin models of poetry: 'The Poetic Content of the Revival Homily', in *The Old English Homily & its Backgrounds*, ed. Szarmach and B.F. Huppé (Albany, NY, 1978), pp. 139-56. This chapter directly informs Wright, who provides a thorough discussion of the poetic sources for Vercelli XXI: 'More Old English Poetry in Vercelli Homily XXI', in *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. Treharne and S. Rosser, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 252 (Tempe, 2002), pp. 245-62. See also Zacher, *Preaching*, pp. 75-98, and p. 115 for a rhyme and alliteration parallel from two variants of Vercelli X, CCC 302 and 421: *sincan 7 swincan*.

⁶⁶ This demonic verbal dexterity has a parallel in Vercelli X, 83-87, where 'Satan's seductive rhetoric is foregrounded through a variety of so-called poetic devices [...] giving the passage a lyrical quality that fittingly seduces the ear' (Zacher, *Preaching*, p. 118).

⁶⁷ The company of women is also shunned by the contemplative narrator of *Seafarer* (see p. 156 above). In a later version of 'The Devil's Account of the Next World', Hatton 115, the bride-section is omitted altogether, perhaps suggesting this later author was uncomfortable with the detail. See 'L', which is presented alongside V.IX in Scragg, ed., *Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 181-83.

English homilies by Ælfric and Wulfstan wherein she is associated with sinfully immoderate lust:

Se Ious wæs swa swiðe gal, þæt he on hys swuster gewifode; seo wæs gehaten Iuno.⁶⁸ (Ælfric, Homily XXII, 108)

This Jove was so very wanton, that he married his own sister; she was called Juno.

Se Iouis wearð swa swyðe gal þæt he on his agenre swyster gewifode; seo wæs genamod Iuno.⁶⁹ (Wulfstan, Homily XII, 37-38)

This Jove became so very wanton that he married his own sister; she was named Juno.

Juno was presented as an especially dangerous figure in late Anglo-Saxon texts, capable not only of tempting her own brother to incest but acquiescing with the iniquitous deed, and so describing the brides as possessing *Iunone wlite* suggests that they represent the very worst of worldly temptations. Shunning the terrestrial beauty of the brides is thus a crucial part of turning the mind from terrestrial images and sensations, whilst purifying it of sin, towards the incorporeal image of heaven.

Having assisted the mind in clearing itself of images, the devil is confident enough to make some limited assertions about heaven: 'he mot þær alybban on wlite 7 on wuldre 7 on wiorðunge butan ælcra onwendednesse' (200-02). Such concepts signify very little, except for those who have followed the series of negations in the depiction of both hell and heaven. To gain a partial understanding of heaven's *wuldre*, both the stratified conceptual negations provided by the depiction of hell, and, predominantly, the elaborate images designed to guide the mind away from terrestrial signification and sensations, must be followed. The discourse mankind may be tempted to have recourse to in imagining heaven is also

⁶⁸ J.C. Pope, ed., *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols., EETS, 259-260 (London, 1967-68), II (1968).

⁶⁹ D. Bethurum, ed., *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957).

undermined by the paradox created through the numerous claims for heaven's ineffability, contrasting with assertions of heaven's *wuldre*. This paradox is unresolved, and so must be held in the mind when attempting to access that which the devil and text attempt to signify beyond words.

XIV 206-21: A Final Invocation of Hell, and Exhortation

The result of the devil's allusive presentation of heaven is spiritual reformation, as V.IX tasks us with becoming worthy of the divine dwelling: 'we ure synna geswican sculon 7 þa betan dæges 7 nihtes' (209-10, 'we must cease our sins and pray day and night'). The confidence with which this is asserted suggests that the V.IX author believes that he has signified enough about heaven and hell to warrant spiritual reformation amongst the audience, even though on the literal level he has said nothing due to the unresolved logical paradoxes employed. Since very little is said about either on the literal level of semiotic meaning, and so the likelihood of someone who has closely followed the text carrying out what amounts to ceaseless prayer as a result of merely the words is limited, it is eminently possible that V.IX's demands here operate under the assumption that the incorporeal contemplation of heaven and hell has been granted to members of the contemplative audience by this stage of the text.

