APOSTOLIC DISCOURSE AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY
IN ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

“Apostolic Discourse and Christian Identity in Anglo-Saxon Literature” argues that Anglo-Saxon religious writers used traditions about the apostles to inspire and interpret their peoples’ own missionary ambitions abroad, to represent England itself as a center of religious authority, and to articulate a particular conception of inspired authorship. This study traces the formation and adaptation of apostolic discourse (a shared but evolving language based on biblical and literary models) through a series of Latin and vernacular works including the letters of Boniface, the early vitae of the Anglo-Saxon missionary saints, the Old English poetry of Cynewulf, and the anonymous poem Andreas. This study demonstrates how Anglo-Saxon authors appropriated the experiences and the authority of the apostles to fashion Christian identities for members of the emerging English church in the seventh and eighth centuries, and for vernacular religious poets and their readers in the later Anglo-Saxon period.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASE</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<td>ASPR</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bede, HE</td>
<td>Bede, <em>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSA</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum</td>
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<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSASE</td>
<td>Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Text Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>EME</td>
<td><em>Early Medieval Europe</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HBS</td>
<td>Henry Bradshaw Society</td>
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<td>JEGP</td>
<td><em>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH AA</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi</td>
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<td>MGH Epp.</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH SRG</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH SRM</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</td>
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<td>MGH SS</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores in folio</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEN</td>
<td><em>Old English Newsletter</em></td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td><em>Patrologia Latina</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SASLC</td>
<td>Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture</td>
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<td>SC</td>
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INTRODUCTION

APOSTOLIC DISCOURSE:
AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF
ANGLO-SAXON CHRISTIAN LITERARY CULTURE

Overview

My project challenges the traditional notion that Anglo-Saxon authors utilized religious discourse primarily as a means of situating (and thus subordinating) their church within the sphere of Rome-centered Christendom. I contend that this move towards participation in the universal Church paradoxically allowed the Anglo-Saxons to claim for themselves and their church a distinctive Christian identity and ecclesiastical authority within northern Europe. Both the Latin literature produced during the Anglo-Saxon missionary movements of the eighth and ninth centuries and the depictions of the apostles in vernacular poetry from the late ninth and early tenth centuries appropriate what I term ‘apostolic discourse’ in a way that registers the tensions between universality and particularism: the desire to identify with Christendom at large, and with Rome in particular, and the desire to maintain a distinctive Anglo-Saxon religious identity and authority. Apostolic discourse develops out the reception of New Testament accounts of the lives of the twelve apostles, the Pauline Epistles, and other patristic and early medieval sources. Anglo-Saxon authors, I argue, make use of apostolic tropes and narratives to endow their own ecclesiastical history and missions (both literal and literary) with the authority of the apostles even as they assert their devotion to the see of St. Peter.
In the Introduction and Chapter One I examine apostolic stories that reached England with the Roman missionaries in the sixth and seventh centuries, and I trace their dissemination to Anglo-Saxon churchmen in England through the textual culture of early monasteries. In the Introduction I discuss depictions of the apostles that circulated throughout the New Testament, the liturgy, the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and literary works such as Arator’s epic poem *De actibus apostolorum*, a text widely used to teach Latin poetry in Anglo-Saxon schools. I also look at representations of the apostles in relation to the Anglo-Saxon church in the works of the highly influential eighth century scholar Bede. Bede’s writings reveal a fascination with the history of the apostles extending from his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles to his late masterpiece, the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. In studying the transmission, content, and influence of these works, we may begin to identify some aspects of the shared language of apostolicity that developed in Anglo-Saxon circles.¹

Chapters One and Two explore the ways this discourse influences both the lived experiences and textual representations of Anglo-Saxon missionaries in continental Germania in the eighth and ninth centuries. The letters of Boniface and his correspondents, as well as the *vitae* of the missionary saints written by and about Anglo-

¹ In doing so, I am conscious of the need to avoid the pitfalls of traditional historical genealogy outlined by Michel Foucault in “Nietzsche, genealogy, history,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 146: “Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute derivations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us.” I do not seek to construct a linear genealogy of apostolic discourse as a monolithic, unchanging concept reiterated and reinstated in various contexts from the time of Christ through the Anglo-Saxon era. Rather, I survey these sources as a means of setting up the major strands of ideas and avenues for the dissemination of those (admittedly unstable and changing) ideas which are constitutive of this intertextual discourse.
Saxons, develop a specific apostolic identity based on the biblical and literary models outlined in the Introduction. These works create collages of scriptural texts and allusions that connect the missionaries and the original apostles, in particular Paul. Focusing on these conventionally historical and documentary sources, this chapter reveals how the words and lives of the apostles shaped the Anglo-Saxon missionaries’ self-conceptions and self-representations. By framing accounts of their experiences, lives and sufferings in the scriptural language of apostolic discourse, these missionary writers and the popes, churchmen and nuns who support them, make remarkable claims for the importance and authority of the Anglo-Saxon church. The success of these claims is recorded in the conversions of the Germanic peoples on the continent, who come to view their own ecclesiastical history as bound up with the legacies of the Anglo-Saxon “apostles to Germany.”

Chapters Three and Four focus on two works by the Old English poet Cynewulf. By signing his poems in runes and providing insight into his own spiritual states, Cynewulf’s poems speak of an *ic* (“I”) who negotiates his own Christian religious and personal identity in relation to the lives and identities of Christ’s apostles. I show how his poems *Fates of the Apostles* and *Ascension* explore two different and somewhat contradictory interpretations of the apostles. *Ascension* presents the apostles as Christ’s loyal but dependent *þegnas* (servants); they are obedient, but also lacking in understanding, bewildered, sad and mournful. In *Fates of the Apostles*, on the other hand, Cynewulf eliminates all traces of the apostles’ human frailty, depicting them as bold heroes, confidently journeying into strange lands to carry out their missions and embracing brutal martyrdoms with superhuman strength and fortitude. Each of these
perceptions – the first human, the other heroic – shapes the response of Cynewulf’s persona as author and Christian to the figures of the apostles as models for Christian life within each poem. I argue that Cynewulf’s choice to represent the apostles as sorrowful and frail in *Ascension* enables him to envision himself and his audience as capable of achieving salvation through emulation of the apostles’ preaching. In *Ascension*, Cynewulf closes the gap between himself and the apostles which he opened in *Fates* by claiming to exercise an apostolic gift from the Holy Spirit – the ability to use language and poetry to educate his Anglo-Saxon audience about the significance of Christian history.

The final chapter discusses *Andreas*, which narrates at length the experiences of Andrew, an apostle who was especially venerated in Anglo-Saxon England. *Andreas* engages with issues of mission, conversion, martyrdom and what it means to follow Christ’s injunction to be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth.” I argue that alongside its vigorous rhetoric of apostolic heroism, *Andreas*, like Cynewulf’s *Ascension*, foregrounds the humanity of the apostles, balancing anxiety and certitude about the evangelical project of extending Christian influence around the world. My reading of the poet’s metacritical interruption of the text reveals how the anxiety and certitude of Andrew and Matthew are reflected in the poet’s self-consciousness about his own more literary mission. The *Andreas*-poet’s justification of literary composition in relation to the fulfillment of the apostolic injunction links him not only to the apostles but also to his Anglo-Saxon predecessors whose missions, both real and rhetorical, were founded in an apostolic discourse.

I argue throughout this dissertation that the cultural and literary productions of Anglo-Saxon Christianity are particular in their self-consciously apostolic character. By
bringing Anglo-Latin missionary writing back into conversation with the vernacular poetry of Anglo-Saxon England, my project crosses conventional boundaries of language, genre, time and place, and seeks to show how these texts present an evocative and specifically Anglo-Saxon notion of Christian culture and authority. In the sections of the Introduction that follow, I will discuss the establishment of apostolic discourse as a system of literary language by investigating the transmission of some sources for apostolic discourse among the Anglo-Saxons via the texts and liturgy of Roman missionaries, and their dissemination through the textual culture of the early monasteries.

**Apostolic Discourse**

This study investigates the development, use, and adaptation of particular varieties of Christian religious discourse about the apostles, as communicated and circulated through the Latin and vernacular literary productions of Anglo-Saxon culture from the seventh to the tenth centuries. This ‘apostolic discourse,’ as I call it, is necessarily intertextual; it originates in New Testament depictions of the lives and sayings of the twelve apostles of Christ in the book of Acts and the Gospel narratives, as well as the words of the apostles themselves, particularly Paul, in the Epistles. The words of the apostles themselves and interpretations both biblical and exegetical of what it means to be an apostle or live an apostolic life were of central importance to the formation of all Christian communities then as now. As participants in the religion of the Word, Anglo-Saxon churchmen absorbed Christian teaching concerning the apostles and the apostolic life primarily through their constant engagement with the Bible in its textual and liturgical manifestations, and secondarily through a vast corpus of biblical
commentaries, Latin religious poetry, apocryphal acta and passiones, and sanctioned hagiographical texts. All these genres of Christian literature are fundamentally exegetical in that they “have an intertextual relationship with the Bible” and are intended to “form the practice and belief of Christian people, individually and collectively.” This means that Christian literature intentionally goes beyond merely reinforcing Christian “practice and belief” to, in effect, constituting Christian culture through discourse. The language created to express the tenets of Christianity in their liturgical, pastoral, and literary manifestations coalesces into what Averil Cameron calls a “totalizing discourse” based on figural representation.

Far from emerging ex nihilo, this Christian mode of figural representation develops out of the tradition of typological interpretation of sacred scripture on the one hand, and the Classical tradition of literary mimesis on the other. As Frances Young recalls,

Mimesis was a key concept in ancient understanding of literature. The performance of epic or drama created a ‘representation’ from which the audience learnt. In the ancient Church mimesis or representation was [also] important. It underlay the enactment of the Scripture: great heroes were listed to illustrate a particular virtue, so a character like Job came to embody patience, and Christ’s life and death were set forth as a way to be imitated. Such ‘mimetic’ use of literary heroes reinforced the paraenetic use of Scripture…and provided ‘types.’

This form of mimesis described by Young is fundamentally literary; the religious text represents a textual ideal, a sign from another text (namely the Bible), rather than referring

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4 Cameron 21.
6 Young 49-75.
7 Young 209.
to an external reality or ‘the world.’ Young argues convincingly that this is a practice taken over from the study of model classic texts, such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in ancient schools of rhetoric which developed a culturally significant practice of *aemulatio*. Gian Biagio Conte describes the classical practice in terms which are equally applicable to the works of Christian writers:

*Imitatio* and *aemulatio* tend to converge in much of classical poetry. The essential point, however, is not that the imitator-poet desires to surpass his model but that ‘tradition’ is a necessary precondition for both emulation and allusion. The tradition both conditions the later poet’s work and helps him to formulate its distinctive qualities. A more rigorous definition of this tradition may perhaps be given by calling it a poetic langue, a system of literary conventions, motifs, ideas and expressions, with its laws and constraints, that each ‘speaker’ (writer) will use in his or her own way.⁹

Young brings this concept back into the realm of religious literature when she explains the relationship of hagiographical texts to the biblical models which underlie their participation in discursive practices which encourage the Christian reader to engage in a kind of *aemulatio*:

The exemplary mimesis is integrated with a paraenesis in which the text is taken to refer directly to the reader, whose life is supposed to fulfill the proverbs and patterns of Scripture. The typological mimesis overlaps with the oracular in understanding the text in some way to represent in advance the reality which is to be fulfilled. In these ways the identity of Christians was formed. And this generated new texts, texts dependent upon the Bible for plot and diction and evidencing the kind of allusive intertextuality…[found in] apocryphal and hagiographical literature….both are imitative of biblical storytelling. Here the kind of mimesis which models lifestyle, event, and language on a sacred precedent, integrating allusions and occasional quotations, takes another literary form, not immediately recognized as exegetical. Yet such narratives portray the ideals believed to be enshrined in the Bible, and spell out a particular reading of Scripture.¹⁰

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ⁱ⁰ Young 209.
In this sense, Young’s use of the word *mimesis* may appear slightly misleading. The word ‘typology’ is likewise inadequate to describe the process of interpretation and representation described above, for, while it would correspond with what Young refers to as presentation of “great heroes” for imitation,\(^1\) it obscures an important secondary aspect of this relation: the deliberate adoption or emulation of biblical language and style in Christian literary discourse.

