The Priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England

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Short Abstract

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The Priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England explores the life and work of priests in England between the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the reforming Council of *Clofesho* of 747. It seeks to reposition priests within the consciousness of Anglo-Saxon historians by demonstrating the essential role which they played first in the conversion of the English, and then in the pastoral care which the English people received up to the reforms instigated by Archbishop Cuthbert at the 747 Council of *Clofesho*. The thesis draws on several trends in recent Anglo-Saxon historiography, notably focus in recent years on the role and function of *monasteria*. Sarah Foot's work, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England,* c. *600 – 900*, is the primary study in this area. Many historians working in this area have read Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the main narrative source for our period, in a predominantly monastic light. Close attention to the text of this and other works of Bede's however demonstrates that priests were indispensable in the initial conversion and continued care of the people, particularly because of their ability to celebrate the sacraments.

This thesis contends that *monasteria* increasingly gained control over pastoral care through their continued endowment and royal privilege. This effectively removed the *cura animarum* from the bishops, to whom it was theoretically entrusted. Following the example of Theodore and Bede, and on the prompting of his contemporary Boniface, in 747 Archbishop Cuthbert recognised the need to reform the structure of the church in Southumbria, particularly the relationship between the episcopate and the *monasteria*, and so restore the cure to its rightful place. He and his fellow bishops achieved this by redefining pastoral care along sacramental grounds, thereby excluding monks from its exercise, and putting the priest back at the heart of the church's mission to the people of England.

Long Abstract

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The Priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England explores the life and work of priests in England between the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the reforming Council of *Clofesho* of 747. It seeks to reposition priests within the consciousness of Anglo-Saxon historians by demonstrating the essential role which they played first in the conversion of the English, and then in the pastoral care which the English people received up to the reforms instigated by Archbishop Cuthbert at the 747 Council of *Clofesho*.

Recent historiography of the Anglo-Saxon church is moulded around the idea of conversion. One historiographical trend has focussed on the people who were converted, and, of these people, particular attention has been paid to the religious experience of women. Stephanie Hollis' *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church* (Woodbridge, 1992), Sarah Foot's *Veiled Women* (Aldershot, 2000) and Barbara Yorke's *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003) are just three examples of this. A second trend has focussed on the use of sacred spaces and areas; places, identified in works such as *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), where the converted would experience God and practise their faith. A final trend has focussed on one group of convertors – monks – and their role in Anglo-Saxon society; the primary study in this area being Sarah Foot's *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England c. 600-900* (Cambridge, 2006). Yet in this third trend only half a story has been told, for monks were not the only convertors in the period. Indeed, certain functions were reserved for the priests which made them an essential part of the church's missionary endeavours. G. W. O. Addleshaw explored this to some extent in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, but since then, there has been no focussed study of the priesthood outside its royal or episcopal contexts (*cf.* John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005)). Thus there is not only plenty of scope for a fresh study of role of the priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England, but historiography almost demands it.

Alan Thacker has recently concluded that priests 'were by no means numerous in early Anglo-Saxon England' (A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester, 1992), p. 138). This conclusion stems from a predominantly-monastic reading of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the main narrative source for our period, and an unhelpful focus on the practicalities of the minster model. The first chapter of this thesis highlights the importance of these two trends in respect of this investigation, demonstrating how they have eclipsed the priest from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history and led to conclusions such as that expressed by Thacker. The second chapter conversely surveys the evidence for the existence of priests in early Anglo-Saxon England, both those who live within and those who live without communities. Close attention is paid here to the text of Bede's *Historia*, as well as his other works and contemporary sources. Far from being 'few in number', priests were scattered throughout the ecclesial landscape, fulfilling an indispensable role in both the initial conversion and continued pastoral care of the people, particularly because of their ability to celebrate the sacraments.

As the secondary literature attests, *monasteria* were quickly founded in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms following their initial conversion. These *monasteria* housed both ordained and non-ordained monks, and also hosted others as part of a wider *familia.* Priests both dwelt and worked here as well as in other buildings across Anglo-Saxon England, particularly *ecclesiae*. In and through these buildings, priests were able to offer both sacramental and non-sacramental pastoral care to the communities which they served. The latter of these categories has received significant attention in recent years as scholars have sought to uncover the role of the *monasterium* in Anglo-Saxon society. Simultaneously, focus on monks has distracted authors from considering sacramental forms of pastoral care. This thesis hopes to redress that imbalance in its second chapter, where non-sacramental forms of pastoral care such as preaching and teaching, and care of the sick and dying, are considered alongside sacramental forms, such as baptism, the reconciliation of penitents, and the mass.

Amongst the institutions in which priests lived and worked, it was *monasteria* which grew in prominence throughout the period, increasingly gaining control over the care which was exercised by their inmates. The effect of this was to remove the *cura animarum* from the bishops, to whom it had

theoretically entrusted on the bestowal of their office, and place it in the hands of abbots and abbesses. Following the example of Archbishop Theodore and the priest-scholar Bede, and on the prompting of his contemporary Boniface, in 747 Archbishop Cuthbert recognised that these institutions and their leaders had encroached on the rights and obligations of bishops to the *cura animarum*, a fact noticed by Catherine Cubitt (*Anglo-Saxon Church Councils* c. *650* – c. *850*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester, 1995)), whose work on the prescriptive literature of the period provides the closest parallel to my own work. Cuthbert believed it was time to reform the structure of the church in Southumbria, by the calling of a council which would rule on the distinctive tasks of monks and clergy, and posit a new relationship between the episcopate and the abbots and abbesses of powerful *monasteria*. He and his fellow bishops articulated this distinction in the canons which were promulgated, and which redefined pastoral care along sacramental grounds. This enforced the idea that the cure belonged primarily to the bishop, and that it could only be exercised by priests acting on his behalf. Whilst non-ordained monks were therefore excluded from exercising those forms of pastoral care which they had previously been able to, the bishops hoped to put the priest back at the heart of the church's mission to the people of England.

So the priest adapted to his historical circumstances. From being considered indispensable from the foundation of the church in England because of his sacramental responsibilities, he became just another minister amongst the band of people who offered pastoral care to the people of England. The importance of the priestly vocation, however, was noted by Bede, whose commentary *In Ezram et Neemiam* offered a vision for the reconciliation of a wayward people to God by the restoration of the priestly cult. In this vision, it was the offering of the sacraments which became the crucial aspect of pastoral care – a view echoed in the canons of 747. Whilst it is hard to prove a direct link, the complementarity of Bede's vision presented in his *In Ezram* with the priest envisaged by Cuthbert's reforms is striking.

This thesis represents the first major attempt at assessing the evidence for priests, and the continuities and consistencies in the priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England, between the conversion and the reforming Council of *Clofesho* of 747. It opens the way for study into the demise of the Anglo-Saxon double house, and later reforms which completed the cloisterisation process.

Contents

Introduction

In 597 the English people 'remained', according to Pope Gregory, 'faithless in their worship of trees and rocks'.[1] 'Priests from nearby' had neglected the Christian faith and had 'cease[d] to inflame' the people's demand for conversion 'with their encouragement'.[2] Fearful of his own fate at the Judgment seat, the pope 'decided to send over a monk of my monastery to preach to them' and convert this people back to the faith, even though he recognised that a purely monastic mission could not work.[3] Indeed, he instructed the priest Candidus that 'because those who live there are pagans', he wanted 'a priest to be sent over here with them, in case if any illness occurs on the way, he can baptize any he sees close to death'.[4] Particularly because of their sacramental capabilities, priests were therefore central to the work of the church in England from its foundation, first assisting in the conversion of the people, and then sustaining them in their spiritual journey as they approached their own deaths.

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[1] *Registrum*, VIII.29 [p. 524]. For this and other standard abbreviations, see below, pp. 192 – 199.

[2] 'Nearby' = '*e uicino*', conceivably British and Frankish clerics. *Registrum*, VI.51 [p. 438]. Ian Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum*, LXIX (1994), pp. 1 – 17, here p. 10, identified 'the vicinity' as Frankia and commented that 'It was Frankish recalcitrance, not fear of the Franks, which ensured that it was a mission Roman rather than Frankish in origin that Christianized Kent'.

[3] *Registrum*, VIII.29 [p. 524]. *Cf.* H. Chadwick, 'Gregory the Great and the Mission to the Anglo-Saxons', in *Gregorio Magno e il suo Tempo: Conference Papers from 1990*, 2 vols (Rome, 1991), i, pp. 199 – 212, here p. 204.

[4] *Registrum*, VI.10 [p. 409].

Historians of the early Anglo-Saxon church have, however, paid the clergy little attention, preferring to focus on monks rather than on the priests whom Pope Gregory placed at the centre of his mission. The Venerable Bede (672/3 – 735), whose writings dominate Anglo-Saxon history, was himself ordained, but the pages of his most famous work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, shed more light on monasticism than they do on priesthood.[5] This thesis, which examines changes and continuities in the development of priesthood from 597 to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747, aims to redress that balance, and refocus attention on these key figures in the conversion and continuing Christianisation of the English people.

Contemporary language offers one way into this investigation. Few sources in Old English survive before 850 and the reign of Alfred. Consequently, references in Old English to the priesthood primarily convey information which more accurately relates to the tenth century and the reforms of that period.[6] (Æthelberht's laws are an exception to this, providing a clear indication of the new status of the clergy in the earliest period of conversion.) Unlike the Old English *prēost*, Latin renders no direct comparative to the modern 'priest'. Instead, the etymologically-related *presbyter*, a loan-word from the Greek *presbuteros*, was used. By the Anglo-

[5] See below, Chapter 1.

[6] Sarah Foot explained how language changes up to the tenth century in 'Language and Method: the Dictionary of Old English and the Historian, *Old English Newsletter*, Subsidia, XXVI (1998), pp. 73 – 87. For further variants on the Old English, see the *Dictionary of Old English*.

Saxon period, *presbyter* had ceased to mean simply 'elder' (in much the same way as *episcopus* had ceased to mean simply 'overseer' and *diaconus* had ceased to mean simply 'servant'), and had taken on the connotations of a distinct order of the clergy. *Sacerdos* acted as a synonym and, like the Greek *hiereus*, denoted the distinctly priestly act of being able to offer the sacrifice of the mass, a function that none of the other orders could perform. Other terms were less specific, such as *clericus*, which was used either to describe a specific order of the clergy or a group comprising many of the orders, and *ecclesiasticus*, which may act as a noun, but is perhaps best understood in its adjectival sense of 'of or belonging to the church'.[7]

This thesis primarily draws on the testimony of written sources, although occasional reference is made to surviving archaeological evidence. An arguably undue reliance on archaeological material has, however, tended to focus modern studies on buildings rather than people, and has had unintended consequences, such as reading later literary sources back into earlier periods. In order to circumvent these problems, whilst not ignoring this evidence, this research will focus on narrative, epistolary, homiletic and conciliar material from the Gregorian correspondence in the 590s to the conciliar material of 747 and the contemporary Bonifacian correspondence.

[7] Catherine Cubitt, 'The Clergy in Early Anglo-Saxon England', *Historical Research*, LXXVIII (2005), pp. 273 – 287, here p. 282, suggested that 'Aldhelm and Bede deploy the adjective "ecclesiasticus" to designate the customs and responsibilities pertaining to episcopal office and the care of the church'.

This approach, however, has its own obstacles. Most of the literature I shall handle was written by monks and so gives a particularly monastic reading of the work of the church in the period.

Our access to the priests of Anglo-Saxon England will undoubtedly be shaped by the historiography of recent generations, which has on the whole kept the priest in the shadows of the so-called 'dark ages'. In order to assess the role and function of the priest in early Anglo-Saxon society, I shall therefore first attempt to unravel this historiography, and assess why this is the case. Having done this, I shall turn to the role of the priest in the conversion of the English people. I shall then, in chapter two, assess the life and work of the priest in Anglo-Saxon England up to the 747 Council of *Clofesho*. This will first require a survey of the literature to assess where priests lived and worked, before focussing on their role in preaching and teaching and the care of the sick and dying. Amidst this, the crux of the second chapter comes in an assessment of the role of the priest as provider of the sacraments.

Chapter three analyses the historical context of the Council of *Clofesho* of 747, particularly focusing on the growth of *monasteria*, and the influence of Theodore, Bede and Boniface. It discusses how the reforming council redistributed authority around the church and re-defined pastoral care, before suggesting how the model priest presented by Bede in his commentary *In Ezram et Neemiam* might link in with the developments at *Clofesho*. In

exploring these aspects of priesthood in the early period of the church in England, this thesis opens the way for further study, both into later tenth-century reforms, and into the role and function of bishops, all of whom were priests themselves.

Chapter 1

Priests in Narratives of the Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Church

In a celebrated letter written to the English nation in 738, Boniface, the Anglo-Saxon missionary to Germany, hinted at the variety of religious vocations open to Anglo-Saxon men and women. Bishops, priests and deacons featured first in a list which also included 'canons, clerics, abbots and abbesses', 'lowly monks who obey for Christ's sake' as well as 'consecrated and devout virgins and all professed nuns of Christ'.[1] Yet historians of the Anglo-Saxon church have either claimed or implied that priests, far from being prominent in the mission of the church in the period, were 'by no means numerous in early Anglo-Saxon England'.[2] Alan Thacker's conclusion reflects two prominent trends in recent Anglo-Saxon historiography: the dominance of the minster debate; and a popular reading of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* that deems it to shed more light on monasticism in early Anglo-Saxon England than on the rest of the early English church. Both stem from twentieth-century readings of Bede by Cuthbert Butler and David Knowles, whose monastic portrayals of the church in Anglo-Saxon England have influenced the renderings of early

[1] *Ep.*, XLVI [p. 96].
[2] A. Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in Blair and Sharpe, pp. 137 – 170, here p. 138.

mediæval English history by historians such as Margaret Deanesly, John Godfrey and Frank Barlow.[3] In more recent decades, the link between monasticism and pastoral care has been made more explicit, particularly through influential studies by John Blair, Nicholas Brooks, Catherine Cubitt, and Sarah Foot.[4] Yet in many of these accounts priests remain curiously invisible.

Unlike recent historians of the Anglo-Saxon church, however, Pope Gregory the Great understood that a purely monastic mission to the English could not achieve the conversion of the people. Whilst Gregory sent 'over a monk of my monastery to preach', as all the secondary literature accepts, he also realised the necessity of priests in the missionary party, something the secondary literature often neglects:[5]

> And so that their souls should not perish in eternal damnation, we have taken care to send there the bearer of this letter, Augustine... together with other monks, so that through them we might learn the wishes of the people themselves and consider their conversion, as far as is possible, with your support also. We have also warned them that they should take priests

[3] M. Deanesly, *The Pre-Conquest Church in England*, An Ecclesiastical History of England, I, 2nd edn. (London, 1963); J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962); F. Barlow, *The English Church 1000 – 1066: a History of the Later Anglo-Saxon Church* (London, 1976).

[4] J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, (Oxford, 2005); N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester, 1984); C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils* c. *650* – c. *850*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester, 1995); S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England,* c. *600 – 900* (Cambridge, 2006).

[5] *Registrum*, VIII.29 [p. 524]. *Cf.* Chadwick, 'Gregory the Great', p. 204.

(*presbyteros*) with them from nearby (*e vicino*) to carry out these things (*ducere*).[6]

Despite the necessity of priests to Gregory's strategy, historians of the conversion of the English relying centrally on Bede have restricted their views of Gregory's mission to those of his letters which Bede included in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. They have consequently presented a different impression of how the English people were evangelised. Before we examine Bede's understanding of priesthood, the anti-clericalist consequences of the minster debate and the prevalent interpretation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* need to be addressed.

The Minster Debate

Argument

Interdisciplinary efforts between history, archaeology, topography and local studies prompted the rise of the minster debate in Anglo-Saxon historiography in the 1980s and 90s.[7] The debate focused research on the

[6] *Registrum*, VI.60 [p. 444]. *Ducere* may suggest more than the translation indicates. Gregory also wrote to the priest Candidus, in a letter of the same year, that 'because those who live there [in Britain] are pagans, I want a priest to be sent over here with them, in case if any illness occurs on the way, he can baptize any he sees close to death' (*Registrum*, VI.10 [p. 409]).
[7] The premises for the model were originally articulated in the 1930s and 1940s by Frank Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Time' [originally published 1936] in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England, being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton*, ed. D. M. Stenton (Oxford, 1970), pp. 231 – 232, as well as his *Anglo-Saxon England*, The Oxford History of England, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1971; reptd. 1997) [originally published 1943]. Unlike German historians,

provision of pastoral care in Anglo-Saxon England, and resulted in the publication of two collections of papers edited by John Blair, *Minsters and Parish Churches: the Local Church in Transition 950 – 1250* (Oxford, 1988), and *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (edited with Richard Sharpe, Leicester, 1992). In brief, proponents of the minster model suggested a two-stage development in the foundation of the parish system. In pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England,

> virtually all churches, except subordinate churches such as oratories and chapels, were served by communities of clergy, and these latter were each responsible, in effect as 'team ministries', for the pastoral supervision of the laity in substantial areas attached to their churches… In the post-Viking period, the territories attached to these churches ('minsters') became fragmented… Thus the system of parishes and parish churches familiar to us emerged, although the 'minsters' retained residual traces of their earlier position and of their original territories.[8]

Challenges and revisions to the minster model have been proposed by a number of Anglo-Saxon historians, especially Eric Cambridge and David Rollason. Although these authors challenged the model itself, little attention has been paid to the underlying historiographical consequences of the dominance of the debate in the past thirty years, and in particular, the concentration of historical investigation on the *place* from which pastoral care

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English historians had not drawn significantly from topographical and archaeological evidence until the legal and ethical obstacles to excavation were removed in the 1970s, *cf*. Blair, *The Church*, p. 2.

[8] E. Cambridge and D. Rollason, 'Debate: the Pastoral Organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the 'Minster Hypothesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, IV (1995), pp. 87 – 104, here p. 87.

was delivered, and on the life of the monks who carried it out. Whilst the debate's focus on pastoral care has obviously been an inspiration to my own investigations into the priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England, the model has contributed to the eclipsing of the clergy from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history.

Place

The notion of place remains central to the minster debate. John Blair made no apology for his study on *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* being 'above all… a book about places, and the various functions in a wider world which stemmed from their religious character'.[9] Proponents of the minster model have claimed to find a dichotomy in the written sources between minsters (*monasteria*) and episcopal churches or cathedrals (*sedes episcopales*), and thus associate the provision of pastoral care with these buildings, particularly the former.[10] On a basic level, the reduction of centres of pastoral care to these two is hard to justify in light of the sources. Other religious places, identified by Cambridge and Rollason in their critique of the minster model, include

[9] Blair, *The Church*, p. 1.

[10] The distinction was made by J. Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical Organization and Pastoral Care in Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe*, IV (1995), pp. 193 – 212, here p. 195 and S. Foot, 'Parochial Ministry in Early Anglo-Saxon England: The Role of Monastic Communities', in *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay. Papers Read at the 1988 Summer Meeting and the 1989 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W. J. Sheils and D. Wood, Studies in Church History, XXVI (Oxford, 1989), pp. 43 – 54, here p. 44.

oratoria, *basilicae* and *ecclesiae*.[11] To give just one consequence of this, both John Blair and Sarah Foot gloss over the provision of pastoral care in the conversion stage in Anglo-Saxon history, when, according to Bede, *ecclesiae* were nearly always the first buildings to be founded on the conversion of a kingdom, before *monasteria*.[12]

On a more fundamental level, pastoral care has come to be associated with a place (either the minster or the cathedral church), and not with a person. Blair addressed this particular criticism in a 1995 article; whilst he affirmed his 'belief in relatively early mother-parish formation' based on the consideration 'that ecclesiastical finance and pastoral care were centered from the outset on minsters', he also accepted that 'the "minster model" had forgotten bishops and their fundamental role in organizing pastoral care'.[13] This is an imbalance this study hopes to address. Blair admitted that 'we are not faced with a choice between alternative and incompatible systems' of the role of the bishop and the role of the *monasterium*, but he and the other proponents of the minster model had placed too much emphasis on the

[11] Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate', pp. 89 – 90. See also C. Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter: The Clergy and the Religious Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching*, ed. P. Cavill (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 41 – 54.

[12] A close reading of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* indicates that *monasteria* were nearly always founded after *ecclesiae*, an order followed by Boniface when evangelising the Hessians, e.g. Canterbury, I.33 (Kent); London, II.3 (Essex); Rochester, II.3; York, II.14 (Northumbria); Lincoln, II.16 (Lindsey); Dorchester, III.7 (Wessex). *Cf*. *WVSB*, VI [p. 46]. Hence, even by the 640s those wishing to pursue monastic life from Kent were being sent to the continent, *cf. HE*, III.8.

[13] Blair, 'Debate', p. 203, *cf*. Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate', p. 92.

econominc weight of *monasteria* and had neglected the theological principle that the cure of souls resided, from the outset of the Gregorian mission, with the bishops, who delegated it (either by choice or because of financial or secular pressure) to others.[14] It would satisfy neither Blair nor Cambridge and Rollason to begin a consideration of who exercised (rather than controlled) pastoral care with a study of religious personnel, but it seems that in this whole debate, it is the practitioners of the episcopally-delegated cure who have been overlooked.

Monastic Life

For our purposes, the primary consequence of the minster debate has been to link pastoral care with the place of the *monasterium*. This gained support from another historiographical trend amongst Anglo-Saxon historians, the focus on the nature of monastic life. Given that a high proportion of extant texts were composed in monastic settings, with monastic audiences in mind, it is no wonder that investigations into the Anglo-Saxon church had traditionally focused on the residents of *monasteria*. In his *Benedictine Monachism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule* (London, 1919), Cuthbert Butler argued that

[14] Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate', p. 92; C. Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 277; see also Cubitt's 'Pastoral Care and Conciliar Canons: the Provisions of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*', in Blair and Sharpe, pp. 193 – 211, in which she drew attention to the use of Pope Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Care*, and highlighted the words of the 747 Council of *Clofesho* which asserted that pastoral care was entrusted to the bishops.

> St. Augustine and his monks brought the [Benedictine] Rule to England, and their monastery of Ss. Peter and Paul (later St. Augustine's) in Canterbury, established 600, was the first Benedictine monastery outside of Italy of which authentic record exists.[15]

Studies on the religious orders of mediæval Britain by David Knowles retained historical interest in Benedictinism, whilst in the 1950s and 60s, the Anglican cleric G. W. O. Addleshaw discussed 'monasteries in the Benedictine sense', 'monastic families', and 'monastic churches' in his contribution to scholarship on the provision of pastoral care.[16] Sarah Foot's doctoral work, published as *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England* c. *600 – 900* (Cambridge, 2006), developed these particular ideas. She argued convincingly that 'Historians, influenced by the writings of Bede (particularly but not exclusively his *Ecclesiastical History*) and by the rhetoric of the monks who reformed the monasteries in the 960s and 970s, have tended to see the monasticism of earlier centuries as conforming to a certain uniform type'.[17] Although Butler's Benedictinism had been known and loved in early Anglo-Saxon England, it had not existed in the way that historians thought.[18]

To rectify the Benedictine presuppositions of her fellow historians, Foot made careful use of the words 'minster' and 'monastic'. However, some have interpreted her writings as suggesting that inhabitants of *monasteria* did

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[15] C. Butler, *Benedictine Monachism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule* (London, 1919), p. 355.
[16] D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: a History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 940 – 1216* (Cambridge, 1940); S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: a Review of Terminology', in Blair and Sharpe, pp. 212 – 225, here p. 216.
[17] Foot, *Monastic Life,* p. 11.
[18] S. Foot, 'What was an Early Anglo-Saxon Monastery?', in *Monastic Studies: the Continuity of Tradition*, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, 1990), pp. 48 – 57, here p. 49.

not include ordained clergy. Foot did not come to this conclusion; she argued merely that we cannot distinguish between houses founded for devotional life and those founded to provide for local pastoral needs. Her findings in fact had important implications beyond the walls of the cloister, for she concluded that the inmates of these 'minsters' included both secular and religious priests, who were sent out to further the mission of the church in the countryside.[19] Moreover, 'relatively small groups of priests may have been more typical' in a minster's composition than a group of contemplative monks.[20]

Such findings are supported by Anglo-Latin texts, which use consistent vocabulary to distinguish between *monachi*, *laici*, and *clerici*. In his *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, Bede wrote that 'We seek that life whatever way of life we lead... whether monk (*monachus*), or layman (*laicus*), or clerk (*clericus*)'.[21] Bede also consistently used the word *monachus* to describe the inmates of Whitby, Melrose and Lindisfarne. Although his use of *frater* appears similar, its particular nuance may indicate the wider population of a *monasterium*, encompassing 'estate workers or tenants on ecclesiastical estates as well as monks'.[22] Precise use of terminology stretches to those monks also in clerical

[19] Some monks were also clerics, though the terms 'regular' and 'secular clergy' were not themselves used until the 755 Council of Verneuil, *cf. Capitula Regum Francorum I*, ed. A. Boretius, MGH, Legum II, Capitularia I (Hanover, 1883).
[20] Foot, 'Parochial Ministry'; Blair, 'Debate', p. 208.
[21] *Retr. in Act.*, IV.32, line 104.
[22] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 275, following Foot, 'Language and Method', p. 77, *cf. HE*, IV.12, 26 (Whitby); IV.12, 27; V.12 (Melrose); IV.4, 27; V.19 (Lindisfarne). *BVSC*, XXXIV.

orders, both parts of their identity being conveyed, as in the case of Dryhthelm's vision of 'a certain monk by the name of Haemgisl, who had been priested'.[23]

Given the linguistic accuracy of Anglo-Saxon authors, and the proliferation of information in Anglo-Saxon texts (albeit somewhat concealed), why have modern historians preferred to focus on monks rather than priests? The dominance of the minster model and its misinterpretation by its critics must take some blame. More widely, however, the yearning for spiritual- over traditional-forms of religion in the latter decades of the twentieth century may have contributed something, as Anglo-Saxon monasticism gave precedence to an unregulated spirituality within the comfy confines of English culture. Such is discernible from the use of texts by Anglo-Saxon historians: they have, so far, preferred to read Bede, and those texts composed in 'Celtic' monastic settings. Simultaneously, they have neglected the conciliar canons of Anglo-Saxon England, which regulated both clerical life and pastoral care from the first councils in the seventh century, through to the reform periods of the tenth. The work of Catherine Cubitt, particularly her *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, c. *650* – c. *850* (London, 1995) but also in her later

[23] '*quidam monachus nomine Haemgisl, presbyteratus etiam*' (*HE*, V.12). This translation by Catherine Cubitt ('The Clergy', p. 276, n. 10) shows how careful Bede was in identifying the status of his characters, much more than the standard translation by Colgrave and Mynors would suggest.

work on the clergy of Anglo-Saxon England, has been corrective in this respect.

It will, nonetheless, prove difficult to write about priests distinctively. Texts which talk in general terms about 'clerics' or 'ecclesiastics', rather than specifically about priests, require careful analysis, as do the actions recorded of those who are labelled by Anglo-Saxon writers as both 'priest' and 'monk'. Similar care must be taken over bishops, though because all bishops are priests (just as all priests are deacons, as holy orders are cumulative) and exercise priestly functions, so the events recorded of them have the potential to shed light on the role, function and identity of the priest in Anglo-Saxon England.[24]

Neglecting Priests

In dominating the historiography for the past thirty years, the minster debate has significantly rooted itself, methodologically and in terms of its conclusions, in the Anglo-Saxon landscape. It has brought to the fore the issue of pastoral care, but has only engaged in a selective reading of the texts, and even then suffered from theological misunderstanding. Whilst John Blair and Sarah Foot have rightly defended criticism from those who have

[24] The hagiographies of Cuthbert and Wilfrid both fit into this category. *N.B.* Despite Wilfrid's championing of the Benedictine Rule and his foundation of *monasteria*, he is never described as having taken monastic vows but only a clerical tonsure *cf. SVSW*, IV [p. 15]. Many authors, including Patrick 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 – 169, have assumed that Wilfrid is a monk.

misinterpreted their words, historians such as Catherine Cubitt, Julia Barrow, Eric Cambridge and David Rollason have highlighted the existence of other important centres of mission in addition to minsters – oratories (*oratoria*), baptisteries, basilicas (*basilicae*) and various churches (*ecclesiae*), some of which lay on royal estates (*villae regales*) – and pointed out that pastoral care, though practically in the hands of the *monasteria* was nonetheless the outworking of the cure of souls entrusted to the bishop.[25] All this evidence for other places of pastoral care enables us 'to imagine a more varied ecclesiastical landscape than the usual monastic dominance portrayed in the secondary sources suggests, one replete not only with monastic communities of different sorts but also with bishops and their clergy, local priests and those in lower orders'.[26]

Research into the priesthood is novel in this respect: it explores the work of the practitioners of pastoral care, whose pastoral responsibilities were delegated to them from the bishop who had the cure of souls in his *parochia*. It is person-focussed and does not principally examine what happened in *monasteria* or indeed in *ecclesiae*. Moreover, whilst focus on the monastic life has engaged Anglo-Saxon researchers on those elements of pastoral care which can be practised by those not ordained – such as charitable work, almsgiving, the care of the sick, and preaching – what has been neglected is

[25] Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter'; Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate'.
[26] J. Barrow, 'Cathedral Clergy', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge *et al*. (Oxford, 1999), pp. 84 – 87.

the sacerdotal aspects of pastoral care – in particular, the celebration of the sacraments, especially the mass, which remained throughout the period the sole preserve of the priestly order.[27] For the past century, Anglo-Saxon historians have viewed pastoral care as a monastic endeavour. The result has been the eclipsing of the clergy from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history. If the clergy are to be re-discovered amongst the pages of the texts, then the distortions effected by the minster debate must be put to bed.

Problems with Bede's Account

Authority

The importance of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a source for early Anglo-Saxon history has traditionally emancipated it from the critical eye of early mediævalists. Collections of essays on the Venerable Bede, published throughout the twentieth century on key anniversaries of Bede's birth and death, have treated the *Historia* as an historically-reliable source; even in recent years, historians such as Henry Mayr-Harting have assumed Bede to be authoritative and predominantly accurate in the information he

[27] In 'Monasteries, Rural Churches and the *cura animarum* in the Early Middle Ages', *Cristianizzazione ed Organizzazione Ecclesiastica Delle Campagne nell'Alto Medioevo: Espansione e Resitenze*, SettSpol, XXVIII (Spoleto, 1982), pp. 349 – 389, Giles Constable described the *cura animarum* as the 'pastoral activities of administering the sacraments, especially baptism and the eucharist, imposing penance and preaching' (p. 353). Foot successfully challenged this, and widened the definition to include some aspects of charitable work, almsgiving, and caring for the sick ('Anglo-Saxon Minsters', *cf*. her *Monastic Life*, p. 332). On priests and the administration of the sacraments, see below pp. 86 – 117; on women see below, p. 100, n. 215, and p. 133, n. 12.

conveyed.[28] This is not surprising: Bede is usually our sole witness to the events of the conversion era. More recent developments in Bedan scholarship, however, have questioned this approach, with new studies highlighting inconsistencies, both within the *Historia* itself, and between the *Historia* and Bede's other works, and comparing information gleaned from the pages of the *Historia* with evidence taken from charters and continental sources. One of the most sceptical of modern Bedan scholars, Walter Goffart, recently wrote that, 'The history that is familiar to us from Bede's narrative – a very pleasing seventh-century Northumbrian church, all sweetness and holiness – is the image that was called for and Bede supplied, but not the one he lived in'.[29] One need only compare Bede's portrayal of the Synod of Whitby to that of Stephen of Ripon to reveal interpretative inconsistencies. Whilst Stephen's account was clearly tailored to his hagiographical purpose, it is nonetheless clear that Bede watered down the impact of Wilfrid, making him a reasoned voice of tradition against the Irish, who, though non-conformists, had many saintly qualities.[30] Wilfrid's personal authority is left somewhat diminished. Yet it is not only Bede's interpretation which is questionable: in assessing the evidence for the Gregorian mission to the English, Henry Chadwick believed

[28] *Bede: his Life, Times and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death*, ed. A. H. Thompson (Oxford, 1935); *Famulus Christi*, ed. Bonner; H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (University Park, PA, 1972; 3rd edn., 1991).
[29] W. Goffart, 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate', in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio, Medieval European Studies, VI (Morgantown, 2006), pp. 203 – 226, here p. 225.
[30] *SVSW*.

that Bede put together a 'deceptively coherent story', reconstructing the narrative from the Gregorian correspondence along the thesis that

> the chair of St. Peter is and ought to be the uniting force, the criterion of authentic orthodoxy, the determinant voice telling the Churches in Britain how things ought to be done and the ecclesiastical cement to bond together the quarrelling powers which had gradually led the warring Saxon kingdoms to constitute a single *gens*, and as the source of authority through which Celtic and Saxon Christians were enabled to live together in fellowship.[31]

The issues raised by these authors, together with our increasing knowledge of the number of factual errors in the *Historia* (such as Bede's misattribution of the bishopric of Arles to Etherius), must lead us to question the reliability of the *Historia* as a source for the organisation and running of the early English church and specifically as a source of information about the life of seventh-century priests.[32]

Solving the Problem?