V.IX then turns for a final time to the nature of hell, as if to provide one final urge to repentance among the unlearned who have been unable to contemplate heaven incorporeally:

Eala, mycel is on bocum leornod 7 hit is soðlice eal gesewen: sagað hit þæt on helle sy an hund. Ne meahte hit þæt dioful þam ancran eall asecgan hu mycel þære sawle witu bioð þe to him bioð gescryede. He hafað hundteonig heafda, 7 he hafað on ælcum heafde hund eageana, 7 ælc þara egena is fyre hat,⁷⁰ 7 he hafað .c. handa, 7 on ælcra handa hundteonig fingra, 7 on ælcum finger .c. nægla, 7 hyra is ælc on nædran wisan ascyrpeð. Eala, min dryhten, laðlic is hit for ðy on helle to bionne. Wa ðam sawlum þe ðær bion sculon!⁷¹ (214-21)

Lo, much is learned in books, and it is truly all visible; they say that in hell there is a dog. The devil could not explain fully to the anchorite how great the soul's torments are that are assigned to him. He has a hundred heads, and he has a hundred eyes on each head, and each of the eyes is as hot as fire, and he has one hundred hands, and a hundred fingers on each hand, and he has a hundred nails on each finger, and each is sharpened in the serpent-manner. Woe, my Lord, it is loathsome therefore to be in hell. Woe to the souls that must be there!

By shifting its focus back to hell, V.IX provides further contrasts to *heofona rices wuldre* narrated in the previous section. This section provides almost a contradictory post-script to the devil's account of hell, noting that the devil could not *eall asecgan* about hell. This narrative insufficiency is already implicit in the descriptions that the devil gives, but here, the purpose of V.IX is twofold. On the one hand, the author is addressing the less-educated of the imagined audience. Whilst for the contemplative audience capable of following the complex network of paradox and negation, there has been sufficient narrative detail in the depictions of heaven and hell to inspire spiritual reinvigoration, for others, whose comprehension has been languishing on the literal level of textual meaning, this further detail of the terror of hell is necessary. The image, however, also serves to provide a further

⁷⁰ The *hund*'s fiery eyes recall the description of Grendel in *Beowulf*, 'him of eagum stod/ ligge gelicost leoht unfaeger' (726b-27, 'from his eyes issued an unbeautiful light most like a flame').

⁷¹ For a list of multiple-headed monsters from Irish literature, see Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 162-65. Wright also provides an English parallel (*Ibid.*, p. 159), Homily IV from MS Cotton Faustina AIX (Ker no. 153, s.xii¹; omitted by G&L), and Homily X from CCC MS 302 (Ker no. 56, s.xi/xii; G&L no. 86, s.xi/xii): 'he is swiþe andryslic; he hæfð an hund heafda, and þara hæfda gehwylc an hund tungan; and he hæfð egeslice fingras, and on ælcum fingre hund clifra. Se lið innan helle gebundan on bæc mid fyrenum on bæc mid fyrenum raceteagum' ('he is very dreadful; he has a hundred heads, and each of the heads a hundred tongues; and he has horrible fingers, and on each finger a hundred talons. He lies within hell bound backward with fiery fetters').

paradox.⁷² Having said that even the devil could not fully describe hell, in addition to the numerous statements and demonstrations of discursive futility in the text, V.IX paradoxically provides a kataphatic image of a hellhound. The consequence for textual meaning is that hell both has and does not have a hellhound, and once again the text does not resolve this paradox, providing another negated contrast to heaven. This duality of meaning is most likely intentional, and both elements of the audience can be satisfied by the image. We can explain this by reference again to Pseudo-Dionysius, who advises that the kataphatic imagery accepted by the less-educated can be used as negations of the concept to which they are applied by the contemplative:

Since the way of negation appears more suitable to the realm of the divine, and since positive affirmations are always unfitting to the hiddenness of the inexpressible, a manifestation through dissimilar shapes is more correctly applied to the invisible. (*Celestial Hierarchy*, II.141A)