Neil Wright notes in the preface to *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West* that this process of quoting from or echoing culturally significant texts (in our case, Scripture or other religious writing)

worked in a number of ways. The majority of the authors [in early medieval Britain]…were not native speakers of Latin, so that prior texts were for them an indispensable point of contact with the language’s idioms and expressions, as well as with a common stock of literary conventions and imagery. However, intertextual allusions did not function simply as a linguistic prop for the inexperienced; most often they were carefully woven into their new fabric and have their own contribution to make to its texture. For this reason, recognition of such echoes frequently allows us to grasp the full nuances of a writer’s message….\(^2\)

The implication of intertextual quotations, allusions, and echoes pertaining to apostolic discourse will form the basis of my inquiry into the particularly apostolic Christian culture which developed in Anglo-Saxon England, and which is recorded in a series of literary works from the beginnings of Anglo-Latin Christian literature in the late seventh century to the height of vernacular homiletics in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. I will be building on the scholarly tradition of Anglo-Saxon source studies by exploring the cultural and literary significance of relevant texts identified as sources for

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\(^1\) Typology as a concept and an Christian interpretive practice is, however, of the utmost importance to the formation and deployment of the apostolic discourse, and will be discussed in greater detail below.

the writings of Boniface and his circle, the vernacular poet Cynewulf, and the anonymous author of *Andreas*. I will also consider questions of adaptation and genre. How do passages from the Epistles of Paul become transformed into a shared language of adulation, exhortation, and membership in or exclusion from religious community in the letters of Saint Boniface and his correspondents? What happens to the biblical narrative, the martyrology, the saint’s life, when it is recast according to the conventions of Old English poetry, and what can this tell us about the Christian culture of the Anglo-Saxons?

It is perhaps already apparent to the reader that this approach assumes a certain level of conscious participation on the part of the authors in the traditions of Christian literature and figural representation outlined above. It also assumes that by identifying the presence of or reference to one text within another, we may be able to interpret each of these texts in relation to each other, and say something meaningful about the purpose and effect of this relationship in its cultural and historical context. In the particular texts which I will be studying here, the authors’ deliberate or unconscious interweaving of biblical and religious quotations, allusions, and echoes throughout their works appears (though not always unanimously or unambiguously) to link them to the dominant and

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13 As an explanation of what I mean by ‘tradition,’ I cite Clare Lees’ adaptation of the concept of tradition as *tradita*, as she expresses it in her study, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Anglo-Saxon England*, Medieval Cultures 19 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 16: “The perspective of culture makes the case for a reexamination of the most conventional historical sense of the traditional as the ‘traditum’, a thing handed down from past to present. Edward Shils points out that, although a tradition has custodians, facilitates identification, and generates lines of affiliation, ‘the decisive criterion is that, having been created through human actions, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next.’ This simplest and most powerful ideological effect of tradition is vastly underestimated by literary history, which uses tradition as a term of negative aesthetic judgment rather than as an instrument of analysis of a sociohistorical process. But, in fact, the ‘traditum’ can be a cultural product like a sermon, which associates texts with events, writing with history and memory, the past with the present. Shils points out that anything can be a ‘traditum’, but once accepted as a living and hence changing tradition, ‘it is as vivid and vital to those who accept it as any other part of their action or belief’. Christian texts like sermons are classic examples of the ‘tradita;’ after all, tradition is central to Christianity, where the past is connected to the present via a body of texts and via the practices of worship codified by the conventions of the liturgy within communities of believers.”
orthodox strains of religious discourse. While this is by and large the case, I would call
attention to the fact that, even as I trace it here, apostolic discourse is not a homogeneous
thing in itself, but is rather a range of discourses (in the plural)\textsuperscript{14} which are often at odds
with each other and with the apparent ideals of the dominant and orthodox strains of
religious discourse.\textsuperscript{15} The doubting and occasional disobedience or weakness of the
apostles, as they are depicted in the Gospels and Paul’s letters, present an idea of
apostolicity that allows authors to make both subversive and authoritative claims for
themselves in ways that challenge the ‘monologic power’ of, for example, the pope
himself. In an attempt to explore the implications of polyphonic voices encoded in these
texts, I focus on how these authors and works use intertexts to build up variations on
apostolic discourse. I ask what these interrelated discourses mean and how they develop
in relation to their changing generic, historical, and cultural contexts.

My choice of the term ‘discourse’ to describe the function of apostolic references
in Anglo-Saxon literature is, therefore, a deliberate one. “The term ‘discourse’ directs
attention to the speaker or writer and the situation from which they speak or write,” as
Graham Allen notes.\textsuperscript{16} It “points to the fact that language always occurs in specific
contexts and always reflects specific codes, expectations, ideological practices and

\textsuperscript{14} By way of explanation, I offer Averil Cameron’s defense (5) of her use of the term ‘discourse’ in a
similar sense and context: “finding suitable terminology is difficult. Rather than a single Christian
discourse, there was rather a series of overlapping discourses always in a state of adaptation and
adjustment, and always ready to absorb in a highly opportunistic manner whatever might be useful from
secular rhetoric and vocabulary. Nevertheless, in totality they did in the long term come to dominate social
discourse as a whole in both East and West; I hope then that it may be legitimate for convenience to use the
singular term ‘discourse’ without being accused of distortion. I mean by it all the rhetorical strategies and
manners of expression that I take to be particularly characteristic of Christian writing.”

\textsuperscript{15} As Lees cautions, any study of traditionality “must include recognition of the fact that traditions are
themselves always conflicted, from within and from without.” The traditions about the apostles and the
language which gives rise to apostolic discourse in Anglo-Saxon literature is no exception to this.

\textsuperscript{16} Allen 211.
presuppositions.”17 By referring to ‘apostolic discourse,’ I am reminding the reader that this is a specific kind of language and reference used by a writer to convey a particular message in a religious context.

The use of this language and these references presupposes the readers’ participation in a Christian literary community, their intimate familiarity with the stories and language of the New Testament, and with liturgical, exegetical, and literary treatments of its contents. Thus we come to another essential tenet of intertextual analysis: the necessity and ability of the reader to recognize, grasp and interpret the author’s intertextual references. In order for a text to communicate its ideas and its meaning, the author and the reader must share an understanding of this literary and religious language. They must participate in the same textual culture. As Gian Biagio Conte explains,

Intertextuality, far from being a matter of merely recognizing the ways in which specific texts echo each other, defines the condition of literary readability. Certainly the sense and structure of a work can be grasped only with reference to other models hewn from a long series of texts of which they are, in some way, the variant form. The literary text realizes, transforms, or transposes in relation to these essential basic models. A literary work cannot exist outside this system; it can be perceived only if the reader is also able to decipher literary language, and this ability presupposes familiarity with multiple texts.18

Apostolic discourse, like all discursive practices, is characterized by formal or “reusable” language. In his discussion of the formality of poetic discourse, Conte refers to Heinrich Lausberg’s useful distinction between ‘Wiedergebrauchsrede’ – language that can be reused – and ‘Verbrauchsrede,’ language that is used up in the currency of everyday living. Reusable language endows with meaning specific well-defined moments that structure social order. Thus it ‘plays an explicit role in raising awareness of the rich continuity of social order and of the specifically social nature of mankind in

17 Allen 212.
18 Conte 29.
Reusable language exists precisely because society recognizes its value. The essential condition of this type of discourse is therefore the privileged position that it enjoys as a result of being distinguished from the perishable commodity that is practical daily language. Language that is reused is invariably preserved in the poetic memory. In the case of poetry this process results in the shaping of a literary tradition.

In apostolic discourse, the characteristic and reusable language gains its value from its origin in the Bible and also from its association with holy persons, the apostles themselves. Use or invocation of various apostolic discourses necessarily reminds the user and the readers/receivers of their places in the social and religious order, their status as Christians and thus as people who venerate Christ and his apostles. Straightforward references to the apostles comprise the simplest and most common manifestations of apostolic discourse in Anglo-Saxon writing. Even those Christians who do not have an extensive monastic education or a deep working knowledge of the Bible will recognize some aspects of the significance and implications of the word “apostle” in any religious or literary context because of its preservation in the (in this case) cultural and religious memory.

A second variety of formal language employing apostolic discourse involves the incorporation of scriptural references from pertinent parts of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, or the Pauline Epistles. These references can take the form of quotations, allusions, echoes, or general adoption of biblical idioms. In his useful introductory essay on “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” biblical scholar Steve Moyise distinguishes between these types of references as follows:

- Generally, a quotation involves a self-conscious break from the author’s style to introduce words from another context.
- Next comes allusion, usually woven into the text rather than ‘quoted,’ and often rather less precise in terms of wording.

Naturally, there is considerable debate as to how much verbal agreement is

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19 Conte 41.
necessary to establish the presence of an allusion. Lastly comes echo, faint traces of texts that are probably quite unconscious but emerge from minds soaked in the scriptural heritage.\textsuperscript{20}

Often all three of these types of biblical references are used in tandem in a religious text, constituting what Frances Young describes in early Christian writing as a “taking over of the language of scripture. The language is made ‘one’s own.’”\textsuperscript{21} Here Young refers to a particular early Christian Greek letter known as \textit{I Clement} and the earliest Christian homily \textit{II Clement}, but the process of “collage” or “pastiche of texts and allusions”\textsuperscript{22} which she notes continues to apply to later texts, and, as we will see, forms a fundamental, pervasive, and highly evocative aspect of the apostolic discourse in Anglo-Saxon writing, especially in the Letters and \textit{vitae} associated with Boniface and his circle which are discussed in chapters one and two. The characteristic ‘collages’ of biblical references in the works by and about the Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the continent work to establish typological connections between these figures and the first apostles, particularly Paul. In these cases, we can see Frances Young’s mimetic hermeneutic at work: the words of the classic text, in this case, the New Testament, are evoked in a later work in order to compare the subject of these letters or saints’ lives with culturally valued literary heroes, the apostles.

In his classic discussion of typology in the Bible and literature, A. C. Charity reminds us that typology extends beyond the collation of Old Testament types with New Testament anti-types; rather, “typology stays with us even in the new dispensation, in the


\textsuperscript{21} Young 230.

\textsuperscript{22} Young 222.
Church’s and the believer’s commitment to the ‘imitation of Christ.’”

The apostles are all in some way typological reflections of Christ in his preaching and suffering. By situating their accounts of the experiences, lives, and sufferings of themselves or their protagonists in the language of apostolic discourse, these writers make a claim for the importance and authority of the Anglo-Saxon church. As Charity argues,

the typological presentation signals a life which grows out of a spiritual conformity to Christ and which participates in the new existence which God opens up. It signals a life that is in this way the fruit of redemption, an ethical existence, ‘righteousness’ which is given from heaven (according to Eph. 2.8) through faith, and whose only form is the form Christ gave it. ‘Can you drink from the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?’ (Mark 10.38) is the question which this typology answers on behalf of its subject; ‘Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me’ (Mark 8.34) is the demand which it presents it subject as now fulfilling.

Typological comparisons underpinned by a strategic employment of scriptural language form the basis of the apostolic discourse in works of Anglo-Saxon missionary writers. Their ability to use this textual method convinced a continent that, as a people, the Anglo-Saxons, new converts to the faith, could in fact drink from the cup of Christ, and not only be baptized with Christ’s baptism, but baptize others in his name as well.

**SOURCES OF APOSTOLIC DISCOURSE IN EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND**

**Biblical Sources**

The foremost source of knowledge about the apostles in Anglo-Saxon England was the Bible itself. Texts of the various books of the Bible would surely have been

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23 Charity 152.
24 Charity 152.
25 Charity 152-153.
among the *codices plurimos* that Bede tells us accompanied Augustine, the missionary sent by Gregory the Great to preach the Gospel to the Anglo-Saxons, when he arrived in Kent in 597.\(^\text{26}\) The biblical texts brought by Augustine of Canterbury mixed Old Latin readings with Jerome’s Vulgate Bible.\(^\text{27}\) Versions of the Latin Bible were also brought from Rome and elsewhere by other missionaries to England, including Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian, and, in the seventh and eighth centuries, Anglo-Saxon pilgrims and travelers to Rome, including Benedict Biscop, Wilfrid of York, and especially Ceolfrith, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow.\(^\text{28}\) A pandect, or complete single-volume copy of the Bible, including both Old and New Testaments, was among the treasures which Abbot Ceolfrith sent from Rome to Wearmouth-Jarrow.\(^\text{29}\) Ceolfrith set his monks to the task of producing a “revised and edited version of the whole Bible based on the best manuscripts” in three identical copies, one of which has come down to us today in the form of the famous *Codex Amiatinus* sent as a gift to the Pope.\(^\text{30}\)

This very general outline\(^\text{31}\) of the coming of the Latin Bible to Anglo-Saxon England is sketched here for three reasons: first, it indicates something of the varied forms of the Bible that reached England; second, it shows us the high regard in which the

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\(^{29}\) Blair 211-213.