In their study of other periods of the church's history, ecclesiastical historians are usually able to compare sources in order to discern from among them that which is interpretation and gloss, and that which has greater claim to

[31] Chadwick, 'Gregory the Great', pp. 199 – 200.
[32] *HE*, I.24.

reliability. However, given that Bede's *Historia* is one of few surviving pieces of evidence from the period, literary or archaeological, a more sophisticated approach needs to be taken, which asks the historian to be particularly aware of Bede's purpose in writing his *Historia*. This might not seem ground-breaking, but

> Only relatively recently has it come to be appreciated that some explanation is needed for Bede's understanding of the [*Historia Ecclesiastica*]; one, moreover, that takes account of his particular methods of working and of the special concerns which he displays for various themes, topics, and personalities.[33]

We need to contextualise Bede, comparing the information presented in the *Historia* with all the available other evidence for the ecclesial and political contexts of Bede's own time, particularly the 730s. Only against such a background can a better-informed judgment be made as to the likely accuracy of the information Bede offers about priests of the seventh century and the extent to which the author has manipulated his data to suit his purposes for the church of the eighth-century.

[33] 'Introduction', *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. J. McClure and R. Collins (Oxford, 1994), xx, n. 19.

Meta-narrative

Whilst classical history told the story of public events, 'of rulers, wars, the administration of justice', Bede's history leaned heavily on the tradition of Eusebius.[34] For Eusebius, 'political affairs were no longer primary subject matter, although the Roman state, through the succession of its emperors, provided an organizing principle for his text'.[35] Instead, Eusebius took the church as his primary subject matter, selecting and arranging a number of sources chronologically to demonstrate how God had worked in the world through Providence. Bede had access to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, translated, adapted and continued by Rufinus, and one author has even argued that Bede wished to add to this work 'a British and Anglo-Saxon supplement'.[36] Whether this is true or not is debatable: of more certainty is Bede's reliance on Eusebius as a model for the writing of ecclesiastical history, which is distinguished by the meta-narrative of Providence.

Like Eusebius, Bede saw the judgment of God within the historical process: God vindicated his saints, and defeated his enemies and the enemies

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[34] A. Thacker, 'Bede and History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 170 – 189, here p. 171, *cf*. Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G. A. Williamson (Hammondsmith, Middlesex, 1965) [rev. edn. by Andrew Louth (London, 1989)]. For relevant secondary literature on Eusebius and his *Ecclesiastical History* see D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (London, 1960), R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford, 1980), and L. W. Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius as Church Historians', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. Bonner, pp. 106 – 124.
[35] Thacker, 'Bede and History', p. 171.
[36] W. Levison, 'Bede as Historian', in *Bede: his Life, Times and Writings*, ed. Thompson, pp. 111 – 151, here p. 133.

of the church in the outworking of time.[37] God was in charge of history, ordering its events and seeing that it reached the end he desired, namely the salvation of souls. Believing Britain to be in the corner of the world, Bede was aware that unless the English were given opportunity to repent and convert to the faith, the end of the world would not come.[38] Bede's works, and particularly the *Historia*, were intended to make the faithful alert to the time in which they lived, and thereby prepare them for the coming judgment.[39]

Morality

Scripture taught that, on the Day of Judgment, individuals would be judged according to their deeds, whether good or bad.[40] Bede's writings grew increasingly conscious of this, culminating in the oft-quoted passage in the Preface to the *Historia*, 'Should history tell of good men and their good

[37] Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. Bonner, p. 110.
[38] 'And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come' (Matthew XXIV.14), *cf.* Acts I.8. Alan Thacker has recently highlighted how the meta-narrative of Providence affected the composition of Bede's works more generally, and argued convincingly that Bede's was an 'ordered program' of writing ('Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', in *Innovation and Tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, pp. 37 – 63).
[39] Bede's belief in the imminence of the end of the world stemmed from Gregory the Great, of whom Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford, 2000) wrote, 'No Christian writer since Paul of Tarsus, perhaps, had as vivid a sense of the nearness of the end times' (p. 135). Gregory 'discussed the signs expected to precede [the end of the world] at the start of a homily preached to the people of Rome a few months after he became pope, which was placed at the beginning of his collection of homilies on the Gospels', *cf.* J. Moorhead, *Gregory the Great*, The Early Church Fathers (Abingdon, 2005), p. 6.
[40] II Corinthians V.10.

estate…'[41] In this statement, Bede espoused the Ciceronian precept that history was a form of moral instruction.[42]

Bede's selection of material and interpretative comments are no longer believed to discredit him as an historian. Rather, they enhance our view of his skills as one who selected, discerned, and carefully presented the history of the foundation of the English church and people. Bede understood his task to be writing of the events that demonstrated 'the unfolding of God's purposes for mankind as the world moved towards final judgement and the end of time', and the edification of the people of God, that new Israel the English people, to good and holy Christian living.[43] In this, Bede has rightly come to be regarded for his critiquing of the present, rather than his synthesizing of the past.

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[41] *HE*, *Praef*. [p. 3].

[42] R. Ray, 'Who Did Bede think he was?', in *Innovation and Tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, pp. 11 – 35, here p. 29.

[43] Thacker, 'Bede and History', p. 170. Note Conrad Leyser on Gregory: 'For the first time, a monk was bishop of Rome. Acutely conscious of the exalted character of his station, and hugely learned in the vast body of patristic literature already in existence, Gregory determined, with astonishing single-mindedness, to answer one question: how to harness the full force of ascetic detachment to the exercise of power in this world. His response is irreducible to any single formulation, theory, or institutional practice. What Gregory offers is a language – a discouse of moral authority, at once fierce and infinitely malleable' (*Authority and Asceticism*, p. 133 – 134).

Ecclesial, Spiritual and Political Reform

The *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* represents the apex of Bede's condemnation of his contemporaries, presenting a remarkably different picture of religious life in Anglo-Saxon England to his *Historia,* written just three years previous.[44] In this letter, Bede articulated his concern for the spiritual well-being of the people of the Diocese of York, commending the words of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care* to his bishop, asking Ecgberht to petition Rome for York's elevation to metropolitical status, and advising him to increase the number of bishops in the newly-formed archdiocese, call for a general council, and seek the support of rightly-minded monastics in all of these endeavours. The *Historia Ecclesiastica*, although distinctively uncritical of the early Anglo-Saxon church, made a positive contribution to this reform agenda. The seventh-century priest Cuthbert, for instance, is presented as 'an exemplary monk, ascetic, and bishop, fulfilling in these roles all the requirements of a Bedan *rector*, *doctor*, and *praedicator*' for the benefit of Bede's eighth-century priestly, monastic, and royal audiences.[45] Bede's deliberate inclusion of the Gregorian two-province plan for the English church, and his articulation of the voluntary submission of the northern province to Archbishop Theodore, may also be intended 'to pave the way for the restoration of metropolitan status to

[44] *Ep. Ecg., cf.* S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, LXXIX (2004), pp. 1 – 25.
[45] A. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald *et al*. (Oxford, 1983), pp. 130 – 153, here p. 142.

the see of York'.[46] The *Historia* continually emphasises the contribution of the Northumbrian church to the wider church as it develops in Britain. As Walter Goffart commented:

> The purpose of Bede's history was not to abase Wilfrid, or to stupefy us with the dating of Easter, or to praise Aidan, Cædmon, and Cuthbert, or to treat other particles of his subject. It was written to present the sum of these and other particulars, the aggregate that we read – an idealized, engaging, edifying account of the church of Northumbria and some of its neighbors [*sic.*], a glowing balance sheet of the Northumbrian past on the occasion of a great leap forward. The elevation of Northumbria to a higher ecclesiastical status was an extraordinary event. Bede could anticipate it… This was the future. For its guidance his history offered a vision of the past that was also a model of Christian virtue and holiness.[47]

Eighth-century remnants of old ecclesio-political alliances also affected Bede's writing of the *Historia*. Chief among these was Wilfrid. Wilfrid had been dead for over twenty years when Bede finished the *Historia*. Yet his behaviour, and the attitude he took to his deposition, presented a problem to Bede. Whilst acknowledging Wilfrid's sanctity, Bede could not easily reconcile the saint with the peaceful picture of the Northumbrian church he wished to paint. Further, in the years following King Aldfrith's succession, there was an 'abrupt realignment of forces', in which the new king gathered around him individuals, including Wilfrid, who supported his cause.[48] Recalling the

[46] Thacker, 'Bede and History', p. 183.
[47] Goffart, 'Bede's History', p. 213.
[48] Goffart, 'Bede's History', p. 217.

spiritual ailments of his own age, as well as the problems of Wilfrid in previous generations, Bede played down the saint's role and achievements, in order to promote the new Northumbrian order he advocated to Bishop Ecgberht. 'The new Northumbrian leaders, with York as center [*sic*.] of a province, offered excellent prospects of reform. The *Historia Ecclesiastica* would instruct and guide them'.[49]

One further important eighth-century context is that of the Bonifacian missions to the continent.[50] Bede, of course, narrated the successes and failures of these missions in the last book of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Yet he was careful to draw links between the Gregorian mission, which had providentially led to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and the creation of the English church and nation, and the Bonifacian enterprise. He consequently established the Gregorian missionaries, Augustine and his contemporaries, as examplars of those who successfully challenged pagan belief and practice amongst people, and planted in them the seeds of faith. The *Historia* not only taught these missionaries the method by which God converted his people, but assured them that due to his providence, whatever minor setbacks they encountered, God would see to the conversion of the heathen in the end, and their efforts would not be in vain.

[49] Goffart, 'Bede's History', p. 218.
[50] See below, pp. 146 - 150.

A Nuanced Reading

Exploration of the eighth-century context of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* encourages the historian to make a careful reading of his text. In one sense, historians will be ever grateful for a history which is in many ways comprehensive and well-documented with the acts of councils, inscriptions, letters and epitaphs. They should be grateful for Bede's thoroughness in citing his own sources, his distinguishing between that which was passed on by word of mouth and that which was documented elsewhere, and his ability to correct information which he knew to be wrong.[51] In this, I find no warrant for the suggestion of Goffart that Bede is in any way 'two-faced': we can trust that Bede believed what he wrote, even to the extent that his hagiographical material contains elements of historical truth.[52] Bede's history, however, is not the history of the twenty-first century. It presupposed the hand of God in the day-to-day affairs of humanity and was written for the edifying of Bede's audience as they prepared for the Day of Judgment, which was closer now than ever before.

In being the master of his works, Bede was not afraid to manipulate his material, both in terms of what he included and excluded from his account,

[51] For more on this see Levison, 'Bede as Historian', p. 140, and Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', p. 42.
[52] Goffart, 'Bede's History', p. 221. On the hagiographical material, see B. Colgrave, 'Bede's Miracle Stories', in *Bede: his Life, Times and Writings*, ed. Thompson, pp. 201 – 219 and B. Ward, 'Miracles and History: a Reconsideration of the Miracle Stories used by Bede', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. Bonner, pp. 70 – 76.

and in his own interpretation, to suit his ends and fit the English people into the providential work of God. Motivated by this meta-narrative, he also paid regard to the ecclesial, spiritual and political arena of the early eighth-century in which he wrote. Whilst readings of Bede should therefore acknowledge the author's determination to supply accurate historical information, they must also acknowledge the work's audiences and contexts, and be regarded as eighth-century glosses on a selective rendering of earlier information. In this way, Bede mirrored many mid-eighth-century debates onto the world of the seventh century, placing his contemporaries in their providentially-ordered place in the salvation history of this new Israel, the *gens Anglorum*.[53] The faults identified above stemming from the prominence of Bede in the historiography of the early English church should not dissuade us from beginning our own investigations of the priesthood with his *Historia* – it is the most detailed account of the formation of the church in Anglo-Saxon England to which we have access. However, in recovering a lost understanding of the priesthood in early Anglo-Saxon England, we must endeavour to make a carefully-nuanced and well-contextualised reading of what he wrote.

[53] George Molyneaux challenged this thesis in 'The Old English Bede: English Ideology or Christian Instruction', *English Historical Review*, CXXIV (2009), pp. 1289 – 1323.

Mission and Conversion

Priestly Function

The evidence from Gregory's letters highlighted at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates the key role of priests in the task of conversion, and it is to Bede's record of this that we first turn in our assessment of priests in early Anglo-Saxon England. Interestingly, for our author, all conversion efforts were grounded in prayer. On arrival in Kent, Augustine first 'chanted litanies and uttered prayers to the Lord for their own eternal salvation and the salvation of those for whom and to whom they had come'.[54] In light of this focus, Pope Gregory responded to Augustine's request for more missionaries by sending to Kent not only men to aid the mission, but also all those things necessary for the worship and ministry of the church.[55] The conversion of Northumbria took place in a similar way. Æthelburh, the wife of Edwin, received advice from Pope Boniface stressing the essential role she could play in the conversion of her husband, and subsequently his kingdom. Her chief duty was not to teach articles of faith, but to pray.[56] Such prayer had a converting effect on the unconverted: King Edwin convinced Eorpwald to abandon idols and accept the Christian faith and sacraments because of his

[54] Secondary authors have so far failed to see the significance of prayer in the conversion process outlined by Bede. *HE*, I.25 [p. 75].
[55] *HE*, I.29. Gregory's first response to Augustine in the *Libellus* also indicated his priorities: he advised Augustine to take care that the clergy are living moral lives, and that they are attentive to the chanting of the psalms (*HE*, I.29).
[56] *HE*, II.11.

devotion to true worship.[57] Aidan constantly engaged his travelling party, composed of both clerics and laymen, in the study of the scriptures and the recitation of the psalms.[58]

Prayer was always followed by preaching in Bede's conversion process. Bede placed special emphasis on the priestly nature of this task when describing Cedd's evangelising of the East Saxons.[59] Cedd and his priestly companions found precedence in the earliest missionaries to Britain, Augustine and the several other 'God-fearing monks' who accompanied him. They were sent by Gregory 'to preach the word of God to the English race'.[60] In order to fulfil this command, the missionaries required the king's permission to preach. Initial efforts in preaching consequently targeted the king, often surrounded by his *gesiths*.[61] Importantly, the king need not convert before his people – in Northumbria, the priest and bishop Paulinus baptised the infant daughter of Edwin and eleven others before the king himself accepted the faith – however, permission to preach in any kingdom was still required, and some form of negotiation with the monarch was necessary.[62] If the missionaries managed to convince the king of the truth of the faith, they also knew they had greater chance of securing the salvation of the people too.

[57] *HE*, II.15.
[58] *HE*, IV.5.
[59] *HE*, III.22.
[60] *HE*, I.23 [p. 69].
[61] *HE*, I.25.
[62] *HE*, II.9.

The king would customarily convert alongside his chief aides.[63] He might also bring with him a number of the 'common people'.[64] Occasionally, if he exhibited particular zeal in his faith, he would use it as a bargaining tool with non-Christian monarchs. Such was the case with Peada, son of Penda, King of the Middle Angles, who desired to marry Alhflæd, daughter of the Christian King Oswiu. Oswiu granted his daughter's hand in marriage on the condition that Peada accepted the Christian faith. Peada, his *gesiths* and thegns, were duly baptised by Bishop Finan.[65] From the earliest attempts at conversion, clerics also encouraged kings to take practical steps in aiding the mission. Pope Gregory advised Æthelberht of Kent: 'to extend the Christian faith among the people… Increase your righteous zeal… suppress the worship of idols; [and] overthrow their buildings and shrines'.[66] Positive material advantages to the king's conversion were also seen: Edwin and Cynegisl, amongst others, ensured the building of churches following their conversions to the faith.[67]

The priests which we are told about in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* would frequently travel on foot to preach, traversing 'the whole kingdom' in order to build up 'a great church for the Lord'.[68] They could spend up to a month in a

[63] *HE*, II.13.
[64] *HE*, II.14 [p. 187].
[65] *HE*, II.21.
[66] *HE*, I.32 [p. 113].
[67] *HE*, III.7.
[68] *HE*, III.22 [p. 283].

single place, where they would expound the faith to those who came to them from the surrounding villages, encouraging them to believe.[69] Although Bede acknowledged the mixed economy of beliefs in any given Anglo-Saxon kingdom, his language nonetheless gives the opinion that each kingdom had a point when it 'converted' to the faith.[70] This moment happened when an individual or kingdom rejected former idolatrous ways, and expressed its belief in the Trinitarian God of the Christians.[71] Bede's account of the reaction of the pagan priest Coifi to the Northumbrian mission exemplifies this part of the conversion process.[72] According to Bede, Coifi, like many others of his generation, was convinced of the Christian faith by the content of the preaching: rewards followed acceptance of the Christian faith, and curses followed refusing it.[73] Paulinus, for instance, told Edwin 'that it was in answer to his prayers that the queen had been safely delivered of a child without great pain'.[74] With the aim of winning souls for the heavenly kingdom, 'conversion was to be made easy, even profitable'.[75]

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[69] Paulinus once spent thirty-six days at Yeavering instructing the crowds who 'flocked to see him from every village and district' (*HE*, II.14 [p. 189]). Bede's inclusion of this fact suggests such a period in one place was longer than usual.
[70] Bede often used the formula that a kingdom had 'accepted' the faith 'through the preaching' of a particular bishop or cleric, e.g. *HE*, II.9 [p. 163].
[71] On rejection of idols as a necessary part of accepting the faith see *HE*, II.13. On the belief in God as Trinity see *HE*, II.10.
[72] *HE*, II.13.
[73] See O. Phelan, 'Catechising the Wild: The Continuity and Innovation of Missionary Catechesis under the Carolingians', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, LXI (2010), pp. 455 – 474.
[74] *HE*, II.9 [p. 165].
[75] R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 31.

In this early period of the English church, acceptance of the faith by an individual was usually followed by baptism.[76] Baptism constituted a regeneration of the individual's soul – a concept understood not only by the clergy, but by informed laity as well, who were clothed in a white garment called the *chrisom* following their baptism, to indicate their new purity.[77] The church understood that, without baptism, you could not inherit eternal life.[78] Conversely, following baptism, eternal life appeared to be guaranteed.[79] Baptism would normally take place in a church or baptistery, if one were available.[80] Sometimes a church would be built for the occasion, as in the case of Edwin's baptism at York, when a church of 'wattle' was hastily erected.[81]

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[76] *HE*, III.21. Bede suggested that following the conversion period, baptism generally occurred later in life, near the point of death. The suggestion that this practice developed in such a way may be likely given the fears of an immanent judgment in the conversion stage of the church in Anglo-Saxon England. However, it may also be likely that baptism was often delayed until the time of death right from the beginning of the church in Anglo-Saxon England – Bede may have included baptism at this stage when he identified stages of the conversion process in order to demonstrate the necessity of the sacrament for completing conversion. For a useful summary of baptismal practice in the period, see Sarah Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit": the Administration of Baptism in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in Blair and Sharpe, pp. 171 – 192. See also below, pp. 87 – 93.

[77] Pope Boniface's letter to Æthelburh discussed the theology of baptism, including the understanding of the church that the soul is regenerated and the individual freed from all sin at the baptismal moment (*HE*, II.11). Cædwalla understood the need to remain pure following his baptism, delaying his regeneration to the end of his life, when he undertook a pilgrimage to Rome for the sake of his soul (*HE*, V.3). On the *chrisom* see *HE*, II.14; V.7.

[78] *HE*, V.3. The *Vita Sancti Wilfridi* indicated this point of baptism: 'O how great and wonderful is God's mercy, Who, by His servant of honoured memory, called back to life a little child who was dead and unbaptized, so that, being baptized, he might live to inherit eternal life of future blessedness' (*SVSW*, XVIII [p. 41]). *Cf*. Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL, CXLIII (Turnhout, 1979), IX.xxi.32, in which he suggested that unbaptised children are damned.

[79] *HE*, II.10.

[80] *HE*, II.14. The existence of special baptisteries, such as those which appear in sixth- and seventh-century Frankia, remains dubious in early Anglo-Saxon England (J. Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Ministers: a Topographical Review', in Blair and Sharpe, pp. 226 – 266, here p. 250).

[81] *HE*, II.14 [p. 187].

At other times, the priest would baptise wherever was expedient, as Paulinus did in the River Swale and the River Glen.[82] The baptism itself would usually be conducted by a priest, who I have argued elsewhere was considered as the ordinary minister of baptism.[83] It is possible that he would use the Roman rite of baptism, which was in use in England from the time of the Gregorian mission.[84] This entailed exorcism by insufflation, a profession of faith, sprinkling or immersion into consecrated water, and anointing with chrism.[85]

The building of *ecclesiae* marked a development in the Christian life of a kingdom from a 'conversion' to a 'consolidation' period. In the initial conversion stage, priests would claim pagan shrines for the church rather than destroying them.[86] This follows the advice of Gregory to Abbot Mellitus: conversion, thought the pope, could be more quickly achieved if 'idol temples' were 'by no means destroyed but only the idols within them'. Pagan shrines (*fana*) 'should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of

[82] *HE*, II.14. See also discussion in R. Morris, 'Baptismal Places: 600 – 800', in *People and Places in Northern Europe 500 – 1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. I Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 15 – 24, here p. 19.
[83] C. Johnson, 'The *Rôle* of the Priesthood in Early Anglo-Saxon England' (Unpublished M.St. thesis, Oxford, 2010), p. 20. See below, pp. 88 - 90.
[84] See below, pp. 90 – 91, 96 – 98.
[85] L. C. Mohlberg (ed.), *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae Ordinis anni circuli* (Rome, 1958), pp. 32 – 97; H. Lietzmann (ed.), *Das Sacramentarium Gregorianum nach dem Aachner Urexemplar* (Münster, 1921), pp. 45 – 54; M. Andrieu (ed.), *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Âge*, 5 vols (Louvain, 1931 – 1956), esp. *Ordo Romanus XI*, vol. ii, pp. 417 – 447. For insufflation see *HE*, V.6, and Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, XLI, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 131.
[86] Though Gregory initially advocated destroying the shrines (*HE*, II.10; I.32; II.13).

the true God'.[87] As the kingdom was converted, however, the foundation of new *ecclesiae* would be negotiated between bishops and secular rulers.[88] In most, if not all cases in Bede's *Historia*, including the churches at Canterbury, London and York, their foundation preceded the building of *monasteria*, demonstrating the clerical nature of the conversion task.[89] Consecrating these churches was an episcopal privilege: Bede articulated that as a priest, Cedd built up the spiritual body of Christ; whereas when he were made a bishop, he 'established churches'. By the end of the conversion period in each kingdom, working *ecclesiae* were scattered over the landscape, acting as bases for clerics to continue the mission to the people through their preaching and the celebration of the sacraments.

The Importance of Priestly Behaviour in the Propagation of the Gospel

The details of the conversion process given in passages from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, outlined above, stand in contrast to Bede's record of the

[87] *HE*, I.30 [p. 107]. This process was replicated by Pope Boniface in 609 when he acquired the Pantheon and dedicated it to St. Mary and the Holy Martyrs (*HE*, II.4). On the contrast between the advice on idols given by Gregory in his *Epistola ad Mellitum* (written on 18th July, *HE*, I.30, in which the pope advocated transforming shrines into places for worship of the true God) and in his letter to Æthelberht of Kent (written on 22nd June, *HE*, I.32, in which the pope advocated destroying shrines) see F. Spiegel, 'The Tabernacula of Gregory the Great and the Conversion of Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XXXVI (2007), pp. 1 – 13, here p. 11. Robert Markus interpreted the quick succession of letters as a change in papal missionary strategy (*Gregory the Great*, pp. 35 – 36).

[88] Not necessarily kings: in the city of Lincoln, the reeve Blæcca sponsored the building of the church (*HE*, II.16).

[89] *HE*, I.33; II.4; II.14.

conversion of Alban, dated to the turn of the third century. Here Bede clearly stated that the only activity in which Alban's clerical fugitive was engaged, was saying his prayers. Going into hiding impaired the cleric in the performance of his full functions.[90] In converting Alban, then, the cleric did not systematically pray, preach, and baptise, conforming to the Bedan pattern of conversion outlined above. Instead, Alban saw the grace of God at work in the man, desired that grace and 'learned to imitate his guest's faith and devotion' before he was instructed in the articles of faith.[91] For Bede, the cleric in the story of Alban's conversion acted a model for ministers of his own day: that even when one's clerical function was impaired, through persecution and trial, one could still convert others by behaving in a godly manner. Priests were therefore the ministers of conversion not only through the exercise of their allotted functions – those of prayer, preaching and baptism – but by their good and Christian behaviour.

Consequently, Bede tell us that when Augustine and his companions arrived in Kent, and

> entered the dwelling-place allotted to them, they began to imitate the way of life of the apostles and of the primitive church. They were constantly engaged in prayers, in vigils and fasts; they preached the word of life to as many as they could; they despised all worldly things as foreign to them;

[90] *HE*, I.7.
[91] *HE*, I.7 [p. 29].

> they accepted only the necessaries of life from those whom they taught; in all things they practised what they preached.[92]

By living this way of life, the people to whom these priests ministered were drawn to conversion. We see the effect of this elsewhere in Bede's *Historia*: Augustine's successor Laurence continued to build up the church 'by frequent words of holy exhortation and by continually setting a pattern of good works'.[93] Columba turned people 'to the faith of Christ by his words and example and so received the island of Iona'.[94] Aidan too

> taught the clergy many lessons about the conduct of their lives but above all he left them a most salutary example of abstinence and self-control; and the best recommendation of his teaching to all was that he taught them no other way of life than that which he himself practised among his fellows.[95]

Priests were called to a Christ-like existence, and Bede believed this successfully attracted people to the faith. The functions which the priest exercised in regard to mission and conversion – prayer, preaching and baptism – can only be understood in light of this, for if the priest did not live a Christ-like existence, he could not substantiate his claims as regards the Christian religion. The Whitby *Vita* made the effect of any discrepancy

[92] *HE*, I.26 [p. 77].
[93] *HE*, II.4 [p. 145].
[94] *HE*, III.4 [p. 223].
[95] *HE*, III.5 [p. 227].

between practice and preaching explicit: 'Those who depart from their duty of keeping those precepts and do not practise what they preach, fail to taste the stream of divine life or to draw them into the pulsing flow of the veins beneath the flesh'.[96] Bede too made the link between the inward condition and outward function clear in his hagiography of St. Cuthbert. He wrote:

> Now the venerable man of God, Cuthbert, adorned the rank of bishop which he had received, by his virtuous works, in accordance with the apostolic precepts and examples. For he guarded the people who had been committed to his charge with his constant prayers, and called them to heavenly things by his most wholesome admonitions and – a thing which is a great help to teachers – he taught what ought to be done, after first showing them by his own example.[97]

Priestly Function and Behaviour in the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons

Priests worked to ensure the conversion of the English people from idolatrous ways to faith in Christ. Yet prayer, preaching, and baptism bore little weight with the Anglo-Saxons if those functions were not substantiated by the godly behaviour expected of their practitioners. This understanding of the complementarity between function and behaviour undoubtedly permeated the thought of Bede.[98] As we have seen, this is evident in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* from Bede's use of the cleric who converted Alban, whose

[96] *AVSG*, IV [p. 81].
[97] *BVSC*, XXXVI [pp. 241 – 243].
[98] *HE*, *Praef*. See below, pp. 173 – 176.

example he held up for his contemporaries. We see the results of this in the account of St. Ecgberht, a priest living in exile in Ireland, who 'planned to bring blessing to many peoples by undertaking the apostolic task of carrying the word of God, through the preaching of the gospel to some of those nations who had not yet heard it'.[99] In Gregorian fashion, he did not accomplish this mission himself, but chose others to carry out the task. Yet the men he chose were 'the most vigorous of his companions and those who were outstanding both by their lives and their learning and so most suitable for preaching the Word'.[100] Ecgberht knew that for the mission to the peoples of Germany to succeed, in the same way that the mission to the English had succeeded, he had to employ men whose zeal for the faith was matched by their holiness of life. Following Gregory, they had to devote themselves 'entirely to winning souls'.[101] Like Augustine and his companions in the first wave of missionaries sent from Rome, they had to be 'prepared to endure adversities, even to the point of dying for the truths they proclaimed'.[102] This was to be the mark of the Anglo-Saxon priest: a willingness to abandon oneself to Christ.

[99] *HE*, V.9 [p. 477].
[100] *HE*, V.9 [p. 477].
[101] *HE*, II.1 [p. 129].
[102] *HE*, I.26 [p. 75].

Conclusion

Two historiographical trends have eclipsed the priest from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history: firstly, the dominance of the minster model in recent studies of the Anglo-Saxon church has focused the attention of historians on the place of pastoral care, the *monasterium*, rather than on its practitioners, the monks and priests who inhabited these and other religious centres scattered through the landscape. Secondly, the narrative of the origin of the English church presented by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* has too readily been interpreted as a predominantly-monastic history. Indeed, reading Bede's *Historia* gives such an impression: Bede himself was keener to point out the role of monastics in the development of the English church than the role of clergy (perhaps because of the closer associations of *monachi* to the ascetic life). Yet recourse to those letters of Gregory's not found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* show that priests were a necessary part of the Gregorian plan to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons. This thesis seeks to examine those practitioners of pastoral care who have evaded the eyes of historians writing in the stream of these two dominant historiographical trends.

Acknowledging the effect of these historiographical trends, we are able to make closer examination of the wording of Bede's *Historia*. By paying attention to Bede's language, we see that priests were not necessarily few in number, nor without work in the early stages of the church in Anglo-Saxon

England. Instead, Bede presents to us priestly figures who engaged in both sacramental and non-sacramental aspects of pastoral care even from the beginning of the conversion period, when, according to Bede, they would pray, preach, baptise and eventually staff new or re-claimed churches for the conversion of the people and the propagation of the faith. This pastoral care took both sacramental and non-sacramental forms. As noted above, non-sacramental aspects of pastoral care have been studied as part of recent efforts to uncover the role of the monastery in the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon church. What is lacking in the historiography is focused study on the sacramental aspects of pastoral care, particularly the celebration of the mass.[103]

Bede's portrayal of priests in the early Anglo-Saxon church demonstrates the importance he attached to the conversion of souls from pagan idolatry to faith in Jesus Christ, which formed part of his context for writing in the 730s. Although preferring to focus on the monastic aspects of church life, Bede, like Gregory before him, knew the necessity of priests in the ecclesial landscape. In writing his *Historia*, Bede demonstrated the importance of the priestly role for the growth of the church, and showed how successful priestly ministry required a combination of right function and godly behaviour. Bede advocated this successful formula to a church and

[103] See below, pp. 86 – 117.

particularly a diocese which, he believed, had lost its moral integrity and whose ministers were harming God's mission to the people. Recounting the acts of priests and other ministers in the early stages of the church in Anglo-Saxon England, he showed how the Anglo-Saxons had been converted kingdom by kingdom and how eventually this had made them into an English people.[104] In both Gregory and Bede, priests must substantiate their faith with virtuous living.

Those aspects of pastoral care open to monastics have received much attention in recent studies into the church in early Anglo-Saxon England. Consequently, the sacerdotal aspects of pastoral care, which Gregory believed to be so essential in the care of the people, and which are evident, though hidden in Bede's *Historia*, have been neglected in modern historical study. This investigation into the priesthood in Anglo-Saxon England, while not neglecting those non-sacramental aspects of pastoral care, will redress this current imbalance.

[104] S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series (1996), pp. 25 – 49.

Chapter 2

The Life and Work of the Priest in Anglo-Saxon England Before the Council of *Clofesho*

Bede believed that the redemptive mission of Christ, which had borne fruit in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms from paganism to Christianity, was continued in the life and work of the church in the pastoral care of the people.[1] Priests occupied an important role in providing this care, which was both sacramental and non-sacramental. This chapter suggests how the role of the priest developed from the initial conversion period to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747; a period which witnessed the rise of the power of the *monasterium* in Anglo-Saxon society.

The first section of this chapter integrates the aforementioned historiographical debate over the place of pastoral care, whilst not confusing place with the function and capabilities of the ministers who lived and worked in and from those.[2] It surveys the evidence for priests both within and without communities, and attests to the variety of religious centres in post-missionary Anglo-Saxon England. Whilst recognising the increasing dominance of the *monasterium* as a place in which clergy dwelt, it proposes a

[1] M. T. A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: his Spiritual Teachings*, Catholic University of America Studies in Medieval History, IX (Washington, DC, 1946), p. 140.
[2] See above, Chapter 1.

particular link between priests and *ecclesiae*, whether within the monastic complex or separate from it. The chapter then moves on to assess the evidence for priests as preachers and teachers in pre-*Clofesho* Anglo-Saxon England; a role shared in the Bedan literature with the non-ordained.