This, for Pseudo-Dionysius, is a methodology employed by Scripture itself. His approach to Revelation's interpretation hinges upon the absurd beasts which John sees encircling God's throne:

et quattuor animalia singula eorum habebant alas senas et in circuitu et intus plena sunt oculis et requiem non habent die et nocte dicentia sanctus sanctus sanctus Dominus Deus omnipotens qui erat et qui est et qui venturus est. (Revelation 4:8)

And the four living creatures had each of them six wings: and round about and within they are full of eyes. And they rested not day and night, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

Pseudo-Dionysius's response to this passage is uncompromising:

⁷² Although the text seems to have assumed that contemplation has taken place by this point, we should recall that *lectio divina* would mean that the text would be read carefully several times, and note that the spiritual exercises it provides would also necessitate re-reading. Thus, this image would likely precede any contemplative ascent, given our model of slow, repeated readings before the reader is prepared for the potential coming of God's grace, and so can be interpreted as part of the scheme leading up to the end of the devil's account of heaven.

We cannot, as mad people do, profanely visualise these heavenly and godlike intelligences as actually having numerous feet and faces. They are not shaped to resemble the brutishness of oxen or to display the wildness of lions [...] [or] the curved beak of the eagle or the wings and feathers of birds. (*Celestial Hierarchy*, II.137a)

The only appropriate response to such imagery is to interpret it negatively, providing an indication of what God and His angels are not, or 'a manifestation through dissimilar shapes' (*Ibid.*, II.141A). Likewise, here, the affirmative description of the hellhound, whilst of obvious appeal to a less-educated audience, can also be negated by the contemplative audience, forming a paradox that assists in the cumulative list of negations and affirmations that undermine language to lead to the realm of the ineffable.⁷³

XV 222-28: A Hortatory Conclusion

V.IX concludes with a conventionally homiletic sentiment:

Hwæt, we nu gehyrdon secgan hwylc hit is on helle to bionne. For ðan we sculon geswican urra synna 7 Gode eaðmode bion mid ælmessum 7 mid godum weorcum. (222-24)

Lo, we have now heard it said what it is to be in hell. Thus, we must cease our sins, and be humble to God with almsgiving and with good works.

If not for the contemplative dimension of the text, this advice would seem somewhat out of place, for the text has not literally said anything about hell, beyond its ineffability. However, through a complex system of negation and paradox, V.IX has signified much on the contemplative level of textual meaning, which makes this an appropriate conclusion.

Nevertheless, the text is concerned to ensure that the audience continues to strive to achieve

⁷³ For both sections of the audience, too, the alliterative punning on *hund* ('dog') and *hundteonig* ('hundred') renders the image mnemonically accessible, either as a visual urge to repentance or as a consciously-inadequate kataphatic image to use in contemplation. The mnemonic technique of repeating the number one hundred also recalls the 'Men with Iron Voices' section (108-13).

purity of heart: ‘7 secen we ure cyrcean mid clænnesse 7 mid hlutran mode, 7 bidden we eaðmodlice bene þæt we ne wiorðan geteodde on þa helle witu’ (224-26; ‘and let us attend our church with cleanness and a pure mind, and pray humbly that we be not assigned to the torments of hell’). The text has demonstrated, through a series of images negating earthly joys and sensations, how to achieve a *hlutran mode*, and this is a lesson which the audience are advised to remember. It is this incorporeal contemplation of heaven that can lead us to yearn for heaven, and thus spiritually reinvigorate ourselves: ‘þonne moton we mid him 7 mid his þam halegan gæste wunigean in ealra worulda woruld, amen’ (226-28; ‘then we may dwell with Him and with His holy spirit in the world without end, amen’). The reinvigorated desire for heaven is the result of contemplation, as Gregory advises:

The higher the elevation, whereat the mind of man contemplates the things that are eternal, so much the more terror-struck at her temporal deeds, she shrinks with dread, in that she thoroughly discovers herself guilty, in proportion as she sees herself to have been out of harmony with that light, which shines in the midst of darkness above her, and then it happens that the mind being enlightened entertains the greatest fear, as it more clearly sees how much it is at variance with the rule of truth. (*Moralia*, V.xxx.53)