\(^{30}\) Blair 224-225.

sacred text was held by members of the early Anglo-Saxon church; and third, it clearly manifests the intimate connections between the Anglo-Saxon church and the Church of St. Peter in Rome, which served as both source of, and destination for, English Bibles.32

In terms of form, it is important to note that the versions of the Bible which came to England were of several kinds: Old Latin, Vulgate, and mixed. Bede’s use of a Greek copy of *Acts of the Apostles* in his *Retractions on Acts* shows that at least some books of the Bible in Greek found their way to England, most likely through the agency of Theodore of Tarsus.33 Pandects were quite rare throughout the Middle Ages;34 Anglo-Saxons who knew the Bible as a text were more likely to encounter it as a series of separate books in smaller codices.35

While the most dedicated biblical scholars with access to good libraries, such as Bede, may have been very familiar with all of the books of the Old and New Testaments, the majority of literate Christians in Anglo-Saxon England would have been more

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32 Loewe 110: “As ecclesiastical centres in certain areas grew in importance, waves of missionary activity might carry a text-form, stamped with marks of the earliest preaching of Christianity in the province concerned, beyond the natural or politically probably frontiers of its currency. The classic example of this is the introduction of a south Italian text-type into Northumbria by Ceolfrid and Benedict Biscop. From Wearmouth and Jarrow, where Irish texts were also current, texts carried by missionaries to Gaul, Switzerland and Germany both transmitted to the Continent in the ninth century Alcuin’s Northumbrian-based bible, and also reinforced the Irish tinge that was independently being injected into texts of other parentage being produced in Europe.”


35 According to Frederick Biggs in his study of *The Apocrypha* for SASLC, Instrumenta Angelistica Mediaevalia I (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 3, “Codex Amiatinus and Codex Grandior are notable because complete bibles would have been relatively rare in AS period even following the Carolingian Reform, which produced its Alcuin Bibles. In addition to Amiatinus, only 3 more complete or nearly complete bibles survive: BL Royal 1.E.VII and 1.E.VIII (s.xi provenance Christ Church, Canterbury), San Marino, California, Huntington Library, HM 62 (s.xi2, possibly from Christ Church, Canterbury; provenance Rochester), and Lincoln, Cathedral Library 1 (A.1.2) + Cambridge, Trinity College B.5.2 (148) (s. xi or xii, provenance Lincoln).”
familiar with the Psalms and Gospels due to what Loewe refers to as “the pull of liturgical conservativism.” While manuscript copies of the Gospels and the Psalms form the majority of Anglo-Saxon biblical texts which have come down to us, the other books of the Bible were also available to the Anglo-Saxons. They were necessary for liturgical veneration and study. As Van Dijk explains, in the early liturgy,

all books of the Bible were covered within a year, starting with the Heptateuch just before Lent, that is, on the Sunday nearest to the beginning of the civil year (March). But the Pauline letters were read on Sundays at the third nocturn of matins and in agreement with the epistles at Mass; so were the Gospel pericopes. Because of the development of the liturgical year and a too frequent repetition of the *Apostolus*, a new order of Bible-reading was issued at Rome, probably during the first half of the eighth century.

What this means is that, prior to the development of this “new order of Bible-reading,” the *Apostolus* (which refers to the biblical Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse inclusively) was being read and reread over and over both in the monastic observation of the third nocturn of matins and at Mass throughout the liturgical year. According to this older practice, “during the summer and fall one read through all the Pauline Epistles as a *lectio continua*. If the whole text was not read, it was

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36 Biggs 3.
37 Loewe 111.
38 McGurk notes (3) that Gospel books account for over 43 percent of all biblical manuscripts from an Insular milieu between the years 600-800; however, he cautions us to recall that “in the early Middle Ages the greatest effort was spent in making and keeping Gospel books: they were often the most valued and treasured possessions of a church, monastery or region and this must have helped their survival rate. It is quite possible therefore that this high proportion misleads and that it reflects the favorable conditions for survival rather than the number that was originally made. One other figure might be worth noting, and that is the higher proportion of Psalters from the later period (after 800) than from the earlier (600-800).”
40 This “frequent repetition of the *Apostolus*” must have had the profound effect of ingraining the words of Paul on the religious consciousnesses of those churchmen who took part in the Divine Office from day to day, year after year.
the job of the reader to select the most important passages to be read.” 41 Even as late as 650, after the standardization of liturgical readings in the Gelasian and Gregorian reforms, we find *ordines* from Rome which specify that “the whole of canonical scripture is to be read in the course of the year,” with the Acts of the Apostles, Catholic Epistles, and Revelation read in the season from Easter to Pentecost, and the Psalms, Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul read throughout the year. 42 The Gelasian and especially the Gregorian standardization of biblical lections in the liturgy reduced the number of readings from the *Apostolus* significantly from the *lectio continua* practice. 43 Yet most of the Pauline Epistles were still used to fill in what Old calls “that long stretch of the year from Pentecost to Christmas,” and the Acts of the Apostles were still read over the period between Ascension and Pentecost. 44 Readings from the *Apostolus* thus continued to predominate in the liturgy from late spring to Advent, particularly in the daily monastic observances.

What kinds of ideas about apostleship would literate Anglo-Saxon religious have encountered in their interactions with and study of the Bible in its scriptural and liturgical manifestations? To quote the poet of the Old English *Andreas*, ṣǫet scell æglæwra / mann on moldan  fonna ic me tælige (it requires a person on earth better versed in the Law (i.e., the Scriptures) than I count myself) to answer that question in full. Given the limited

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41 Hughes Oliphant Old’s study *Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, volume 3: The Medieval Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 167.
42 *Ordines Romani XIV* cited in Old 148. Old notes that this “document was probably not meant to guide the selection of Scripture lessons for the celebration of the mass, but rather for daily prayer, either in a cathedral church or another large church or monastery where daily worship was held. In fact, by the time the tradition is reported in the *ordines Romani* the daily reading is primarily thought of in terms of the night office of monastic communities.”
43 Old 165.
scope of this introduction, it is only possible to sketch some of the major biblical themes concerning apostleship and ‘mission’ and these only in very broad strokes. We will focus briefly on three main parts of the New Testament: the Gospel of Matthew, Luke-Acts, and the Pauline Epistles.

**Gospel of Matthew**

The final verses of Matthew’s Gospel (28:16-20) form what is known to modern biblical scholars as the “Great Commission.” These verses report the words of the resurrected Christ to his apostles (minus Judas):

16 undecim autem discipuli abierunt in Galilaeam in montem ubi constituerat illis Jesus 17 et videntes eum adoraverunt quidam autem dubitaverunt 18 et accedens Jesus locutus est eis dicens data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra 19 euntes ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Fili et Spiritus Sancti 20 docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem saeculi

16 And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And seeing him they adored: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. 19 Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.

The “Great Commission” forms the culmination of Matthew’s Gospel, not only because of its position at the conclusion of the text, but because, as missiologist David Bosch explains, Matthew’s “gospel [is] permeated, from beginning to end, by a notion of a mission to Jews and Gentiles.”

In the “Great Commission” medieval audiences found two fundamental commands of Christ to his apostles and disciples: “teach all nations” and “baptize them.” As a powerful and explicit statement of Christ’s intention for a

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Gentile mission (*omnes gentes*), the conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel takes on a kind of life of its own in Anglo-Saxon religious writings, often being cited or echoed in the correspondence of missionaries such as Boniface, and repeated in the words of apostles or Christ as they are depicted in Old English poetry, such as Cynewulf’s *Christ II: Ascension*.

It is especially significant that the Great Commission forms Christ’s final words in Matthew’s Gospel and that they are framed by Matthew’s statement that the apostles who saw Christ “worshipped” (*adoraverunt*) him, “but some doubted” (*quidem autem dubitaverunt*). The theme of the weakness of the apostles runs throughout Matthew’s Gospel, complicating his depiction of Jesus’ closest disciples as ideal models for Christian living and belief. As Bosch explains, in Matthew,

> the disciples are sometimes referred to as being ‘of little faith’ or ‘afraid’ or ‘full of doubt.’ The last of these, *distazein*, appears only in Matthew. Particularly striking is its appearance in the context of the ‘Great Commission’….Clearly these references to the weakness of the disciples have an important meaning for Matthew’s readers. Being a disciple of Jesus does not signify that one has, as it were, arrived. Matthew’s gospel records several parables about the need for remaining vigilant to the last moment….The weaknesses of the disciples in Matthew’s gospel do not, however, have a dark side only….Matthew’s Christians, like the first disciples, stand in the dialectical tension between worship and doubt, faith and fear. 46

This “dialectical tension” becomes, as we will see, an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon interpretations and negotiations of apostolic identity; we will return again and again to the creative potential of this contrast between the apostles as fallible human beings and ideal followers of Christ.

Matthew’s Gospel also contains the most detailed statement of Christ’s expectations for the apostolic life in its account of the choosing and sending out of the

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46 Bosch 76.
apostles. This statement is prefaced by Christ’s analogy of the labor of preaching and conversion to a harvest of souls, a figure which serves as a central motif, a kind of shorthand, even, for the discussion of missionary work in Anglo-Saxon circles. On its own, however, Matthew 10 serves as a veritable “how-to” guide for apostleship. The passage, while too extensive to quote here, will be familiar to most readers. The most significant emphases are the powers Christ gives to the apostles to heal and cast out spirits (10:1, 8), and his commands to preach (10:7), to live and travel simply (10:9-10), and, most importantly, to expect and endure suffering and affliction for the sake of spreading his teachings among the people (10:16-28). The apostles too must share in the suffering of Christ, for “the disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord” (19:24). It is because of their willingness to share in and endure suffering for the sake of Christ that the apostles may share his authority in teaching and preaching:

38 et qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me non est me dignus
39 qui invenit animam suam perdet illam et qui perdiderit animam suam propter me inveniet eam
40 qui recipit vos me recipit et qui me recipit recipit eum qui me misit

38 he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. 39 he that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it. 40 he that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

The history of the apostles as martyrs for the faith in the early days of the Church not only appeared to confirm the truth of Christ’s sayings in Matthew 10:38-40, but also concretized the connection between apostleship and suffering in Christ, so that the two concepts came to be inextricably linked in the minds of medieval Christians. For those living, as the Anglo-Saxons largely did, in an age when martyrdom was rare, other forms of affliction, both physical and spiritual, externalized and self-inflicted, came to supplant the martyrs’ death for the faith as a form of apostolic legitimation.
Luke’s Gospel and his second book of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, establish his special interest in Christian mission and the apostles as historical persons.47 Within this two-part work, several significant themes emerge; most notable for our purposes are Luke’s emphases on the status of the apostles as witnesses of Christ,48 the powers of the Holy Spirit at work in them, and the role of the twelve and Paul in the establishment of an apostolic church.49 The first two of these themes are expressed in Luke’s version of Christ’s commission to his apostles, which comes at the conclusion of the Gospel (chapter 24), just prior to the Ascension.

46 et dixit eis quoniam sic scriptum est et sic oportebat Christum pati et resurgere a mortuis die tertia 47 et praedicari in nomine eius paenitentiam et remissionem peccatorum in omnes gentes incipientibus ab Hierosolyma 48 vos autem estis testes horum 49 et ego mitto promissum Patris mei in vos autem sedete in civitate quoadusque induamini virtutem ex alto

46 Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day: 47 and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 and you are witnesses of these things. 49 and I send the promise of my Father upon you: but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high.

The concept of apostles as Jesus’ witnesses (Greek martys/martyres) expressed here in Luke 24:48 is significant because, while Luke mentions the word only here in his Gospel, he uses it thirteen times to designate the apostles in Acts.50 The apostles to whom Christ speaks are called to “witness” or profess Christ, his suffering, death, and resurrection as the fulfillment of scriptures to the people (Luke 24:44-45), and in doing so, to preach

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49 Bosch 113-114; 120.
50 Bosch 116.
“penance and the remission of sins” in his name. At this point in the Gospel of Luke “witness” seems to refer only to the apostles’ requirement to “point to what God has done and is doing, and to give testimony to what they have seen and heard and touched.” In Acts, Luke’s treatment of figures such as Paul and Stephen begins to extend the concept of witnessing, that is, of ‘martyrdom,’ beyond its immediate meaning of “proclamation of the Gospel” to include the ideas of suffering and struggle for the faith which are inherent in the modern and medieval concept of the word martyr.