Distinctive to the priestly role, however, was the function of the priest as provider of the sacraments. This is a role we have already witnessed in the missionary phase of the Church in England, where priests were sent to accompany Gregory's monks because of their ability to baptise.[3] The priest's function as provider of the sacraments in post-missionary Anglo-Saxon England dominates this chapter. No modern scholar has previously attempted to assess all of the sacraments and this aspect of the priestly role systematically and in one place, drawing from a wide variety of contemporary sources, particularly Bede and the prescriptive literature. Whilst remaining cautious about the conclusions which can be drawn, particularly given the uncertainties concerning the rites which were used, I nonetheless collate the evidence that is available to suggest how the church provided these aspects of pastoral care, up to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747.[4] The chapter concludes with an assessment of the role of the priest in the care of the sick and the dying, and suggests that priests may not have been as pro-

[3] See above, pp. 7 – 8.
[4] On the uncertainties of the rites, see above, p. 35, n. 85.

active in pastoral visiting as either Bede or the secondary literature seem to impress upon the reader.

Where Did Priests Live and Work?

In his *Vita Sancti Bonifatii*, Willibald described the origin of Boniface's calling in an early encounter with a group of travelling priests or clerks:

> When priests or clerks (*presbiteri sive clerici*), travelling abroad, as is the custom in those parts, to preach to the people, came to the town and the house where his father dwelt the child would converse with them on spiritual matters and, as far as the capacity of his tender years permitted, would ask them to advise him on the best means of overcoming the frailties of his nature.[5]

Although this passage is written from the perspective of the late eighth century, it establishes the main question which must be considered if we are to locate priests in the early period of the church in Anglo-Saxon England.

As noted above, focus on the place of pastoral care has not only dominated but distorted the historiography of the early Anglo-Saxon church for too long.[6] But it is nonetheless important to consider the question of the where priests lived and worked. The existing literature has unfortunately

[5] *WVSB*, I [p. 27].
[6] See above, Chapter 1.

confused the *place* of pastoral care with its *exercise*. This has led to a further confusion of *place* with clerical and monastic *functions*, and the question of where pastoral care was exercised must now be divorced from the question of what monks and priests did in the period if the debate is to continue. To this end, I shall collect references in the extant contemporary texts to words describing the places in which priests lived and from which they worked.[7] Unlike the current literature surrounding the minster debate, however, I shall not assume from this work conclusions about the control of pastoral care which have been made by its proponents.

Monasteria, Ecclesiae *and Other Religious Centres*

It is widely acknowledged that there were some functioning churches and other religious buildings in Anglo-Saxon England before the Gregorian mission, although evidence suggests that many of these, particularly in the absence of British priests, had fallen into disrepair. Such was the case at Canterbury, where we read of 'a church (*ecclesia*) built in ancient times in honour of St. Martin'.[8] Bede's claim that the church was built while the Romans were still in Britain, is supported by archaeological evidence.[9] It was

[7] This methodology proved profitable when employed by James Campbell in his article, 'Bede's Words for Places', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 99 – 121.
[8] *HE*, I.26 [p. 76].
[9] *HE*, I.26, *cf*. H. M. and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1965), i, pp. 143 – 145.

given by Æthelberht, the then-pagan king of Kent, to his Frankish wife Bertha, whose Christian faith he promised to allow her to practise unhindered upon their marriage.[10] Bede claimed that when the Gregorian party arrived in 597, they were first given a 'dwelling-place' (*mansio*) in which to live, and the church of St. Martin's in which 'to chant the psalms, to pray, to say mass, to preach, and to baptise, until, when the king had been converted to the faith, they received greater liberty to preach everywhere and to build or restore churches'.[11] From this passage, we see that the foundation or take-over of existing religious buildings was considered important for the success of the mission to the English people, a fact expanded in Gregory's separate communications to Mellitus and Æthelberht concerning the use of pagan shrines in relation to Christian worship.[12]

As the Gregorian mission developed, and resources were bequeathed from newly-converted monarchs, other religious centres were founded in Anglo-Saxon England, including *ecclesiae*, *monasteria*, *basilicae*, and *oratoria*.[13]

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[10] *HE*, I.25.

[11] '*ecclesias fabricandi uel restaurandi*' (*HE*, I.26 [p. 77]). For more information on the development of the ecclesiastical landscape of Canterbury, see Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*.

[12] In *HE*, I.30, Bede recorded the advice of Gregory to Abbot Mellitus of Canterbury that pagan shrines 'should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them' [p. 107]. He recommended the purification of such shrines by the use of holy water, the building of altars, and the placing in them of relics. In a separate communication to King Æthelberht, Gregory advocated the destroying of these shrines (I.32). *Cf.* R. A. Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a Papal Missionary Strategy', in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith. Papers Read at the 7th Summer Meeting and the 8th Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. G. J. Cuming, Studies in Church History, VI (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 29 – 38.

[13] Bede's narration of the resurrection of Dryhthelm in *HE*, V.12, assumes the presence of a village oratory (*ad villulae oratorium*).

Monasteria have come to dominate the historiography through the minster debate, yet despite the best efforts of the proponents of the minster model, confusion still exists as to the relationship of *monasteria* to *ecclesiae* and these other places. This is evident in the articles cited above by John Blair, and Eric Cambridge and David Rollason.[14] To clarify terms it is useful to turn to Sarah Foot's definition of a *monasterium* as 'a congregation of people living together, apart from the world under religious vows'.[15] This can include active and/or contemplative religious, of whom some may have taken holy orders. The term *ecclesia* has been similarly misunderstood. It's 'broad semantic range' was considered by Catherine Cubitt, who claimed that 'it can mean the community of the faithful, as in the universal church or the church of the English people… a bishopric, the church of Lindisfarne, York, or Canterbury, for example… [or a] church in the sense of a physical building'.[16] Without denying any of these interpretations, which are all reasonable, when considered in the context of a *monasterium*, it is likely that the dominant definition employed by the sources is one of a physical building, as an individual *ecclesia* formed part of the wider complex of a *monasterium*.[17] This is

[14] Blair, 'Debate'; Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate'.
[15] Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 5, *cf.* her 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters'. In an article in the same volume, Catherine Cubitt asked whether the staff of a church, which might have included a priest, deacon and a couple of acolytes, could be described as a *monasterium* ('Pastoral Care'), a suggestion which John Blair answered in his 'Debate' with Cambridge and Rollason, p. 208.
[16] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 278.
[17] We might take Coldingham as just one example, where the anonymous author of the life of Cuthbert clearly envisaged the church to be part of a wider monastic complex, see *AVSC*, II.3. Sarah Foot's 2012 Jarrow Lecture, *Bede's Church*, proves illuminating here: in the lecture, she

suggested by the ruling in Theodore's *Penitential* that if a monastery be closed, a priest must be left in charge of the pre-existing church.[18] Indeed, most if not all *monasteria* included an *ecclesia*, even though not all *ecclesiae* were based in *monasteria*.[19]

Both *ecclesiae* and *monasteria* were staffed by religious personnel, although in this early period the proportions and spread of this personnel between active and/or contemplative monks and those in clerical orders is impossible to determine. Religious personnel lived in *monasteria*, and worshipped and worked in *ecclesiae*, though these churches were often accompanied by other dwellings in which staff could live, such as the *mansio* at Canterbury.

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considered different uses of *ecclesia* by Bede, and concluded that 'Church for Bede was at heart a physical reality. Not a metaphor, an analogy, a mystical figure of the divine, or a moral trope from which lessons might be drawn; *ecclesia* was literally this building… This church, dedicated to St Paul, where Bede daily sang the office, was the institution that made him not just a devout monk and caring priest, but a notable historian and inspiring exegete. It represented for him the epitome of the universal church, now labouring here on earth, but aspiring ultimately to enjoy the everlasting rewards of the heavenly kingdom' (p. 29).

[18] *Penitential*, II.vi.7.

[19] Bede' description of John of Beverley's and Birinus' work suggests that the dedicating of churches by bishops was an ordinary activity in the period, *cf*. *HE*, V.4 – 5; III.7.

Thus priests operated both from *ecclesiae* and from *monasteria*. Importantly, it should not be inferred that the dedication of *ecclesiae* by bishops indicated either the building's ownership by a *monasterium* or a bishop, or that the pastoral care exercised in the building 'belonged' to one or other of these parties, but merely that the bishop was exercising a function reserved to his own order.[20] A similar approach should be taken to other religious centres, including *basilicae* and *oratoria*, which in the sources refer to buildings or parts of buildings and not institutions which exercised control over aspects of pastoral care.[21] In particular, the term *basilica* is frequently associated with places which housed bones and relics, as is made explicit in the record of Cuthbert's burial written by the anonymous author.[22] Bede similarly used the phrase in his account of the translation of Cuthbert's and Aidan's relics to Lindisfarne, a point Cubitt noted, that brings him in line with continental usages of the word.[23] Richard Morris has argued that the term *oratorium* is used by Bede to denote a baptismal church.[24] Yet an appreciation of other sources alerts us to the wider usage of the term to indicate a chapel, in which is likely to be found an altar.[25] These *oratoria* can be located in secular

[20] *Cf.* Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate', p. 89.
[21] *Cf.* Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate', p. 90.
[22] *AVSC*, IV.13. This *basilica* is also referred to as a *sepulchro* in the following chapter (IV.14 [p. 131]).
[23] *HE*, III.17; *BVSC*, XXXVII; Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 278.
[24] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 20, n. 35.
[25] *E.g. SVSW*, V.

mansiones, *ecclesiae* or *monasteria*, though there need not be a religious community attached.[26]

Although therefore the eighth-century use of *monasterium* appears imprecise, Bede appreciated a distinction between a monastic complex, which perhaps housed a mixed community of monks, clerics and laity, with varying proportions of each across locations, and an *ecclesia*, by which he seems specifically to have meant a church building, either within or without the walls of the cloister. *Ecclesiae* and *basilicae*, together with smaller chapels referred to as *oratoria*, were carefully designated by Bede, who we know was careful in his use of other words as well.[27] We should therefore assume the existence of distinct places where priests lived (amongst which we can number *monasteria* and *mansiones*) and worked (amongst which we can number *monasteria, ecclesiae*, *basilicae*, and *oratoria*), and note the particular although not exclusive connection between priests and places in which altars are located, this being the locus of their distinct ministry even in the early Anglo-Saxon period.[28] As Cubitt summarised: the number of religious institutions extant in early Anglo-Saxon England 'encompassed a variety of establishments from major bishoprics, basilican shrines and royal monasteries

[26] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 279.
[27] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 275, acknowledged Bede's careful distinction of ecclesiastical and monastic status.
[28] Note the connection between the priest and the altar enshrined in Wihtred's *Laws* of 695, XVIII [p. 28].

to village churches and rural oratories'.[29] This landscape is both rich and varied and points to the location of priests in religious centres across the early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Priests in Community

Most, but not necessarily all, priests in the early period of the church in Anglo-Saxon England were, at some point in their ministry, attached to a community, be it a *monasterium*, *ecclesia*, or other religious centre. In Bede's experience, these communities were able to contain both monks and clerics.[30] Whilst both continental and Irish monastic traditions gave precedents for the communal life of monks, the precedent for the communal life of the bishop with his clergy was set on the outset of the mission to England, as we can see through Gregory's response to Augustine's question in the *Libellus Responsionum*. When asked 'How should bishops live with their clergy?', Gregory answered that a bishop 'ought not to live apart from [his] clergy in the English Church… [instead, having] all things in common'.[31] This need not mean that communities of clergy were very large; in the *Vita Sancti Willibrordi* Bishop Ecgberht and the priest Wichberht forsook 'home, fatherland and

[29] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 281.
[30] *BVSC*, XVI.
[31] *HE*, I.27 [p. 81].

family and retired to Ireland', desiring to dwell together in solitude.[32] It does, however, indicate that some clergy in the period formed part of an episcopal household, as an episcopal retinue, as bishops travelled around.

Most clergy seem to have begun their religious life in a community. Various narratives in the lives of the saints suggest that individual adults (or the parents of children on their child's behalf) frequently chose a specific institution in which to make their first profession, not necessarily presenting themselves at the nearest monastic church.[33] Much research has been conducted into the monastic communities to which individuals may aspire, but the author of the *Vita Sancti Willibrordi* clearly believed that individuals could seek to join *ecclesiae* as well.[34] The process of joining a community is described in the case of Cuthbert: the future bishop was said to have visited the monastery's *ecclesia* before entering the *monasterium*-proper where he was received by the priestly prior, Boisil.[35] It was in communities such as Melrose that individuals not only adhered to a monastic rule, but after a period of discernment involving the whole community and in particular the recommendation of its leaders, were able to receive holy orders.[36] That this should happen as part of a community testified to the fraternal aspects of holy

[32] *AVSW* [p. 6] (written *c*. 796).
[33] *BVSC*, VI. Willibrord offers one example of an individual who was sent to a community by his parents (*AVSW* [p. 5]).
[34] *AVSW* [p. 3]: 'In this church the reverend father gathered together a rather small but devout company of those who wished to serve God'.
[35] *BVSC*, VI.
[36] *BVSC*, VI.

order which one entered when one assumed the clerical tonsure.[37] During and after this discernment process, the community would train the individual for the monastic and clerical roles to which he aspired; and in this light we read that the monk and priest Sigfrith, though priested, had 'as yet [learned] only the first rudiments of monastic life'.[38] Training in monastic and clerical matters was an on-going process. Importantly for this study, it was possible for a priest to take up the service of the altar (fulfilling his particular priestly role) without being entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish or *ecclesia*. This was envisaged by the anonymous author of the Whitby *Vita*, who wrote that Gregory ascended to the 'ministry of the sacred altar' (*sacri altaris ministerium*) before he was entrusted with the pastoral care of the people.[39]

The communities to which clergy and aspirant clergy were attached provided the location for various aspects of pastoral care, delegated from the bishop, to take place. Both the *monasterium* and the *ecclesia* received visitors, though the type of pastoral provision of each varied according to local facilities. *Monasteria* were therefore better equipped to welcome guests, providing them with warmth, food, and clean water in which they could wash.[40] Guesthouses were common on monastic sites, with sleeping

[37] Fraternal aspects of priesthood, perhaps enhanced by monastic ideals in which communities work together for a common good, were valued in early Anglo-Saxon England. *Cf*. the record of Cuthbert's tonsuring (*BVSC*, VI).
[38] *BVSC*, VI [p. 173].
[39] *AVSG*, II [p. 75].
[40] *AVSC*, II.2.

accommodation distinct from the sleeping accommodation for the members of the community.[41] In contrast, *ecclesiae* were more often used for the spiritual edification of the people, being the place of their instruction and direction in godly matters, and the place where the sacraments were celebrated.[42] *Monasteria* engaged in this spiritual provision as well, but following our understanding that *ecclesiae* were located within *monasteria*, there is no need to see an incompatibility in these positions, as it was in the *ecclesia* within the *monasterium* that certain aspects of pastoral care (predominantly the spiritual and sacramental) took place.[43] Again it is in this light that Theodore's *Penitential* might be read: Theodore ruled that if a *monasterium* should close, the community must continue to provide a priest in the *ecclesia* for the 'offices of the church'.[44] This said, although priests were frequently described as operating within a community or building, whether *monasteria*, *ecclesiae* or other chapels, those in community were not confined to the cloisters. Indeed, priestly mobility was essential in order for the priest to exercise his priestly functions to the laity beyond the cloister walls.

[41] *AVSC*, II.8; II.2; *BVSC*, VI.
[42] *E.g. AVSG*, XV.
[43] Sarah Foot has noted the importance of *monasteria* for the pastoral provision of the sacraments, particularly on Sundays and festivals, as well as often-needed social care at other times.
[44] *Penitential*, II.vi.7 [p. 204].

Priests in Episcopal Entourages

Bishops of the early Anglo-Saxon church had unmovable 'seats', consisting of an *ecclesia* and a dwelling, from which they presided over their diocese, yet they were also prominent travellers.[45] The primary purpose of the bishop's travelling, particularly around his own diocese, was to fulfil his obligations of pastoral care towards the residents of the diocese, particularly in regard to those episcopal functions which had not been delegated to priests.[46] Hence, for example, the bishop would travel to conduct the laying on of hands, which fulfilled the Christian rite of initiation begun by the priest in baptism.[47] However, the purpose of travelling was more varied than this as the example of Wilfrid suggests: Wilfrid was able to build a monastic empire by travelling across the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and even to the continent and to Rome, from where he perceived his authority derived.[48] Priests aided him in this mission.

Both within and without their own dioceses, bishops would travel with a party of clergy. When Wilfrid first appealed to Rome, he took with him his

[45] Bede's use of *sedes episcopales* is examined by Blair, 'Debate', p. 195, Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', in Blair and Sharpe, p. 219, and J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 139 – 140.
[46] So, for instance, Bishop Aidan would inhabit *cubicula* attached to *ecclesiae* for the purpose of his preaching missions (*HE*, III.17 [p. 263]).
[47] See Bede's complaints in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, § 7.
[48] *SVSW*, XXIX.

'companions and clergy' but left 'many thousands of his monks' behind.[49] This division of Wilfrid's followers into travelling clergy (accompanied by servants) and stationary monks might be said to indicate either Stephen's – or a particularly Wilfridian – attitude to the different vocations of clergy and monks, but it nonetheless also indicates the close relationship that priests had with their bishop, and the bishop's expectation that they would attend to him. To fulfil this function, priests within episcopal entourages would often stand by the bishop's side as he engaged with others. In the account of Cuthbert's vision of a man who fell out of a tree, Bede indicated that 'his [Cuthbert's] priest… was standing by and serving' him whilst he talked to the Abbess Aelfflaed.[50] Priests would also assist their bishops in pastoral visiting: in the anonymous *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, Cuthbert sought the advice of his priests to see who needed the bishop to visit.[51] Furthermore, when the bishop was travelling round, 'dispensing words of salvation in houses and villages of the countryside, and was also laying his hand on those who had been lately baptized… he came to the house of a certain gesith whose wife was lying very ill and apparently at the point of death'.[52] On learning of the wife's illness, Cuthbert blessed some holy water and 'gave it to a priest, bidding him

[49] *SVSW*, XXV [p. 51].
[50] Here the priest noticed Cuthbert's 'changed countenance' and prompted the Abbess to enquire as to the reasons (*BVSC*, XXXIV [p. 263]). In this chapter Bede departed from the anonymous life by introducing the character of the priest. This indicates Bede's understanding of the function of priests in a travelling episcopal party (*cf*. *AVSC*, X).
[51] *BVSC*, XXXIII.
[52] *BVSC*, XXIX [p. 253].

sprinkle it over the sick woman'.[53] Although the suitability of the water for healing is suggested by Cuthbert's saintly blessing, Bede reported that the act of sprinkling was delegated to the priest who attended his bishop and who thereby fulfilled both his bishop's request and the delegated pastoral duty. The sources indicate that priests therefore featured prominently in travelling episcopal parties in the early Anglo-Saxon period. They would attend to the bishop, fulfilling both their duties towards him as clergy under his authority, and the delegated duty of pastoral care towards the people.

Priests as Individual Travellers

In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede wrote that

> Whenever a cleric or monk (*clericus aliqui aut monachus*) went anywhere, he was gladly received by all as God's servant… If by chance a priest (*sacerdotum*) came to a village, the villagers crowded together, eager to hear from him the word of life; for the priests and the clerics (*sacerdotibus aut clericis*) visited the villages for no other reason than to preach, to baptize, and so to visit the sick, in brief to care for their souls (*quam praedicandi baptizandi infirmos uisitandi et, ut breuiter dicam, animas curandi causa fuit*).[54]

Whether this passage is 'idealised', as David Rollason would have it, or not, it indicates Bede's belief that clergy and monks travelled around individually to

[53] *BVSC*, XXIX [p. 253].
[54] *HE*, III.26 [p. 311].

exhort people, and that priests and clerics travelled to villages to preach, baptise, and visit the sick, exercising the pastoral care entrusted to them by the bishop.[55] Junior members of communities appear to be invited out by monastic and clerical superiors, as in the case of the Abbess Aebbe who sought Cuthbert's presence in the monastery of Coldingham.[56] They could also be sent out by their own superiors to conduct the sacraments or exercise other elements of pastoral care.[57] Bede indicated, however, that when a junior member ceased to be junior, he stopped requiring permission to travel. Instead, Bede made the point that on becoming a prior, Cuthbert increased the frequency of his journeys outside the monastery to correct sinners by the preaching of the truth, just as his predecessor Boisil had done.[58]

Priests who travelled for the purpose of pastoral care were based in *monasteria* and *ecclesiae*, which acted as bases for expeditions to remote and dangerous places.[59] In Bede's day, those with pastoral care often neglected

[55] D. Rollason, 'Monasteries and Society in Early Medieval Northumbria', in *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain,* ed. B. Thompson, Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium (Stamford, 1999), pp. 59 – 74. The above passage is quoted by Foot in her article on 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 212, in support of her claim that it was 'common for priests, monks and other clerics to leave their parent-houses and travel around their locality, teaching the laity and bringing the sacraments of baptism and communion to them'. The language of the text, however, suggests that while both clerics and monks wandered, blessed and perhaps preached in the church or monastery, it was priests alone that gathered crowds, and priests and other clerics who visited villages to preach, to visit the sick, and to conduct the sacraments. This reading of the text is supported by Blair ('Debate', p. 209).
[56] *AVSC*, II.3.
[57] *AVSC*, II.5.
[58] *BVSC*, IX.
[59] *AVSC*, II.6.

these places because of their location and poverty.[60] Bede indicated that a round journey from the monastery to somewhere so remote could take up to a month to complete.[61] The purpose of these trips by individual clergy focused on preaching, baptism and the saying of the mass, practices which were important from the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms up until Bede's day (although as *ecclesiae* were built in more remote places, the making of long and hard journeys became less necessary).[62] Clerics would also heal, bless and conduct the last rites for people, and were not averse to travelling from the security of the cloister to the outside world even in times of plague.[63]

Travelling beyond the *ecclesia* or *monasterium* took priests to people's homes, to the remotest parts of the countryside, and to places where there were no churches.[64] Bede explained that, whilst sacraments usually took place in churches, they could be celebrated elsewhere if no church could be found.[65] This was particularly so in the conversion period of Anglo-Saxon England, beyond which efforts were made to restrict the celebration of the sacraments to *ecclesiae*. Hence Theodore's *Penitential* (*c*. 690) permitted the celebration of confirmation in a field if necessary, and allowed a priest to celebrate the mass

[60] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 7, *cf. BVSC*, IX.
[61] *BVSC*, IX.
[62] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5. In his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, Bede claimed that 'it was the custom *at that time* amongst the English people, when a clerk or priest came to a village, for all to gather together at his command to hear the word' (IX [p. 187]). This passage pre-supposes that there was no *ecclesia* in which the priest could preach.
[63] *AVSC*, IV.3; IV.6, 7.
[64] *BVSC*, XIV; XXIX; XXXII.
[65] *HE*, II.14 (Paulinus baptises in the river Glen); BVSC, XXXII (Cuthbert confirms in the countryside).

in a field if measures were taken to protect the oblation from the elements.[66] No mention is made in this latter law about the practice of confirmation. This may indicate either that confirmation outside an *ecclesia* was still permitted (but the sacredness of the mass demanded that it be restricted to the sanctuary of an *ecclesia*), or that the celebration of confirmation in a field had fallen out of practice (but that the celebration of the mass outside an *ecclesia* continued and needed to be suppressed).

If the anonymous author of the *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* is to be believed, the efficacy of pastoral visits was not always guaranteed. Instead, at one point, the author referred to an occasion where the priest Tydi instructed a man to bring his demoniac son to the island of Lindisfarne because the prayers he made on a recent pastoral visit to the son had not been effective.[67] The failure of the priest in the first account demonstrates that efforts of healing (through exorcism or otherwise) made on pastoral visits would not necessarily produce the desired consequences. This did not, however, dissuade individuals from requesting that priests visit them.[68]

[66] *Penitential*, II.ii.1, 2.
[67] *AVSC*, IV.15.
[68] *AVSC*, II.8.

Bede's *Historia* summarised the pastoral duties of priests as caring for the souls of the people.[69] Bishops increasingly ordained more individuals as priests to cope with the demands that were placed on them: the biographer of Wilfrid tells us that 'in every part he [Wilfrid] ordained numbers of priests and deacons (*presbiteros et diacones*) to help him and thus he steered the ship of the Church carefully amid the tossing billows of the world'.[70] Yet by the 730s, Bede was still complaining that not enough priests had been ordained, and that the people were still lacking pastoral care because of this.

Wandering Clerics[71]

Unless under monastic obedience, trained priests did not have to remain within the walls of their cloisters. The anonymous account of Cuthbert's life indicated that he drew one story from the priest Plecgils, who related a story from the time 'when he was in the monastery'.[72] By the time of writing, Plecgils was no longer at Melrose, though we do not learn whether he joined another *monasterium* or *ecclesia*, or whether he lived independently elsewhere. That he is still named as a priest, and presented in a positive light, suggests that he is practising his orders but elsewhere. The ability of priests to live

[69] *HE*, III.26.
[70] *SVSW*, XXI [p. 45].
[71] Foot assesses the evidence for wandering clerics in relation to monastic *stabilitas* in her *Monastic Life* (pp. 40, 170 – 171, 303).
[72] *AVSC*, II.3 [p. 79].

independently from the monastery is indicated by the author of the *Vita Sancti Gregorii*, who wrote that the priest Trimma, who had previously 'exercised the office of a priest in a monastery of the South English' and who had found the bones of Edwin and taken them back to Whitby, 'afterwards lived for a time by the holy site of the first burial'.[73] As the author related that 'if he could have done so… [the priest] would have liked to build a monastery there', we must understand that he believed the priest to be living outside a monastic setting, perhaps in a dwelling attached to an *ecclesia* or independently elsewhere.[74]

Whilst some contemporary literature shows that clerics who wandered were doing so for the sake of their pastoral duties, other sources indicate that their independence often caused problems for their monastic and ecclesiastical superiors.[75] The Council of Hertford (672/3), first dealt with this problem in its fourth and fifth canons, which restricted the movements of monks and clergy.[76] Wihtred's *Laws*, published perhaps in the decade following Hertford, similarly ruled that 'If a tonsured man, [who is] not under ecclesiastical discipline, wanders about looking for hospitality, once [only] shall it be granted to him, and unless he has permission, he shall not be

[73] *AVSG*, XVIII [p. 103]; XIX [p. 105].
[74] *AVSG*, XIX [p. 105].
[75] *WVSB*, I.
[76] *HE*, IV.5.

entertained further'.[77] Literature contemporary with the episcopate of Ecgberht indicates that this problem became prominent in Northumbria in the 730s. In answer to the question of 'whether a priest or deacon, going away without consent of his prior may minister in another diocese', Ecgberht determined that 'we look on a deserter of his own church as forbidden to minister in another; and that he who does so minister, should be removed from his office till he be reconciled to his own church'.[78] If a junior cleric wished to travel therefore, he should instead have ascertained permission in the form of letters from his prior, which he should present to the one who received him, or face punishment.[79]

Solitary Priests

Focus on the institutions of the *monasterium* and the *ecclesia* in the minster debate has tended to treat priests solely as members of communities. As John Blair commented, 'While it cannot be proved that there were no independently-functioning small churches in pre-Viking England, both the lack of references (in sharp contrast to Francia) and the impression that all priests lived in communities… point in that direction'.[80] Further on in his article, Blair explained that 'sparser but still quite explicit references show

[77] Wihtred, *Laws*, VII [p. 27].
[78] *Dialogi*, VI [pp. 164 – 165].
[79] *Dialogi*, VI.
[80] Blair, 'Debate', p. 196.

that priests and clerks were envisaged as living in minsters', and quoted Cubitt's words, that 'there is little evidence for the development of a system of pastoral care independent of religious communities. Seventh- and eighth-century sources seem to presuppose that all those committed to the religious life (priests, monks, clergy and nuns, though not necessarily hermits) were members of some sort of religious community, and evidence for village churches with single priests is lacking'.[81] One question which arises from these statements concerns the issue of pastoral care: because the authors here attached pastoral care to the institution of the *monasterium* (or even the *ecclesia*), rather than to the episcopal, presbyteral or monastic states, they neglected the idea that hermits can exercise pastoral care. Conversely, the sources explain that even during his solitary retreat to the island of Farne, Cuthbert's hagiographer records that the saint was visited by some of his brethren, to whom he preached, a clear demonstration of pastoral care even if to his own community.[82] We must therefore add to our picture of the ecclesiastical landscape, which included priests in communities, priests in episcopal entourages, priests as individual travellers, and wandering clerics, individual solitary priests who were able to exercise some aspects of pastoral

[81] Blair, 'Debate', p. 204; Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 116.
[82] *AVSC*, III.3.

care despite focusing their attention at particular times on the contemplative rather than the active life.[83]

The Priest as Preacher and Teacher

In the opening to *De Tabernaculo*, Bede drew attention to the Matthean Jesus' commission to his apostles to 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you'.[84] Pope St. Gregory the Great had sent preachers to the Anglo-Saxons in 597, fulfilling Christ's commission to preach everywhere, like the apostles, even to the four corners of the world.[85] These were, according to Bede, people who announced the good news of the salvation of Christ, like the cock that crows to meet the dawn.[86] All the missionaries in the *Historia* are, in fact, described as 'preachers', including Augustine and his companions, Mellitus, Paulinus, Felix, Columba, Aidan,

[83] Foot noted that 'all Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, including the members of episcopal *familiae*, appear to have spent some part of their time in personal contemplative prayer and in communal worship' ('Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 224).
[84] *De Tab*., I.1, lines 31 – 33 [p. 2], quoting Matthew XXVIII.20.
[85] *HE*, I.23; *In Tobiam*, VIII.22, lines 55 – 59 [XXIII, p. 54]: 'Holy teachers and martyrs… instruct the flock of Christ throughout the whole world which is divided up into four quarters', *cf. De Tab*., I.1., lines 31 – 33.
[86] *In Tobiam*, VIII.11, lines 28 – 30 [XXII, p. 53], likened the voice of preachers to the cock-crow as it sings 'of the true dawn and day of faith that was to come after the darkness of error'.

Birinus, Fursa, Cedd and Wilfrid; their first task, having been sent, was always to preach.[87]

Bede articulated the priority of preaching in the conversion process in his *Expositio in Canticum Habacuc*, when he wrote, that 'it is first necessary that the word of the teacher be heard, and that the light of truth be thus firmly fixed in the heart of the hearer'.[88] This firm fixing of light in the 'heart of the hearer' may allude to the reception of the sacraments, as Bede's language in his commentary *In Tobiam* suggested: 'The teacher first preaches salvation', Bede wrote, 'then the Lord, the enlightener, cleanses hearts', evoking ideas of the sacramental washing and cleansing from sin associated with Christian initiation. [89] Confirmation may have also followed preaching in some circumstances.[90]

From the beginning of the conversion period in Anglo-Saxon England, preaching therefore functioned as part of the means by which new believers were incorporated into the church. Bede elucidated this principle when he wrote that 'holy preachers bring new peoples together into the unity of the Church of Christ with his assistance'.[91] In his *De Templo*, he compared

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[87] *HE*, I.23; II.3; II.9; II.16; III.4; III.5; III.7; III.19; III.21; IV.13. Bede, *In Ezram,* noted the etymology of the verb *evangelizare* (I, lines 675 – 681), and Lawrence T. Martin provides a useful summary of Bede's use of *praedicare* in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in 'Bede and Preaching', in *The Cambridge Companion*, ed. DeGregorio, pp. 156 – 169, here p. 158 – 159.
[88] *In Cant. Hab.*, III.5, lines 236 – 238 [XII, p. 74].
[89] *In Tobiam*, XI.9, lines 8 – 9 [XXX, p. 57].
[90] *BVSC*, XXXII.
[91] *In Tobiam*, IX.6, lines 27 – 29 [XXVI, p. 55].

preachers to the building's masons, who rendered wood just as preachers 'render' individuals to make them 'fit to join the body of the faithful'.[92] It was with this logic that Bede wrote in his *Historia* that the English nation had been converted by Gregory's efforts 'from the power of Satan to the faith of Christ'.[93]

Preaching and Teaching

Anglo-Saxon authors writing in the seventh and early-eighth centuries understood 'preaching' and 'teaching' to be more or less the same activity; on many occasions, Bede used the terms interchangeably. Both activities shared the same overall aim, which was the imparting of the knowledge of revealed doctrine from the teacher or preacher who knew (and hopefully understood) it, to his student or listener, who did not. As T. R. Eckenrode suggested, 'This lack of rhetorical alignment does not come about because he [Bede] confused the two, but because he integrated them. Teaching and preaching were slightly different means designed to achieve the same end'.[94]

Bede's designation of the title 'preacher' or 'teacher' to an individual should not be confused with his designation of individuals as clerics,

[92] *De Temp.,* I, lines 217 – 218 [I.iii.3, p. 11].
[93] *HE*, II.1 [p. 123].
[94] T. R. Eckenrode, 'The Venerable Bede as Educator', *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, VI (1977), pp. 159 – 168, here p. 168, *cf.* Foot, *Monastic Life,* p. 291.

monastics or laity. Indeed Bede wrote that preaching was not a task be carried out solely by priests:

> Not everyone is intended to preach the sacraments of faith in the midst of the people, but only those who have proved by the purity of their faith and the performance of good works that they belong among the sons of the High Priest, namely, our Lord and Saviour. But even though someone may seem to be distinguished by the name or the status of a priest, if he either strays from the purity of the faith by perverse teaching or defiles the integrity of the acknowledged and preserved faith with the depravity of vile deeds, such a one will surely hear from the Lord, '*Why do you declare my judgements, and take my covenant in your mouth, when you hate discipline?*'[95]

In writing this, Bede suggested that only those who had led upstanding lives should be counted amongst those worthy to preach and instruct the faithful. In his commentary *In Tobiam* he commented that 'the Lord gathered to the faith from Judea… as many as would serve as an example of [virtuous] living or for the ministry of preaching until he should lay the foundations of the Church among the Gentiles too'.[96] One reading of Bede would suggest that Bede's 'preachers' are therefore those who have attained perfection in this way, whether ordained, monk, or lay.[97] These

[95] *De Tab*., III, lines 73 – 82 [I, p. 108].
[96] *In Tobiam*, VI.6, lines 89 – 92 [XVI, p. 50].
[97] See the comment from the translator of Bede's *In Ezram*, p. 17, n. 1.

people might be deacons as well as priests, members of the laity, monks, or even women.[98]

Nonetheless, that Bede mentions priests in the above quotation suggests two things; most fundamentally, that those ordained as priests did preach and teach in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Moreover, if we interpret Bede's words as a corrective, then they may reflect a more widely held consensus of either belief or practice that preaching and teaching were considered as a specific part of the priest's role or function. This would then suggest a link between the task of preaching and teaching and the office of the priesthood.