The desire for heaven inspired by the contemplative ascent, for which V.IX is a preparation, is not dissimilar in effect to the response of a lesser-educated audience, who though probably unable to recognise and maintain the paradox and negation of the text in mind, would nevertheless be terrified at what they would interpret as the literal prospect of the *hund*. The result of both responses to the text, therefore, is to reinvigorate spiritual activity, and so the conclusion neatly applies to both parts of the audience. Whilst this sheds little light on the definition of a specific audience for the Vercelli prose texts, in the case of V.IX, at least, the potential audience for the text is broad, encompassing those who would interpret the text entirely literally, and those members of the contemplative audience, capable of following the text’s network of negation and paradox to be granted potentially an

incorporeal vision of heaven and hell, should God's grace permit it. Most importantly for this thesis, the ability of V.IX to accommodate both contemplatives and the laity in its intended audience demonstrates the extent to which contemplative ideas were embedded in texts intended primarily for a mixed audience, and provides strong evidence both for the importance and familiarity of contemplatives to the Anglo-Saxon church.

6 Conclusion

In Chapter 1, we began by tracing the presence, and influence, of contemplation in Anglo-Saxon spirituality. By identifying the influence of eremiticism on early monasticism, both Continental and Insular, and tracing the related tradition of contemplation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, it was possible to unearth some fascinating data on the currency of contemplation. We saw how the Anglo-Saxon church supported eremites such as Cuthbert and Guthlac, and architecturally accommodated the contemplative aspirations of others such as John of Beverley. Despite the difficulty of studying the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, we were able to trace the ritual celebration of eremites and contemplatives in surviving calendars and liturgical material. We then examined the monastic tradition of *lectio divina*, or *ruminatio*, a mandatory daily reading process which was seen as the starting point of contemplation in the Early Medieval period. Allied to the list of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of contemplative texts frequently referred to in the thesis (Appendix I), we identified a culture which was influenced by, and crucially willing to accommodate, contemplative ideals. Even before we studied any texts, it was possible to suggest that Anglo-Saxon culture had its own contemplative tradition.

In Chapters 2-5, we examined a broad range of verse and prose texts, seldom discussed together, and traced the influence of Patristic and Insular theology on their narrative arrangement and content to evidence their contemplative nature. Out of the texts studied at length, *DDI*, *JDII*, and *V.IX* are the most similar in content, apophatically discussing heaven and hell and an anchorite. However, on the literal level of understanding,

the other two texts analysed deal with vastly different subjects: sailing (*Seafarer*) and the vision of a cross (*DOTR*). As such, the feasibility of tracing the same influences and ultimate purpose in each text studied is an emphatic indication of the existence of an Anglo-Saxon contemplative tradition. All of the texts selected exhibit attempts to purge the mind of sin, temptation, and worldly images, demonstrating the limitations of discourse along the way and inviting personal identification with the kenotic narrator (and anonymous eremite in V.IX), so as to assist the contemplative audience in preparing for contemplative ascent. The moment of contemplative ascent is indicated entirely allusively by all of these texts except *DOTR*, which is the most obviously contemplative of all the texts studied. However, as discussed, this vision is suffused with apophatic theology, mediated through a theophany which was familiar from the Anglo-Saxon plastic arts, and consciously aligned with what I referred to as ‘verbal visions’ in the Old Testament. As such, just as similar events are communicated through allusion and silence in the other texts studied, the vision of *DOTR* remains ineffable, thus harmonising with the biblical depiction of such events (II Corinthians 12:2, 4; see p. 174 above). A further indication of the contemplative nature of the incidents discussed in all of the texts is the reaction of the narrator, which evidences renewed spiritual vigour and longing for heaven.