Luke’s depictions of Stephen the Protomartyr and Paul, in particular, challenge his own definition of an apostle. In his account of the events following Christ’s Ascension, Luke lists the apostles as “Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes, and Jude the brother of James” (Acts 1:13); these men, he has Peter say, “have companied with us [the chosen disciples – the twelve, minus Judas] all the time that the Lord Jesus came and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day wherein he was taken up from us” (Acts 1:21-22). This suggests that, for Luke, the apostles were a finite group of twelve (once they added Matthias) who have had close contact with Jesus during his time on earth and themselves witnessed his resurrection and Ascension in person. According to this definition, neither Stephen nor Paul can be considered apostles. Yet, Luke spends a considerable portion of his Acts of the Apostles on the martyrdom of Stephen, and the story of Paul takes up more than half of this book, far exceeding his coverage of all the other ‘official’ apostles except Peter, who still gets less coverage than

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51 Bosch 116.
52 Bosch 116.
54 LeGrys 72.
Paul. While Luke never uses the word ‘apostle’ to designate Paul or Stephen, he does expand the category of ‘witness’ to them (Acts 22:15, 20; 26:16).\textsuperscript{55} This, coupled with the extensive treatment Paul receives in the New Testament Acts and Epistles, and his own protestations to apostolic status (discussed below), allowed the category of apostle, interlinked as it is with the Lucan notion of ‘witness,’ to reach beyond the twelve. The idea of witness as apostle encompasses other Christians who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel, despite the fact that they themselves could not have encountered Jesus while he walked on earth.

For Luke, then, the agency of the spirit working through the apostles guides them in their mission to witness to Christ, and imbues them with the power and the authority to spread his teachings through the twin offices of preaching and baptism. As Bosch explains, for Luke, “mission is the direct consequence of the outpouring of the spirit” in the Pentecost event.\textsuperscript{56} The “power from on high” promised by Christ at his Ascension and sent to the apostles at Pentecost enables them to witness to him, and “emboldens” them to speak in his name,\textsuperscript{57} in spite of their human weaknesses.\textsuperscript{58} As we will see, in Anglo-Saxon religious writings, the theme of the power of the Holy Spirit becomes linked to the gift of eloquence; to be blessed with linguistic abilities comes to be seen as a source of authority and a call to witness to Christ and his saints.

Finally, Luke’s perspectives on the apostolic origins of the early church were influential in the formation of the concept of apostolic succession. Throughout Acts, Luke stresses that the apostles established churches on the basis of their “apostolic

\textsuperscript{55} Bosch 116.
\textsuperscript{56} Bosch 113.
\textsuperscript{57} Bosch 114.
\textsuperscript{58} Bosch 121.
authority,” exercised primarily through Peter. Even Paul’s Gentile mission required the ratification of the twelve to be seen as legitimate (Acts 15:7-11).59 As the only ‘history’ in the New Testament, Acts was also influential as a source of inspiration for hagiographers and church historians, including the Anglo-Saxons. Several features of Acts’ narrative style, contents, and recurring motifs, such as its episodic structure, attention to geography and historiography, and its emphasis on the dangers of traveling, shipwrecks, farewell scenes, stories of ministry, preaching, miracles, conversion, and the founding of churches60 all appear as prominent features of Anglo-Saxon apostolic discourse.

**Pauline Writings**

Paul’s claim to apostleship in the early church was, for the reasons outlined above, problematic. While Luke extends the concept of witnessing to Paul, and comes close to using witness as a synonym for apostle, he never explicitly designates Paul as an apostle. There were, moreover, many members of the early church (particularly the Judaizers in certain congregations) who disagreed with Paul’s Gentile mission, criticized his missionary practices, and outright challenged the validity of his claims to apostolic authority in several ways.61 Paul’s Epistles, in particular Galatians, 1 and 2 Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians, were written during this time of tension and questioning of Paul’s apostolicity. As such, these letters contain Paul’s own explicit defense of his status and

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59 Bosch 120.
offer the most clear and direct articulations of what it means to be an apostle in the entire New Testament, especially since Paul presents himself (or rather, God working through him) as a model for the emulation of others.

As P. W. Barnett points out, “Paul uses the word apostolos more than any other New Testament author,” and Paul repeatedly describes himself in his letters as

‘apostle of Jesus Christ’ or by a similar ascription (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 Tim. 1:1, etc). It is ‘through Jesus Christ’ that Paul has ‘received apostleship’ (apostole, Rom. 1:5, cf. Gal. 1:1) because Jesus has ‘called’ Paul to be an apostle and ‘separated’ him for the Gospel of God (Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1) to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5, 11:13). All of this is due to the risen Christ appearing to Paul ‘last of all,’ as the persecutor was traveling to Damascus.

Paul’s understanding of his own apostleship was grounded in the three points outlined above – his sense of calling, his belief in the necessity of the Gentile mission, and his Christophany on the road to Damascus, which he and the twelve interpreted as a real encounter with the risen Lord.

But these were not the only aspects Paul used to support and define his claim to apostleship. He also appealed to his success as a missionary among the Gentiles and his exemplary suffering in Christ as signs of his apostolic status. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 Paul’s apostleship is attacked and he must defend it. He begins his defense by appealing to his experience of having seen the risen Christ. This, Schnackenburg suggests, was the expected justification for admittance to the select group of Christ’s apostles in “certain circles in Jerusalem.” However, Schnackenburg continues,
as far as Paul is concerned, this is not enough to attest his apostleship: he adds still another argument: ‘Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?’ That is to say, the congregation brought into existence through his preaching is also evidence of his apostleship. Paul underlines this point in the following sentence: ‘If to others I am not an apostle (i.e. if they reject me as an apostle), at least I am one to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.’

This conception of the congregation of Christian converts as a “seal” or “sign” of apostleship is key, especially because, as Schnackenburg points out, it would appear that Paul justified his apostleship differently to his different audiences. In the “Hellenistic mission,” the necessity of experiencing the risen Lord was subordinated, or even replaced by an emphasis on “successful missionary activity, which was possibly confirmed by ‘signs of an apostle,’ powerful preaching and proof of authority.”

Furthermore, Paul justified his apostolic status through his experience of the suffering promised to him when he was called on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:15-16). As S. J. Hafemann explains, “rather than questioning the legitimacy of his apostleship because of his suffering, Paul considered suffering to be a characteristic mark of his apostolic ministry.” Paul’s longest discussion of his suffering as a defense of his apostleship is found in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Comparing himself to other ministers who claim apostolic status and deny his own, Paul tells the Corinthians,

23… dico plus ego in laboribus plurimis in carceribus abundantius in plagis supra modum in mortibus frequenter 24 a ludeis quinquies quadragenias una minus accepit 25 ter virgis caesum sum semel lapidatus sum ter naufragium feci nox et die in profundo mari periculis fluminum periculis latronum periculis ex genere periculis ex gentibus periculis in civitate periculis in solitudine periculis in mari periculis in falsis fratribus in labore et aerumna in

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67 Schnackenburg 293.
68 Schnackenburg 301-302: “If one considers Paul’s choice of words in 1 Thess. 2:7, 1 Cor. 4:9; 12:28f, and Romans 15:7, it appears that in the mission field he clearly associated himself more readily with the usage which regarded apostles as preachers and missionaries to Christ.”
vigiliis multis in fame et siti in ieuniiis multis in frigore et nuditate 28 praeter illa quae extrinsecus sunt instantia mea cotidiana sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum 29 quis infirmatur et non infirmor quis scandalizatur et ego non uror

23...I am more; in many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. 24 Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods: once I was stoned: thrice I suffered shipwreck: a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. 26 In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren: 27 In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness: 28 Besides those things which are without: my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?

The catalogue of sufferings and afflictions is meant to be impressive; and it is. Especially significant is Paul’s statement that his greatest source of suffering is his “daily...solicitude for all the churches” (mea cotidiana sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum), for it grounds his suffering not only in the experiences of the flesh but also those of the mind and spirit. According to Paul, pastoral care is its own form of apostolic suffering in the Lord, equal to or even surpassing the many “perils” and physical deprivations he endures. Paul’s rationale for viewing all forms of suffering as legitimation of his apostleship rests in his belief that, in his suffering, the “power of the Gospel was revealed,” that is, he becomes able to identify with the suffering Christ and to reveal to others the “power of God made known in the cross of Christ as God sustains [him] in the midst of [his] adversities.”

Paul intended his readership to understand him as not only the “least of the apostles” because he did not encounter the risen Christ with the twelve, but also the “last” apostle – that is, the final one (1 Cor. 15:8). However, by legitimating his apostleship to the Gentiles on the grounds of his exceptional suffering and the success of his ministry

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71 Barnett 50.
and establishment of churches, Paul paradoxically opened up the category of apostleship beyond the limited circle of those twelve individuals, plus Paul, who experienced and were called by the risen Christ on earth. Following Paul’s example, Christians who endured suffering with joy for Christ’s sake, and/or engaged in successful missionary endeavors could legitimately claim apostolic status, at least in some form.

The Anglo-Saxons themselves appear to have understood apostleship in this way. For them, it was an exceptional category of religious life, but not an unattainable one, limited only to a few contemporaries of Jesus. This seems to be the sense, for instance, when Bede writes in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Gregory the Great,

> Quia, cum primum in toto orbe gereret pontificatum, et concursis iam dudum ad fidem ueritatis esset praelatus ecclesiis, nostram gentem eatenus idolis mancipatam Christi fecit ecclesiam, ita ut apostolicum illum de eo liceat nobis proferre sermonem: quia etsi aliis non est apostolus, sed tamen nobis est; nam signaculum apostolatus eius nos sumus in Domino.

We can and should by rights call him [Gregory] our apostle, for though he held the most important see in the whole world and was head of Churches which had long been converted to the true faith, yet he made our nation, till then enslaved to idols, into a Church of Christ, so that we may use the apostle’s words about him, ‘If he is not an apostle to others yet at least he is to us, for we are the seal of his apostleship in the Lord.’

In citing Paul’s own defense of his apostleship based on the success of his missions as his reason for designating Gregory as a new apostle, Bede draws on the legitimacy of Paul to support his claim, and thereby establishes a comparison between the two apostolic men that reflects favorably upon Gregory. Moreover, while the tone and phrasing of Bede’s statement suggests that he expected others to disagree with his argument for Gregory’s apostleship to the English, this way of thinking about Gregory was clearly widespread in

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72 Bede, *HE* II.1, 73-74.
the early Anglo-Saxon church (at least in Northumbrian circles). As Michael Lapidge points out,

the anonymous Vita Gregorii, composed at Whitby probably between 704 and 714, refers unambiguously to the inclusion of St Gregory’s name in a litany alongside the names of other apostles and martyrs: *Unde letaniis, quibus Dominum pro nostris imploramus excessibus atque innumeris peccatis quibus eum offendimus, sanctum Gregorium nobis in amminiculum vocamus, cum sanctis scilicet apostolis et martyrribus.* Similarly, the council of *Clovesho* which met in 747 stipulated not only the recitation of Gregory’s name in the litany of the saints, but the addition immediately following it of that of St Augustine [of Canterbury].

The stipulation for inclusion of these two fathers of the English church in liturgical commemoration alongside the twelve apostles and Paul himself demonstrates the early medieval view that the status of ‘apostle’ was still attainable for Christians living in the post-apostolic age.

**Liturgical Veneration of the Apostles in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church**

Our discussion of the inclusion of these two new ‘apostles’ to the Anglo-Saxons in the litany along with the biblical apostles and early martyrs brings us to the topic of the commemoration of the apostles themselves in the liturgy of the early Anglo-Saxon church. As Els Rose explains in her study of the liturgical use of the apocryphal acts of the apostles,

medieval liturgy, or public worship, is marked not only by the commemoration of the central episodes of Christ’s life, but also the annual, weekly, even daily communal remembrance of holy men and women: the saints. This commemoration of particular predecessors that had played and continued to play a special role in the Christian community (be it the local group of the faithful or the church at large) was contributory to the determination of the communal identity of the members of that community. The selection of saints makes visible with what kind of Christians medieval faithful wanted to be identified, whom they

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saw as their role models and whom they accepted as the founders of their religious belief.\textsuperscript{74}

The apostles were commemorated and culted in the Church from very early on, particularly in Rome.\textsuperscript{75} The popes housed and promoted (through church dedications, hagiographies, and the facilitation of pilgrimage to the shrines of the apostles’ relics) the corporeal remains of Peter, Paul, Andrew, and John\textsuperscript{76} along with those of other popular Roman martyrs from the age of Christian persecution. As Alan Thacker has shown, the Anglo-Saxons inherited their notions of sanctity and their profound appreciation for and practice of the cult of the apostles directly from Rome via the Gregorian mission of 597.\textsuperscript{77}

When Augustine and his Syriac colleague Theodore of Tarsus came to Anglo-Saxon England, they brought with them not only the mentality of the Roman church at that time, but also the entire apparatus of the Roman cult of the apostles, including relics,\textsuperscript{78} liturgical books, and practices of veneration. Among these practices were the celebration of the feast days of the apostles and their commemoration in the litany. While

\textsuperscript{74} Els Rose, \textit{Ritual Memory: The Apocryphal Acts and Liturgical Commemoration in the Early Medieval West} (c. 500-1215), Mittellateinische Studien und Texte 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1.