Some authors, such as Alan Thacker, have claimed that Bede distinguished 'priests' from 'teachers and preachers'.[99] Whilst certain distinctions no doubt existed, the evidence we have presented above recognises a cross-over between the tasks proper to each vocation. Furthermore, when one reads Bede, there is a much closer association

[98] *HE*, II.2 (preaching by non-Roman clergy); II.20 (deacons); II.15 (King Edwin to Eorpwald); III.3 (monks). In his commentary *In Ezram*, Bede wrote that 'It is proper also that, along with the male singers, female singers should be included on account of their female sex, in which there are many people found who not only by the way they live but also by preaching enkindle the hearts of their neighbours to the praise of their Creator, as though with the sweetness of a holy voice, assist the labour of those who build the Lord's temple' (I, lines 650 – 655 [p. 32]). Alan Thacker first noted the implications of this for Bede's understanding of those who preached in 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 131. The idea accompanying the relevant note *In Ezram* stretches this Bedan scheme too far, however, when it claims that terms such as 'priest' comprise 'all the faithful who live and teach well' (*In Ezram*, p. 32, n. 2).

[99] In claiming that 'there was a distinction between *sacerdotes*, *episcopi*, and *presbyteri*, who were ordained, and *doctors* and *praedicatores*, who were instituted', Thacker misses the obvious cross-over between the task of preaching and the priestly role (Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 131).

between priests and teaching or preaching than there is between both monks and members of laity who carry out the same task. Thus in *De Tabernaculo*, Bede described preaching as a particular function of the presbyterate: 'Just as the number of the twelve apostles marked the beginning of the episcopal rank, it is apparent that the seventy-two disciples, who were also sent out by the Lord to preach the word, signify in their selection the lesser rank of priesthood which is now called the presbyterate'.[100] Bede illustrated this principle when he wrote in his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* that 'it was the custom at that time amongst the English people' for a clerk or priest to come to a village to preach.[101] This does not mean that the task of preaching was limited to priests, as Eckenrode envisaged when he described Bede's preachers as 'priest-preachers', but it does mean priests shared in the task of preaching.[102]

For Bede, bishops were the sources of doctrine. Indeed, it was the bishop's ultimate responsibility to preach the Good News in his *parochia.* Writing to Bishop Ecgberht of York, Bede stated:

> For to this office you were chosen by the Lord and to this you were consecrated, that you might preach the word with great virtue… And because the distances between the places belonging under the rule of your diocese are too great for you alone to be able to traverse them all and preach the word of God in the several hamlets and homesteads even in the full course of a whole year, it is very necessary that you appoint several

[100] *De Tab*., III, lines 742 – 746 [p. 128 – 129].
[101] *BVSC*, IX [p. 187].
[102] T. R. Eckenrode, 'The Venerable Bede and the Pastoral Affirmation of the Christian Message in Anglo-Saxon England', *Downside Review*, CCCXXXVII (1981), pp. 258 – 278.

> assistants for yourself in the sacred work, by ordaining priests and instituting teachers, who may devote themselves to preaching the word of God in the various villages and to celebrating the heavenly mysteries, and especially to performing the rites of holy baptism, wherever opportunity arises.[103]

Those who were ordained or instituted into the role of preacher therefore participated in the bishop's task of sharing the faith by preaching and teaching the people and converting them to Jesus Christ.

Context

Initially, priests preached and taught in those places provided for worship, their *ecclesiae*, and people would flock from the surrounding areas.[104] In narrating the mission to the English of Germanus and Lupus, however, Bede produced an example of preaching 'in the streets (*trivia*, more accurately translated as 'crossroads') and in the fields (*rura*)', as occurred at large stone crosses such as the Ruthwell Cross, when the church extended its mission beyond the safe confines of buildings set aside for ecclesiastical purposes.[105] Bede argued that during Cuthbert's time, 'it was the custom… amongst the English people' for a 'clerk or priest' to come to a village, and for people to

[103] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5 [p. 854].
[104] *HE*, I.26.
[105] *HE*, I.18 [p. 57]. The importance of stone crosses as places of both divine encounter and clerical association up to the eighth century is attested in *HSW* [pp. 154 – 155].

gather together to listen to what was being said.[106] This might suggest that by Bede's time, itinerant preachers were less common, although still important for reaching the uncivilized mountainous regions for which Cuthbert himself was praised for attending.[107] This extensive task that Bede's preachers carried out could take priests away from their *monasteria* and *ecclesiae* for weeks, or perhaps even months, at a time.[108]

Preaching and teaching were often given within a liturgical setting, and we have already seen evidence concerning the link between this and baptism and confirmation.[109] Although the *Ordines Romani* may not have influenced practice in Anglo-Saxon England directly, it is notable that they required a homily to be preached in the context of the mass, after the proclamation of the Gospel by the deacon. An indication in one *Ordo Romanus* that readings at mass from the Fathers should follow the liturgical calendar makes it possible that Bede preached his homilies in this or an otherwise a similar setting.[110] Benedicta Ward suggested that Bede gave his homilies 'in his own monastery and in the context of the liturgy, most probably after the reading of the Gospel either at the Eucharist or at the preceding vigil'.[111] There

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[106] *BVSC*, IX [p. 187].
[107] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5.
[108] *BVSC*, IX.
[109] See above, pp. 30 – 36, 73.
[110] *Hom.*; a useful article on the history of Anglo-Saxon homiliaries is given by Mary Clayton, 'Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. P. Szarmach (London, 2000), pp. 151 – 198. A summary of the content of the *Homilies* is given by Benedicta Ward in her Preface to the English translation, i, iii – ix, here vi.
[111] Ward, 'Preface', in *Hom.*, i, v.

are, however, other possibilities, as the lack of references to the Eucharist itself may indicate.[112]

Although preaching was neither considered a sacrament nor considered to have sacramental significance, it was understood as a vital activity outside the confines of the early Anglo-Saxon *ecclesia* and *monasterium*.[113] A lack of direct references to the Fathers in Bede's homilies (in contrast with his exegetical works) might itself 'point to an original setting which was non-liturgical or para-liturgical'.[114] Such homilies may have focused less on the liturgical aspects of the Christian life, and more on the fundamentals of faith, although the preacher himself would have been aware of the liturgical season in which the church was at any given time. These homilies would have been preached both within and without the walls of the *ecclesia* and *monasterium*, to laity who gathered around the preacher or who visited the building. In addition, collections of homilies like those provided by Bede may have been written down for private or public reading, particularly for the brethren of a *monasterium* to whom most sermons within its walls were directed.[115]

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[112] L. T. Martin, 'Introduction', in *Hom.*, i, xi.
[113] *Contra* Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 130.
[114] Martin, 'Bede and Preaching', p. 163. There is little overlap too between Gregory the Great's forty *Homilies on the Gospels* and Bede's fifty *Homilies* (*cf*. Martin, 'Introduction', xvii).
[115] By the 740s, homilies at the liturgy were expected on all Lord's days and feasts, *cf*. the Canons of the Synod of *Clofesho* of 747, IV.

Content

Anglo-Saxon preaching and teaching involved scriptural interpretation, from basic re-tellings of the literary narratives to allegorical, tropological and anagogical interpretation for the benefit of the students or listeners.[116] The use of logical argument was particularly important for preachers and teachers, as they sought to convert individuals or explain elements of the Christian religion to the faithful. Such was the case in the conversion of King Sigeberht in Bede's *Historia*, where the king's convertor, King Oswiu, supposedly explained that gods cannot be fashioned out of material things, but must be invisible to human eyes.[117] Bishop Daniel of Winchester advised Boniface to use similar evangelistic tactics: beginning with an acceptance of the pagan gods and using a first cause argument to prove them wrong.[118]

Those homilies of which we are aware also reveal a similar method. Bede's, for instance, all begin with an introduction that draws out the themes of the reading of the day, before moving to a deeper analysis of each verse in turn (though the length of comments for each verse vary). Following this, Bede interpreted symbolically the main characters of the story, its setting and other details of the narrative, before making suggestions of how this all

[116] A scheme determined by Bede in his *Figures of Rhetoric*. Allegorical or typological interpretation concerned Christ or the church, tropological interpretation concerned the life of the individual, and anagogical interpretation concerned the heavenly kingdom (C. B. Kendall, 'Bede and Education', in *The Cambridge Companion*, ed. DeGregorio, pp. 99 – 112, here p. 108).
[117] *HE*, III.22.
[118] *Ep.*, XXIII. *Cf*. Psalm CXV.

applied ethically or pragmatically to his audience. The conclusion either takes the form of a bidding to a particular action, given with the subjunctive 'let us', or a doxology.[119]

Advocacy of the Christian message came in two ways: an encouragement to accept the faith of the church, and a demand to reject all that was contrary to it.[120] This was because Bede believed the faith of the church to be a schematic whole: there was one, single faith, with one set of doctrines which were taught by Christ, preached by his preachers, and universally to be accepted by all.[121] Those who believed other, heterodox, doctrines could therefore feel the wrath of the preacher. It was similarly important that elements of the faith were not missed from the instruction of the faithful: 'Nor should the teachers omit any of the things that he has ordered to be performed for they are obliged to commit to their hearers everything that he has commanded them'.[122]

Importance was attached to belief, for instance in the Trinity and in the remission of sins, and in those things which distinguished Christians from their pagan surroundings and the orthodox from the heterodox. The author of the *Vita Sancti Wilfridi* indicated that this was a priority of Wilfrid's, manifesting his own concern for right belief. So when Wilfrid came to

[119] Martin, 'Bede and Preaching', p. 164.
[120] *Retr. in Act.*, II.2, lines 13 – 29.
[121] *De Tab.*, I, lines 24 – 64.
[122] *De Tab.*, I, lines 55 – 58 [p. 3].

Friesland, for instance, Stephen narrated that the saint not only preached the word to the people immediately, but told them 'of the true God, the Almighty Father, Jesus Christ His only Son, and the Holy Spirit coeternal with them, and of one baptism for the remission of sins; he also taught them clearly about life everlasting after death in the resurrection'.[123]

One way in which all those evangelised could participate in this affirmation of the church's doctrines was through the learning and recitation of the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Bede advised Bishop of Ecgberht of York to 'endeavour to impress deeply on the memory of all under your rule the catholic faith which is contained in the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer which the text of the holy gospel teaches us', and in the 740s such advice was formalised.[124] As Martin noted, 'The great doctrines of the Christian Church, like the Incarnation, the Redemption and the sacramental life, are based on biblical stories which were told to believers annually through the course of the liturgical year, and homilies were a necessary complement to these stories'.[125]

The preaching of the faith and the particular teaching of the Creed and Lord's Prayer encouraged individuals to accept the faith of the church in its

[123] *SVSW*, XXVI [p. 53]. In the same way, Theodore's Synod at Hatfield (679/80) endorsed the legislation of the councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople (553) against the error of Eutyches (*HE*, IV.17).
[124] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5.
[125] Martin, 'Bede and Preaching', p. 168.

entirety, and urged them to understand and practise it in their lives; a pattern which Ambrose had elucidated in his writings.[126] Such repetition was intended to increase in the believer the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.[127]

Preaching and teaching also served to identify evil spirits and, if necessary, warn or reprove the listener. Just as the devil's intrigues were recognised by the teachers of truth, so the saintly Cuthbert is described by Bede as foreseeing in his spirit 'that the ancient enemy would be present to hinder the work of salvation, and [so] forthwith he set out to forestall, by his teaching, the snares which he knew would come'.[128] As well as preparing the faithful for attack from evil spirits, preachers were sometimes called to be defenders when an assault on the church and her faith was made. In his commentary *In Tobiam*, Bede likened teachers to dogs 'because they defend their founder's spiritual home, property and sheep from thieves and beasts, *i.e.* from unclean spirits and heretical men'.[129] On occasion, preachers would also have to offend as well as defend, 'break[ing] down the hardness of the worldly spirit' or 'combating heretics [who] often drive off troublesome wolves from the supreme pastor's fold'.[130]

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[126] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5, *cf.* Ambrose, *De Virginibus*, III.4.
[127] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 6.
[128] *BVSC*, XIII, *cf. In Tobiam*, VI.5, lines 64 – 66 [XV, p. 49].
[129] *In Tobiam*, VI.1, lines 5 – 8 [XI, p. 46].
[130] *In Cant. Hab.*, III.10, lines 407 – 410 [XXIV, p. 81]; *In Tobiam*, XI.9, lines 4 – 6 [XXX, p. 57].

Differentiation

Bede urged the preachers and teachers of early Anglo-Saxon England to differentiate according to the ability of their audience:

> Surely the wise are to be taught in one way, the foolish in another; the rich in one way, the poor in another; the healthy in one way, the sick in another; the old in one way, the young in another; men in one way, women in another; celibates in one way, married persons in another; prelates in one way, subjects in another.[131]

The preacher thus needed skill to adapt his preaching and teaching style for his audience. Bede sought a Biblical precedent for this in the parable of the wise steward.[132]

The arrival of Aidan in Northumbria demonstrates that simpler teaching was often thought to be necessary.[133] Recounting this story, Bede claimed that, at first, a man of 'harsher disposition' was sent to evangelise to the Northumbrians. Yet his harshness and the complexity of his preaching rendered this mission unsuccessful: 'At a meeting of the elders he reported that he had made no headway in the instruction of the people to whom he

[131] *De Tab.*, I, lines 832 – 837 [p. 27].
[132] *De Tab.*, I, lines 844 – 846, *cf.* Luke XII.42.
[133] Consider the example of Dícuill and his brothers at Bosham, where according to Bede 'none of the natives cared to follow their way of life or listen to their preaching' (*HE*, IV.13 [p. 373]).

had been sent'.[134] Aidan himself offered the solution, urging that the milk of simpler teaching must be offered first, just as the apostle recommended.[135] In practice, Anglo-Saxon preachers, particularly when preaching to the uneducated laity, may have employed visual aids to convey tenets of the faith in order to help their audience understand.[136]

For the majority of people who had no command of Latin, Bede urged that catechesis happen in the vernacular, and that individuals then repeated articles of faith like the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.[137] If practised, this would have made the faith more accessible to people, and the preacher more effective. Bede noted in his *Historia* the difficulties surrounding the preaching efforts of Bishop Agilbert, a native Frank, who, though learned in the scriptures, had a poor command of the English tongue.[138] As a result of the king's anger concerning this, the diocese was divided into two, and the see of Winchester was given to a bishop who had greater communication skills.

The linguistically-able and theologically-literate, particularly those who pursued a monastic or clerical vocation, were schooled in the recitation of the psalter.[139] Wilfrid is recorded as having committed this to memory at an

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[134] *HE*, III.5 [p. 229].
[135] I Corinthians III.2.
[136] One thinks of the increasing decoration within churches and the work on the side of crosses such as that based at Ruthwell.
[137] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5.
[138] *HE*, III.7. Consider also Agilbert's inability to make the Roman case at Whitby.
[139] The second canon of the Council of Nicaea ruled that 'a candidate for the episcopacy know at least the Psalter by heart', *cf.* G. H. Brown, 'The Psalms as the Foundation of Anglo-Saxon

early stage along with several other books.[140] Important in such training was 'rote memorization, effected by repeating aloud the text to be studied… followed by dictation onto wax tablets. Oblates and novices needed only to acquire enough Latin to be able to perform the Divine Office'.[141] Priests, on the other hand, were expected to be familiar with the liturgies of the church, particularly baptism and the mass. This would, in turn, aid their abilities to study the scriptures and so help them preach.[142] Places of learning associated with *monasteria* and *ecclesiae*, like Whitby and the school of Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury, were founded in this period to pour daily into the minds of their students 'the streams of wholesome learning'.[143] This was intended to have practical consequences for the clergy of early Anglo-Saxon England, whose ability to understand the faith and practise their duties were questioned even in Bede's own day.

Learning', in *The Place of the Psalms in the Intellectual Culture of the Middle Ages*, ed. N. van Deusen (New York, 1999), pp. 1 – 24, here p. 4. On the training of the clergy see also J. McClure, 'Bede's *Notes on Genesis* and the Training of the Anglo-Saxon Clergy', in *The Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. K. Walsh and D. Wood (Oxford, 1985), pp. 17 – 30.

[140] *SVSW*, II.

[141] Kendall, 'Bede and Education', p. 99.

[142] Kendall, 'Bede and Education', p. 99. We might recall the questions allegedly raised by Bishop John of Beverley over Herebald's baptism by a priest who was unable to learn the baptismal office (*HE*, V.6), and those raised by the missionary Boniface who re-baptised individuals due to the insufficient understanding of Latin of some of the clergy (*Ep*., LXVIII). It is interesting to note that in writing to Boniface, Pope Zacharias does not insist on re-baptism, but on the confirmation of a candidate's baptismal status by the laying on of hands.

[143] *HE*, IV.2 [p. 333]. On the school of Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury see M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XV (1986), pp. 45 – 72.

Purpose

The purpose of preaching and teaching was, firstly, the acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ, demonstrated particularly in the willingness of an individual to be baptised. Those who had already been baptised were to proceed in their sacramental life to confirmation, known more commonly in contemporary texts as the laying on of hands.[144] Students and audiences were also exhorted to greater holiness of life, by believing and practising the Christian faith and consequently increasing in virtue.[145] This was particularly true of the chief virtue of charity, the fire of which the 'holy preachers' should kindle by assembling 'eloquent words of truth' in the heart and inflaming their audiences with a 'desire for eternal things'.[146] This aimed to have a positive effect on the individual's contribution to society, encouraging him or her to cease despising the poor, taxing unfairly, sharing nothing with the dispossessed, paying unjust wages, taking away widows' cattle for security, administering torture, and mutilating the values of the Gospel amongst other things. [147] Bede also believed that preaching and teaching inculcated steadfastness in the individual for the Christian faith, and granted those who

[144] *BVSC*, XXXII.
[145] Note Bede's comment in his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* that it was thought unfitting for the early Cuthbert 'to play among children when the Lord has consecrated you to be a teacher of virtue even to your elders' (I [p. 159]).
[146] *De Tab*., II, lines 1505 – 1511 [p.90].
[147] See Eckenrode, 'The Venerable Bede and the Pastoral Affirmation of the Christian Message', p. 267, and p. 276, nn. 64 – 70.

heard and learnt of the faith a greater ability to reject evil, although preaching was also directed at those who had gone astray.[148]

Failure to Preach and Teach

Witnesses to the foundation of the church in England do not underestimate the importance of preaching and teaching. Bede and his contemporaries realised that if the faith were not handed down from generation to generation, it would neither grow nor continue. Bede believed this to have happened in the case of apostate kingdoms in the conversion period, as it had happened in England as a whole between the time of the end of the Roman occupation and the sending of Augustine and his companions in 597 (with perhaps a short period of grace thanks to the evangelising efforts of Germanus and Lupus). Bede's high expectations of the spiritual qualities needed in a preacher or teacher of the faith, together with his expectations concerning the training of the clergy and monastics, must be read in this light. So too must his letter to Bishop Ecgberht of York, in which Bede lamented the state of the church in the northern province, and claimed that those to whom the task of preaching and teaching had been passed down neglected their duty.[149] These people had brought the message of salvation into disrepute, particularly by their

[148] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5; *HE*, IV.27.
[149] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 4.

unbridled tongues.[150] Thus even more preachers were needed to cover such a large diocese, and so Bede advocated the ordaining of priests and the institution of preachers.[151] These people, like the wise steward, would be entrusted with a good of great value, the Gospel of Christ, and would be responsible for its careful and managed distribution, so that the people of the Diocese of York might hear and believe in the Good News, and increase in holiness.[152]

Bede's concern for the continual evangelisation of the people of Anglo-Saxon England and their growth in faith led him to encourage and promote the training of preachers and teachers, who either by virtue of their ordination as priests, or their institution as preachers, were compelled to spread the Gospel message. They were to pass on the message of salvation that had been entrusted to them. Sometimes they travelled, even to remote places; sometimes they remained within the walls of their *ecclesiae* or *monasteria*. They were to take seriously the call of Christ to preach to the ends of the earth. They preached to lay, monk and cleric alike, at the great liturgies of the church, the initiation of catechumens by baptism, the conferral of the sacrament of confirmation, the celebration of the mass, and possibly at the recitation of the divine office. In their preaching and teaching, they exhorted their students and listeners to live holy and virtuous lives, and to accept the

[150] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 4.
[151] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5.
[152] *De Tab.*, I, lines 844 – 846.

doctrines of the catholic church, while discerning and rebuking perceived error and all things contrary to the faith of the church. A skilled preacher would discern the level at which his or her audience operated and exercise the virtue of temperance in determining how best to achieve his or her aim. Whilst Bede's complaints to Ecgberht suggest that many priests and preachers failed to instruct the people well, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons had nonetheless been achieved thanks to those whose contemplation of heavenly things substantiated their claims concerning the Christian religion.

Priests and the Administration of the Sacraments

Bede considered the sacraments 'temporal benefits of God', with which humanity was 'refreshed and illumined in the present time'.[153] The sacraments strengthened and sustained humanity, and made men and women fit for heaven, where they would see God as he is. Bede believed that the sacraments originated in Christ's passion and death, and that they perpetuated the effects of this sacrifice to the present age. So in commenting on the soldier's piercing of Christ's side, and the pouring forth of blood and water, Bede wrote that the evangelist had specifically chosen the word 'opened' rather than 'pierced' or 'wounded', to indicate how the sacrifice of Calvary had provided through the sacraments an entrance to heavenly

[153] *De Tab.*, II, lines 1226 – 1230 [pp. 81 – 82].

things.[154] The Church celebrated these sacraments through her ministers, and particularly her priests, who provided 'for the transmission of the gift of life from Christ to the soul, and for its nourishment'.[155]

Baptism and Confirmation

The importance attached to baptism in the period up to the 747 Council of *Clofesho* is evident from both Bede and the prescriptive literature. Addressing his concerns over the sacramental care of the people of the Diocese of York to Bishop Ecgberht, Bede wrote that priests should be ordained and 'devote themselves to preaching the word of God in the various villages and to celebrating the heavenly mysteries, and especially to performing the rites of holy baptism, wherever the opportunity arises'.[156] Similarly, various canons were written which placed penances on priests who neglected this fundamental duty of their calling.

These canons highlighted the development of baptismal practice from the conversion period. In the conversion period, the baptism of adult converts was standard; in the period following the conversion of England, particularly from the archiepiscopate of Theodore, infant baptism was encouraged, and adult baptism became more rare. By the time of Bede's death, sixty years after

[154] *De Temp.*, I, lines 760 – 767 [p. 29].
[155] Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, p. 101.
[156] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5 [p. 854].

Theodore, infant baptism had replaced adult baptism as the norm.[157] This was due to the fact that the timing of the sacrament was rarely planned, but instead generally administered 'to infants or adults *in extremis*'.[158] No doubt based on concerns over infant mortality, Theodore's *Penitential* even went so far as to threaten deposition for a priest who failed to baptise a 'weak and… pagan' infant.[159] The parents of children were also held responsible for the failure to baptise: Theodore prescribed a penance of one year for failing to bring a child to baptism before his or her death.[160] The late seventh-century secular *Laws* of Ine and Wihtred also reflected this attitude, and provided a useful basis for the developments at *Clofesho* the following century.[161]

The matter of who could baptise was contentious among the early Anglo-Saxons. If Bede's account of Augustine meeting with the British bishops is accurate, then we should note that from an early time, there were differences in the baptismal rites used by the Roman party on the one hand and the British bishops on the other.[162] Some scholars have argued that this

[157] Foot, *Monastic Life,* p. 301. Morris, 'Baptismal Places', has argued that infant baptism 'was introduced into England once conversion had proceeded beyond the adult members of royal households' (here p. 15). Morris also noted (p. 15, n. 1) that baptism of some infants entered the Christian tradition in the second century, which undermined the traditional timing of baptism at Easter. *In Marci*, II.vii.29, lines 1418 – 1424.
[158] *Cf*. Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 188. Catechetical periods were seldom as long as Cædwalla's, and probably very short, if they occurred at all, *cf*. *HE*, V.7.
[159] *Penitential*, I.xiv.28 [p. 197].
[160] *Penitential*, I.xiv.28 [p. 197].
[161] Ine, *Laws*, II-II.1 [p. 37]; Wihtred, *Laws*, VI [p. 27]. See below, Chapter 3.
[162] *HE*, II.2.

difference concerned who could administer the sacrament.[163] Bede did not, however, question the validity of baptism because of the celebrant: he made no criticism of James the Deacon, who taught and baptised in York and the surrounding area.[164] However, Bede's narration of James' historical context may provide further illumination on this: in his *Historia*, Bede recorded how James 'remained for a long time in the church [of York]' when Paulinus, and presumably many of his clergy, had left.[165] Thus only when Northumbria was plunged into turmoil did James exercise this specific ministry. Furthermore, when Aidan came to Northumbria, Bede specifically restated that only those amongst Aidan's party 'who held the rank of priest administered the grace of baptism to those who believed'.[166] We should conclude therefore, that as far as Bede was concerned, lower ranks of clergy could administer the sacrament, but only when there was no priest available. It seems that Bede had no problem with non-priests baptising candidates, even if in his mind this was to be an exception rather than a rule.

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[163] C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981), p. 209; Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 15, n. 3. Other scholars suggest that it might have been the practice of a single immersion which concerned Augustine, or that disagreements took place concerning the nature of confirmation (Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 174). M. W. Pepperdene, 'Baptism in the Early British and Irish Churches', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, XXII (1995), pp. 110 – 123, noted how the variance in practice must have been considered significant, otherwise Augustine would have had Gregory's permission to tolerate differences.

[164] *HE*, II.20.

[165] *HE*, II.20.

[166] *HE*, III.3.

We should view the seventh-century *Penitential* of Theodore in this context. In it, Theodore ruled that deacons might also administer baptism.[167] This legitimises the actions of James canonically. Theodore's *Penitential* stated, however, that baptism must be conducted by one who was ordained, although he need not be ordained to the rank of priesthood. Baptism must also not be conducted by those who were seeking ordination to the priesthood: one couldn't baptise just because one hoped eventually to become a priest.[168] These rulings therefore reinforced the notion that the sacrament was a priestly prerogative, particularly in the face of the new context of infant baptism, which by virtue of the changed shape of Christianity in England, relied much more heavily on local clergy.[169]

Although the specific form of the baptismal rite in the post-Conversion church remains uncertain, if the Roman rite had been in use in England since the time of the Gregorian mission, the ceremonial would have included exorcism by insufflation, a profession of faith, sprinkling or immersion into consecrated water, and anointing with chrism.[170] Liturgists believe that the

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[167] *Penitential*, II.ii.16.

[168] *Penitential*, I.ix.11.

[169] Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', pp. 187 – 189. The availability of *monasteria* and *ecclesiae* conditioned where baptisms occurred, *cf.* Morris, 'Baptismal Places', and Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*.

[170] The fullest account of Western baptismal practice is found in Ambrose of Milan's *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis*. For possible differences in baptismal practices in Ireland see Pepperdene, 'Baptism', p. 117. On the practice of insufflation see above, p. 35, n. 85. That candidates or their parents were required to turn away from sin and affirm their belief in the Christian God was suggested by Bede (*HE*, III.19), although a credal statement is absent from

profession of faith sufficed for a Trinitarian baptismal formula, which was only added to the Roman rite in the eighth century.[171] This fits many Anglo-Saxon sources, such as the *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, in which Stephen recorded Wilfrid baptising 'in the name of the Lord'.[172] The wording of other texts could refer to a profession of faith, rather than a baptismal formula, which accompanied the pouring of water.[173] Bede's account of the problems associated with Herebald's baptism may support this view: John of Beverley complained not because a formula was incorrectly used – contrasting later continental authors – but that the priest who conducted the baptism had an insufficient command of Latin 'to learn the office of catechism or baptism'.[174]

According to Roman use, Easter or Pentecost provided the ideal time to receive the sacrament of baptism, making Lent a similarly ideal period for instructing.[175] Bede believed this model was appropriate for his context, as he narrated for his contemporaries the example of an entire army being prepared

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SVSW, XLI. For a summary of evidence in the Bedan corpus suggesting the existence and use of these practices, see Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, p. 104.

[171] J. C. D. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West: A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation* (London, 1965), p. 17. Foot summarised: 'While Bede stated in his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* that it was a rule of the church that the faithful should be baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, he argued (quoting the authority of Ambrose and of Romans VI.3) that baptism in the name of Christ would also be valid, because in the naming of one member of the Trinity, all were designated' (Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 178).

[172] *SVSW*, XXVI [p. 53], *cf. AVSC*, II.5.

[173] *E.g. AVSC*, II.5.

[174] *HE*, V.6; contrast the letter of Pope Zacharias to Boniface where the Trinitarian baptismal formula is questioned, again over mistakes in the Latin, *cf. Ep.*, LXVIII. *N.B.* Re-baptism had officially been declared heretical by the Councils of Constantinople (381), c. 7, and Arles (314), c. 8, *cf.* C. Corning, 'The Baptism of Edwin, King of Northumbria: a New Analysis of the British Tradition', *Northern History*, XXXVI (2000), pp. 5 – 15, here p. 7.

[175] Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 22 – 28.

for baptism during the season.[176] In this period, the desire of the candidate would be tested, and his or her life observed.[177] Of course, with the increasing probability that parents would have their children baptised soon after birth, any time for preparation would necessarily be curtailed.[178] We have no evidence as to what preparation if any parents made, but the practice of baptism necessarily changed to fit new circumstances, and Bede suggested that in the rite, the parents could now speak the *fides* and *confessio* on behalf of their child.[179]

Writing in the seventh century, Bede suggested that the sacrament of baptism cleansed the candidate from previous (including original) sin, initiated them into the Church, and enabled them to receive the Eucharist.[180] It remained perhaps the most important sacrament which the church could offer to the English people, being the single necessary precursor to attaining salvation and everlasting life that was on offer.[181] As the anonymous author of the Whitby *Vita* commented, 'without baptism none will ever see God'.[182] The imperative for baptism, ordinarily conducted by a priest, therefore remained throughout the period.

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[176] *HE*, I.20.
[177] *Cf.* J. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 1980), pp. 85 – 90.
[178] The scattered nature of the clergy – and their own level of education – might also have hampered the ability to teach catechumens in any great depth before baptism itself (Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 176).
[179] *In Marci*, II.vii.29, lines 1418 – 1424.
[180] On the relation of baptism to admission to the Eucharist see *HE*, II.5.
[181] *Cf. HE*, III.23; IV.13, 16; *Ep.*, XXXIII; *Penitential*, II.iv.3.
[182] *AVSG*, XXIX [p. 127].

Theodore understood confirmation as the completion of the process of Christian initiation, which had begun at baptism.[183] According to Bede, this occurred when the bishop laid hands upon the candidate and anointed him or her with holy oil.[184] Sometimes this may have occurred straight after baptism, in the case of adult candidates baptised by bishops. At other times, 'the final episcopal unction, without which initiation was not complete… [would have been] performed in a ceremony separate from baptism'.[185] The history of the confirmation in the period is rather obscure, and the role of the priest in this rite (particularly given the rite's historic development as a peculiarly episcopal privilege) is negligible. Further, the practicalities of confirmation (which entailed episcopal visitation) and the perceived superfluity of the rite (given that baptism admits one into the communion of the church), suggests that the rite may not have been performed very widely in the period at all.[186]

[183] *Penitential*, II.iv.5, *cf*. Pepperdene, 'Baptism', p. 118.
[184] Bede, *Exp. Act.*, VIII.14, lines 23 – 27, claimed that priests could anoint the baptised with chrism, previously consecrated by a bishop, but they may not anoint the brow with the same oil, which is reserved to the bishop when he gives the Paraclete.
[185] Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 149.
[186] A wealth of literature exists on the role of sponsors at baptism and confirmation, see for instance Lynch, *Godparents*, and a shorter analysis in Corning, 'Baptism of Edwin', p. 9.