It is not just the functioning of texts with differing literal subjects as contemplative apparatus that testifies to an established contemplative tradition, but the geographical and temporal context of the manuscript witnesses:

DDI: s.x^{med}; St. Augustine’s, Canterbury (Ker, no.146; G&L, no.326)

JDII: s.xi^{med}; St. Augustine’s, Canterbury (Ker, no.49; G&L, no.66)

Seafarer: s.x²; Salisbury and Exeter (Ker, no.116; G&L, no.257)

DOTR and V.IX: s.x²; St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, or Rochester (Ker, no.394; G&L, no.941)

The majority of the manuscript witnesses are tenth century, and all are from the South of England, predominantly St. Augustine's, Canterbury. There are various reasons for caution, however, before we draw our conclusions. Anglo-Saxon England was a predominantly oral culture, and the extant literary corpus is merely a remnant of what once existed, greatly reduced by the ravages of time and deliberate destruction at various points in English history, which makes the common late tenth-century-to-eleventh-century date misleading. As discussed in Chapter 1, contemplation was an influence throughout the period, and not just the tenth century. Canterbury has, of course, been the seat of the highest-ranking clergyman in the English Church since Augustine arrived in 597: we can assume, therefore, that it had a higher financial endowment than other contemporary monastic and cathedral libraries, and so would most likely possess an especially active scriptorium.¹ Another variable to consider is the topography of Canterbury. It is set inland, and so was spared the ravages of the opportunistic raids of the early Viking Age, which resulted in the destruction of large libraries such as Whitby and Lindisfarne. This makes our data regionally skewed, in the reverse of the archaeological record's Northumbrian bias (see pp. 52-53 above). However, as frustrating as this is, it allows us to see the widespread influence of contemplative spirituality, traceable in the North through the writings of Bede and monastic excavations, and much later in the South through the books produced at Canterbury. We should not, however, suggest that this centre was outstanding in its contemplative interest, as we simply do not have comparable data from other parts of Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, identifying this religious centre further evidences the cultural currency of contemplative ideals, which would have been disseminated in the teachings of oblates and the example of contemplative monks. Specifically, the copying and production of

¹ N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester, 1984), p. 95.

contemplative texts at the nexus of the Anglo-Saxon Church suggests that contemplation was an important part of spiritual life, approved and disseminated *ex cathedra*.

Despite our findings, this thesis has necessary limitations. As research progressed, the scope of the contemplative tradition proved to be greater than anticipated, and so there are many texts that I have had to omit for pragmatic reasons of space. Identifying texts as contemplative apparatus requires very close textual engagement, and to have added any more chapters or texts to be studied at length would have been to the detriment of the thesis. Nevertheless, several texts discussed as parallels, but to which entire chapters were not dedicated, warrant brief mention. The Old English *Soliloquies*, for instance, is a fascinating contemplative reworking of Augustine's original text and, whilst we have referred to it several times to explain or parallel certain features of the main texts studied, an examination of its theological content, as well as the adaptations and differences to its source, alone would warrant an entire DPhil thesis.² Likewise, Bede's tale of Dryhthelm (*HE*, V.12) is a fascinating prose item that has been discussed only as a parallel to the main texts studied in this thesis, but is replete with contemplative nuance. A study of its contemplative nature, manuscript history, Old English translation, and Ælfric's version, would also warrant a lengthy, dedicated study. Finally, we have not been able to discuss the corpus of private prayer at any great length but, again, the contemplative aspect of this group of texts would provide the substance for further research.

Nevertheless, despite the unavoidable limitations on what could be included in this thesis, through a broad interdisciplinary study encompassing a diverse, yet structurally and thematically harmonious, range of Anglo-Saxon texts, we have uncovered a visible tradition

² H.L. Hargrove's translation of the text conveniently notes which parts of the Old English text are additions. See *King Alfred's Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies* (New York, 1902).

of contemplation. Anglo-Saxon spirituality was fertile in contemplative ideas and influences, and this cultural context produced a range of challenging and sophisticated texts designed to assist the contemplative aspirations of a group of individuals we have called the contemplative audience.