\textsuperscript{75} Literature on the culting of the apostles, particularly in Rome, is vast; one may begin with the studies of Alan Thacker, particularly his “Rome of the Martyrs: Saints, Cults and Relics, Fourth to Seventh Centuries,” in \textit{Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome}, ed. Éamonn Ó Carragáin and Carol Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 13-49; and “In Search of Saints: The English Church and the Cult of Roman Apostles and Martyrs in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” in \textit{Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald Bullough}, ed. J. H. M. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 247-277.

\textsuperscript{76} As Thacker (“Roman Apostles,” 265) explains, “Rome had been developing a devotion to apostolic cults other than Peter and Paul since the construction in the 460s of an oratory to St John the Evangelist by Pope Hilary (461-68) and his successor Simplicius (468-83). Pope Symmachus (498-514) had boosted interest further by embellishing St Peter’s with a rotunda dedicated to St Andrew and an oratory of St Thomas. Feasts of all these apostles entered Roman mass books at an early date.”

\textsuperscript{77} Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 248.

\textsuperscript{78} These relics were soon supplemented by gifts from Rome and the addition of many relics brought back to England by Anglo-Saxon pilgrims to the shrines of the apostles, including Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop. Thacker notes (“Roman Apostles,” 262) that “the usual description of…‘relics of the apostles and martyrs’ [used by the Anglo-Saxons] strongly suggests that until the late seventh century the principal relics in England - in its shrine-crypts, its portable reliquaries, and its altars – had been brought from Rome.”
it is difficult to determine the exact liturgical calendar followed at Rome in the time of Augustine of Canterbury, David Rollason has pieced together various liturgical sources to reconstruct the saints venerated there. He organizes these saints into three groups: “first, those whose tombs were near Rome itself and were places where a celebratory mass was said by the whole Roman church on the feast day; second, the patron saints of the principal churches of Rome; and third, saints not in the city of Rome who were either biblical or widely known.” The apostles Peter and Paul, venerated on 28, 29, and 30 June and 6 July, were naturally included in the first group of Roman saints, and the last group included Philip and James (1 May), Stephen Protomartyr (2 August), Andrew (29 or 30 November) and John the Evangelist (27 December). Thacker also notes that by the late fifth century a feast of the twelve apostles was being celebrated in Rome and continued to be practiced throughout the later sixth century though it was primarily an auxiliary to the feast of Peter and Paul on 29 June. Through Theodore and Hadrian, the Anglo-Saxons also came to venerate several lesser apostles, especially Bartholomew, and companions to the apostles, such as Barnabas, Timothy, and Onesimus the slave, who had been culted in the eastern church. In the absence of native saints and martyrs, the early Anglo-Saxon church enthusiastically embraced these apostolic cults and feasts as a

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79 David Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 60. Rollason lists the following sources as the basis for his reconstruction: “the *Leonine Sacramentary*, the late 7th century *Gelasian Sacramentary*, the *Chronographia* of Furius Dionysius Philocalus containing 4th century lists of martyrs and bishops, the *Hieronymian Martyrology* and information relative to the patron saints of the titular churches of Rome. The *Gelasian Sacramentary* in its present form is a Frankish book but it embodies elements of the usage of Rome.”

80 Rollason 61.

81 Rollason 61.

82 Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 266-267.

83 Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 271.
means of affiliating themselves not only with the authority of Rome and its universal, apostolic church, but also with Christ himself through his first followers.84

**Litanies, Apostle Lists, and Martyrologies**

The forms of commemoration of the apostles which the Augustinian mission brought to Anglo-Saxon England included other types of liturgical practices beyond the observance of feast days. These included the recitation of the names of the apostles in the canon of the mass85 and invocation of the apostles’ aid as individuals and as a group in the litany of saints.86 The canon was the central prayer of the mass, and, as Thacker tells us, it was “fixed by the early sixth century” and “included two intercessory sections, known from their opening words as the *Communicantes* and the *Nobis quoque.*”87 In these two prayers, the celebrants petitioned the apostles and other saints in a familiar sequence of names following a set order that began with the Virgin Mary. Lapidge gives the *Communicantes* prayer as follows: *Imprimis gloriosae semper uirginis Mariae genetricis Dei...sed et beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum tuorum, Petri, Pauli, Andreae, Iacobi, Iohannis, Thomae, Iacobi, Philippi, Bartholomei, Matthei, Simonis et Taddei...et omnium santorum...etc.,* and further notes that “the prayer *Nobis quoque* peccatoribus asks for mercy and the privilege of participating in the community of saints, who are named as follows: …*cum Iohanne, Stephano, Matthia, Barnaba, Ignatio, Alexandro, Marcellino, Petro, Felicitate, Perpetua, Agathe, Lucia, Agnen, Caecilia,*

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87 Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 266.
Anastasia, et cum omnibus sanctis,” and so on. These types of serial lists of apostles in the prayers of the Mass existed alongside differing lists of the apostles found in the Bible, particularly in Matthew 10:2-3 and Luke 6:14-16, and both forms influenced the various listings of the apostles in the litany of the saints.

Like the Communicantes and Nobis quoque prayers which influenced it, the litany was also as a form of supplicatory prayer, recited in a variety of other liturgical rites including penitential processions, rogations, personal devotions, and, significantly, the monastic Divine Office. While the exact order of saints listed varied from region to region and litany to litany, the basic structure of the prayer’s classification of saints was relatively stable. The grouping of the apostles occupied a high rank, often recited just after the prayers to the Virgin Mary, the archangels, and John the Baptist (or the prophets).

Within the grouping of apostles, the order of the names of lesser apostles tended to vary for the reasons noted above. Yet my own survey of Lapidge’s edition of the litanies known from Anglo-Saxon England reveals an identical order for the first three apostles in every single Anglo-Saxon litany: Peter, Paul, Andrew. These three are usually followed by John the Evangelist or James. The initial order of Peter, Paul, and Andrew, however, appears to be fixed. This pattern overlaps significantly with the ranking of these three apostles in the number of church dedications from the early Anglo-Saxon period,

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88 Lapidge, Litanies, 28-29.
89 Thacker (“Roman Apostles,” 266-267) explains that “in the 1930s Kennedy pointed out that the order of the list in the Communicantes diverged sharply from that in the Scriptural lists of the apostles.” Lapidge (Litanies, 28-29) further states that “Frequently, but not invariably, lists of saints in litanies were reshaped under the influence of these two Mass prayers...[concerning the lists of apostles in the litany] sometimes they followed one of these [biblical] lists, or the Communicantes version, or were amended to reflect the sequences in the Bible, or put in the evangelists.”
90 Lapidge, Litanies, 6, 44.
91 Lapidge, Litanies, 22.
and reflects the high position and close association of these three particular apostles within the hierarchy of the saints. In his listing of Anglo-Saxon church dedications from the seventh and eighth centuries, Wilhelm Levison identifies twenty-four dedications to Peter alone, seven for Peter and Paul combined, five for Paul alone, and seven for Andrew. These findings have been complicated by the realization in recent years that “Anglo-Saxon cathedrals and monasteries consisted not of a single church but of complexes of churches, some of which contained a number of altars” which may be dedicated to different saints. However, the strong impression of the dominance of these three particular apostles in the dedications of churches and altars in early Anglo-Saxon England is undeniable. This is usually taken as an indication of the overwhelming romanitas of the Anglo-Saxon church, and it undoubtly is that. However, it might also be a reflection of the apparently hierarchical sequence of these three apostles – Peter, Paul and Andrew – in the litany, especially because, as Lapidge has proven, “it was in the British Isles, and particularly in Anglo-Saxon England, that the litany of the saints first came to be widely used for devotional purposes in the western Church.”

The special predominance of these three apostles in the litany and in Anglo-Saxon church and altar dedications is further reflected in the commemoration of universal saints in Anglo-Saxon calendars and martyrologies, including the earliest of these, the calendar of the eighth century Anglo-Saxon missionary to the Frisians, Willibrord. Willibrord’s calendar is based on a version of the Hieronymian Martyrology, which concludes with lists of the feasts of the apostles known as the Notita de locis sanctorum apostolorum or

93 Cubitt, “Universal and Local Saints,” 444.
94 Lapidge, Litanies, 25.
95 Cubitt, “Universal and Local Saints,” 439-446. For more on Willibrord’s calendar, see H. A. Wilson, ed., The Calendar of Willibrord from Ms Paris Lat. 10837, HBS 15 (London: 1918).
Brevarium apostolorum. The Hieronymian Martyrology, a collection of brief notices of the lives and passions of saints falsely attributed to Jerome, was originally compiled in Rome in the fifth century, but was disseminated to the Anglo-Saxon church through its contacts with Gaul. Here it is important to recall that Rome and Anglo-Saxon England were not alone in their shared appreciation for and veneration of the apostles. Thacker has documented the sustained interest in the apostles evidenced in sixth- and seventh-century Gaul:

Gaul produced a succession of revisions and reworkings of the Latin texts of the apocryphal acts of the apostles, the originals of which were suspect because tinged with Gnostic heresy. Besides a number of works devoted to the individual apostles, such as the Liber miraculorum sanctae Andreae of Gregory of Tours, there was also a highly influential collection known to posterity as the Apostolic Histories but to contemporaries as the Virtutes or Passiones apostolorum.... circulating in Francia by the later sixth century if not before. Other literature of the period undoubtedly reflects Gallic interest in the apostles as a group.

This Gallic veneration and production of texts related to the apostles entered directly into England through various channels (most notably through Bishop Wilfrid), reinforcing and augmenting the Anglo-Saxon church’s already strong apostolic interests and affiliations with Rome as the center of the cult of the apostles. The versions of the apostolic passiones as well as the works of Gregory of Tours on Andrew and the Gloria martyrum (which contains accounts of the cults of several of the apostles) were known and used in Anglo-Saxon England, and the forms of Hieronymian Martyrology and

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96 Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 268.
97 Rollason 72.
98 Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 268-269. Thacker also notes that “in fourth and fifth century Gaul the apostles as a group were titulars of at least one cathedral, six cemeterial basilicas and probably one conventional church; thereafter, however, this form of dedication seems to have been eclipsed by dedications to individual apostles, especially Peter, and to a lesser extent Paul and Andrew.”
Brevarium apostolorum, along with other martyrologies and apostle lists\textsuperscript{100} were influential in the establishment of Anglo-Saxon Latin and vernacular martyrological traditions.\textsuperscript{101}

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles form another highly influential source of knowledge about the apostles with ties to the liturgy. These extra-canonical texts recounted further adventures of the apostles as individuals or in pairs “in novelistic fashion…aimed at supplementing the deficient information which the New Testament

\textsuperscript{100} There are two main versions of apostle lists other than the Brevarium apostolorum; these are Isidore of Seville’s De ortu et obitu patrum in PL 83, cols. 129-56 and an anonymous Hiberno-Latin tract of the same title in PL 83, cols. 1275-94. On a possibly related note, Martin K. Fois has recently uncovered a tradition of map-making in Anglo-Saxon England which merges the T-O map form with listings of the mission fields of the apostles. One manuscript in particular, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 265, which Foys assigns to late eleventh-century Worcester indicates the mission fields of the four major apostles, Peter, Paul, John and Andrew. See Fois’ essay “An Unfinished mappa mundi from late-eleventh-century Worcester,” ASE 35 (2006): 271-284.

communicates about the destinies of these men.” 102 As the use of the term ‘apocryphal’ suggests, these accounts of the lives, deeds, and martyrdoms of the apostles were not officially received into the canon of biblical literature, and several important writers of the early Church and major literary figures in Anglo-Saxon England, including Bede and Ælfric, voiced their distrust of the origins and contents of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. 103 However, these apocryphal accounts of the apostles remained in heavy circulation throughout the Middle Ages, and were read, recycled, and adapted in various forms and put to ample use in literary and commentary traditions in Anglo-Saxon England.