The Mass

For Bede, the Mass was the sacramental act *par excellence*, connecting the sacrifice of Calvary to the present.[187] It commemorated the sacrifice of Calvary from where its powers of cleansing flowed. Those powers were attested to in the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, which the faithful would receive to the benefit of their own salvation.[188]

It was the function of the priest within the community to offer the mass. This could be celebrated both publically and 'privately'.[189] There is no evidence to suggest that anyone other than priests were permitted to say, or actually said the mass, including deacons and those of lower ecclesiastical rank.[190] The extant sources – Bede's narrative material and the legislative material – supposed that mass should take place in a church, but Theodore's *Penitential* allowed for the celebration in a field if a deacon or priest held in his hands the chalice and oblation.[191] This suggests a flexibility useful in the continued evangelisation of the people.[192]

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[187] *Hom.*, I.15.
[188] It is clear here, as in other passages, that Bede desired the full participation of the faithful in the Eucharist; making a 'spiritual communion' was a poor alternative, *cf*. John VI.54 – 55.
[189] Wilfrid appointed a priest as Abbot of Oundle who said a private mass every day for the bishop (*SVSW*, LXV). I have failed to uncover any evidence from the period (597 – 747) which suggests that those in lower orders were permitted to say mass. It therefore seems likely that the saying of mass was reserved to the priestly order.
[190] Theodore's *Penitential* ruled that women were neither permitted to touch the corporal, nor to offer gifts or stand among the priests (II.vii.1).
[191] *Penitential*, II.ii.2.
[192] We might also consider the evidence of Cuthbert's portable altar here.

Commentators have misunderstood the emphasis in Theodore's *Penitential*, which lists the frequency with which the Greeks and Romans, layman as well as clerics, were accustomed to communicate at the mass.[193] Several references in early sources support the assertion that daily mass was offered in certain places or by certain clerics.[194] However, the evidence is far from consistent, and is tainted by Bede's desire to encourage more devotion to the sacrament, manifest in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*.[195] Here, however, we get a picture of who was and who wasn't permitted to receive the sacrament. Theodore's *Penitential* barred communion to a heretic and ruled that if a priest were to administer communion to a heretic he should serve penance, either for one year if he were ignorant of the church's condemnation of the individual, or for longer if he were in full knowledge of the fact.[196] Other penances were prescribed for those who did not abstain from women, those who received when they ought not to communicate before the conclusion of their penance, those who failed to keep the Eucharistic fast, and those who left the consecrated host to be eaten by animals.[197] For clergy, neither daily

[193] *Penitential*, I.xii.1-2.
[194] *E.g. HE*, II.9; V.10; *SVSW*, LXV. See a fuller discussion of these examples and others in Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 206.
[195] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 15.
[196] *Penitential*, I.v.7. An individual who permitted a heretic to say mass was to do forty days penance, but if he promoted him on purpose, he was to do penance for one year (I.v.8). If he were to become a heretic himself, he should do penance for twelve years: four years outside the church; six years 'among the hearers'; and two years 'out of communion' (I.v.10 [p. 189]).
[197] *Penitential*, I.xii.3, 4, 5, 8. Those who broke the fast were, according to the second book of Theodore's *Penitential* not to be admitted to the peace (II.i.2).

celebration nor daily reception of the Eucharist seemed to be a requirement before the Council of *Clofesho* in 747.[198]

The question of the rite used is a perplexing one, and evidence is sketchy. Three possible influences can be discerned in surviving liturgical sources: that of the Roman rite, that of the Gallican rite, and that of the rite of the Irish church.[199] Jane Stephenson has noted that the Stowe Missal (dating from the early ninth century) was basically a Roman text interspersed with Gallican features.[200] It would have been possible for Merovingian ecclesiastics, such as Birinus and Agilbert, to bring with them a Gallican rite, Augustine, Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid to bring with them Roman rites, and the Irish missionaries rites to bring with them rites with which they were familiar.[201] Bede certainly displays knowledge of Gelasian prayers and ceremonies, for

[198] This is often played down by commentators, *e.g.* Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 302 – 304.
[199] Secondary literature on this question includes S. McKillop, 'A Romano-British Baptismal Liturgy', in *The Early Church in Western Britain and Ireland: Studies Presented to C. A. Ralegh Radford arising from a Conference Organised in his Honour by the Devon Archaeology Society and Exeter City Museum*, ed. S. M. Pearce, BAR British Series, CII (Oxford, 1982), pp. 35 – 48, and Pepperdene, 'Baptism'. More generally on early Anglo-Saxon liturgy, see D. Bullough, 'Roman Books and Carolingian *renovatio*', in *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 1 – 36, Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 168 – 190; and H. Gneuss, 'Liturgical Books in Anglo-Saxon England and their Old English Terminology', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 91 – 141. On the Roman rite, see above, p. 35, n. 85.
[200] F. E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, ed. J. Stephenson, Studies in Celtic History, IX (Woodbridge, 1987; originally published 1881).
[201] *HE*, III.7; I.29; *HA*, IV; VI.

instance in his commentaries *In Ezram* and *De Tabernaculo*.[202] Certain differences of course persisted in each of these rites:

> In the liturgy of the Mass, for instance, we know that the Irish church had added a number of collects, a multiplicity not found in the Roman liturgy, had evolved the practice of co-fraction, and had added a second fraction to the Mass, among other deviations from Roman practices… These deviations found among the Irish may be assumed also to have been found in the British church, since these two provincial churches had developed a similar organization, had exchanged priests and clerical students, and were usually considered as practicing identical abuses by the representatives of Roman authority.[203]

In his recent book on *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History*, Richard Pfaff supplied three fragments of evidence which he claimed were once part of three separate mass books.[204] The first two pieces, because of their size, appear to have come from two altar books, and the third contained evidence of mass for the vigil of the Ascension. Pfaff concluded that 'there is ample reason to suppose that Roman (probably Gelasian) as well as Campanian mass books may have been available in eighth-century Northumbria. About Southumbria we have, as is true in so many aspects, markedly less information'.[205] The likelihood, therefore, was that a diverse pattern existed, which prompted

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[202] C. Cubitt, 'Unity and Diversity in the Early 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, Studies in Church History, XXXII (Oxford, 1996), pp. 45 – 58, here p. 49.
[203] Pepperdene, 'Baptism', p. 116.
[204] R. W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge, 2009), esp. pp. 41 – 42.
[205] Pfaff, *The Liturgy*, pp. 41, 44.

reformers such as Theodore, Bede, and then the bishops in council at *Clofesho* to legislate enforcing use of the Roman rite, promoting consistency and conformity throughout the Anglo-Saxon church.[206]

Bede clearly believed that the mass was efficacious. In summarising his thought on the matter, M. T. A. Carroll wrote that

> Besides being a pledge of eternal life, the reception of the eucharist works a cleansing effect, gives refreshment and strength to the soul as bread does to the body, serving as a 'sign of victory by which we are fortified against the snares of the enemy.' It enables each [recipient] to welcome Christ as a guest of the soul, and makes of him 'a temple of Christ.'[207]

Nowhere was this more powerfully told than in Bede's narration of the story of the thegn Imma.[208] Imma was a retainer who had been struck down in battle, but who recovered consciousness and set about finding shelter. In this search, however, he was caught by the enemy, and was tied and bound. Bede narrated that Imma's brother, Tunna, was a priest, who, presuming Imma to be dead, said masses for him. In what is presented as a minor miracle, Imma's captors found that his chains could not be bound, because 'of these celebrations [of the mass]'. To emphasise the link further, Bede noted that Imma's 'fetters were at once loosed… at the time when masses were being

[206] This effect is discussed by Catherine Cubitt her useful article on 'Unity and Diversity'.
[207] Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, p. 111.
[208] *HE*, IV.22.

celebrated on his behalf'.[209] Discussing the power of forgiveness in the Anglo-Saxon period, Helen Foxhall Forbes noted a similar story recorded in Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, which revealed the tangibility of the issue – namely that an offering of mass can 'produce an actual, physical release from chains' which includes sin.[210] For Bede, the mass thus provided a powerful tool for Anglo-Saxons to be released from the bonds of sin, particularly for the souls of those who had died and who now dwelt in purgatory – a tool which was increasingly used in the period to *Clofesho*.[211]

Confession and Penance

Amongst its many images, the Ruthwell Cross depicts two encounters with Christ: the first is an image of Christ healing the man blind from birth (taken from John IX.1 – 38); and the second depicts the woman who was a sinner kneeling at the feet of Christ (from Luke VIII.36 – 50).[212] The first of these images represents conversion – when one first turns to Christ – and the second an image of repentance – when one has sinned and so needs to return

[209] *HE*, IV.22 [p. 403].
[210] H. Foxhall Forbes, 'The Power of Binding and Loosing: the Chains of Sin in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Liturgy', *Quaestio Insularis*, VIII (2008), pp. 51 – 65, here p. 57, *cf*. Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, IV.59.
[211] Consider, for example, Bede's request that after his death, many masses might be celebrated for him (*BVSC*, *Praef*.).
[212] These images appear on the south side of the cross: the woman who was a sinner sits above the blind man. These are followed by depictions of the Annunciation, and finally the crucifixion.

to him once again.[213] Together they reflect the relationship between baptism and confession: the former occurs when one turns to Christ for the first time, and is sacramentally received into the church in an unrepeatable rite; the latter occurs when one who has been baptised returns into the fellowship and communion of Christ's flock, and so in some sense recovers his or her baptism.[214] Both involved the participation of the wider Christian community: the first insofar as the catechumen was welcomed into the community; and the latter insofar as he or she were reconciled to it.

Whilst it is clear that priests heard confessions in the period, the sources are silent as to whether non-ordained monks could hear confession too. It is possible that references which have been interpreted in this way could refer to spiritual counsel rather than sacramental confession, or that those monks referred to could be simultaneously priests and monks.[215] It is, however, likely that communities of religious had amongst them confessors. Theodore's *Penitential* sought to standardise practice, and in a way that anticipated the rulings of *Clofesho* in the following century, it claimed that

[213] See É. Ó. Carragain, 'The Periphery Rethinks the Centre: Inculturation, "Roman" Liturgy and the Ruthwell Cross', in *Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas, c. 500 – 1400*, ed. C. Bolgia, R. McKitterick and J. Osborne (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 63 – 83.

[214] On the interrelated nature of these sacraments see also T. O'Loughlin and H. Conrad-O-Briain, 'The "Baptism of Tears" in Early Anglo-Saxon Sources', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XXII (1993), pp. 65 – 83.

[215] Sarah Foot has certainly allowed for this interpretation (Foot, *Monastic Life*). Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), makes the mistake of confusing spiritual counsel, such as that offered by the Abbess Hild, with sacramental confession.

'penance was properly the duty of the clergy and only a "liberty" or privilege of the monastery'.[216] The administration of penance was therefore considered by Theodore at least as a priestly prerogative. Moreover, it was also understood as an obligation: neglecting this duty laid personal responsibility for the soul of the unconsoled penitent on the priest himself.[217]

Bede reasoned that priests were those who had been authorised to hear confessions. He believed that binding (*ligere*) and loosing (*solvere*) were functions granted by Christ to his apostles, of whom the bishops were the successors.[218] Bede further understood that bishops delegated this authority to priests, with whom they shared a number of their sacramental functions:

> Indeed even now the same office is committed to the whole Church in her bishops and priests, so that when she has come to know sinners' cases, she considers which are humble and truly penitent, and in compassion she may

[216] A. J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983) p. 65, *cf. Penitential*, II.xi.16. Of the relationship between the penitential literature and the secular law, see C. Hough, 'Penitential Literature and Secular Law in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, XI (2000), pp. 133 – 142. For a literary analysis of penitentials, see A. J. Frantzen, 'Spirituality and Devotion in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, XXII (2005), pp. 117 – 128, here p. 121, and on Theodore's *Penitential* in particular, see T. Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore and the *Iudicia Theodori*' in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. M. Lapidge, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, XI (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 141 – 174. On the development of penance in later Anglo-Saxon England, see C. Cubitt, 'Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe*, XIV (2006), pp. 41 – 63. For more general reading on the literature, there is a useful footnote in A. J. Frantzen, 'The Penitentials Attributed to Bede', *Speculum*, LVIII (1983), pp. 573 – 597, here p. 573, n. 1.

[217] *Penitential*, II.ii.15; II.vi.16; I.viii.5. *Cf.* A. J. Frantzen 'The Tradition of Penitentials in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XI (1982), pp. 23 – 56, here p. 25: 'Episcopal documents requiring the priest to own and use the handbook are found in both eighth- and tenth-century sources, English as well as continental'.

[218] *Cf.* The argument over papal supremacy presented by Wilfrid at the Synod of Whitby (664).

> then absolve them from the fear of perpetual death. But she may suggest that those whom she recognizes to be persisting in the sin which they have committed, should be assigned to everlasting punishments.[219]

The development of the sacrament in England from the conversion to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747 is hard to pin down because of the sporadic nature of the evidence. The existence of public and private penance in the initial conversion period is not recorded, although some form of confession (other than that made at baptism) must have existed. As the church became more firmly rooted in the land, however, and infant baptism began to replace the baptism of adults, it is reasonable to believe that confession and penance became similarly more widespread as a method by which those who had offended against God and the community could be reconciled.[220] The Mediterranean church had for some time practised public confession and penance, where the bishop would hear of an individual's sin, prescribe penance for him or her, and would exclude him or her from the community for a period of time.[221] Vacancies in English sees at the time of the arrival of Theodore, however, would suggest that if this practice were current in England, penitents would have found it difficult to be reconciled to the

[219] *Hom*., I.20, lines 171 – 176 [p. 202]. The initial authority to bind and loose was given to the Peter and the apostles in Matthew XVI.19, *cf.* Foxhall Forbes, 'Power of Binding and Loosing', pp. 51 – 52.
[220] Frantzen, in his *Literature of Penance* wrote that we 'do not know what percentage of the medieval population confessed, or how often confessions were made' (p. 15).
[221] Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore', noted the stages of reconciliation practised in public confession, pp. 164 – 165.

church given the scarcity of bishops. Theodore in fact wrote in his *Penitential* that there was no public reconciliation in the province because there was no public penance.[222] Instead, it seems likely that Theodore promoted the Irish practice of private penance to a priest. Designed for 'all devout Christians', his *Penitential* was to be 'a self-contained text to guide every phase of the private penitential system, from the reception of the penitent by the priest to practical adjustments which enabled the sinner to perform the penance assigned to him'.[223] It prescribed 'acts of atonement proportionate to the offences acknowledged'.[224] By publishing his *Penitential* in order to encourage the practice of private confession, Theodore ensured that the penitential system in England would be controlled by priests rather than bishops.[225]

The priest who heard a penitent's confession would have had to exercise his judgment in each case before imposing a specific act of atonement, and the penitential literature assumes priests enquire about the circumstances of the sin(s). Priests would also take into account the sex, age, condition, status and character of the penitent, before warning, exhorting, and correcting him or her, and prescribing an appropriate penance.[226] It should be noted that there was no typical penitential, and so again practice will have

[222] Theodore found that reconciliation was not 'publicly established in this province, for the reason that there is no public penance either' (*Penitential*, I.xiii.4 [p. 195]).
[223] Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 67, 18.
[224] Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, ix.
[225] Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore', p. 163.
[226] Bede, *Penitential*, in *Die Bussordnungen der Abendländischen Kirche*, ed. F. W. H. Wasserschleben (Graz, 1958), p. 220; Cummean, *Penitential*, in *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. L. Bieler (Dublin, 1963), p. 134.

varied across early Anglo-Saxon England.[227] When and where practised, private confession nonetheless provided an opportunity for the clergy to instruct the laity in a way that the Latin mass, celebrated towards God on behalf of the congregation, did not.

Exorcism

The initial imagery which Bede employed in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* in narrating the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons is that turning to Christ necessarily involved casting out the devil. This was why contemporary baptismal practice included a rite of exorcism. The symptoms of demon possession were noted by both Bede and the Anonymous author in the two prose *vitae* of Cuthbert. The Anonymous author at one point narrated the story of a woman vexed by the devil, the wife of a certain *gesith* known as Hildmer. The Anonymous wrote that 'She [the wife] was greatly ravaged and afflicted to the point of death, grinding her teeth and uttering tearful groans'.[228] Recording a separate incident, Bede wrote of a posthumous miracle, in which a boy who was vexed by a demon used to cry out, howl, and tear his clothes.[229] In the first instance, it surprised the woman's husband that someone so devout could fall prone to such a severe demonic attack.

[227] T. P. Oakley, 'Some Neglected Aspects in the History of Penance', *Catholic Historical Review*, XXIV (1938), pp. 293 – 309, here p. 308.
[228] *AVSC*, II.8 [p. 91].
[229] *BVSC*, XLI.

However, the author took the opportunity to assure his readers that such trials fall frequently upon Christians, a sentiment Bede echoed in his narration of the same event.[230]

Both Bede's and the Anonymous' accounts of the wife's healing stress that when Hildmer approached Cuthbert, he did not ask the bishop to attend the sick woman himself, but to send a priest to his house. Cuthbert is not told what the problem is, allegedly because Hildmer felt embarrassed about the situation, but more likely because both narrators wished to stress Cuthbert's ability to apprehend and attend to the situation, when only a mere priest was required. Hildmer's request seemed not to cause alarm to Cuthbert or his authors, indicating that calling a priest out for the purpose of healing was not an unusual practice. It may even be presented as the normative response to demonic possession.

Bede listed the methods by which Cuthbert could drive away evil spirits, 'praying, touching, commanding and exorcising' (*orando, tangendo, imperando, exorcizando*).[231] In an early instance recorded in the Anonymous life, when the devil deceived Cuthbert's hearers into destroying a house they perceived to be on fire, Cuthbert was able to drive away the devil simply by praying.[232] The author of the anonymous life of Gregory proposed too that the

[230] *AVSC*, II.8, *cf*. *BVSC*, XV.
[231] *BVSC*, XVI [p. 209].
[232] *AVSC*, II.6.

sign of the cross was enough to expel the devil.[233] Pope Boniface similarly advised King Edwin (in a letter preserved by Bede in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*) to keep the cross of Christ close by in order to 'cast out of your hearts the accursed wiles and cunning of the devil'.[234] This was repeated by Bede himself in his own letter to Bishop Ecgberht of York, when he wrote that teachers should teach the laity 'with what devotion they ought to pray, in supplication to the divine clemency: how they have need to fortify themselves and all their possessions frequently and diligently by the sign of the Lord's Cross against the continuous snares of unclean spirits'.[235] Prayer and the cross may have both had a place in the exorcism rite used by priests in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

Similarly, water often accompanied the exorcism of individuals, as Bede suggested by his narration of the arrival of Germanus and Lupus to Britain.[236] Facing a storm, Germanus invoked the Trinity, 'took a little water and sprinkled it', to calm the raging sees.[237] But this holy water need not be obtained through the clergy. Such was the case in miracles associated with the place where Oswald's body was washed at Bardney. According to Bede, the soil upon which the water which touched the holy body was poured 'had the

[233] *AVSG*, XXII.
[234] *HE*, II.10 [p. 171].
[235] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 15 [p. 860].
[236] Bede is obviously alluding to a rite with which he was familiar, and not providing evidence for Germanus' and Lupus' actions.
[237] *HE*, I.17 [p. 57].

power and saving grace of driving devils from the bodies of people possessed'.[238] Admittedly, this need not imply that priests did not use the soil to carry out exorcisms, yet a more likely explanation is that soil was picked from the spot by people, illustrating their popular devotion. Amongst other tools believed to dispel the devil were holy oil, which unlike holy water required blessing by a bishop, and relics.[239]

In a posthumous miracle attributed to Cuthbert by Bede, it was clearly a priest who 'was sent from the monastery to the demoniac boy'. More importantly, the priest 'was accustomed to put impure spirits to flight by the grace of exorcism', indicating the frequency not only of his exorcisms, but also their success.[240] If Bede is to be believed, *monasteria* evidently had priests who were sent out to perform this specific task of ministering to people in this way. In this case, the exorcism did not produce its healing effect, and so the priest advised the boy's father to take him to the *monasterium*. Even at the *monasterium*, around other learned and skilled individuals, due respect was given to the role of the priest in the exorcising of a subject, as Bede recorded in one instance in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*: in narrating a conversation between Queen Osthryth and Abbess Æthelhild, Bede claimed that one guest of the *monasterium* 'used very often to be greatly troubled in the night, without

[238] *HE*, III.11 [p. 247].
[239] *HE*, III.15. This does not indicate the use of oil in sacramental functions. Other relics include the linen in which Abbess Æthelthryth was first dressed before her exhumation and translation (*HE*, IV.19).
[240] *BVSC*, XLI [p. 289].

warning, by an unclean spirit'.[241] One night, after supper, he was 'suddenly possessed by the devil and began to gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth, while his limbs were twisted by convulsive movements'. Rather than attending the guest herself, the abbess went with one of her nuns to the men's dwelling 'where she called a priest and asked him to come with her to the patient', around whom a crowd was forming. The priest duly pronounced exorcisms, although Bede records how unsuccessful they were in order to exemplify the power of the relics.

More interestingly, the question arises as to why the abbess called the priest. Looking at the story, three reasons present themselves. Firstly, the abbess may have called the priest because he was a man, whose strength was required to hold the patient still. Secondly, the abbess may have called the priest because he also exercised a function as a doctor in the community. Thirdly, the abbess may have called the priest because he was vested with some authority or power to exorcise the demon. Of all these, the first seems unlikely given the crowd that had developed around him by the time the abbess returned. The second could be possible given that no females are described as *medici* by Bede, but it is unlikely given that Bede is silent on the priest's status as a *medicus*. The third option thus seems the most probable, that at that particular time, the abbess felt the need to employ the skills of a

[241] *HE*, III.11 [p. 249], quoting Ezekiel XXXIII.15, 19.

priestly exorcist. These priest exorcists were individuals whose use of prayer, the cross, and specific words – the priestly exorcist in Bede's account 'pronounced exorcisms' (*dicebat presbyter exorcismos*) – were believed to counter the assaults of demons, and so offer healing to a possessed individual.

Unction of the Sick and Dying

When encountering the sick and dying, the priest's main responsibility was to prepare the individual for his or her death and the afterlife. The role of the priest at the deathbed therefore consisted in much of what has already been discussed, namely enabling the dying to make their confession, and giving them opportunity to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist, known in this context as the *viaticum*.[242] Theodore's *Penitential* knew the importance of this opportunity for the individual and his safe passage to heaven: first and foremost, he should be given every opportunity to convert. Therefore, if the priest refused 'to baptise a sick person who has been committed to him or on account of the exertion of the journey [declines the body] so that he dies without baptism, he shall be deposed'.[243] Moreover, 'if any presbyter denies penance to the dying, he is answerable for their souls, since the Lord saith,

[242] In many cases, Bede narrated the reception of the *viaticum* as the last thing to occur before an individual's death, *e.g.* in the case of Abbot Benedict, *cf*. *HA*, XIV. Non-sacramental aspects of caring for the sick and dying are treated below, pp. 117 – 125.
[243] *Penitential*, I.ix.7 [p. 193].

"On whatever day the sinner is converted, he shall live and not die"'.[244] If he were baptised, however, the best preparation for a holy death was confession, and reception of the *viaticum*:

> At the end of temporal life we all have the common assurance of one and the same hope when we close our eyes in death, so that having first received the viaticum of the heavenly mystery, we may be confident of finding ourselves very quickly in the true life and of remaining in it forever.[245]

Of further interest here is the anointing of the sick and dying with holy oil. The link between the forgiveness of sins and the imposition of oil on the sick is made in the epistle of James, on which Bede commented.[246] In due course, the Bishop of Rome came to bless oil for use by priests and laity in his diocese, and so the ritual grew. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Bede affirmed his support for this practice in Anglo-Saxon England, claiming that anointing was carried out by the presbyters, but that lay people could also make use of the holy oil.[247] This reflects a development from the idea that 'whilst the benediction of the oil was a liturgical act, its application was not, and its use was directed, as were the prayers for the sick, almost exclusively

[244] *Penitential*, I.viii.5 [pp. 191 – 192].
[245] *De Tab.*, II, lines 256 – 280 [p. 53].
[246] James V.14 – 15. Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, noted the importance of Bede's commentary on James for the understanding of unction later in the mediæval period: 'In the Carolingian Age, Bede was recognized, along with St. James and Pope Innocent, as the authority on extreme unction. Amalarius…, Jonas of Orleans…, Haimo of Halberstadt…, Regino of Prüm…, all cite Bede's comment' (p. 133, n. 199).
[247] *In Ep. VII Cath.*

to the health of the body'.[248] Rites for the sick then became prominent in the second half of the eighth century in the Irish penitential literature, and their structure formed around the mass whilst incorporating an anointing.[249]

In his *Penitential* Theodore also noted the burial practice of the Roman Church, presumably so that this might be replicated in places under his jurisdiction.[250] Theodore's regulations imposed no limits on who might receive funerary rites, other than that the deceased must have been a 'religious man'.[251] The funeral should begin with the anointing of the body with chrism. Following this, a priest would celebrate a requiem mass, then have the body taken to its grave 'with chanting'. Once in the grave, the priest would say a further prayer as the tomb was closed or covered. Importantly, masses would then be celebrated on the first, third, ninth, thirtieth and ('if they wished it') annual anniversaries of death, though in the case of monastics, the abbot retained flexibility in this matter.[252]

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[248] F. Paxton, 'Anointing the Sick and Dying in Christian Antiquity and the Early Medieval West', in *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. S. Campbell, B. Hall and D. Klausner (Toronto, 1992), pp. 93 – 102, here p. 94.
[249] Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual*, pp. 164 – 173.
[250] *Penitential*, II.v.
[251] Presumably one who has been baptised.
[252] Helen Geake presents a useful summary about who might 'control burial' in her 'The Control of Burial Practice in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300 – 1300*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 259 – 269. See also *Penitential* (II.v.1, 2), which details the custom in the Roman church regarding the funereal practices for monks and religious men.

Marriage[253]

If 'for Anglo-Saxon society the primary bond was kinship, and marriage a contractual relation between families; and, indeed, amongst members of the same family', then we may ask what the church and her priests had to do with the institution.[254] Nonetheless, as the early missionaries attempted in a more general way to Christianize Anglo-Saxon society, so they also sought specifically to Christianize its pre-existing practices. Gregory the Great's *Libellus Responsionum*, for instance, demonstrates a very early concern for the marriage bond from Augustine of Canterbury. In this exchange of questions and answers, Augustine sought the Pope's advice concerning what was considered as lawful marriage.[255] Whilst Gregory's answers were clear, the advice they gave appeared not to be heeded by Anglo-Saxon society, for in 672/3, the Synod of Hertford ruled that 'nothing be allowed but lawful wedlock'.[256] This Synod also commented on the appropriateness of divorce: 'let none leave his own wife', the final canon stated, 'except for fornication, as the holy gospel teaches'; and 'if anyone puts away his own wife who is joined to him by lawful matrimony, he may not take another if he wishes to be a true

[253] The secondary literature on marriage in the Anglo-Saxon period seems to have two main focuses: firstly, on women and marriage law; and secondly on the monastic celibacy and the virtue of chastity. On the latter of these, see, *e.g.*, S. O'Sullivan, 'The Image of Adornment in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*: Cyprian and his Influence', *Peritia,* XV (2001), pp. 48 – 57.
[254] Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, p. 38.
[255] *HE*, I.27.
[256] *HE*, IV.5 [p. 353]. Theodore's *Penitential* discussed marriage between a Christian and a pagan: if a pagan puts away his wife and then is then baptised, he is permitted to choose 'to have her or not to have her' (II.xii.18 [p. 210]); and with his bishop's consent a man may take another wife after having been alone for five years (II.xii.20 [p. 210]).

Christian; but he must either remain as he is or be reconciled to his own wife'.[257] It is clear from the persistence of this attitude amongst early Anglo-Saxon sources, then, that the church maintained a rigorist, although not completely inflexible attitude towards marriage, separation and divorce.[258] This, however, need not specifically affect the role of the priest, except in cases in which the priest was seeking a divorce or hoping to remarry, or conversely if a layman who was divorced or remarried was seeking to be ordained. It is similarly unlikely that priests had a role in a marriage ceremony, except perhaps as witnesses to the vows between two individuals. If this were the case, it would exploit the legal role of the priest.[259]

A second question which we should deal with here is the issue of priestly marriage and celibacy.[260] Bede's stance on this was clear: for Bede, 'sexual activity rendered invalid the sacramental power of the priest. To approach the altar after intercourse was to pollute it, a sin that corresponded

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[257] *HE*, IV.5 [p. 353].

[258] *Penitential*, I.xiv.4. Theodore also gave a penance for the breaking of the marriage vow more generally in I.xiv.7.

[259] In early Anglo-Saxon England, priests acted as legal witnesses. They appear to be in a different category when it comes to taking oaths, with the *Laws* of Wihtred, for instance, permitting a priest to 'clear himself by his own asseveration' (XVIII [p. 29]). One canon in Theodore's *Penitential* (I.xiv.1) claimed that the priest ought to perform a mass and offer his blessing, presumably on the occasion of marriage, and afterwards the couple should absent themselves from the church for thirty days. This, however, is an isolated canon and does not seem to be reflected elsewhere.

[260] For a general history of clerical celibacy see C. A. Frazee, 'The Origins of Clerical Celibacy in the Western Church', *Church History*, XLI (1972), pp. 149 – 167. For its application to priests in Anglo-Saxon England, see particularly Cubitt, 'Images of St. Peter'. It is Christopher Brooke's contention that secular marriage was Christianized in the Gregorian reforms of the eleventh century, *cf. The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (Oxford, 1989). These reforms also attempted to deliberately destroy clerical marriage. *cf.* 'Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050 – 1200', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XII (1956), pp. 1 – 21.

to the unforgiveable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit'.[261] Bede stressed instead the canonical position on clerical marriage in *De Tabernaculo*, where he wrote that 'without [chastity], no one can assume the priesthood or be consecrated for the ministry of the altar, that is, unless he will either remain a virgin or dissolve the covenant of union that he has contracted with his wife'.[262] This was reflected in the earlier decrees of Theodore, who in his *Penitential* stated that bishops and priests could be married so long as their marriage had preceded their ordination, and it was approved of by the church.[263] Post-ordination, they were required not to 'indulge in any sexual activity'.[264]

Consequently, we might surmise that there was a divergence between the teaching of the Anglo-Saxon church, which concentrated on the ideals of Christian married life – designed to be permanent, and contracted between two freely consenting parties – and the practice of the early Anglo-Saxons and their priests – which departed from the rigorist line on divorce, and a strong attachment to clerical celibacy, in favour of that which was more socially acceptable and easier to adhere to.

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[261] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 50, *cf.* Carroll, *Venerable Bede,* p. 153; *In Prim. Part.*, I, lines 795 – 803.
[262] *De Tab*., III, lines 1087 – 1093 [p. 140].
[263] In his *Dialogi* (XV), for instance, Ecgberht forbade the ordination to the diaconate, priesthood or episcopate of a man twice married. Theodore's *Penitential* noted that only those who entered into 'acceptable marriage' could be promoted to the higher offices (I.ix.6, 10)
[264] Cubitt, 'The Clergy'.

Ordination[265]

From the third century, the Church recognised eight orders of clergy: four major orders, and four minor orders. In contrast to the lower orders, the episcopate and priesthood found their origins in Christ himself.[266] Whilst on earth, Christ had instructed his apostles to teach, judge and consecrate. 'They had, by their preaching, laid the foundations of the church in all parts of the world'.[267] Bede saw precedence for the priesthood in scripture too, through Christ's appointment of the seventy-two disciples.[268] These were subordinate to the apostles, but 'exercised functions and assumed responsibilities similar to those of the bishop'.[269] Admission to the top three ranks – bishop, priest and deacon, commonly called orders of divine institution – was by ordination, the laying on of hands by a validly ordained bishop.[270] This contrasted appointment to the lower ranks – subdeacon, acolyte, lector, porter

[265] Priests may also have had a role to play in the blessing and consecration of nuns. Theodore's *Penitential* ruled that a priest may consecrate an abbess with the celebration of the mass (II.iii.4), although a bishop was required to perform the mass and blessing at the ordination of an abbot (II.iii.5). This was, according to Theodore, a Greek practice: 'According to the Greeks a presbyter may consecrate a virgin with the sacred veil, reconcile a penitent, and make the oil for exorcism and the chrism of the sick if it is necessary. But according to the Romans these functions appertain to bishops alone' (II.iii.8 [p. 201]).

[266] *De Tab*., III, lines 742 – 751.