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8 Appendix

Appendix I Anglo-Saxon Manuscript Witnesses of Texts Referred to Frequently in Thesis

I.i Augustine, *Confessiones*¹

163 Cambridge, Trinity College B. 3. 25 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s. xi^{ex})
434 London, BL, Harley 3080 (W. England, s. xi^{ex} or xi/xii)
456.8 London, BL, Royal 5.B.xiv (Gloucester, s.xi/xii or xii¹)
603 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 815 (Exeter, s.xi^{ex})
697 Salisbury, Cathedral Library 6 (Salisbury, s.xi^{ex})

I.ii Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*

717 Salisbury, Cathedral Library 106 (Salisbury, s. xi^{ex})

¹ Appendix I is adapted from G&L. Numbers preceding manuscript details refer to this volume.

I.iii Cassian, *Conlationes*

- 173 Cambridge, Trinity College B.10.5 (216) (Northumbria, s.viii) (extract)
627 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 23 (Worcester, s. xi²) (chs. I-X)
700 Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 10 (Salisbury, s. xi^{ex}) (chs. I-X, XIV-XV, XXIV-IX)
834.5 Kassel, Gesamthochschulebibliothek 2° MS.theol.267 (England, s.viii²)

I.iv Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*

- 166 Cambridge, Trinity College B.4.9 (123) (Christ Church, Canterbury, s.xi/xii) (Books XVII-XXXV)
188.8 Cambridge, Trinity College O.2.30 (1134) (Southwark, s.xi/xii) (extracts)
241 Durham, Cathedral Library, B.III.10 (Durham, s.xi^{ex}) (Books I-XVI)
453.6 London, BL, Royal 3.C.iv (Rochester, s.xi/xii) (Books I-XVI) (companion 469.3)
469.3 London, BL, Royal 6.C.vi (Rochester, s.xi/xii) (Books XVII-XXXV) (companion 453.6)
564 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 310, ff.1–145 (England, s. ix² or ix^{3/4})
668.5 Oxford, Bodleian Library, G.1.7 Med. + G.1.9 Med. (binding fragments) (s. xiⁱⁿ)
(fragment)
677.3 Oxford, Magdalen College, Lat. 267, ff.60–1 (fragment) (s.xi/xii)
691 Oxford, Trinity College 39 (Gloucester, s.xi^{ex}) (Books I-X)
704 Salisbury, Cathedral Library 33 (Salisbury, s. xi^{ex})
773.6 York, Minster Library, XVI.Q.1 (York, s.xi^{ex}) (Books I-X) (companion 773.7)
773.7 York, Minster Library, XVI.Q. 2 (York, s. xi^{ex}) (Books XI-XXII) (companion 773.6)
840.5 St Petersburg, Russian National Library, F.v.1.3, ff.1–38 (Northumbria, s.viii²) (extracts)
858 New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library 516 (Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, s.viii¹)
(fragment)
865.5 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, G.30 (Northumbria, s.vii^{ex}) (fragment)
946.5 Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.f.149a (Mercia, s. viii²) (Books XXXII-XXXV)

I.v Gregory I, *Regula pastoralis*

- 99 CCCC 361 (Malmesbury, s.xi^{med} or xi²)
261 Glasgow, University Library, Hunterian 431, ff.1–102 (Worcester, s.x/xi or xiⁱⁿ)
346 London, BL, Cotton Otho A.i (Mercia or Canterbury, s.viii²) (extracts from Books II-III)
439.6 London, BL, Harley 5228, f.140 (Worcester, s.ix) (Book I.x-xi)
590 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 708 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s.x^{ex})
598 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 783 (Exeter, s.xi^{ex})
684 Oxford, St John's College 28 (St Augustine's, Canterbury, s.x² or x/xi)
742 Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 157, ff.5-170 (England, s.xi^{ex})
755.5 Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury School 21 (Durham, s. xi/xii)
771 Worcester, Cathedral Library, Add.3 (s.viii) (fragment)
800 Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale 63, ff.1–34 (England, s. xi^{2/3}) (Book I.ix)
833 Kassel, Gesamthochschulbibliothek, 2° MS.theol.32 (S. England, s.viii/ix)
894 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat.9561 (S. England, s.viii¹/viii^{med})
898.5 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat.13089, ff.49–76 (Northumbria, s.viii^{med}/viii²)
(Book III.ix-xxix)