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles generally circulated as several varying collections of texts, with the most important collection for Anglo-Saxon England being the ‘Pseudo-Abdias’ Apostolic Histories, although several other collections and individual apocryphal apostolic texts appear to have been known to them, including the “‘Pseudo-Marcellus’ Martyrdom of Peter and Paul, the ‘Pseudo-Mellitus’ Martyrdom of John, and the passiones of Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Simon and Jude.” 104 Often, as is the case with several of the Pseudo-Abdias Apostolic Histories, the accounts of the martyrdoms of the apostles were hived off from the larger body of the text to create an apostolic passion narrative; these excerpted and redacted accounts are known as

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Evidence for the inclusion of material from the apocryphal acts and passiones is particularly strong in Anglo-Saxon England, with clear references to and borrowings from the various apocrypha in the works of Aldhelm, Bede, and Ælfric (despite their protests about the dubious content of these texts). Material from the apostolic passiones lies behind the epitomes of the anonymous Old English Martyrology, and as we will discuss in chapters 3 and 5, the passiones and a version of the apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Mathias in the Country of the Cannibals served as major sources of content and inspiration for two Old English poems, Cynewulf’s The Fates of the Apostles and the anonymous Andreas.

The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are likely to have reached Anglo-Saxon England by a variety of routes. Collections of passiones and virtutes (another name for Apocryphal Acts) were circulating in Gaul and were used by Gregory of Tours in his compilation on the Glory of the Martyrs and his account of the miracles of Andrew in the sixth century. Aideen O’Leary has also posited that apocryphal accounts of the apostles may have reached early Anglo-Saxon England through the influence of their Irish neighbors, since “Irish comparanda help to show that a collection of apostles’ passiones was known in Insular milieux by about AD 700 – certainly by the late seventh century in Ireland, and possibly even earlier in Anglo-Saxon England.”

Another major avenue for the circulation of apocryphal legends and texts about the apostles, however, was the liturgy itself, as these texts adapted in the rituals, lections and homilies associated with the liturgical commemoration of the saints, particularly

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108 Rose, Ritual Traditions, 3ff.
(though not exclusively) in the monastic night office of Matins. The second nocturn of Matins was taken up by three lessons from the appropriate vitae of the saints; for the feast days of the apostles, the Apocryphal Acts and passiones often appear to have filled this and other liturgical roles. As Frederick Biggs explains, the apostolic apocrypha were often “adapted to liturgical use and survive in collections referred to as legendaries and homiliaries,” the most significant of which are the “Pembroke Homiliary and the Cotton-Corpus Legendary,” which are adaptations of the “Carolingian collection known as the Homiliary of St. Pere de Chartres.”

While these apocryphal accounts of the apostles’ lives and martyrdoms were ostensibly intended to supplement the biblical Acts of the Apostles, they diverge radically from the Lucan text in contents, style, and approach to subject matter. In their generally sustained focus on a single apostle (or an apostolic duo), and their emphasis on the apostle’s martyrdom as the “apex” of the saint’s life, the representations of the apostles in the Apocryphal Acts have more in common with the presentation of Christ in the Gospels than the biblical Acts. The focus on the apostle as an imitator of Christ paradoxically leads to what Bovon calls a “marginalization of Christology: Andrew or Thomas [becomes] the providential agent while Christ is far away in heaven on the side of God and does not function anymore as mediator,…though he may appear in a vision or a dream” and is “always behind the power of the apostle.”

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110 Rose, Ritual Memory, 74-77. In addition to providing readings for hagiographic lections, material from the apocryphal acts and passiones was adapted into other liturgical genres, such as hymns and prayers.
112 Bovon 177.
113 Bovon 183, 177.
martyr, largely leads the apocryphal accounts to depict each apostle as a “hero” and “savior” in his own right.114 While there are important exceptions – the Acts of Andrew and Mathias, the source text for Andreas, is one – to this generalization about the heroicization of the apostles in the Apocryphal Acts, the concept of the apostle as a nearly super-human imitator of Christ’s mission and passion was extremely influential in Anglo-Saxon religious writing and in the development of the hagiographic genre as a whole.

**Arator’s De actibus apostolorum**

In addition to receiving information and models for writing about the apostles from biblical, liturgical, and apocryphal sources, the Anglo-Saxons also had access to several influential Latin exegetical and literary works on the subject. While the array of patristic sources and commentaries which speak of the apostles and were known to Anglo-Saxon authors is too vast to begin to touch on in this introduction, we may concentrate here on one particularly influential Latin literary work, Arator’s De actibus apostolorum or Historia apostolorum.115 This poetic work belongs to the genre of biblical epics treating the New Testament, along with Juvenecus’s Evangeliorum libri quattuor and Sedulius’s Carmen paschale. Its author, known to us as Arator (‘Plowman’), was a subdeacon in the service of Pope Vigilius in Rome when he read his verse epic based on Luke’s Acts of the Apostles before the church of St. Peter ad Vincula.

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114 Bovon 185.
in year 544.\footnote{Roger P. H. Green, \textit{Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), xiii; and Lawrence Martin, “The Influence of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England,” \textit{Proceedings of the PMR Conference 7}, ed. Joseph C. Schaubelt and Joseph Reino (Villanova, Penn.: Villanova University, 1982), 75-76.} Arator writes in a prefatory letter to his friend Parthenius that after leaving behind secular poetry, he had considered writing verses on the Gospels (\textit{volumina Christi}), the Psalms (\textit{Davidicis odas}) and Genesis. But seeing that many of these worthy subjects had been treated by others (particularly the Gospels), he resolved at last to take up “that [book] which the Canon names Acts, a book filled with the apostles’ harvest in the world” (\textit{quem regula nominat Actus, / Messis apostolicae plenus in orbe liber}).\footnote{Epistula ad Parthenius, ed. McKinlay, lines 70-78; Schrader p. 102.}

Arator’s poem follows the narrative of events in Acts fairly closely, but differs from Luke’s work in its exclusive emphasis on Peter and Paul,\footnote{Richard Schrader. “Arator: A Revaluation,” \textit{Classical Folia} 31 (1977): 65-66; Green 279-80.} and in its deliberate, artful integration of the epic conventions, pagan diction, and poetic phrasing of Virgil and Lucan\footnote{Martin 75.} with the Christian discourses of allegorical exegesis and homiletics.\footnote{Green xiii.} Arator’s poem reflects the structure of Acts in its division into two books, the first focusing on Peter, and the second on the adventures of Paul. But unlike Luke, Arator endeavors to impose “epic unity” on the two halves by integrating the story of Paul as Saul in Book 1, and commenting on Peter (apostle to the Jews) and his role as the ‘leader’ of the apostles and the counterpoint to Paul (apostle to the Gentiles) throughout Book 2.\footnote{Martin 78; Green 273-74.} Moreover, Arator departs from Luke’s account by ending his poem with the overlapping sojourns and martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in the city of Rome. The poet uses this conclusion to impress upon his audience the relationship between these “two lights of the world” (\textit{duo...})
lumina...mundi) as well as to triumphantly assert the supremacy of Rome as the center of a Christian empire.\textsuperscript{122}

\begin{verbatim}
Altius ordo petit duo lumina dicere mundi
Convenisse simul tantisque e partibus unum
Delegisse locum, per quem sua sidera iungant
Omnia qui fidei virtutibus arva serenant….

Petris in Ecclesiae surrexit corpore princeps;
Haec turrita caput mundi circumtulit oris;
Conveniunt maiora sibi, speculentur ut omnes
Terrarum dominae fundata cacumina sedes.
Gentibus electus Paulus sine fine magister
Aequius huic praesens oris diffundit habenas
Quae gentes praelata monet; quodque intonat istic
urbis cogit honor, subiectus ut audiat orbis.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{verbatim}

The account begs [me] more profoundly to say that the two lights of the world came together and from regions so wide chose a single place, through which they, who make all lands bright with the virtues of faith, might unite their stars…. Peter rose to be the leader in the body of the Church; turret-crowned, she [Rome] surrounded her head with the regions of the world; the greater things gathered to her, so that the [episcopal] sees might observe the secure heights of the mistress of the world. More justly present in this [place than any other city], the preferred [city] which instructs the nations, Paul, chosen to be teacher for the Gentiles forever, unleashes the power of his eloquence; and whatever he thunders there, the honor of the City compels the subject world to hear.\textsuperscript{124}

While this rhetoric of Rome as the heart of Christendom and realization of imperial destiny in the apostolic succession of St. Peter was not new, it was also not, strictly speaking, \textit{true} in 544.\textsuperscript{125} It was certainly not a prevalent theme in Luke’s account of the lives of the apostles. As Green points out, the emphasis on Rome and Petrine primacy in

\textsuperscript{122} Green 347-8.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{De actibus}, 2.1218-1232.
\textsuperscript{124} Schrader 93.
\textsuperscript{125} The development of the concept of Petrine primacy and the apostolic succession as well as the consolidation of apostolic authority in Rome and the participation of the Anglo-Saxon church and its representatives in this process will be discussed in depth in Chapter 1. For now, it may suffice to note that the authority of the popes and the religious and political significance of Rome as the center of the Church was still a matter of debate and questioning as late as the eighth century. In Arator’s time, the concepts had been articulated (particularly by Pope Leo in 441), but were not widely ascribed to outside of papal circles and were roundly questioned by the Church in Constantinople.
Arator’s text derives from the influence of Virgilian epic on the one hand, and the rhetoric of papal propaganda, particularly that of Leo the Great, on the other.\textsuperscript{126}

Other than a powerful statement of Petrine primacy and the legacy of eternal Rome, what could Arator’s readers and auditors learn from his poem? They could, for one, gain a fairly “good overview” of the content of Acts and the history of the Church in the apostolic age.\textsuperscript{127} In the absence of Latin commentaries on the book of Acts,\textsuperscript{128} Arator’s rendering of this book of the New Testament was particularly novel and well received.\textsuperscript{129} Arator’s interest in exegetical interpretation of the events and circumstances of Acts fulfilled the need for a commentary, but in verse form. As Bede would note in the preface to his own commentary on Acts, Arator “added not a few flowers of allegory” (\textit{nonnullos...allegoriae flores admiscuit}) to the book of Acts on which later Christian authors were able to draw.\textsuperscript{130} Furthermore, Arator’s audience would have the manifold and hidden significances of baptism, Arator’s favorite theme, and a highly pertinent one for a text concerning the Church’s first missionaries, impressed upon them.\textsuperscript{131} Arator likewise celebrates the preacher’s power of words, rehearsing in poetic form many of the long speeches and sermons given by Peter and Paul in Acts, and repeatedly exalting

\textsuperscript{126} Green 348: Arator had many reasons to exalt both Rome and Pope Vigilius. Arator had fled Ravenna for Rome during attacks of the Goths, and had sought refuge in the Church of Rome, abandoning his secular aspirations and writings, becoming a subdeacon in the court of Vigilius himself.

\textsuperscript{127} Green 277.

\textsuperscript{128} The commentaries of the Greek fathers were largely unknown in the West throughout the early Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{129} As Martin 75 notes, there is “a tenth-century Vatican manuscript” containing “a preface to Arator’s poem which tells how the poet gave a reading of his epic at the Church of St Peter in Chains, and how the reading took four days because his noble audience so frequently demanded encores. Raby accepts this story as fact and takes it as evidence that the poem was immediately regarded as a ‘literary masterpiece.’” Arator’s poem was very popular during the Middle Ages and was frequently copied.”


speech and song as the gifts of the Holy Spirit throughout his account.¹³² These twin themes, baptism and preaching, both central to the apostles’ work of conversion, are given a poignant and forceful expression in Arator’s work.

There is substantial evidence for knowledge of De actibus apostolorum in Anglo-Saxon England. Michael Lapidge asserts that, “There is no doubt that they [Juvenecus, Sedulius, Avitus, Arator] were intensively studied,” and Patrizia Lendinara lists Arator among the authors whose works formed “specialized curricula…of intermediate and advanced school texts” that served as the backbone of the Anglo-Saxon education in Latin composition and poetic diction.¹³³ Arator may have been known to British Christians even before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, since, as Lapidge notes, the “earliest surviving fragment of Arator is a paste-down from a manuscript in the Bodleian library which paleographers think may have been written in sub-Roman Britain, before the arrival of the Gregorian mission in 597.”¹³⁴ Both Lapidge and Lendinara note five other manuscripts, all instructional miscellanies that contain De actibus apostolorum,¹³⁵ as well as the presence of Arator’s name in two booklists from the Anglo-Saxon period.¹³⁶ In his encomium on the city of York, Alcuin lists Arator among the authors

¹³² Schrader 72. This will be of some interest to us in our discussion of the apostolic poetics of Cynewulf in chapter 4.
¹³⁴ Lapidge 24.
¹³⁶ The booklists include Bishop Leofric’s list of books donated to the church at Exeter (dated between 1069 and 1072) and two listings in a booklist from an unidentified center which Lapidge suggests may be Worcester. See Michael Lapidge, “Surviving Booklists form Anglo-Saxon England” in Learning and
whose works were present in his master Ælberht’s library, and we have already seen Bede’s praise of Arator, whose *De actibus apostolorum* provided the basis for his own commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. Bede and Aldhelm both quote extensively from Arator in their works on Latin metrics and the art of poetry. Both writers also “silently borrow” (to use Martin’s phrase) “short formulas of a few words from Arator” in the case of Aldhelm, and “whole lines or groups of lines, perhaps changing a single word or two in order to fit his context” in the case of Bede. Andy Orchard cites the presence of a couplet from *De actibus apostolorum* in a work by Byrhtferth of Ramsey as evidence for knowledge of Arator in the later Anglo-Saxon period. While little work has been done regarding Arator’s influence on vernacular literature, Lawrence Martin has tentatively stated that Arator’s poem may have been a source of inspiration for the Caedmonian poems of the Junius manuscript. Martin suggests that “Latin biblical epics…establish[ed] a precedent for treating the biblical narrative in an artistic form which had been developed in a pre-Christian context…and [for] applying pagan diction

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137 Lapidge 24 quotes Alcuin’s poem as follows: “Quid quoque Sedulius uel quid canit ipse Iuuencus / Alcimus et Clemens, Prosper, Paulinus, Arator.’ (I:1650-51) [The library contained] that which Sedulius and Iuuencus sang, and what Alcimus, and Prudentius, Prosper, Paulinus and Arator (sang).”