[267] Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 81.

[268] *De Tab*., III, lines 742 – 751 .

[269] Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 82.

[270] A tenet of ecclesiastical organisation promulgated by the Council of Neocaesarea in the fourth century, *cf*. M. Lapidge, 'Clergy', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, ed. Lapidge *et al*., pp. 106 – 107. The actual number of orders has been debated across the church's history, particularly whether the episcopate constituted a separate order from the priesthood. I do not attempt to enter this debate here, but for my purpose feel it would be better, as it has been throughout this thesis, to distinguish the episcopate and presbyterate where expedient.

and exorcist, known as orders of ecclesiastical institution – which was conferred by the giving of various instruments of office.[271]

Theodore's *Penitential* makes an interesting assertion that monks were ordained. It is possible that this statement could refer to a monk's ordination as a priest, but this is unlikely given the ritual actions which are said to accompany the ordination, and the possible need for the abbot to be in episcopal orders himself. Instead, it is more likely that the author uses the same verb to refer to the institution of monks as he does clerics. Nonetheless, I have not come across any evidence in the period to suggest that this ordination shared characteristics with priestly ordination, but embodied a distinct rite in itself.[272]

Although Bede advised his bishop that 'it is very necessary that you appoint several assistants for yourself... by ordaining priests', literature of the period demonstrates the exacting standard of life and belief that clerics had to live up to.[273] In Theodore's *Penitential*, apostates are barred from becoming clerics (I.v.2); and in the *Dialogues of Ecgberht* (*ca*. 750), question fifteen

[271] Although references to these 'minor' orders can be observed throughout the literature, neither the narrative material nor the canonical material seems to discuss them at any great length. This would suggest either their infrequency in the early Anglo-Saxon church, or that their orders were so minor as to be negligible.
[272] *Penitential*, II.iii.3, after bishops (II.iii.1) and deacons (II.iii.2). The rites of ordination are not discussed here: references to them in insular literature are few, and so any discussion would have to rely on the Roman *ordines*, which cannot be assumed to have been used in Anglo-Saxon England between the conversion and the Council of *Clofesho* of 747. A number of priests and bishops in this period also received ordination either abroad or at the hands of foreign bishops, such as Wilfrid.
[273] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 5 [p. 854].

specifically addresses those things which prevent 'a man from becoming a priest' and those things for which someone can be 'deposed who has already been ordained'. Ecgberht answered that an ordination is only valid when the individual has committed no serious offense, has no second wife, has not undergone public penance, is not of servile rank, and is free from connections with the court. Clerics are deposed if convicted of idolatry, soothsaying, bearing false witness, murdering and committing acts of fornication, stealing, and perjuring.[274] This literature is silent on the ability to lose one's order – holy order appears as permanent as one's baptism – but instances are recorded when the bishop would be advised to discipline or depose a cleric who has misbehaved. So, for instance, a priest who kisses a woman or touches her is given a forty day penance; a bishop, priest, or deacon who is guilty of fornication ought to be degraded and do penance at the discretion of a bishop; and a priest or deacon who marries a 'strange woman' should be deposed before the people.[275]

Priests in the Care of the Sick and Dying

Theodore's *Penitential* presumed that the sick ate at specific hours. This suggests that care of the sick occurred within the *monasterium*, a community

[274] *Dialogi*, XV.
[275] *Penitential*, I.viii.1; I.ix.1; I.ix.4.

which ran on regular hours and a specific timetable, rather than outside of it.[276] Caring for the sick and dying was considered a normal task in which a *monasterium* engaged, although this work was not necessarily carried out in all *monasteria*.[277] In cases where ordained and non-ordained members of *monasteria* exercised pastoral care in this way, this care did not merely encompass the monastic *familia*, but naturally extended to strangers, as Bede made clear. To enable the exercise of this particular ministry, a *monasterium* would have specific quarters where the sick could be brought in and placed, away from the dormitories of the monks and clergy.[278]

Several factors may contribute to the reason why care of the sick tended to take place within the walls of a *monasterium*. Amongst these we might number the presence of relics, believed to carry healing potential, access to consecrated bread and wine for the *viaticum* in case of death, and the presence of trained *medici*, which were all to be found in these centres of religious devotion.

Visiting the Sick and Dying Outside the Monasterium

Although caring for the sick was therefore not an exclusively priestly task, Bede believed that visiting was part of the role of the clergy. In his *Historia*,

[276] *Penitential*, II.xiv.14.
[277] Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 310, 311.
[278] *HA*, VIII.

Bede listed 'visiting the sick' (*infirmos visitandi*) amongst preaching and baptising as duties which priests and clerics carry out when visiting villages.[279] His commitment to this aspect of pastoral work becomes apparent in narration of the healing of Hildmer's wife in his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*. When compared to the Anonymous *Vita*, from which he took the story, Bede evidently inserted the verb 'to visit' in Hildmer's request to Cuthbert that he might send a priest to help his wife. In the Anonymous, we read instead that Hildmer simply asked for a priest to go 'with him'.[280] Another comparison between the two texts can be made to illustrate this point. Further on in his *Vita*, Bede recounted the arrival of a pestilence which 'brought with it destruction so severe that in some large villages and estates once crowded with inhabitants, only a small and scattered remnant, and sometime none at all remained'.[281] The bishop was described as travelling to bring 'much needed consolation', presumably to the bereaved. In doing so, he enquired of a priest whether anyone required him 'to visit' them. In a similar way to the earlier example, Bede here inserted the verb 'to visit' into the account provided by the Anonymous author. He also moved the focus of the story from the healing of a sick child to the ministry of Cuthbert visiting those needing consolation: whereas in the Anonymous *Vita*, Cuthbert blessed the

[279] *HE*, III.26 [p. 311].
[280] *BVSC*, XV: '*Obsecro quia uxor mea male habet, et videtur iam proxima morti, ut mittas presbiterum qui illam priusquam moriatur visitet…'. Cf. AVSC*, II.8: '*Sed tantum presbiterum aliquem secum mittere, et requiem sepulture deposcebat*'.
[281] *BVSC*, XXXIII [pp. 259 – 261].

child to heal him, in Bede's account, Cuthbert blessed the woman who grieves. This may indicate Bede's conviction about the task of the clergy in conducting what we might now term 'pastoral visits'.

The evidence for priestly pastoral visiting, however, is not as straightforward as at first glance. In another story narrated in the Anonymous *Vita*, Cuthbert was often said to enquire whether anyone in the village he was visiting was ill.[282] His visiting of a particular place therefore did not presuppose the presence of the sick or dying. Instead, even in Bede's accounts, the bishop is often portrayed as on his travels anyway, usually performing his sacerdotal functions, until he stumbles across a sick person somewhat incidentally. In one chapter of Bede's *Vita*, for instance, Bede made it clear that Cuthbert was visiting in order to perform the sacraments of baptism and confirmation; his visits to the sick appear only as a secondary concern.[283] In instances recorded by the Anonymous author as well, the bishop is recorded as travelling in order to convert individuals, whereupon he might be invited into a house and then told about someone's sickness.[284] Although we may be reading too much into the language of Bede and the Anonymous author here, it is possible that priestly encounters with the sick in the early Anglo-Saxon period were often more co-incidental than intentional.

[282] *AVSC*, IV.6.
[283] *BVSC*, XXXII.
[284] *AVSC*, IV.3, 8.

Although arguing from silence presents its difficulties, a passage from Stephen's *Vita Sancti Wilfirdi* is worth noting here. In this text, Stephen praises Wilfrid's virtues, and links them closely to the acts of charity listed in Matthew XXV.31-46, the famous eschatological parable in which Jesus conducts the great assize, separating the sheep from the goats by virtue of their charitable works. To the list provided by Matthew, Stephen added the care of orphans and widows, but omitted the visiting of the sick. Nor is the verb 'to visit' used of prisoners, who are 'redeemed' rather than 'visited'.[285]

The question that now arises is not whether priests offered care for the sick – as an integral part of a *monasterium*, they may have worked alongside the non-ordained community to offer care within the confines of the community. Nor is it whether they offer pastoral care for the sick outside the *monasterium* – Cuthbert's activities on his travels clearly suggest that caring for the sick could happen outside the walls of the cloister. However, we should now question whether priests left the confines of the *monasterium* intending to visit the sick, or whether it is more likely that they left the *monasterium* intending to complete some other task and merely happened to visit the sick as part of this.

This question has the potential to shed light on Bede's narration of Bishop John of Beverley's followers, who were sent to 'seek out some poor

[285] *SVSW*, XI, *cf*. Matthew XXV.31 – 46.

man who was afflicted by serious illness, or in dire need'. [286] If the above is an accurate reflection of early priestly pastoral care, then Bede's recording of this particular act of charity represents an unusual occurrence, and not the norm. In support of this assertion, we should note that seeking out the needy appears only to have happened because it was Lent, and the Bishop needed a focus for his charitable work.

Healing in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church

Healing was often linked by the authors of early Anglo-Saxon texts to the sanctity of a person rather than his or her ecclesiastical grade. It will be important then to distinguish these two elements when attempting to interpret the texts which recount instances of healing in the period. As might be inferred from the role of the *monasterium* in the care of the sick, many Anglo-Saxons, of varying religious and ecclesiastical status were involved in the process of healing. Chief among these were the *medici*.[287]

Medici were individuals found in early Anglo-Saxon *monasteria* with sufficient knowledge to enable them to treat both sick members of, and sick visitors to, the community. Bede claimed that their medicine included the use

[286] *HE*, V.2 [p. 457].
[287] For a useful study on *medici* in the later Anglo-Saxon period, see 'The Early English Healer', in S. Pollington, *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plantlore and Healing* (Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk, 2000), pp. 41 – 67.

of 'compounds and drugs' (*pigmentorum compositione*), and 'fomentations and ointments' (*pigmentorum fomentis*). They also cut and bled individuals if they felt the need to 'drain out… poisonous matter'.[288] *Medici* were found in places where cults existed, including Linsidfarne, which was noted for its physicians.[289] Communities like Lindisfarne would often have had more than one doctor, suggesting that these people were professional physicians living as part of the monastic and clerical community.[290]

Whether *medici* could be priests as well as doctors is disputable. Nonetheless, priests often displayed knowledge of medical issues. The author of Gregory's anonymous life did not find it unusual that Gregory offered advice to a king on how to improve his health. In this case, he advised the king to return to childish food in order to make improvement.[291] John of Beverley offers a clearer example in this regard. His first recorded healing was of a dumb youth, where he employed what might now be described as speech therapy to the child to help him to speak, first instructing him to say 'yes', then encouraging the recitation of the alphabet.[292] Later, Bede wrote that Bishop John came across a nun of Watton, whose arm was swelling. After the *medici* had bled the arm, Bishop John arrived on the scene only to exclaim in outrage that she has been bled at the wrong time: 'I remember', Bede

[288] *HE*, IV.19 [p. 393].
[289] *AVSC*, IV. 17.
[290] *HE*, IV.32.
[291] *AVSG*, XXIII.
[292] *HE*, V.2.

recorded him as saying, 'how Archbishop Theodore… used to say that it was very dangerous to bleed a patient when the moon is waxing and the ocean tide flowing'.[293] By including this, Bede suggested that some clergy at least were keen to pass on medical knowledge to their followers and fellow priests.

Whether priests could be described as *medici* or not, those within a *monasterium* often cooperated with one another to solve a patient's illness. The boy whom Bishop John healed also suffered from a scabby head. So whilst the Bishop taught the boy how to speak, he left the healing of the scabby head to the physicians.[294] Stephen recorded a similar incident in his *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, when he explained the bishop's reaction to a boy who had fallen off a horse. Although the boy's bones were broken, the bishop first prayed and blessed him, and then the physicians bound his limbs. This order could, however, be inverted, so that when physicians failed, the clergy could be shown to succeed.[295] We should be cautious of these descriptions, however, given that the authors who narrated stories of healing do so in the context of narrative history or hagiography; in these instances, their purpose is not the praise of the doctors, but the proving of the sanctity of the individual. Perhaps the best way of understanding the relationship between priests and *medici* then is to see clergy as advisers to the *medici*, as those who prayed for

[293] *HE*, V.3 [p. 461].
[294] *HE*, V.2.
[295] See, for instance, *BVSC*, XXIII [p. 233], where Bede recorded that Ælfflæd 'had long since despised of any help from doctors'.

the healing of individuals and as those who blessed them to support any physical healing that might take place.

Conclusion

Between the mission of St. Augustine in 597 and the Council of *Clofesho* of 747 the church in Anglo-Saxon England underwent a number of fundamental changes in its relationship with wider society which determined the nature of pastoral care in the period, and therefore shaped the role of the priest within this. The evidence cited in the first part of this chapter enables us to imagine 'a more varied ecclesiastical landscape than the usual monastic dominance portrayed in the secondary sources suggests, one replete not only with monastic communities of different sorts but also with bishops and their clergy, local priests and those in lower orders'.[296] Nonetheless, throughout the period we also see the development of the *monasterium* as a centre in which a significant number of priests lived. These *monasteria* acted as bases for priests and monks who would carry out the pastoral care of the people both within and without the monastic complex. One can understand therefore, given the close association of priests and these places, how the secondary literature has confused place and function.[297] Yet we can also see how *monasteria* began to

[296] Barrow, 'Cathedral Clergy'.
[297] See above, Chapter 1.

become the focus for pastoral activity, a theme we will explore in the next chapter.[298]

Importantly, we have been able to distinguish aspects of pastoral care which were carried out by both the ordained and non-ordained alike, for instance preaching and teaching, and the care of the sick and dying, from those aspects of pastoral care which were carried out by priests alone, namely the sacraments, and most especially baptism and the Eucharist. From this we might conclude two things: firstly, that some priests, particularly those who lived and worked in *monasteria*, engaged in non-sacramental aspects of pastoral care in the period; and secondly, that those who weren't ordained to the office of priest did not celebrate the sacraments, although they may have assisted the priest or bishop in doing so. These conclusions hardly seem remarkable, but they provide important context for the changes which were instituted at *Clofesho* in 747.

These conclusions also lead us to ask the question of how important the sacraments were in the provision of pastoral care between 597 and 747. Given our historiographical assessment in the first chapter of this thesis, we must always be wary of drawing broader conclusions from the writings of Bede.[299] However, it seems that he understood the sacraments as an essential, but not a dominating force, within the provision of pastoral care more

[298] See below, pp. 130 – 134.
[299] See above, Chapter 1.

generally. If the redemptive mission of Christ was to continue in the life and work of the church then 'first the listener is to be taught; next he should be imbued with the sacraments of the faith; then according to circumstances he should be more fully instructed in observing our Lord's commandments', for

> It is not possible that anyone uninstructed and ignorant about the Christian faith can be purified by the sacraments of this faith, nor is it sufficient that one be cleansed from his sins in the bath of baptism if he does not strive to devote himself to good works after his baptism. Therefore, he commanded them first to teach the nations, that is, to educate them in knowledge of the truth, and so to baptize them, because *without faith it is impossible to please God,* and *unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God*.[300]

Thus whilst the sacraments seem to Bede to be an essential element in the life of the Christian, the care of the people could not be achieved by the provision of these alone. This affected the position of the priest *vis-à-vis* the wider church: his sacramental task was essential, but not the extent of the pastoral care which the church exercised over the people. This contrasts the emphasis of the canons of the 747 Council of *Clofesho* to which we must now turn.

[300] *Hom*., II.8, lines 78 – 89 [p. 72].

Chapter 3

The Reforming Council of 747

The reforming Council of 747, convened by Archbishop Cuthbert at a place called *Clofesho*, attempted to redefine the nature of pastoral care as it was understood and exercised in early Anglo-Saxon England.[1] Prior to the council, conflicting examples of pastoral care had been practised in different times and places since the arrival of Augustine of Canterbury.[2] The prominence of monks in the first mission to the people of England, together with the foundation and ascendency of a strong and powerful network of *monasteria* effectively placed the pastoral care of the people of England in the hands of abbots rather than bishops. The independence of each foundation, the varying freedom each *monasterium* enjoyed from its local bishop, and the variety of inmates within each cloister, may all have effectively fostered different models of pastoral care throughout the church. A common theme, however, was that pastoral care was able to be practised by both the ordained and non-

[1] Although many references to *Clofesho* can be found in books by authors who write about monastic and clerical life in early Anglo-Saxon England, there is little material specifically on the 747 Council, and that which does exist appears more concerned with the supposed location of the council than its rulings. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, and 'Pastoral Care', provide the best analysis of the canons to date. Works on the location of *Clofesho* include C. Offer, *In Search of* Clofesho*: the Case for Hitchin* (Norwich, 2002), K. Bailey, '*Clofesho* Revisited', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, XI (2000), pp. 119 – 131, and D. Parsons, 'St. Boniface – *Clofesho* – Brixworth', in *Baukunst des Mittelalters in Europa: Hans Erich Kubach zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. F. J. Much (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 371 – 384. S. Keynes, *The Councils of* Clofesho, Vaughan Paper, XXXVIII, Brixworth Lecture, 1993 (Leicester, 1994) presents a useful summary of information known.

[2] Variety of monastic experience is the central tenet of Sarah Foot's thesis in her *Monastic Life*.

ordained alike, and included but was not limited to those tasks which priests alone could do.

Three important figures identified problems with the provision of pastoral care between the Gregorian mission and the council of 747: Archbishop Theodore in the 670s; Bede, writing in the 730s; and the celebrated missionary to the Frisians, Boniface, who communicated with Archbishop Cuthbert in the 740s.[3] Although the immediate circumstances of these three individuals were varied, they each levied criticisms of the state of pastoral provision for the people of Anglo-Saxon England. They also, however, identified how the problems raised by the state of this provision could be remedied, each recommending or implementing the same solution: the appointment of bishops, the better training of the clergy, the convening of a council, and the stronger exercise of episcopal authority. In this way, these three individuals provide an historical context to the council of 747, which occupies the first past of this chapter.

The content of the canons of the council of 747 is analyzed in the second part of this chapter. This demonstrates how the bishops attempted to re-distribute authority for pastoral care in the Anglo-Saxon church, redefining their own responsibilities and improving the lot of the priests who were

[3] Theodore's actions, and the canons of the councils of Hertford (672/3) and Hatfield (679/80), are narrated in Book IV of *HE*: for Hertford see IV.5, and for Hatfield see IV.17; Bede's criticisms can be found throughout his works, for which see discussion below, pp. 139 – 145.

accountable to them, and removing control over pastoral care from the abbots who presided over *monasteria*. In doing so, *Clofesho* provided the Anglo-Saxon church with a single, unified model of care, universally applicable, in which each archbishop, bishop, and priest, had his part to play.

Changes instigated by the Council of *Clofesho* envisaged a new role for the priest in the care of the people of Anglo-Saxon England. The third part of this chapter assesses how the positive role which is envisaged by the council compliments the model priest described by Bede in his commentary *In Ezram et Neemiam*.[4] Just as Bede's reforming prophet hoped to return a wayward people to their God by the restoration of the temple cult with its sacrifices and priesthood, so *Clofesho* hoped to accomplish the same by the restoration of the priesthood of the new covenant, whose function was sacramental and whose character was to be conformed to the life of Jesus Christ.[5]

The Growth of *Monasteria* up to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747

Priests were the ordinary ministers of word and sacrament, so it did not take long after the initial conversion period for some *monasteria*, in which clergy dwelt, to become the focus of pastoral care.[6] This was due to a combination of

[4] *In Ezram.* Secondary literature on Bede's work is listed below, see p. 140, n. 33.
[5] See below, pp. 166 – 173. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church'.
[6] See above, Chapter 1.

factors relating to their foundation in the early stages of the conversion of kingdoms, their acquisition of land and wealth, and petitions for freedom from ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction, all of which continued to intensify their role until the tenth century.[7] The possibility of *monasteria* assuming pastoral care has recently been doubted by authors who attribute the organisation of the *cura animarum* to the bishop.[8] However, the practicalities of diocesan organisation could not compete with the network of established *monasteria*: little could thus prohibit these powerful institutions from practically assuming the cure of souls.

As we discovered earlier in this thesis, *monasteria* played an important role in clerical life. These institutions housed a significant proportion of priests, who were sent out from the cloister to care for the people. This associated pastoral care with the *monasterium* as an institution at an early stage in the history of the church in England. Consequently, as early Anglo-Saxon pastoral care was assumed by *monasteria*, so emphasis was placed on the provision of care in both sacramental and non-sacramental forms. This meant that both ordained priests and non-ordained monks ministered to the people, the former especially (but not exclusively) in the sacraments, and the

[7] Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 286. Note Catherine Cubitt's reservation that only *some* houses exercised pastoral care (*Anglo-Saxon Church Councils,* pp. 116 – 117). Foot details the houses which applied for privileges on pp. 133 – 134 of her *Monastic Life*. For tenth century changes, see S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 224.
[8] Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 277.

latter probably in preaching the Word, and more certainly in charitable work, almsgiving, and caring for the sick.

As the growth in the power of *monasteria* in the early stages of the church in England was due to the acquisition of land and wealth, so an association grew up between *monasteria* and royalty and the rich and wealthy. (To take just one example, Alhfrith granted land to the Abbot Eata at Ripon to build his *monasterium*.[9]) The effect of this endowment was not always positive: 'the value of ecclesiastical land, and the privileges it carried with it, rendered the church's estates particularly liable to exploitation by the unscrupulous and not merely by those who masqueraded as abbots'.[10] Furthermore, although it is hard to determine whether church dues for services such as burials and baptisms were compulsory by this time; they were written about by Theodore in his *Penitential* and in the laws of King Ine and so some form of system of payment probably existed. If these were levied successfully, this would add further evidence for the financial stability and power of the early Anglo-Saxon *monasterium*.[11]

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[9] *BVSC*, VII.

[10] Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 127. Criticism of this problem was taken up by both Bede and Boniface, in their respective letters to Bishop Ecgberht of York and Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, *cf. Ep. Ecg.*, and *Ep.*, LXXVIII.

[11] *Penitential*, II.xiv.9-10; Ine, *Laws*, IV, LXI. Tithe (church-scot) and burial dues (soul-scot) were not made compulsory until Æthelstan's ordinance of 926x930, *cf. Councils & Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church* I: *A.D. 871–1204*, ed. D. Whitelock, *et al.* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 43 – 47, here pp. 44, 46.

Many of the houses found in England such as those at Ely and Whitby, were often in close proximity to royal towns.[12] The power which *monasteria* yielded is acknowledged in their location. As Sarah Foot has observed, 'many early minsters… were founded in or near places of secular administrative importance', such as Aidan's *monasterium* at Lindisfarne, which overlooked the royal town of Bamburgh.[13] These royal connections gave weight to the authority of the monastic superior against the bishop: although ordained members of the *monasteria* were placed under obedience to both their abbot or abbess and their bishop, it was the abbot or abbess who directed their coming and going and who dealt with them on a day-to-day basis. The bishops consequently lost their theoretical monopoly over both their own clergy as well as the *cura animarum*, which properly belonged to their office. As Alan Thacker has summarised:

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[12] There is significant literature on the presence of nuns in Anglo-Saxon England, and on royal abbesses, for instance: P. Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the early Middle Ages', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Barker (Oxford, 1978), pp. 79 – 100; D. Schneider, 'Anglo-Saxon Women in the Religious Life: a Study of the Status and Position of Women in an Early Mediaeval Society' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1985); Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*; S. Foot, *Veiled Women I: the Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, Studies in Early Medieval Britain (Aldershot, 2000); B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*, Women, Power and Politics (London, 2003). See also G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2008).

[13] Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 78, *cf. HE*, III.17. Also see: Thacker, 'Monks', p. 139; J. Blair, 'Minster Churches in the Landscape', in *Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, ed. D. Hooke (Oxford, 1988), pp. 35 – 58; B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977), pp. 70 – 83; A. Angendent, 'The Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons Considered Against the Background of Early Medieval Mission', *Settimane*, XXXII (1986), pp. 747 – 792, here pp. 767 – 777; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', p. 231.

> Although [the bishop's] role as sole dispenser of crucial rites and sacraments and their right to receive *tributum* from their flock was unquestioned, their authority over their own and other communities within their dioceses was less certain. At Lindisfarne, notoriously, the bishop was subject to an abbot within the confines of the *monasterium*.[14]

Such was the state of the Church when Archbishop Theodore landed in England in 669.

The Context of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*

Theodore

The potential for reform of the English church was first realised by Archbishop Theodore, who Bede acclaimed as 'the first of the archbishops whom the whole English Church consented to obey'.[15] Between his arrival in England on 27th May 669 and his death on 19th September 690, aged 88, Theodore implemented reforms that were to change the nature of the church in England. He began his ministry by visiting 'every part of the island where the English peoples lived', in order both to familiarise himself with his new territory, and to exert his authority as metropolitan over a church whose

[14] Thacker, 'Monks', p. 149, *cf. BVSC*, XVI.
[15] *HE*, IV.2 [p. 333]. A summary of what we know about Archbishop Theodore, gleaned from the pages of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as well as the biblical commentaries produced from the Canterbury school, is given by Michael Lapidge in 'Theodore', *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, ed. Lapidge *at al*., pp. 444 – 446. The main study on the archiepiscopate of Theodore is also edited by Michael Lapidge (for full reference see above, p. 101, n. 216). This volume includes works on Theodore's background, archiepiscopate, and influence.

structure had collapsed within the past decade. Vacancies in see at the time included Rochester, Lichfield, Dunwich and Winchester. In addition, London was occupied by an alleged simoniac, Wine, and York was occupied by the uncanonically ordained Chad.[16] Such vacancies, coupled with these additional irregularities would have undermined the 'routine pastoral work of the Church', as the numbers of bishops would have had a direct corresponding impact on the numbers of priests, for whom ordination by a bishop was a necessary precursor to sacramental ministry.[17] Nicholas Brooks' conclusion that we may 'legitimately guess that many local churches and monasteries were without ordained priests and deacons, that the education of the clergy had been interrupted, and that the Christian gospel had ceased to be preached in many areas' is not beyond the realm of possibility.[18]

Theodore proposed a handful of solutions to the problems he found in the English church. To begin with, he filled the sees which had fallen vacant, appointing Putta to Rochester, Chad to Lichfield, Bisi to the East Angles, and Leuthere to Wessex. Importantly, he then summoned synods which both demonstrated and confirmed his authority as metropolitan over the subordinate sees. The first met at Hertford on 24th September 672/3. Here, Theodore asked the bishops of the church to consent to a *liber canonum*, understood to be a pre-existing collection of canons, to which he added ten

[16] Bede identified Wine as a simoniac in *HE*, III.7.
[17] Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 69.
[18] Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 71.

chapters of his own.[19] These *capitula* addressed the rising tensions between bishops and *monasteria*, as well as tensions among the episcopacy itself. Theodore was concerned with the provision of pastoral care in the dioceses, and determined that pastoral care could only be effective if the different layers of the church through which pastoral care took place worked to one aim, each layer assuming responsibility which was proper to itself.[20] The next synod Bede recorded was that of Hatfield, held on 17th September 679/80, convened at Theodore's instruction. In this gathering, the bishops again (although in a more explicit way than at Hertford) affirmed the conclusions of the universal councils of the church (Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II) as well as the council held in Rome 'in the time of the blessed Pope Martin' against the monothelete heresy.[21] Bede suggested

[19] There is disagreement over which pre-existing collection of canons was used, although most authors presume that Theodore presented the collection of Dionysius Exiguus for approval. For a useful discussion, see M. Brett, 'Theodore and Latin Canon Law', in *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. Lapidge, pp. 120 – 140.

[20] *HE*, IV.5.

[21] *HE*, IV.17 [p. 387]. Monothelitism was a seventh-century heresy which professed that Jesus Christ has one will rather than two. The controversy was settled by the Council of Constantinople in 681, which ratified the decisions of earlier synods in Rome. It held that there were two wills in Christ, divine and human. Before being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore had been a monk in Rome and was not unfamiliar with the monothelete controversy: 'In drawing up the *acta* or proceedings of the Lateran Council [of 649, which also condemned the heresy], the pope and his secretariat relied heavily on the advice and learning of the communities of oriental monks then living in Rome, and particularly on Maximus the Confessor himself. The published *acta* of the council contain a list of names of the scholars who participated in this way, and the list… includes the name of *Theodorus monachus*, immediately after the abbots and priests but preceding a list of deacons'. It is possible that Theodore of Tarsus, later Archbishop of Canterbury, was an important theological adviser to the pope in this matter ('The Career of Archbishop Theodore', in *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. Lapidge, pp. 1 – 29, here pp. 21 – 22. For a more detailed overview of Theodore and monothelitism in the same volume see H. Chadwick, 'Theodore, the English Church and the Monothelete Controversy', pp. 88 – 95.)

that affirmation of the English church's opposition to the monothelete heresy was sought from the Pope *via* John, Precentor of St. Peter's and Abbot of the monastery dedicated to St. Martin in Rome.[22] Thus the Pope received confirmation of the English church's allegiance to Rome, whilst Theodore's credentials (previously suspect) were affirmed and his own authority bolstered.[23]

The school of Theodore and Hadrian, begun at Canterbury, also provides evidence for the Archbishop's concern for the pastoral welfare of his people.[24] In this school, the teachers poured into the minds of their students 'the streams of wholesome learning'.[25] Such learning consisted of 'metre, astronomy, and ecclesiastical computation', and employed methods of Biblical study and training which drew from a wide variety of church fathers and teaching.[26] At his school, Theodore produced clerics for the Anglo-Saxon church such as Aldhelm, Albinus, Tobias and Oftfor, each noted for their

[22] *HE*, IV.18.
[23] Theodore was re-tonsured according to the Western practice before being sent to Britain. He also received a travelling companion, who Bede says accompanied him to ensure his conformity to Western practice (*HE*, IV.1).
[24] Michael Lapidge, in his article on 'Theodore of Tarsus' in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), listed Theodore's most important contribution to Anglo-Saxon culture as scholarship, amongst which he included the foundation of his Canterbury school (accessed on 8th January 2013 *via* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27170?docPos=2).
[25] *HE*, IV.2 [p. 333]. See Lapidge, 'School of Theodore and Hadrian'.
[26] *HE*, IV.2 [pp. 333 – 335]. 'The intellectual complexion of the Canterbury commentaries suggests that Theodore's scholarly orientation was derived from his period of study in Constantinople, particularly his interest in philosophy, rhetoric, medicine, computus, astronomy, and astrology' (Lapidge, 'ODNB: Theodore of Tarsus').

successful ecclesiastical careers.[27] Theodore's clergy were also provided with a practical handbook of pastoral care in the form of the *Penitential*, which focused particularly on the moral life of the laity, and how the clergy should minister to them and dealt with likely sins.[28] Both of these advancements of Theodore's indicate the archbishop's desire to resource his clergy well so that they could in turn be effective pastors to the people for whom they cared.

Bede leads us to believe that by swift and decisive action on the appointment of bishops to sees within his jurisdiction, and by the convening of church councils, Theodore brought about in the English church a sense of order and conformity so that the work of the church in the provision of pastoral care to the laity might be more effective. The problems of authority had indeed become so critical by his arrival, that from the canons of the Council of Hertford, we may surmise that the archbishop realised 'that ecclesiastical growth would be much more monastic than diocesan. New sees would continue to be founded, but... by means of monastic networks... [And] as monastic endowments multiplied after 670 it was in the independence, lands, and rights of minsters that ecclesiastical power resided'.[29]

Theodore's reforms strove against this, intending to distinguish monastic from episcopal authority, and the Council of Hertford represents the

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[27] *HE*, *Praef*. (Albinus); IV.23 (Oftfor); V.23 (Tobias). On Aldhelm, see M. Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XXXVI (2007), pp. 15 – 69.
[28] For further resources, see Lapidge, 'School of Theodore and Hadrian', p. 48, n. 17.
[29] Blair, *The Church*, p. 80.

first major step in the attempt by the bishops to regain ecclesiastical power and so maintain control of pastoral care over the laity, which was being loosened from their grip. The immediate effect of these reforms cannot be accurately judged due to lack of evidence. In theory, they aligned the English church with papal policy and with Rome, and thereby stressed both the unity of the church across time and space, and bolstered Theodore's own authority as metropolitan. We remain uncertain, however, whether Theodore's councils were repeated as planned on a yearly basis, and by the time Bede wrote his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, it is clear that the problems which Theodore challenged had not been remedied, and the influence of the monasteries was continuing to cause frustration amongst the episcopate. The archbishop nonetheless laid important foundations for reform of the provision of pastoral care of the people of God, which were to come to a head in the reforms of the mid-eighth century.