I.vi Gregory I, *Dialogi*

- 34 Cambridge, Clare College 30, pt.i (Worcester, s.xi²/xi^{3/4})
208 Canterbury, Cathedral Library and Archives, Add.32 (s.xiⁱⁿ) (fragment)
510 London, Lambeth Palace Library 204 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s.xi¹)
667 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 3 (Worcester, s.xiⁱⁿ/xi^{2/4})
715 Salisbury, Cathedral Library 96 (Salisbury, s.x) (incomplete)
818.7 Düsseldorf, Universitäts-und Landesbibliothek, Fragm.K1:B213 (S. England, s.viii/ix)
(fragment)
856.1 Münster in Westfalen, Universitäts-und Landesbibliothek, Fragm.1, no. 2(s.viii²)
(fragment)
924 Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, A.337 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s. x^{ex}) (part)
937.3 Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Theol.et Philos.Q.628 (Northumbria,
s.vii/viii)
943.8 Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Akc.1955/2 +1969/430 (Northumbria, s.viii¹/viii^{med})
(fragment)

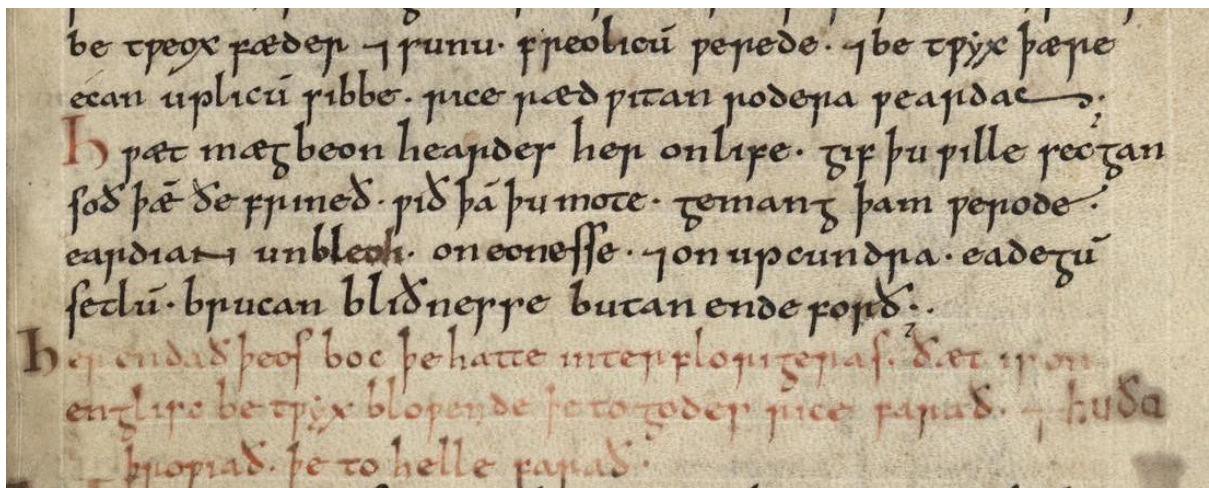
I.vii Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*

457.8 London, BL, Royal 5.E.X (Rochester, s.xi/xii)

548 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 126 (Winchester, s. xi/xii)

Appendix II CCCC 201, p.165 (detail).

Note the 's' on *weardas*, the final word of line two in the image.



Appendix III.i London, BL Cotton MS Claudius B IV f.43v
(Ker no. 142, s.xi¹; Gneuss no. 315, s.xi^{2/4}), Jacob sees the
ladder (Genesis 28:10-19)



Appendix III.ii London, BL MS Harley 2904, f.3v (s.x^{3/3};
omitted by Ker; Gneuss no. 430) The Crucifixion



Appendix III.iii London, BL, Stowe 944 f.6r (AD 1031, Ker no. 274; G&L no. 500), Cnut and Ælfgifu present a cross to Hyde Abbey