138 Bede writes, *In quo me opusculo, cum alii plurimi fidei catholicae scriptores, tum maxime iuuauit Arator, sanctae romanae ecclesiae subdiaconus, qui ipsum ex ordine librum heroico carmine percurrens nonnullos in eodem allegoriae Flores admiscuit, occasionem mihi tribuens uel alia ex his colligendi uel eadem planius exponendi in Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractio*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1939), 3; “In this little work I have been aided by several other writers of the Catholic Faith, especially Arator, a subdeacon of the holy Roman church. He went straight through this same book [Acts] using heroic verse, and in the same meter he added not a few flowers of allegory, giving me the opportunity to bring together others of these, or to explain the same ones more clearly,” Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Lawrence Martin, Cistercian Studies Series 117 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 3.

139 Orchard 167; Martin 77.

140 Martin 77. See also Orchard 166-170 for detailed analysis of Aldhelm’s debt to Arator.

141 Orchard 167.
and themes to Christian contexts.” With such formidable evidence for widespread study and citation of Arator’s De actibus apostolorum throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, it is perhaps surprising how little scholarly attention has been paid to the potential, or as Green puts it, the probable influence of Latin biblical epic in general, and Arator in particular, on the corpus of Old English religious poetry. Both Green and Martin raise the issue of Arator’s influence and inspiration on the vernacular poets of Anglo-Saxon England, yet neither pursues these ideas beyond the brief statements noted above.

It is, therefore, one of the aims of this project to observe potential connections between Arator’s well-known account of the Acts of the Apostles and the vernacular poetry of Cynewulf, which, to my knowledge, has not previously been linked to Arator’s work. In Chapter 4 I indicate some of the ways in which Arator’s De actibus apostolorum may have inspired and influenced Cynewulf’s view of his own purpose and relation to the apostles as a poet inspired by the “fostering Spirit.”

Rome and the Veneration of the Apostles in Anglo-Saxon England

Arator’s enthusiastic encomium to Rome as an imperial center presided over by the enduring power of the Apostles Peter and Paul would not have seemed at all strange

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142 Martin 76.
143 Green 358-359.
144 Andy Orchard has briefly mentioned Arator as a source for Cynewulf’s use of certain rhetorical features such as “polyptoton, paronomasia, and homoeoteleuton” and notes that the “stylistic influence of...[the] Latin curriculum authors on vernacular poets seems likely, and is a topic ripe for further research” in his essay “Both Style and Substance: The Case for Cynewulf,” in Anglo-Saxon Styles, ed. Catherine Karkov and George Hardin Brown (New York: SUNY University Press, 2003), 273, but he does not proceed with this type of analysis himself in this article. Orchard again raised the possibility of Arator’s connection to Cynewulf’s poetry in a conference presentation entitled “Christ according to Cynewulf,” delivered at the 42nd International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, May 11, 2007, but here (as usual) Orchard’s focus was on formulae and verbal parallels, as well as establishing the possibility that Cynewulf wrote Christ II as a deliberate bridge between Christ I and Christ III. Orchard did not, to my recollection and according to my notes, touch on any of the themes I mention above.
or overstated to the poem’s Anglo-Saxon audience. Beginning with the first official contacts between Æthelberht, king of Kent, and the Roman missionaries sent to England by Gregory the Great, the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon church involved encouraging the complete dedication of the Anglo-Saxon people to all things Roman. As Nicholas Brooks explains,

Augustine’s wearing of the papal pallium when celebrating mass, his recovery of Roman churches for Christian worship, his building of new stone churches in Roman style and his loyalty to the Roman liturgy were all means of emphasizing that Kent and its rulers now enjoyed the full benefits and full authority of romanitas. They indicated that Rome was committed to the Anglo-Saxon rulers and had no interest in a revival of British power….Paradoxically that English identity was best strengthened by asserting in every possible way how Roman was Canterbury and how Roman was royal power in the Christian English kingdoms, while yet omitting all interest in the Romano-British history of the church of Canterbury. In accepting St. Gregory was their ‘apostle;’ in accepting the authority of Rome and of Canterbury in doctrine and in ecclesiastical structure; and in dressing their courtiers in Roman garb, English kings were thereby asserting a new identity to which all of their subjects could subscribe.145

This “new identity” that Brooks speaks of was, in fact, the identity of the Anglo-Saxon church itself, of the idea of the Anglo-Saxons as a Christian people. This Anglo-Saxon identification with Rome, its faith and its customs, appears to have been so strong, that we may speak, as Nicholas Howe does, of Rome as the “intellectual and spiritual patria…the capital of Anglo-Saxon England.”146 As the source of Rome’s religious authority, the presence of the corporeal remains of the apostles, especially Peter and Paul, were of monumental importance to Anglo-Saxon cultural affiliation and identification with Rome. Indeed, one cannot overstate this fact. The evidence is overwhelming. Anglo-Saxon pilgrimages ad limina apostolorum (to the thresholds of the apostles), as they often

referred to it, began in earnest in the seventh century.\footnote{Bertram Colgrave, “Pilgrimages to Rome in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” in \textit{Studies in Language, Literature and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later}, eds. E. B. Atwood and A. A. Hill (Austin, 1969), 156-172; and Michael Lapidge, “Roman Martyrs and their Miracles in Anglo-Saxon England,” in \textit{Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Texts}, eds. K. E. Olsen, A. Harbus and T. Hofstra (Leuven, 2004), 110.} Bede’s representation of Egbert’s desire to “spend some of his time upon the earth as a pilgrim in the neighborhood of the holy places” (\textit{cupiens in uicina sanctorum locorum ad tempus peregrini in terris}) in the \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica} is typical; as he tells us, “many Englishmen, nobles and commons, layfolk and clergy, men and women, were eager to do the same thing” (\textit{quod temporibus plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles ignobiles, laici clerici, uiri ac feminae certatim facere consuerunt}).\footnote{Howe, “Rome,” 148; see also Dee Dyas, \textit{Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature}, 700-1500 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), 97, and Henry Mayr-Harting, \textit{The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} edition (London: Batsford, 1991), 265.} By 750 the number of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims in Rome was so vast that they had their own settlement or \textit{burh} with dwellings and a hospice near the Vatican, known as the \textit{schola Saxonum}.\footnote{As Lapidge, “Roman Martyrs,” 110-111, notes, “the earliest record of pilgrimage to martyr-shrines in Rome is the so-called ‘Malmesbury Itinerary,’ a sort of tourists’ guide to the various shrines and cemeteries, arranged according to the various arterial routes leading into Rome. The work is preserved uniquely by William of Malmesbury in his \textit{Gesta regum}, but clearly dates from many centuries earlier: the shrines commemorated point to the period 648-682 and suggest that the work is the composition of an Anglo-Saxon pilgrim, or of his tour guide.”} They also had their own tourists’ guidebooks to the shrines and holy sites associated with the apostles and other Roman martyrs.\footnote{Alan Thacker, “Rome of the Martyrs,” 13-15.}

Anglo-Saxon journeys to the tombs of the apostles in Rome were motivated not only by a pervasive desire to venerate and be near the saints, but also by a need and want to bring something of the spiritual and cultural aura of Rome back to the Anglo-Saxon homeland in the form of relics, books, or a knowledge of the Christian intellectual, liturgical, and artistic culture there.\footnote{Aideen O’Leary calls the “similarit[i]es] in}
landscape between the churches of Peter and Paul at Rome and at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow...refined or symbolic reflections of devotion to the apostles” and their enshrinement in Rome, and notes that abbot Ceolfrith made “processional visits to the churches of Peter, Mary and Lawrence” in the monastery complex “on the eve of a pilgrimage to Rome” as a kind of preliminary exercise in romanitas.152 Alan Thacker elaborates further on these observations:

The dedications of the churches and oratories of [Benedict] Biscop’s twin foundations are all eloquent of the ‘sweet memorial of the relics of the blessed martyrs’ brought back from the Eternal City: the apostles Peter and Paul themselves, the Virgin Mary, and Lawrence, the Roman patron and proto-deacon. Wilfrid’s Roman relic-gathering was probably even more wide-ranging. He adopted as his special patron Peter’s brother Andrew, whose cult had been focused on a basilica attached to the Vatican since the time of Pope Symmachus (498-514), but he also toured the circuit of the loca sancta, collecting relics. That is made clear in Stephen’s description of his visit [in the Vita Wilfridi] in 680: ‘Going round [circumies] the holy places of the saints [loca sanctorum] to pray over a period of several days, he obtained a great number of holy relics from authorized men [ab electis viris]...writing down the name of each, and whose relic it was.’ Biscop and Wilfrid were simply the earliest and most famous examples of a much larger group of English pilgrims. We know, of course, of very high status figures, such as the West Saxon kings Cædwalla and Ine, King Coenred of Northumbria, King Offa of the East Saxons....But there were also many lesser folk whose devotion is reflected in graffiti inscribed in the cult sites in the catacombs.153

Thacker’s synopsis provides a clear picture of the allure of Rome to Anglo-Saxon Christians from all walks of life, as well as an explanation of the ways in which the Roman relics of the apostles literally provided the seeds that enabled the planting of the most influential and important ecclesiastical centers in England. The relic-collecting missions of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid of York were motivated by their profound desires not only to be close to the apostles, but also to be like the apostles.

In Wilfrid this desire appears to have been particularly strong. Scholars have long noted the degree to which he modeled himself after his personal patron saints, Peter and Andrew.\textsuperscript{154} Some have more recently commented on the efforts of his biographer Stephen of Ripon to portray Wilfrid as a “persecuted apostle and prophet.”\textsuperscript{155} This comparison of Gregory to the apostles is also a striking feature of the anonymous Anglo-Saxon monk of Whitby’s \textit{Vita Gregorii}.\textsuperscript{156} Aldhelm’s fourth \textit{Carmen ecclesiasticum}, a poem on the twelve apostles probably intended to serve as a series of inscriptions for altars dedicated to the apostles, is based largely on the apostolic \textit{passiones} as well as Isidore of Seville.\textsuperscript{157}

\textbf{Bede’s \textit{Expositio in Actibus Apostolorum} and \textit{Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum}}

Nearly all of Anglo-Latin authors from the early Anglo-Saxon church evince a strong interest in the apostles as models for Christian life, but none more so than the most

\textsuperscript{154} Thacker, “Roman Apostles,” 273.


\textsuperscript{156} See \textit{The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby}, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1968), chapters 4-6, 28, and 30. Colgrave (58) argues that although the anonymous \textit{Vita Gregorii} predated Bede’s writing of the \textit{HE}, it appears that Bede did not know the text or use it as a source. Indeed, it seems hardly to have circulated.

\textsuperscript{157} O’Leary, “Apostolic \textit{Passiones},” 107. See also Andy Orchard, \textit{Poetic Art of Aldhelm}. 
prolific and well-known writer of the period, the Venerable Bede. Several of Bede’s numerous biblical commentaries, homilies, poems, and vitae discuss the apostles and their significance for his Christians in his own time, but in this introduction I will briefly discuss two of his works that are most immediately relevant to the subject of this study: Bede’s *Expositio in Actibus Apostolorum* and his famed *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. Bede’s *Expositio in Actibus Apostolorum* was the first (and for a very long time, the only) formal commentary on the biblical Acts of the Apostles known in the medieval West. Written between 709-716, the *Expositio* was one of Bede’s earliest commentaries and it became one of his most popular due to the dearth of patristic exegesis of this important book of the New Testament. Bede’s continued interest in Acts is further attested by his revision of the *Expositio* toward the end of his career, in his *Retractio in Actibus Apostolorum*.