Bede

Whilst Anglo-Saxon historians since R. W. Chambers have highlighted the reforming agenda of Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (written on 5th November 734) and, since Plummer, have noted its shared agenda with the Council of *Clofesho* of 747, only recently have scholars begun fully to appreciate the extent to which his concerns about the state of the church of his own day

permeated his other works.[30] In a seminal article on the matter, Alan Thacker noted that a concern for reform was 'key to the understanding of all Bede's later works, not only the commentaries and homilies, but the hagiography and histories as well'.[31] Thacker saw Bede's ideal of reform beginning

> as early as 716, in his Commentary on 1 Samuel, [where] he condemned those *magistri inertes* whose inadequacies allowed compromise with heathen practice. Thereafter he increasingly deplored the lack of the necessary intellect and virtue, the avarice, venality, and indolence of contemporary *doctores* and *sacerdotes*, whose failings left their flocks uncorrected and unsupervised.[32]

Scott DeGregorio has developed Alan Thacker's argument further through several influential articles, arguing that this reform agenda can be perceived in Bede's commentaries, particularly *In Ezram et Neemiam*, *De Tabernaculo*, and *De Templo*, as well as his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[33] DeGregorio has further demonstrated that Bede's concerns intensified in the later 720s. In his early *Expositio Apocalypseos* for instance, Bede wrote that his division of the work to

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[30] R. W. Chambers, 'Bede', Annual Lecture on a Master Mind, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXII (London, 1936), pp. 3 – 30, here p. 19; *Ep. Ecg.*; C. Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historia*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), i, xxxiii– xxxvi.

[31] Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 130.

[32] Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', p. 132 – 133.

[33] S. DeGregorio, '"*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*": The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, XI (2002), pp. 107 – 122; *idem*, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church'; *idem*, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*: A Document in Church Reform?', in *Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), pp. 97 – 107; *idem*, 'Bede, the Monk, as Exegete: Evidence from the Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', *Revue Bénédictine*, CXV (2005), pp. 343 – 369; *idem*, 'Monasticism and Reform in Book IV of Bede's "Ecclesiastical History of the English People"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, LXI (2010), pp. 673 – 687. *Cf. De Tab.*, and *De Temp*.

facilitate easy reading was 'done to abet "the indolence of our nation… which not long ago, that is, in the time of blessed Pope Gregory, received the seed of faith but has cultivated it poorly as far as reading goes"'.[34] He drew attention to similar spiritual slovenliness in his commentaries *In Epistolas VII Catholicas*, *In Lucae Euangelium Expositio*, and his *In Regum Librum XXX Quaestiones*.[35] Such criticisms intensified *In Principium Genesim* and *In Marci Euangelium Expositio*, although it was *In Ezram et Neemiam* which 'above all that such remarks bulk the most heavily'.[36] This commentary lent itself to Bede's agenda well: the story of Ezra-Nehemiah (originally treated as one book) features the return of Jews from the Babylonian captivity, followed by the physical restoration of their temple, and then, importantly, 'the moral and spiritual reform of the wayward post-exilic community'.[37] Bede related this story to 'reform-related issues such as corruption of monastic life and neglect of pastoral care, and this in language… with unmistakable Northumbrian overtones', as DeGregorio goes on to prove.[38]

Bede's criticisms not only intensify throughout his works, but they increasingly focus on problems associated with those in positions of spiritual responsibility. *In Ezram et Neemiam*, for instance, the 'main thrust of the

[34] DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*', p. 112, quoting *Exp. Apoc.*, *Praef.*, lines 140 – 145.
[35] *In Ep. VII Cath.*; *In Lucae*; *In Reg. Lib.*.
[36] DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*', p. 112. *In Princ. Gen.*; *In Marci*.
[37] DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*: A Document in Church Reform?', p. 99.
[38] DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', p. 3.

commentary… is concerned with the teachers and preachers themselves'.[39] These are exhorted to make themselves fit for office so that they might give weight to their spiritual claims.[40] Bishops too are exhorted to rebuke their colleagues and correct wayward teachers, much as the Jewish leaders in Ezra IX rebuked their colleagues for associating with foreign women.[41] DeGregorio also saw a significant parallel between the commentary and the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* in the following passage, which is worth quoting in full. Commenting on Ezra III.8, Bede wrote:

> The reason that these ministers of the word (i.e. the Levites) are said to have been appointed from twenty years old and above is doubtless that those who are to be preferred to preach God's word to the people are those who can not only reveal the Decalogue of the Law through the practice of good works as an example to their hearers, but also keep it unsullied in the sight of their Creator through chastity and integrity of the heart. Nor should we doubt that the state of the Church only makes favourable progress in places where not only do the bishops, duly maintaining their status, ordain teachers of the truth in an orthodox manner to educate the people, but also the people themselves, by diligently hearing and obeying their words, importune the teachers provided for them not to cease from speaking. But alas, it pleases the sloth of our times and injures both old and young – hindering the former from preaching the word, the latter from hearing it, and both groups from putting it into practise – that we ponder less carefully than we should on how bitter was the enslavement to the devil from which we have been rescued or on how great a celebration we have been called to in the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, of which we have already received a pledge in the Church of the present time.[42]

[39] DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*', p. 116.
[40] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1252 – 1257.
[41] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1581 – 1589.
[42] *In Ezram*, I, lines 1452 – 1470.

This statement exemplifies the view articulated by Gerald Bonner, after M. T. A. Carroll, that Bede's concerns were 'more pastoral than claustral', concerning the priests and bishops more than monastics.[43] Nonetheless, neglect of the fundamental Christian calling to contemplation, which priests and monks shared, also had its effects on the success of pastoral work. Thus in both his works *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*, Bede criticised the cupidity of the clergy, their slovenliness when they were meant to be working on behalf of the people, and their ostentatiousness. Living an impoverished spiritual life undermined the capacity for the priest and preacher to be taken seriously by his listeners.[44]

Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* does not, unlike his commentaries, contain such extensive explicit criticisms of the clergy of his own day.[45] Yet DeGregorio is right to note the constraints of genre here: Bede wrote, for the edification of the people, the deeds of good men.[46] Nonetheless, the *Historia* stretched to near the time of the completion of his *Epistola*, and one must wonder to what effect it informed the completion of the book. In fact, we can see that all these good men, including Aidan, Theodore, and Owine, are

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[43] G. Bonner, 'Bede: Scholar and Spiritual Teacher', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 365 – 370, here p. 365; Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, p. 239. *N.B.* DeGregorio's comment ('Bede, the Monk', p. 362) that the linguistic distinction between 'pastoral' and 'monastic' can be unhelpful following recent research. Nonetheless, the sentiment of Carroll's statement remains useful.

[44] *De Tab*., III, lines 136 – 143 [p. 110]; III, lines 869 – 875 [p. 133]; *De Temp*., II lines 595 – 603.

[45] *Cf*. N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London, 2006), pp. 54 – 58.

[46] DeGregorio, 'Monasticism', p. 675, *cf*. *HE*, *Praef*. and above, pp. 18 – 29.

written about in the hope that modern church leaders might absorb their holiness and ecclesiastical abilities, rout out imperfection, and so be able to set the church back 'on track'. Thus Bede described Aidan as an example of virtue in contrast to 'our modern slothfulness'; Theodore appears an example of zeal in a reforming pastor; and Owine the 'antithesis of those laymen' described in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*.[47]

The complaints in the commentaries cultimated in the letter to Ecgberht, bishop (later archbishop) of York, in which Bede identified explicitly the major problems of the church in his day. Although some concern was raised over lay corruption of the monastic life, more dominant in the letter is the lack of provision of pastoral care of the people by their bishops and priests. The corruption Bede identified included a 'general deterioration in the rectitude requisite to [the episcopal] office; neglect of episcopal duties such as preaching and teaching, visitation, and confirmation; [and] unjust taxation of the laity and other forms of clerical avarice'.[48] Bishops and priests were implicated in these, and both were encourage to formulate better morals so that what these people preached with their mouths they might embody in their lives.

[47] DeGregorio, 'Monasticism', pp. 676 – 679, *cf. HE*, III.5; IV.2, 3.
[48] DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church', p. 7, *cf. Ep. Ecg.*, § 4, 5 – 8, 16 – 17.

Bede's solution to such moral decline and its implications for pastoral care was distinctly Theodoran in its encouragement of the use of episcopal – and later, for Ecgberht, archiepiscopal – authority. He insisted that Ecgberht set a good example in both his teaching and life, and he advised the bishop to ordain more priests to help preach and administer the sacraments to the laity. He promoted the teaching of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to monks, clergy and laity alike, and in the vernacular. He advised the implementation of the Gregorian plan of twelve northern sees with York as metropolitan, and recommended the calling of a council to make and confirm these decisions.[49] These envisaged changes were highly institutional in nature. They were to be confirmed by a general council under the auspices of the bishop, working with the secular authority. They would both reinforce Ecgberht's episcopal privileges in pastoral care, and determine that the method by which pastoral care was carried out was fit for purpose, and as resourced as it needed to be, with clergy who led upright moral lives. Some of these plans of Bede's were adopted by Ecgberht, whilst others failed to materialise. Nonetheless, the recommendations were not in vain, but would prefigure developments at *Clofesho* in 747.

[49] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 2, 5, 9, 10.

Boniface

In 747, the Anglo-Saxon missionary to Germany, Boniface, wrote to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury concerning their shared metropolitical duties.[50] 'The work of our ministry is in one and the same cause,' he wrote, 'an equal supervision over Churches and people is entrusted to us, whether in teaching or in reproving or in admonition or in protecting all classes of clergy and laity'. Such duties were distinguished from that of other bishops: 'Our responsibility towards Churches and peoples is greater than that of other bishops on account of the pallium entrusted to us and accepted by us, while they have the care of their own dioceses only'.[51] Thus Boniface established a platform from which he could appropriately advise his fellow archbishop on the need for reform in England, akin to that which he had carried out on the continent. The Council of *Clofesho* of 747 was the result. Yet this desire for reform can be traced further back in Boniface's career, to his early missionary efforts.

Biblical concern for the evangelisation of non-Christians had spurred the missionary Boniface to travel abroad and proclaim the Good News to

[50] Several of Boniface's writings are still extant, including his treatises on grammar and Latin metre (*Ars grammatical* and *Ars metrica*) and his epistles, alongside Willibald's *vita*. For a broad overview of Boniface from English scholars see *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St. Boniface and the Church at Crediton*, ed. T. Reuter (Exeter, 1980).
[51] *Ep.*, LXXVIII [p. 130].

those who shared English blood.[52] Having sought papal approval for this work in a visit to Rome in 719, he made his way back to Frisia through Bavaria, Thuringia and Hesse, where he encountered lots of 'freelance' clergy, who held no allegiance to any diocesan authority.[53] This was Boniface's first introduction to the institutional problems which he would later attempt to remedy. Consequently, having assisted Willibrord with the pagans for three years, Boniface turned his attention to Hesse, where he began to confront remnant pagan customs. During this period, his 'ecclesiastical influence grew against the background of conflict with the Frankish episcopate'.[54] After a subsequent journey to Rome which saw him consecrated bishop he turned his attention to Thuringia to organise the church there. These efforts were recognised by Pope Gregory III in 732, who dispatched the pallium to him. This conferred on the missionary authority to nominate and consecrate bishops as he saw fit; authority which was bolstered when a third journey to Rome in 738/9 resulted in his appointment as a Papal Legate, placing 'the entire Frankish dominions east of the Rhine under his jurisdiction'.[55] On his

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[52] *Ep.*, XLVI. *Cf.* the recent discussion of James Palmer, 'Saxon or European? Interpreting and Reinterpreting St. Boniface', *History Compass*, IV/V (2006), pp. 852 – 869, here pp. 852, 854. For literature on the history of missions to the continent, see: W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946); J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'A Background to St. Boniface's Mission', in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 35 – 48; and more recently J. T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World 690 – 900* (Turnhout, 2009).

[53] N. Proksch, 'The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries on the Continent', in *Monks of England: the Benedictines in England from Augustine to the Present Day*, ed. D. Rees (London, 1997), pp. 37 – 54.

[54] Proksch, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries', p. 43.

[55] Proksch, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries', p. 44.

return to Germany, Boniface employed these new powers in order to re-organise the church in Bavaria, first by calling a synod, and then noting the deficiencies in clergy training, and creating new dioceses in Hesse, Thuringia and Eastern Franconia, to which he appointed three of his own countrymen. After much effort, and the calling of a council, 'the episcopal organisation of the German Church east of the Rhine, so far as the Frankish dominions extended, was completed by 741'.[56] Boniface now had eight suffragans under his authority.

The death of Charles Martel in 741 heralded a new era of ecclesiastical reform in the Frankish territories. The kingdom was divided between Charles' sons, Pippin III, who controlled the west, and Carloman, who controlled Austrasia and the east, both of whom adopted Boniface's zeal for church reform. Ecclesiastical law and custom gained a new importance sponsored by the state, 'whereas these had lost ground in the Frankish Church during the struggle of the factions for power'. As Levison wrote, 'Restoration of the old order became the aim, a Carolingian "Renaissance" in the sphere of the Church'.[57] Carloman became particularly enthused with Boniface's ideas, and on 21st April 742 convened the *Concilium Germanicum*, the outcome of which was that of an ecclesiastical synod, but the decrees of which were enforced by

[56] Levison, *England*, p. 81.
[57] Levison, *England*, p. 83.

Carloman.[58] This synod not only brought the church together after a period of fracture and independent pastoral activity, but in its decrees stressed the unity of the church over which the bishop presided, and the king ruled. Rulings were made concerning lax pastoral care. As in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, bishops were encouraged to make pastoral visitations, and discipline improper clergy.[59] Boniface's concern was for the pastoral care of the laity, who had suffered from a negligent clergy. His solution was both institutional and episcopal.

For Boniface, the *Concilium Germanicum* of 742 was a useful step towards a similar meeting for the western part of the kingdom at Soissons in 747. This was quickly followed by a synod of the whole realm, the decrees from which were made known to Boniface's contemporary at Canterbury, Archbishop Cuthbert; he was encouraged to identify any problems in his own province and act accordingly.[60] Textual comparisons of the 747 Bonifacian council and that of *Clofesho* demonstrate a close parallel between the content, some of which is copied from Boniface's letter *verbatim*.[61]

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[58] Levison, *England*, p. 84. For the decrees of the *Concilium Germanicum* see *Concilia aevi Karolini*, ed. A. Werminghoff, MGH, Legum III, Concilia, Tomi I, Pars I (Hanover and Leipzig, 1906).

[59] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 9, *cf. Concilium Germanicum*, III.

[60] *Ep.*, LXXVIII. Here, Boniface set out his metropolitical mandate, which he encouraged Cuthbert to adopt.

[61] A helpful synopsis of the debate surrounding this is given by Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils,* p. 102. Boniface also wrote to King Æthelbald expressing his disapproval over royal misconduct towards the church (*Ep.*, LXXIII).

Boniface's reforms of the church in Germany, from their humble missionary beginnings to Carloman's *Concilium Germanicum* therefore offer a further insight into the context in which reform occurred in England in the mid-eighth century.[62] Not only are there strong historical links between the two through the correspondence of Boniface, but there exists underlying themes, of which the most important is the question which the synods address: the provision of pastoral care for the people. As with the changes instigated by Theodore in England in the previous century, Boniface's reforms targeted a lax clergy and a disorganised church. The key to re-engaging with the people was the appointment of more bishops, the emphasis of metropolitical authority (bestowed by the papacy), and the convening of councils, which turned pluralistic and syncretistic expressions of the Christian religion into a unified whole.[63]

The Pastoral Problem and the Conciliar Solution

The Southumbrian church we find in 747, like that in the north, was ripe for reform. Tensions had risen between the laity and religious, and the pastoral

[62] This is demonstrated by the aforementioned textual link, explained by Cubitt in her *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 103, where she offers in parallel columns evidence from the Bonifacian correspondence, the *Concilium Germanicum* decree of 742, and the *Clofesho* decree of 747. Cubitt considers other hypotheses in p. 103, n. 10, and offers a defence of her own argument in light of these.

[63] The continued effect of the Romanization of the church in Germany is noted by Proksch, 'Anglo-Saxon Missionaries', p. 48, and discussed by Palmer, 'Saxon or European?', p. 858.

care of the church was being adversely affected by conflict between dioceses and *monasteria*. If the precise criticisms previously levied by Theodore were still apparent – and we know that, despite Theodore's efforts to perpetuate his reforms through the school at Canterbury and the resources he provided in the councils and in his penitential literature, Bede identified similar problems in the church of his own day – then the pastoral care of the laity was being neglected. At the heart of Theodore's changes, of Bede's criticisms, and of Boniface's reforms, was the same desire we find in *Clofesho*: the desire to provide adequate pastoral care for the laity. The themes identified by Theodore in the 670s, Bede in the 730s and Boniface in the 740s in Germany, were present in the Southumbria of 747 too: there weren't enough ministers to complete the tasks at hand, and of those who were ordained, many appear to have grown cold of their faith and lacked the skills to minister effectively to the people.

Just as common themes concerning the context for *Clofesho* can be located in the life and work of Theodore, Bede and Boniface, so too did the solution present itself from these examples. To counter the Southumbrian problems, Cuthbert would call a council. It would assert his authority as archbishop, re-claim pastoral care for the episcopate, emphasise the catholicity and unity of the church against the individualism of the *monasteria* and individual sees, and contextualise an insular Christianity in the wider

framework of the catholic faith, which looked to Rome as its centre. The church in Anglo-Saxon England was on the brink of major reform, and its priests were to be the vehicles whereby pastoral care would be delivered once more to the people of God.[64]

The Redistribution of Authority

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, Theodore, Bede and Boniface were all concerned with the proper provision of pastoral care in the English church. Yet the encroachment of monastic authority in the church provided an added difficulty for the bishops if they were to effect reform. Various options presented themselves: one possibility was to follow the advice in Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* and simply to exert archiepiscopal authority in order to remedy problems (this might have been easier to achieve in the south as Bishop Ecgberht of course needed to apply for the pallium); a second possibility might have been possible in a more considered appeal to Rome, after the example of Wilfrid. Yet the former was unlikely given the monastic powers which surrounded Archbishop Cuthbert, and the latter (if indeed possible) would present pragmatic difficulties. The best precedent Cuthbert had for the successful re-distribution of power around the church was in

[64] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 122.

Theodore's councils, and so in 747, Cuthbert convened his fellow bishops at *Clofesho*.

Empowering the Archbishop

One of the aims of the council was the re-distribution of power in the Anglo-Saxon church, and in particular the removal of authority and power from *monasteria* and monastic superiors, in order to place it in the hands of the bishops. In order to achieve this, Theodore needed first to assert his own archiepiscopal privilege, namely the obedience of his inferiors. This would only be possible: firstly, if the *acta* of the council were widely known; and secondly, if they had legal force.

To the first point, Theodore ensured that he drew his council from several groups within church, bishops, priests, and those referred to as 'lesser dignitaries'.[65] These included all but one of Cuthbert's suffragans.[66] Given the context which we have outlined above, it is important to ask whether this group included abbots from the province. Unfortunately, however, this can't be ascertained. Whilst it remains a possibility, no abbot is listed amongst those present (unless they were considered as 'lesser dignitaries', which is far

[65] '*et minoribus quoque ecclesiastici gradus dignitatibus*' (*Clofesho*, *Praef*. [p. 242]).
[66] The bishops of Rochester, Selsey, Sherborne, Winchester, Worcester, Hertford, Leicester, Lichfield, Lindsey, Dunwich and London were present; only the Bishop of Elmham appeared to be absent, *cf.* Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 41.

from conclusive), and according to Theodore's *Penitential*, a bishop could not force an abbot to attend his synod without good reason anyway.[67] Nonetheless, Cuthbert made provision for the rulings of the council to be disseminated to diocesan synods, on which the council believed abbots sat.[68] Consequently, whether the abbots were present or not in *Clofesho*, Cuthbert made the conciliar decisions widely known in order that individuals might be aware of the decrees and therefore have no excuse not to obey them.

In her study on *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, Catherine Cubitt made a distinction between councils called by an archbishop, such as the Council of Hertford, and councils summoned by royal right, such as the Synod of Whitby.[69] One difference between these types of council concerns the legal force which can be applied for non-compliance, and the weight which decisions seemed to hold. If Cuthbert were aiming for a council with binding authority, he would want to include the secular authorities to improve his chances of successful reform. Yet in discussions of pastoral care, he would also not want his own ecclesial authority challenged by an intrusive secular lord, whose motivations may well have been very different to his own. Neither an entirely ecclesial synod nor an overtly secular synod would be useful, and so he adapted the model employed at the Council of Hertford. The contexts were fairly similar: as would be seen in the church around the

[67] *Penitential*, I.ii.3.
[68] *Clofesho*, XXV.
[69] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 6.

time of the council of *Clofesho*, provision of pastoral care in the 670s was irregular and in need of reformation. This was because of two power struggles which prompted Theodore to convene the council at Hertford in 672/3. The first was (as Cuthbert found) the struggle between episcopal and monastic groups within the church. The second was the struggle between the church as a whole and the secular authorities.[70] Theodore inherited a church where bishops were vulnerable on both accounts, and he managed to strengthen the episcopate through Hertford by calling an ecclesial council *witnessed to* by a secular ruler. *Clofesho* therefore had the strength of Hertford – an ecclesiastical synod supported by the king. In this way, *Clofesho* fits into what Cubitt terms councils in which ecclesiastical and royal boundaries were 'blurred'.[71]

The effect of this merger of archiepiscopal presidency and royal witness was two-fold: firstly, it retained the ecclesiastical importance of the council and secured it from any secular takeover; and secondly, the presence of royalty added greater legal force to the council's rulings. With the presence of the king, both those present and those absent had to take heed of the decision. Consequently, by ensuring that the *acta* of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*

[70] The tensions between the secular authorities and the church were commented on by Bede in his works, particularly the *Epistola*. Boniface's letter to Æthelbald makes clear that such problems were acute at the time of the Council of *Clofesho* of 747 (*Ep.*, LXXIII). For the Council's attitude to this problem, see for instance cc. XXVI and XXX, and the commentary by Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 110 – 113.
[71] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 7, 53.

were widely propagated among the province, and made enforceable by the added weight of the secular authority, Cuthbert completed the first necessary step of reform, improving his own archiepiscopal standing and power over the church over which he presided.

Empowering Bishops

The thirty canons of *Clofesho*, which represent ambitious reform in every area of church life, can be divided into canons affecting bishops (one to seven), priests (eight to twelve on priestly ministry, followed by thirteen to eighteen on liturgy) and monks (nineteen to twenty-four) respectively.[72] The first group of canons, concerning the episcopate, made three important statements about episcopal authority. Firstly, they re-affirmed that the *cura animarum* properly belonged to the bishop, requiring him to be ready 'to defend the pastoral charge *entrusted with him*'.[73] This required bishops to be aloof from secular affairs and filled with good manners and virtues, ready to 'reform the people of God by their example, and instruct them by the preaching of sound

[72] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 99. Canons XXV to XXX are miscellaneous rulings.
[73] '*Ut unusquisque episcoporum curam sibi pastoralem creditam…*' (*Clofesho*, I [p. 243]).

doctrine'.[74] Practically, bishops were urged to visit their dioceses annually in order to teach individuals and confirm candidates.[75]

The second effect of the council on episcopal authority came in the proposed relationship between the bishop and the abbots and monastic houses in his diocese. Canons four to six emphasise that bishops have authority over *monasteria*, and that they must admonish abbots and abbesses to set a good example to their *familia*.[76] Bishops were for the first time granted authority to visit *monasteria*. This had been forbidden by the third canon of the Council of Hertford.[77] *Monasteria* subject to episcopal visitation included those of which Bede disapproved in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. Previously these had been rejected by the bishops as ungodly institutions. Now, for the sake of the unity of the church and the proper provision of pastoral care, including to their own inmates, they were to be brought within the purview of the episcopate. Moreover, *Clofesho* also justified episcopal interference in *monasteria* whatever the land status of the particular establishment – as noted above, minsters had previously attempted to evade episcopal control by

[74] *Clofesho*, I [p. 243].
[75] *Clofesho*, III. This, of course, was not a new task for the episcopate. However, the criticisms levied by Bede and others indicate that whether for practical reasons or slovenliness, visitations did not happen in the run up to the Council. The precise words of the canon reminded the bishops that visitations were a practical necessity in the exercise of the pastoral care which was theirs.
[76] *Clofesho*, IV.
[77] *Clofesho*, V.

obtaining papal privileges.[78] Now, the bishops had license to impose themselves on all monastic institutions within their diocese.

A third effect of the council concerns the relationship between the bishops and their priests. Previously, as noted above, priests owed obedience both to their bishop and to their abbot or abbess. The council did not alter this fact, but insisted on a change of balance. Whilst clergy would still reside in *monasteria*, their first obedience would not be to the superior with whom they spent their days, but to the bishop, who might or might not visit the institution regularly or even maintain any contact with his clergy. Nonetheless, they were his priests first and foremost, and members of the monastic community second. The force of this recommendation is illustrated by the emphasis in canon six on the role of the bishop in the selection of candidates for ordination to the priesthood. Here, bishops were enjoined to investigate the candidate's former life, their present manner, and their knowledge of the faith. Candidates could not be ordained until the bishops had verified that they had studied enough to preach sound faith, give knowledge of the word and direct others in penance.[79]

The Council of *Clofesho* consequently upheld the right of the bishops to their cure of souls over and against the monasteries, provided bishops with the legal support for visiting and ruling on *monasteria* within their dioceses,

[78] See Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 133.
[79] *Clofesho*, VI.

(whatever the former status of that institution as regards the law) and asserted that a priest's first allegiance was to his bishop and not his monastic superior. This latter point was essential for ensuring the permanence of the council's rulings.

Empowering Priests

The most significant rulings of the 747 Council of *Clofesho* concerned the role of the priest in the provision of pastoral care to the people, for it was by redefining pastoral care along sacramental terms that power was given to clergy, and it was by this that the authority and power previously held by *monasteria* came to be associated instead with the bishops. The council ruled that priests must be mindful of their high calling, avoiding secular affairs. They should discharge their service at the altar with the highest attention. They must look after the *domus oratorii* and all that belongs to the service of the altar, and be vigilant in reading, prayer, the saying of mass and the recitation of the psalms.[80] In addition, they should be diligent in baptising, teaching and visiting, shunning drunkenness, avarice and unfitting talk.[81] They should achieve this by knowing the rites of the church; and those priests who were ignorant of Latin must learn to translate and explain the Lord's

[80] *Clofesho*, VIII.
[81] *Clofesho*, IX.

Prayer, Creed and the words used at the mass and in holy baptism.[82] Such was the sacramental understanding of pastoral care, and of the role of the priest envisaged by *Clofesho* in 747. We should note the high importance placed on the rituals of mass and baptism, and the link between the priest and the altar, all of which have been themes which we have previously identified in the church before the council. Here, however, the bishops at *Clofesho* envisage these as central to their conception of pastoral care.

The Council located this understanding of pastoral care in the wider theology of the *cura animarum*, as discussed above. As the cure belonged to the bishop, so the pastoral care – the saying of mass, the baptism of individuals, the recitation of the psalms, the reading of scripture, and the teaching and visiting – was done on behalf of the bishop. The priest's first allegiance was to his bishop, and he should only help an abbot or abbess 'whensoever there seems to be an occasion for it', *i.e.* when the priest was asked to perform his priestly tasks of 'admonishing, reprehending, and exhorting his subjects'. [83] Rather than being attached to their *monasterium*, priests would use this as a base from which they could minister to a specific

[82] *Clofesho*, X. Priests were not necessarily expected to translate and interpret these things for the laity, but should be able to give account of them to their bishop, *cf. Concilium Germanicum*, III, in which Boniface's synod determined that bishops would test that priests fulfilled those obligations annually every Lent (*Ep.*, LXXVIII).
[83] *Clofesho*, VIII [pp. 246 – 247].

area of the bishop's diocese, perhaps the first instance in legislation of this sort.[84]

As an important counter-weight to these rulings on priests, the council encouraged all people to make greater recourse to the sacraments. Canon fourteen interestingly insists that priests should remain in their churches on Sundays, and that other individuals should attend the church, to hear mass as well as scriptural readings and sermons. This reverses the procedure exemplified in the conversion period – whereby priests had to go out to the people.[85] Now, the people were expected to come to the priest, at his church, to hear his mass, and to communicate as frequently as they could.[86]

Re-defining pastoral care along sacramental terms, and understanding it as a delegated cure from the bishop, made priests the most important vehicles for the reform of the church in the mid-eighth century. According to the model of pastoral care envisaged by the bishops, priests would become powerful servants of their cause over and against the institution of the *monasterium*.

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[84] *Clofesho*, IX. The development of the parochial system has been discussed widely in secondary literature. An overview of these discussions is provided by Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 285 – 291.

[85] See above, pp. 30 – 40.

[86] *Clofesho*, XXIII, *cf*. Cubitt, 'The Clergy', p. 283.

Containing the Monastic

In contrast to the decrees which affirmed the role of the bishop and his priests in the reformed church envisaged by *Clofesho*, decrees were also issued by the bishops to limit the role and function of *monasteria*. As pastoral care had now been re-defined on sacramental terms, so monks had no active role to play in the care of the people. Indeed, the only monastic functions listed by the council were to pray for kings, and to say the daily office.[87] Abbots and abbesses were additionally asked to ensure devotion to study in those in their care, and their continued role in educating clergy was stressed. The Council of *Clofesho* envisaged that *monasteria* should be places not of pastoral care, but of devotion to the ascetic life, to the monastic rule, to prayer and to the education of the clergy.[88]

The limitation of the role of monks to these things was supported by rulings on the interaction of monks with lay people. Canon twenty-nine ruled that professed religious must live in religious communities, and not dwell with laymen. Similarly, canon twenty asserts that laymen should not frequent monasteries nor imbibe them with their bad habits or worldly pleasures. *Clofesho* removed from monks any duty to care for the people, and forced them to remain separate so that they might focus their attention on God. To prevent further corruption, the growth of *monasteria* would also be curtailed,

[87] *Clofesho*, XXX.
[88] *Clofesho*, XIX, XXVIII, IV, VII.

limited to what a monastery's land could cope with. And in a startling intrusion of the episcopate into the monastic, bishops were even given more say in the selection of candidates for the monastic life.[89]

The Reformed Church

The Anglo-Saxon church before the Council of *Clofesho* was based on two overlapping structures, that of the dioceses and that of the monasteries. The practice of priests residing in *monasteria* together with increasing financial and royal endowment up to the mid-eighth century had pushed the bishop and his diocesan structure from the centre of the provision of pastoral care in the Anglo-Saxon Church to its sidelines. Aimed at 'creating a division between the life of the seculars and that of the religious', Cuthbert's reforming council in 747 hoped to restore the bishops to the place which they considered to be their right.[90] How far any of the disciplinary measures were enforceable is extremely hard to know. However, the re-envisaging of the role of priests within the church, which the council initiated, would contribute to the endurance of the council's ideas. In 747, the bishops of the English church, under the presidency of Cuthbert and in the presence of the king, redefined pastoral care from the loose definition which had enabled monks and nuns to

[89] *Clofesho*, XXIV, XXVIII.
[90] Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 101.

take a central role in care of the people, to a more sacramental definition which ensured that, through the clergy, the *cura animarum* would be properly understood as a prerogative of the bishop.

Pastoral care may have had continuous attributes in the early Anglo-Saxon period, but the shift in emphasis supplied by the conciliar movement led to an effective redefinition. This solidified ecclesiastical roles which had been more open and fluid in earlier years, and had substantial implications for the place of all those who were not authorised to carry out sacramental functions, especially women, foreign clergy, and those who did not hold a license from a bishop.[91] Episcopal control was consequently strengthened and reinforced by the re-constitution of the priesthood as the prime focus of sacramental ministry.

What constituted pastoral care in the Anglo-Saxon period continues to be debated. Traditionally, authors have understood pastoral care sacramentally – a view maintained in recent years by Giles Constable, who described the *cura animarum* as the 'pastoral activities of administering the sacraments, especially baptism and the eucharist, imposing penance and preaching'.[92] Foot successfully challenged this, and widened the definition to

[91] Nuns were involved in pastoral care from the foundation of *monasteria* in England: one thinks of the examples, say, of Hild or Leoba.
[92] Constable, 'Monasteries', p. 353.

include some aspects of charitable work, almsgiving, and caring for the sick.[93] However, working in the same volume of collected essays, Cubitt convincingly argued that pastoral care was a sacramental endeavour.[94] Foot's and Cubitt's articles are consequently hard to reconcile, especially given the proximity of Bede's writings in the 730s to the 747 council which provided Cubitt's focus. However, Cubitt's opening words provide the necessary hermeneutical key: 'The concept of pastoral care is not a simple one with a fixed definition'.[95] Instead, the church in Anglo-Saxon England operated with several different models of pastoral care. These became the focus of attention at the council of *Clofesho*, and a useful tool in the power struggles which lay behind the *acta*.

Historians thus far have approach pastoral care with their own fixed definitions. Cubitt made a first step out of this model by stating her belief that pastoral care was a flexible idea: this section has reassessed the evidence, and noted how the definition of pastoral care was indeed flexible, and that it changed between the advent of *monasteria* and the great reforming council held at *Clofesho* in 747. Through this council the bishops of the English Church redefined pastoral care along sacramental terms, and attempted to restrict the power of *monasteria* to what they considered to be their proper realm. As they

[93] Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters', *cf*. her *Monastic Life*, p. 332.
[94] Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care'.
[95] Cubitt, 'Pastoral Care', p. 193.

had the ability to perform the sacraments, priests were effectively used as pawns in the bishops' struggle against the power of the *monasteria*.

Consensus was therefore reached as to the proper allocation of authority: the archbishop's metropolitical authority was bolstered by the calling and implementation of the council; the bishops received back their cure, which they had practically forfeited to *monasteria*; the priests became the sole vehicles for the provision of pastoral care in its newly-defined form; and the abbots, abbesses and monks of England were ushered back behind the cloister walls, representing a first step in the cloisterisation process and the demise of the Anglo-Saxon double house.[96] This is how the peace of the church was envisaged in the second canon of the council's decrees could be achieved. While all were 'fellow-servants in one ministry', each minister had his place and role within the ecclesial economy.[97]

Bede's Model Priest in the Reformed Church Envisaged by *Clofesho*

Just as this thesis began with Bede, so it is fitting that one whose writings have been so important for our own understanding of the history of the early Anglo-Saxon period should feature at its end. In our opening chapter we explored how Bede's historical writings reflected the context of his own day –

[96] *Cf*. Foot, *Veiled Women*, pp. 62 – 84.
[97] *Clofesho*, II [p. 244].

that he saw the church of the 730s as failing the people in the provision of pastoral care.[98] In the second chapter, we used Bede's writings to discern what Bede's account appears to have revealed of pastoral care for the early Anglo-Saxons, and where the priest might have fitted into a scene dominated by monks and *monasteria*.[99] Earlier in this chapter, we demonstrated how Bede's writings, particularly but not exclusively his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, may have contributed to a growing sense that reform of the English Church was desirable.[100] It was in this letter that Bede also suggested how these reforms might practically be achieved: he advocated the calling of a council, the exertion of archiepiscopal authority, and the reform of the monastic and priestly orders.[101] Bede's writings consequently made both positive and negative contributions to the reform agenda: he was quick to point out the faults of contemporary society, and equally able to paint a realistic picture of the sins and failures of the contemporary church. However, his narratives and commentaries also displayed a level of idealism which was designed to inspire those who job it was to instigate reform.[102]

Archbishop Cuthbert convened the Council of *Clofesho* in 747 aware of the pastoral challenges which were presented to him. In case he was in any doubt himself, these had been articulated to him explicitly by Boniface, who

[98] See above, Chapter 1.
[99] See above, Chapter 2.
[100] See above, pp. 139 – 145.
[101] *Ep. Ecg.*, § 10.
[102] *Cf. HE*, *Praef.*

demonstrated the failings of the English Church to care for the people.[103] In order to overcome this, Cuthbert emphasised that the *cura animarum* properly belonged to the episcopal order, and he set about re-defining the contemporary understanding of pastoral care (which had overwhelmingly endorsed the role of *monasteria*) in order to make it more focused on the sacraments. This opened up a new role for priests in the post-*Clofesho* church. What were these priests to be like? Just as the impetus for reform can be somewhat attributed to the criticisms Bede levied of his age, so too in the *Clofesho* material we can discern a positive Bedan influence. In particular, Bede was able to provide a model for priestly ministry in his writings about the priestly-scribe Ezra.

Bede's In Ezram et Neemiam *and the Restoration of the Cult*

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, now separate in our Bibles, were considered as a single volume by Bede.[104] Together, they told the story of the reconstruction of the second temple and the restoration of the cult and community surrounding it.[105] Scott DeGregorio, whose research has drawn strongly from Bede's Ezra-Nehemiah material, perceived the book to be divided into three sections, 'each involving a return from exile and projects of

[103] *Ep.*, LXXVIII, *cf.* Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 113 – 122.
[104] See above, p. 140, n. 33.
[105] For general works on Ezra-Nehemiah see L. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, MA, 1986), pp. 330 – 345, and L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (London, 1998), pp. 11 – 68.

restoration and reform'.[106] Chapters one to six record the first Jewish exiles returning to Judah in order to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, which began with the erection of the altar. In chapters seven to ten, Ezra leads back a second group of exiles to restore the Jewish community 'in accordance with the teaching of the Torah'.[107] In the Nehemian material which follows, the prophet is granted permission to return to Jerusalem to restore its walls and purify the community through the implementation of the law.

Bede elucidated his purpose in his commentary of the Ezra-Nehemiah material at the beginning of his work. He wrote that just as the prophet Ezra explained how the projects of restoration and reform occurred, so he wanted

> to relate some episodes from this book and, so far as the Lord will grant, to expound them according to the spiritual sense so that it may be more clearly disclosed how those who have perished due to negligence and error should be brought back to repentance, by how much grace of God and by how much effort of their own pardon ought to be sought and procured for the sins they have committed, and how these same penitents together with those who have recently come to the faith should build one and the same house of Christ and together look forward to the ceremonies of its dedication in the future.[108]

A number of points are clear from this passage. Firstly, Bede understood the problems of Ezra's day to be similar his own: that people had fallen into

[106] S. DeGregorio, 'Footsteps of His Own: Bede's Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Innovation and Tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, pp. 143 – 168, here p. 146.
[107] DeGregorio, 'Footsteps', p. 146.
[108] *In Ezram*, I, lines 80 – 88 [p. 9].

negligence and error through the behaviour of their pastors.[109] Secondly, Bede understood the solution to this to lie in bringing these people back to God. Thirdly, Bede believed that this repentance, or turning back to God, could only happen through the forgiveness of sins. And fourthly, such reconciliation could only happen through the cult which was administered by priests. Just as in Ezra's time so for Bede, the restoration of the cult with its priesthood was the solution to the spiritual problems of the age.

Priests and the Provision of the Sacraments

According to Bede, the restoration of the cult in Ezra-Nehemiah managed to turn the people back to God; so the sacraments had an important role to play in the process of the restoration of the people of Bede's own day. As Bede wrote: 'Our Lord and Saviour desired to open for us the door of salvation in the right side of his body, through the sacrament of which we may be cleansed and sanctified and able to enter the lofty court of the heavenly kingdom'.[110] Thus Bede presented to us a three-part system for restoration, in

[109] Ezra-Nehemiah refers to some as 'ejected from the priesthood'. These are 'ministers of the altar themselves' who reminded Bede of those in his own day who 'fall into such great crimes and such serious heresies that, although by repenting they can recover the salvation of their souls, they can no longer become worthy to be promoted to the sacerdotal grade which they have lost, or recover the job of preaching the Gospel or administering the sacraments' (*In Ezram*, I, lines, 611 – 618 [p. 30]).
[110] *In Ezram*, II, lines 516 – 519 [pp. 98 – 99].

which baptism cleanses, penance revivifies, and the Eucharist sanctifies, in order to make God's people his own.

The way in which the Christian cult provided for the restoration of the people was primarily through the forgiveness of sins. With this in mind, Bede suggested the importance of baptism in creating new Christians, which he believed to deliver the individual from his sins.[111] Moreover, after baptism, when the people fell into sin and death again, the Christian would be able to come to life again by repentance, which returned him or her to the fold of the church through the performance of the sacrament of reconciliation. This was a particular duty of a particular office: whilst those Bede called preachers could expound the word of God and convict people of their offences, only priests had the authority to absolve. This was due to the priesthood they shared with Jesus Christ, who is 'the true priest according to the order of Melchizedek – a priest because he cleanses us from our sins through the sacrificial offering of his body and even now, after his passion and ascension, intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father'.[112]

The sacrificial offering of Christ's body on the cross was, of course, articulated most strongly in the celebration of the Eucharist. Bede referred to this when he wrote that

[111] See above, Chapter 1.
[112] *In Ezram*, I, lines 914 – 921 [pp. 41 – 42].

> he who died on behalf of our own sins might rise for our justification. This was aptly done at the time of evening sacrifice… because the Lord at the end of the age offered the sacrifice of his own flesh and blood to the Father and ordered that it should be offered by us in bread and wine.[113]

Just as the re-building of the priestly Sheep Gate in Ezra-Nehemiah was the first practical step in the re-introduction of the cult, so Bede related that buildings fit for the worship of God in Anglo-Saxon England should not be empty but staffed with clergy: 'priests and Levites [should] be straightaway ordained to serve in [the church]… for there would be no point in having erected a splendid building if there were no priests inside to serve God'.[114] Bede heightened the contemporary application of this, claiming that this point 'should be impressed as often as possible on those who, though founding monasteries with brilliant workmanship, in no way appoint teachers in them to exhort the people to God's works but rather those who will serve their own pleasures and desires there'.[115]

The sacraments were instruments of the grace of God, which both conferred virtues and removed wickedness, thereby restoring the people in their relationship with the Almighty.[116] Without these, it was neither possible for the church to be constituted nor for her to reach her eschatological

[113] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1670 – 1675 [pp. 141 – 142].
[114] *In Ezram*, II, lines 598 – 600 [p. 102], *cf*. III, lines 210 – 227.
[115] *In Ezram*, II, lines 600 – 605 [p. 102].
[116] *In Ezram*, II, lines 580 – 584.

fulfillment.[117] Furthermore, these sacraments could only be performed at the hands of priests. We have already articulated in the previous chapter how sacraments remained throughout the period the preserve of the priestly order. Bede confirmed his own belief in this in the present work, when he wrote that

> All who desire to join the community of the Holy Church must be washed in baptism and consecrated to the Lord *through the hands of priests*. Equally, those who by sinning have been drawn away from the Church's fellowship into the devil's servitude, and who by remaining in their sin have fallen into the captivity of the King of Babylon, must be reconciled to the Holy Church by doing penance *through the office of a priest*.[118]

Just as Ezra turned the people back to God by building the temple and re-instating the cult, so Bede realised that the problems of his own day could only be solved by the sacramental order, over which priests had continually presided since the foundation of the church in England.

Priestly Character and Behaviour

In his commentary, Bede wrote that teachers emulate spiritual gifts

> in order that they might be fit for preaching, or else when our Lord, whom we have shown is symbolized by Joshua and Zerubbabel together, *imparts spiritual gifts to those same ministers of his word* whereby they are illumined

[117] DeGregorio, 'Footsteps', p. 152, *cf*. Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, pp. 99 – 144.
[118] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1342 – 1350 [p. 130].

> inwardly and made stronger for combating the ostentation and foolish wisdom of the proud by preaching.[119]

In the same vein, Bede articulated later in the commentary that 'an abundance of virtues is *divinely conferred upon preachers* of the truth so that, aided by those, they might have the means to correct the hearts of the wicked and make them fit to obtain heavenly goods'.[120] These two short extracts come as close as the commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah gets to admitting a difference of character in teachers and preachers which has the ability to be caused by an 'imparting' of spiritual gifts from God, 'conferred' because of the role which the teacher or preacher is to take within the Church. The question pertinent to this thesis is whether Bede limits this imparting of spiritual gifts to teachers who are ordained – and if so, did he believe it was conferred at ordination – or whether the imparting of these gifts was entirely distinct from the sacerdotal office.

Bede made it clear in another passage in the same commentary that priests and Levites could be teachers: 'It is proper that priests and Levites be established in their proper orders and turns', he wrote, 'to supervise God's service, so that not only may the people be admitted to the sacraments of the

[119] *In Ezram*, I, lines 1356 – 1360 [p. 59]. Joshua and Zerubbabel represent Christ in his priestly and regal capacities. If our interpretation is correct, this may be a reference to the episcopal office. The italics are mine.
[120] *In Ezram*, I, lines 1369 – 1370 [p. 59].

faith but also instructed to do the things that are of God'.[121] Whilst (as we have already discovered) in the Bedan scheme, all priests had the potential to be described as teachers, it does not necessarily follow that all teachers were priests.[122] Therefore, to argue that the conferral of these spiritual gifts corresponded to the sacrament of ordination – or even more specifically the laying on of hands – certainly takes the evidence too far. Nonetheless, this is a possibility. We should not forget that Bede's commentary is primarily concerned with priests, and that preachers have their place in the ranks below the ordained.[123] Whether these gifts were imparted at ordination or elsewhere, or otherwise acquired, they nonetheless set the teacher apart for his task.

This 'setting apart' was linked by Bede to the sacrificial character of the priestly office in the commentary. When describing the role of the high priest, the *pontifex*, Bede wrote that

> The *pontifex*… stands out above all the people when he who received the rank of teacher rises above the activity of the crowd by the merit of a more perfect life; but he stands on a wooden step that he had made to speak upon when he makes himself higher than the rest through exceptional imitation of the Lord's passion.[124]

[121] *In Ezram*, II, lines 619 – 625, p. 104.
[122] See above, p. 67 – 86.
[123] *In Ezram*, III, lines 1134 – 1137.
[124] *In Ezram*, III, lines 1134 – 1137 [p. 194].

This imitation of the Lord's passion, as Bede described elsewhere, involved the offering of oneself, body and soul, for the Lord, as Jesus gave up his life for his fellow men.[125] All can partake of it through the offering of perfect thoughts and deeds to the Lord as all are priests within the priesthood of all believers. Nonetheless, ordained priests have a duty to 'make their own actions worthy more than others through a special sanctification, and to do this earnestly so that those who are joined with them might sanctify the Lord's name in themselves by living well'.[126]

In these examples, it is clear that Bede believed the cultic behaviour of priests, as expressed in the sacraments, derived their origin from Jesus Christ. It is now clear that he also believed priests had a special responsibility to conform their lives to that of their Lord. They may or may not have been aided in that process by the conferral of spiritual graces at ordination, but they were called to sacrifice both body and soul in the service of his church. The reconciliation of the people about which Bede wrote was therefore as much a matter of good example set by the priests as it was about their sacramental offerings.

[125] *In Ezram*, I, lines 625 – 629.
[126] *In Ezram*, III, lines 224 – 229 [p. 163].

The Role of the Bishop in the Promotion of the Cult

The main protagonist of the restoration of the cult in Ezra-Nehemiah has so far eluded our consideration. Yet he, Ezra, remains a key figure in understanding the priestly model advocated by Bede in his work. In the commentary, Ezra is described as a 'high priest', or *pontifex*, which Bede explicitly equated to the archiepiscopal order.[127] This 'equation… makes clear the extent to which in his mind Ezra was to be a model for contemporary ecclesiastical rulers'.[128] What makes it more exceptional is that the term *pontifex* is not applied to Ezra in the canonical story, but only attributed to him by Bede, whose 'handling of the term appears designed to underline Ezra's status as a figure of pre-eminent religious authority whose reforming actions are programmatic for ecclesiastics in Bede's own time'.[129]

Such explicit contemporary parallelism resonates with Bede's perception of the urgent need for reform in the latter years of his life. Bede's own *pontifex*, Bishop Ecgberht, who he had previously encouraged to seek the *pallium* from Rome, should be inspired by Ezra who took the lead in reform

[127] *In Ezram*, II, line 1587 [pp. 138 – 139]. Much has been made of the frame contained in the *Codex Amiatinus* which may or may not depict Ezra, as both scribe and high priest. Some authors claim that the association is a later addition – Ezra can only successfully be identified by the inscription above which names him. There is a wealth of literature on this topic, which we cannot rehearse here. However, for a basic history of the MS, see R. L. S. Bruce Mitford, 'The Art of the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, XXXII (1969), pp. 1 – 25. For Bede's own possible role in this see P. Meyvaert, 'Dissension in Bede's Community Shown by a Quire of *Codex Amiatinus*', *Revue Bénédictine*, CXVI (2006), pp. 295 – 309.

[128] S. DeGregorio, 'Introduction' to *In Ezram*, xxxiv.

[129] DeGregorio, 'Introduction', xxxiv.

and exerted an authority contemporaneous with his episcopal office. The conciliar suggestion was also alluded to when Bede wrote that 'it was right that the restoration of the city was begun by a high priest and his brothers'.[130] These episcopal brothers should seek to supply enough priests that the cult might be reinstated, just as Ezra provided 'for himself a sufficient supply of ministers of God's house in order to carry out those things which were necessary for the needs of the temple when he arrived in Jerusalem'.[131] These decisions also deserved the support of all 'Christian rulers' who should 'order all who are subjected to them to give whatever our Lord and *Pontifex* may ask of them without any hesitation, holding back nothing at all; rather, let them be swift to carry out the commands of the divine will'.[132] This was to be achieved by the implementation of the law; the patristic tradition understood Ezra to have restored the law of Moses after it had been burned by the Babylonians.[133]

The spiritual illnesses of Bede's day, which he articulated so well in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, were as severe as the problems faced by Ezra as he sought to return the people under his care to their Lord. Ezra achieved this

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[130] *In Ezram*, III, lines 214 – 215 [p. 162].
[131] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1285 – 1288 [pp. 127 – 128].
[132] *In Ezram*, II, lines 1151 – 1155 [p. 123]. A fuller discussion of this is given by Scott DeGregorio in his article 'Footsteps', pp. 163 – 165. DeGregorio noted that it was particularly apt for Bede to describe Ezra as *pontifex* and not just as *sacerdos* as he 'discerned a combination of qualities that resonated strongly with the special needs of the Northumbrian church… Such qualities made him [Ezra] especially germane to Bede's reforming purposes'.
[133] J. O'Reilly, '"All that Peter Stands For": The *Romanitas* of the *Codex Amiatinus* Reconsidered' in *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell and M. Ryan (Oxford, 2009), pp. 367 – 395, here p. 385.

reconciliation by re-building the temple, and re-instating the cult. In this treatise on scripture, Bede advocated the same solutions to the problems he found in early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England: as Ezra had restored the temple, so Bede urged his own *pontifex* to restore the church, whose focus was the worship of God at the altar; as Ezra re-instated the cult, so too Bede advocated the sacramental reconciliation of God to his church. Ezra himself became the model: a priest of the cult who could provide the sacraments, a type of Christ whose sacrifice of himself reflected that of Jesus Christ, whom priests of the new covenant were to emulate, and a high priest who could instigate reform with his fellow bishops carried out through the operation of the clergy.

The Provisions of the Council and the Model Priest

The failings of the time, which the canons of the 747 Council of *Clofesho* sought to address, did not only demand correction; they required a new model of pastoral care in which the bishop and his priests were dominant. The positive model presented by Bede in the figure of Ezra fitted the bill well: in his Council, Cuthbert re-defined the nature of pastoral care to make priests not just necessary or indispensable – they had always been necessary and indispensible given the inability of others to perform the sacraments. Now, however, the Council asserted that their work was central to the conception of

the Christian religion in England. Although it is hard to prove the direct influence of Bede's model priest on the canons of the Council of *Clofesho*, it is nonetheless interesting to observe the similarities between the three aspects identified above concerning Ezra and the ideal priest which the agreed canons envisaged.

The first discernable emphasis of the canons is on the importance of the sacraments within pastoral care. This care was entrusted to bishops, whose primary work was described as 'baptizing, teaching, and visiting, according to lawful rites'.[134] In the wider context of the canons, particularly canon ten, reference to 'lawful rites' here must indicate the sacramental nature of their work. Whilst some sacraments were reserved for the episcopate, others were delegated to the bishop's priests who were referred to as '"God's ministers, and stewards of the mysteries of Christ"', a reference to I Corinthians IV.2.[135] These priests were ordered to 'discharge their duty at the altar, and in divine service', to 'carefully preserve the house of prayer and all its furniture,… spend their time in reading celebration of masses and psalmody,… be mindful, according to their duty enjoined them by God, [and] to be assistants to their abbots, and abbesses… in admonishing, reprehending, and exhorting their subjects'. Here, amongst other things, the canons associated the priest with the celebration of the Eucharist (and the place in which that sacrament

[134] *Clofesho*, IX [p. 247].
[135] '*quod Dei videlicet ministros et dispensatores mysteriorum Christi vocantur*' (*Clofesho*, VIII [p. 246]).

was celebrated), as well as the sacrament of penance. This was made more explicit in two later canons, which also add baptism to the mix: 'all priests [must] perform every sacerdotal ministry, everywhere, in the same way and fashion, in baptizing, teaching and judging', as well as in the mass.[136] Canon ten required priests to learn the rites associated with these two sacramental functions: 'let them who know it not, learn to construe and explain in our own tongue the Creed and Lord's Prayer, and the sacred words which are solemnly pronounced at the celebration of mass, and in the office of baptism'.[137] This three-fold emphasis on baptism, the Eucharist and penance, should remind us of Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah. Bede wrote that Ezra restored the cult so that the people might return to God. Here in the canons of *Clofesho*, the sacraments entrusted to priests are made prominent so that better pastoral care might be had over the people. These sacraments seek to fulfil what the cult fulfilled in Ezra-Nehemiah, reconciliation between God and his people.

The second discernable link between Bede's interpretation of Ezra-Nehemiah and the canons of *Clofesho* is seen in what behaviour the canons expect of ministers within the church. Bishops, we read, should ordain 'no monk, or clerk, to the degree of a priest till they first make open enquiry into his former life, and into his present probity of manners, and knowledge of the

[136] *Clofesho*, X, XI [pp. 247 – 248].
[137] *Clofesho*, X [p. 247].

faith. For how can he preach sound faith, or give a knowledge of the Word, or discreetly enjoin penance to others, who has not earnestly bent his mind to these studies; that he may be able, according to the Apostle, to "exhort with sound doctrine"'.[138] Yet just as we saw in Ezra-Nehemiah, this associates uprightness of life with the office of teaching, which was not reserved to priests. Like in Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah, however, a distinction is made between teachers and priests. In canon eight we read that priests should

> remind themselves of what purpose they are promoted above others, by divine ordination, that they are called 'God's ministers, and stewards of the mysteries of Christ,' and then that 'it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful:' therefore let them know, that it is necessary for them, in regard to God, to desist from secular business and causes, so far as they can, to discharge their duty at the altar, and in divine service, with the utmost application.[139]

Although this does not go are far as Bede's commentary in describing the graces which those ordained might receive, or how they might receive them – a difference that may even be attributed to the genre of each document – it does link the living of an upright and faithful life particularly with the priestly office by its reference to the altar. It would be wrong to read out of this any more than the text itself permits, but perhaps Bede's understanding

[138] *Clofesho*, VI [p. 245].
[139] *Clofesho*, VIII [p. 246].

of the sacrifice of body and soul, expounded in his commentary, and linked to the particular sacrifice of Christ on the cross is lying in the background here. In support of this we may note the reference to I Corinthians, the context of which concerns the divisions in the Corinthian Church and the place of the apostles within it.[140] Its inclusion in the *Clofesho* material adds emphasis to the canons in three ways: firstly, it solidifies the concept that priests derive their authority from Christ himself;[141] secondly, priests occupy a particular calling in a church, whose other members also contribute;[142] and thirdly, priests are reminded of their apostolic calling to humility.[143] This not only fits comfortably with the wording of the passage, which alludes to the sacramental function of the priest, but attunes extremely well to the model of priest provided by Bede in his commentary.

The final parallel we might draw between Bede's model of Ezra and the canons of the reforming council of 747 concerns the role of the Cuthbert himself. As we have noted earlier in this chapter, Cuthbert convened the council with his fellow bishops – 'When the said prelates of the sacred order of divers provinces of Britain, with many priests of the Lord, and of those of the ecclesiastical order in lesser dignitaries' – and under the authority of a

[140] I Corinthians IV.1.
[141] I Corinthians III.4, 11, 23.
[142] I Corinthians III.9 – 11, 21 – 23.
[143] I Corinthians III.21. A feature I explored with relation to the use of liturgical dress in the period ('How Did Liturgical Clothing Help to Define Priestly Identity in the Anglo-Saxon Church?', Unpublished essay submitted for the M.St. examination, Oxford, 2010).

secular lord, reflecting Bede's words in his commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah that reform should be led by the high priest, instigated with his fellow priests, and receive the support of the secular authority.[144] Bede commented that Ezra's reforms occurred by the application of the law; the opening canon of the Council of *Clofesho* similarly insisted that 'every bishop be ready to defend… the canonical institutions of the Church of Christ (by God's protection and assistance) with their utmost endeavor, against the various and wicked assaults [that are made upon them].'[145] Furthermore, although *Clofesho* envisaged everyone as having their place and all being 'fellow servants in one ministry', like in Ezra's conception of his reconstructed society, it was first and foremost the role of the priests to begin the re-building process.[146] For Ezra, as for Cuthbert, reform began with the *pontifex* working with his fellow bishops, was enacted through the priests, and sought the restoration of the whole people to God.

Like the prophet in Bede's account of Ezra, Archbishop Cuthbert hoped to restore the people under his care to God, who had been forsaken. This reconciliation was to occur primarily through re-institution of the cult, whose present-day ministers were the priests and bishops of Southumbria. The reconciliation and spiritual growth envisaged by Cuthbert focused on the celebration of the sacraments, particularly that of baptism, the Eucharist and

[144] *Clofesho*, *Praef*. [p. 242].
[145] *Clofesho*, I [p. 243].
[146] *Clofesho*, II [p. 244].

penance. The ministers of these should remember that they were types of Christ, like Bede's Ezra, following their Lord's instruction, and dispensing his grace to a people to whom it had been promised. Whilst *Clofesho* sought to remedy the spiritual ills of the age, within and without the church, it also required a positive model of priesthood for the future. Bede's Ezra may well have provided this model of priests who were '"God's ministers, and stewards of the mysteries of Christ"'.[147]

Conclusion

The actions of Theodore and the canons of his councils demonstrate that reform of the English church was thought to be needed from the beginning of his archiepiscopate. The criticisms levied by Bede, however, half a decade later, suggest that the councils had not exercised their full potential and that significant problems still existed in the Anglo-Saxon church.[148] Whilst Cuthbert's actions in summoning a council suggest his confidence in Theodore's chosen method of dealing with the deficiency in pastoral care, it is clear to us, and may have been clear to Cuthbert, that Theodore had not addressed the underlying problem which prevented the reforms taking effect. The canons of the council of *Clofesho* were a first attempt by the bishops of the

[147] *Clofesho*, VIII [p. 246].
[148] See above, pp. 139 – 145.

English church to answer both the long-standing deficiencies in pastoral care as well as the underlying problem, which was the relationship between the powerful abbots and *monasteria* of early Anglo-Saxon England, and the bishops.

The Council of *Clofesho* of 747 therefore marked a pivotal point in the creation of a new, single, unified conception of pastoral care appropriate for a church whose failings towards the people of Anglo-Saxon England had once more become apparent.[149] *Clofesho* was consequently crucial in the development of the role of the priest in early Anglo-Saxon England. Whereas before *Clofesho*, pastoral care was more broadly understood and a number of its tasks could be carried out by non-ordained religious, after the council, priests became central to the provision of pastoral care for Anglo-Saxon Christians.[150] This occurred due to a fresh emphasis on the centrality of the sacraments in pastoral care.[151]

Whether the Council witnessed to a more developed understanding of the things that separate priests from other orders, we cannot tell. While a presumption that *Clofesho* permits one to make claims about the ontological distinction of the priesthood might be asserted, the evidence is insufficient to decide whether this was indeed an outcome of the Council or not.

[149] *Cf. Ep.*, LXXVIII.
[150] See above, Chapter 2.
[151] See above, pp. 163 – 166.

Nonetheless, we can more confidently say that *Clofesho* opened up a space in the mid-eighth century so that a new type of priest could emerge: one whose ability to perform the sacraments allowed him to be considered the vehicle of pastoral care *par excellence.* The attendees of the council of *Clofesho* of 747 decided that the faithful of Anglo-Saxon England, who had been neglected by generation after generation of monks and clerics, were now to be cared for primarily by a ministerial priesthood. Whether Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* influenced the council's rulings or not, this new role for the priest in Anglo-Saxon England which the council envisaged was to some extent foreshadowed in the model priest presented by Bede in his commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah: priests who would restore the people to God, by the celebration of the sacraments of the new covenant, and by conforming of their lives to the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Priests have been disregarded in Anglo-Saxon studies for too long: this thesis aims to reposition them within the consciousness of Anglo-Saxon historians, by demonstrating the essential role they played within the conversion of the English from paganism to Christianity and in the continued pastoral care of the people up to the Council of *Clofesho* of 747. Two historiographical trends have contributed to this eclipsing: firstly, a predominantly monastic reading of Bede's *Historia*; and secondly, building on this, a focus on the minster model. In this study I have sought to make closer examination of the wording of Bede's *Historia* and his other exegetical and homiletic works, made more accessible in recent years, together with contemporary epistolary, hagiographical and conciliar evidence. I have discovered that priests were not necessarily few in number, nor without work in the early stages of the church in Anglo-Saxon England.[1] Rather, as members of *monasteria* and other foundations, they contributed to the spiritual care of the people, both in non-sacramental ways – alongside religious – and in sacramental ways.

Whilst non-sacramental aspects of pastoral care have been studied as part of recent efforts to uncover the role of the monastery in the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon church, the sacramental aspects of pastoral care have been neglected. Like the novelty of the topic, this thesis is also original in that it

[1] *Contra* Alan Thacker, 'Monks', p. 138.

draws attention to the sacramental aspects of pastoral care, collating evidence for the exercise of the several sacraments in one place. I have distinguished aspects of pastoral care which were carried out by both the ordained and non-ordained alike, for instance preaching and teaching, and the care of the sick and dying, from those aspects of pastoral care which were carried out by priests alone, namely the sacraments, and most especially baptism and the Eucharist.

Save for work by Catherine Cubitt, recent studies of the period have also failed to recognise the changing nature of pastoral care, preferring instead to work with a fixed definition.[2] At one extreme Anglo-Saxon historians have perceived pastoral care as being predominantly non-sacramental, whilst at the other they have regarded it as being wholly sacramental. This thesis points to a general trend from an original mixed economy of sacramental and non-sacramental pastoral care, strengthened by the rise of monastic power, to a culmination in the 747 decrees of the Council of *Clofesho*, where the bishops of the church attempted to exclude non-sacramental aspects in order to claim the authority over the cure of souls which was entrusted to them by virtue of their office. The Council was therefore pivotal in the creation of a new, single, unified conception of pastoral care required for a church whose failings towards the people of

[2] See above, pp. 163 – 166.

Anglo-Saxon England had once more become apparent to contemporary authors. Within this broad chronological framework, it is nevertheless likely that geographical variance still existed, depending on the needs of people, and particular power struggles in each locality: the sort of pastoral care exercised in a newly-evangelised kingdom will not be the same as the sort of pastoral care exercised in a kingdom heavily populated with *monasteria*, or diocesan structure administered by an authoritarian bishop such as Wilfrid.

This thesis tries not to argue beyond the evidence available; and where evidence is sketchy or events or behaviours are attested to only by Bede, for instance, it employs modal verbs rather than declarative ones. The suggestion of the third chapter concerning the place of Bede's model priest in the post-747 church fits into the former category, and whether the Council witnesses to a more developed understanding of the things that separate priests from other orders, as we find in Bede's commentary on Ezra, we cannot tell. However, we can now more confidently claim that the Council of *Clofesho* of 747 facilitated a space in the mid-eighth century in which a new type of priest could emerge: one whose ability to perform the sacraments allowed him to be considered the vehicle of pastoral care *par excellence.*

Bede's *In Ezram* asserted that a wayward people could be brought back to God by the restoration of the priesthood, by their celebration of the sacraments, and by their personal conformity to the sacrificial life and death

of Christ. Whether this strategy worked or not is beyond the scope of this thesis, but historians should now regard what happened at *Clofesho* in 747 as important context in contemplating the reforms of the later Anglo-Saxon period: Cuthbert's reforms at *Clofesho* did not change the face of the Anglo-Saxon Church overnight, but they did start a process which Dunstan would finish, when he re-built the cloister walls.

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CCSL — *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, ed. B. Janssens, *et al*., 194 vols (Turnhout, 1953 – 2013)

MGH — Monumenta Germaniae historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesmium et quingentesimum

PL — *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols (Paris, 1844 – 1864)

Standard Abbreviations

AVSC — Anon., *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1940)

AVSG — Anon., *Vita Sancti Gregorii*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Cambridge, 1968)

AVSW	Alcuin, *Vita Sancti Willibrordi*, ed. W. Levison, MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, VII (Hanover, 1920), trans. C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: being the Lives of Ss. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba, and Lebuin, together with the Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald and a Selection from the Correspondence of St. Boniface* (London, 1981)
Blair and Sharpe	*Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe, Studies in the Early History of Britain (Leicester, 1992)
BVSC	Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1940)
Clofesho	*Canons of the Council of* Clofesho *of 747*, ed. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland, edited after Spelman and Wilkins*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869-78), iii, ix: The English Church During the Anglo-Saxon Period A.D. 595 – 1066 (1871), trans. J. Johnson, *A Collection of the Laws and Canons of the Church of England from its First Foundation to the Conquest, and from the Conquest to*

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HE	Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969)
Hom.	Bede, *Homiliae Evangelii*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL, CXXII (Turnhout, 1955), trans. L. T. Martin and D. Hurst, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols, Cistercian Studies Series, CX – CXI (Kalamazoo, 1991)
HSW	Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH, Scriptores, XV (Hanover, 1887), trans. C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: being the Lives of Ss. Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba, and Lebuin, together with the Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald and a Selection from the Correspondence of St. Boniface* (London, 1981)

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