Although Bede does cite appropriate passages from Augustine and Jerome, and makes copious use of Arator’s *De Actibus Apostolorum*, Bede’s commentary on Acts is generally more original than his other exegetical works because he had less patristic material to work with. However, the bulk of the *Expositio* is Bede’s own, and it reflects his particular interest in expounding the literal and tropological senses of Scripture for the intellectual understanding, and spiritual benefit, and practical information of his Christian audience. Alongside his allegorical exposition of the moral sense of key portions of Acts,

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158 Lawrence Martin, “Introduction,” in *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. and trans. Lawrence Martin, Cistercian Studies 117 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1989), xviii, notes that Chrysostom’s *Homilies on Acts* were unknown in the medieval West, and that the two Greek commentaries of Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia were lost or fragmentary.  
159 Martin xviii. The popularity of Bede’s *Expositio* is attested by the large number of extant manuscripts: 80 for the *Expositio* itself, and 27 for the *Retractio*.  
160 Martin xxiv. The *Retractio* corrects some minor errors the mature Bede found in his earlier work, responds to criticisms of his audience, and includes further meditation on the meanings of key passages. It also corrects and furthers Bede’s earlier comparisons of the Latin text of Acts to the Greek version, as his knowledge of Greek had improved significantly from his earlier years.
Bede seeks to clarify questions of history, chronology, geography, terminology, grammar, syntax and rhetoric as well as elaborate on various types of symbolism, including etymological, onomastic, numeric and even animal, which he thought would aid in understanding.\footnote{Martin xx.}

Because of this, the *Expositio* serves as a very practical guide to Acts, one keyed to impressing upon its readers how the apostles serve as models for Christian living and preaching to be emulated by all those who seek to further the mission of the Church. The didactic thrust of Bede’s *Expositio* reflects his primary objective as a Christian author writing in the Gregorian tradition: “to educate, instruct, and encourage Northumbrian [and other, I would add] preachers” and “to filter those ideas that would most aid in the work of evangelization.”\footnote{Scott DeGregorio, “The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: exegetical connections, spiritual departures,” *EME* 18 (2010): 60.}

Glenn Olsen argues that Bede’s study of Acts grows out of his deep interest in what Bede refers to as *ecclesia primitiva*, or, ‘the primitive Church’ or the Church in the age of the apostles.\footnote{Glenn Olsen, “Bede as Historian: The Evidence from his Observations on the Life of the First Christian Community at Jerusalem,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 1.} Olsen explains that Bede saw “all…aspects of the apostolic life as adequately imitated in the monastic common life.”\footnote{Olsen 11.} Bede sought to understand the relationship between the communal life of the apostles, their preaching, and their particular approaches to conversion, particularly of the gentile peoples, in literal, practical, and moral terms.\footnote{George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 12 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 34-37, 63-64.} In his reading and discussion of the Acts of the Apostles, Bede appears to be asking, what can we learn from the apostles and Luke’s account of their apostolic work and lives? How do the apostles serve as models for the monks and preachers England and the world so desperately needs?
An example of Bede’s practical and didactic approach to explaining Acts may be found in his treatment its examples of the preaching of Peter and Paul. In his discussion of Peter’s preaching to the Jews in Acts 2:22-23, Bede provides his readers with a step-by-step rhetorical analysis of Peter’s approach to the education and conversion of his auditors. Bede writes,

*Quasi doctus magister prius incredulos, quos miseratur admonet, ut justo timore compunctis consilium salutis postmodum opportunius impendant. Et quia legem scientibus loquitur, ipsum Christum esse, qui a prophetis esset promissus ostendit.*

[As a learned teacher, he [Peter] first admonishes unbelievers for the crime which had been committed, so that once their consciences had been stung by righteous fear, he might afterwards devote [his discourse] more advantageously to the plan of salvation. And because he is speaking to those who know the law, he shows that Christ himself is the one promised by the prophets….*

Bede explains the methodology Peter uses preach to Jews and how and why he structures and words his sermon to address a particular audience and their concerns. Bede’s analysis of Peter’s sermon continues to give further specific advice to his readers on how to preach in the manner used by Peter in Acts, and then goes on to specify that the reader will see an example of how to preach to the Gentiles when Bede discusses Paul’s sermon at Athens later in the commentary.

Bede’s treatment of Paul’s preaching in Acts 17:24 is even more explicitly instructional, presumably because Bede found the example more applicable to his immediate audience, who were rather more likely to encounter ‘gentiles’ than Jews. Bede explains that,

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166 Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, *PL* 92, col. 949a-b.
168 Bede, *Acts 2:22: Quae vero apud gentiles apostoli praedicationis utantur exordio, in Cornelii centurionis historia, et in sermone apostoli Pauli Athenis habito doceberis* (in the history of Cornelius the Centurian and in the sermon given by the apostle Paul at Athens, you will be shown the sort of introduction which the apostles used in preaching among the Gentiles).
Ordo diligenter apostolicae disputationis est intuendus, qua ita apud gentiles tractatus seriem format, ut primum unum Deum auctorem mundi omniumque esse doeat, in quo vivimus, et movemur, et sumus, cujus et genus sumus, ut non solum propter munera lucis et vitae, verum etiam propter cognitionem quamdam generis diligendum ostendat, deinde opinionem illam quae est de idolis, aperta ratione devincat, quod totius mundi conditor et Dominus templis non possit includi saxeis, quod omnis beneficii largitor sanguine non egeat victimarum, quod hominum denique creator et gubernator omnium non possit hominis manu creari, quod postremo Deus, ad cujus homo factus est imaginem, non debeat metallis existimari similis, erroris remedium docens esse studium poenitendi. Nam si primo destruere voluisset caeremonias idolorum, aures gentium respuissent. Cum ergo unum Deum esse persuaderet, tunc judicio ejus astruxit, per Christum nobis salutem datam, magis tamen eum hominem, quam Deum nuncupans, incipiensque ab illis quae gessit in corpore, et ea divina describent, ut plus quam homo fuisse videretur, victam unius virtute mortem, mortuumque ab inferis resuscitatum (paulatim enim fides crescit), ut cum supra hominem fuisse videretur, Deus esse crederetur.169

Bede’s emphasis here on the importance of the apostle’s ability to tailor his message to the cultural understanding and pre-existing beliefs of his audience. By adapting his rhetorical methods and approach to overcoming heathen practices, Paul predisposes his gentile audience to receive his preaching and convert to Christianity. Bede’s exposition of Paul’s approach to the work of conversion is consonant with the instructions of Gregory the Great to his missionary Augustine for dealing with pagan Anglo-Saxons to

view the work of conversion as gradual and not to alienate potential converts by
affronting their traditions and destroying all traces of their heathen religion and sacred
places. Bede even defends Paul’s simplification of doctrine for his gentile converts by
saying, *Quid enim interest quo quisque credat ordine? Non in principiis perfecta quae
queruntur, sed de initis ad ea quae perfecta sunt pervenitur* (for what difference does it
make in what order anyone believes? Perfected things are not sought at the start, but from
beginnings one comes to the things which are perfect).

In this way, Bede’s exposition of the Acts of the Apostles seeks to highlight the
apostles as practical examples and models for the *praedicatores* of Bede’s own age. We
must recall that, for Bede, monasticism was not only about withdrawal from the world into
the spiritual haven of the *cenobium*; it was also, perhaps even primarily, about training
men and women in the study of the Scriptures and the practice of the liturgy so that they
may apply their religious knowledge to the apostolic work of preaching and pastoral
care.

Bede’s Gregorian conception of the relationship between education, monasticism,
and apostolic mission is most thoroughly articulated in his histories, and particularly in
his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. As Alan Thacker explains, the *Historia*
is clearly dominated by the twin themes of the providentially ordained conversion
of the English, a new Israel with a divine mission, and the urgent need for exemplary *doctores*, preachers and pastors to guide the *gens* along the path in the present. The great teachers and preachers of the golden age of the English church
clearly provide concrete illustration of the qualities, duties and functions of the

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171 See Gregory’s letter to Augustine and Mellitus, quoted in Bede, *HE* I.30.
172 Bede, *Expositio*, Pl. 92, col. 980b; *Commentary on Acts*, 143.
doctores and praedicatores discussed in a more abstract way in the commentaries.  

Indeed, Bede’s entire Historia can be viewed as an expression of the history of the English nation as a story of mission and conversion, teaching and preaching. In the Historia, the Anglo-Saxons act as both the recipients and the purveyors of apostolic gifts, a theme largely expressed through Bede’s explicit comparisons of key figures in the early history of the Anglo-Saxon church with the apostles.

As we have already seen, Bede stressed the status of Gregory the Great as an apostle to the English. But he also lauded other figures central to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, including Augustine of Canterbury and his companions, for their imitation of the apostolic life and their dedication to the task of preaching the faith. He tells us of the early days of Augustine’s mission to Kent in these glowing terms:

At ubi datum sibi mansionem intrauerat, coeperunt apostolicam primitiuae ecclesiae utiam imitari, orationibus uidelicet assiduis uigiliis ac ieuniis seruiendo, uerbum utiae quibus poterant praedicando, cuncta huius mundi uelut aliena spernendo, ea tantum quae uiciui necessaria uidebantur ab eis quos docebant accipiendo, secundum ea quae docebant ipsi per omnia uiuendo, et paratum ad patiendum aduersa quaeque uel etiam moriendum pro ea quam praedicabant ueritate animum habendo. Quid mora? Crediderunt nonnulli et baptizabantur, mirantes simplicitatem innocentis utiae ac dulcedinem doctrinae eorum caelestis.

[As soon as they had entered the dwelling-place alloted 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; they accepted only the necessaries of life from those whom they taught; in all things they practiced what they preached and kept themselves prepared to endure adversities, even to the point of dying for the truths they proclaimed. To put it briefly, some, marvelling at their simple and innocent way of life and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine, believed and were baptized.]

175 Bede, HE, II.1, 122-123.
The depiction of Augustine’s missionary companions as apostles living in common and leading the heathen to the faith through their preaching and exemplary way of life not only honors them by association with this lofty ideal, but also provides an example to Bede’s readership of the continuing effectiveness of the apostolic model and its attainability in their own age.

Bede also endeavors to bring to the fore examples of Anglo-Saxon preachers and missionaries who, following Gregory and Augustine as well as Peter and Paul, bring credit to the island, its church, and its people. As George Hardin Brown has noted, Bede seeks to honor “the pastoral apostolate in the History,” and presents Anglo-Saxon saints such as Cuthbert as “exemplar[s] of monastic preaching.”177 His description of Cuthbert’s pastoral work shares with his discussion of the life of Augustine and the first Roman missionaries to Anglo-Saxon England the aspect of a moral exemplum held up for imitation.178

Much of the fifth book of Bede’s Historia is taken up with the description of the beginnings of the Anglo-Saxon missions to the Germanic peoples of the European mainland. Bede first introduces this theme with the story of Egbert:

Eo tempore uenerabilis et cum omni honorificentia nominandus famulus Christi et sacerdos Ecgberct, quem in Hibernia insula peregrinam ducere uitam pro

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177 Brown, Companion, 107, 110.
178 Bede, HE IV.27: Porro Cuthbercto tanta erat dicendi peritia, tantus amor persuadendi quae coeperat, tale uultus angelici lumen, ut nullus praesentium latebras ei sui cordis celare praesumeret, omnes palam quae gesserant confitendo proferrent, quia nimimum haec eadem illum latere nullo modo putabant, et confessa dignis, ut imperabat, poenitentiae fructibus abstergerent. Solebat autem ea maxime loca peragrare, illis praedicare in uiculis, qui in arduis asperisque montibus procul positi ad uisendum, et paupertate pariter ac rusticitate sua doctorem arcebant accessum (So great was Cuthbert’s eloquence, so keen his desire to drive home what he had begun to teach, so bright the light of his angelic countenance, that none of those present would presume to hide from him the secrets of their hearts, but they all made open confession of their sins because they realized that these things could certainly never be hidden from him; and they cleansed themselves from the sins they had confessed by fruits worthy of repentance, as he bade them to do. Now he used especially to make for those places and preach in those villages that were far away on steep and rugged mountains, which others dreaded to visit and whose poverty and ignorance kept other teachers away).
adipiscenda in caelis patria retulimus, proposuit animo pluribus prodesse, idest, initio opere apostolicum, uerbum Dei aliquibus earum, quae nondum audierant, gentibus euangelizando committere. Quarum in Germania plurimas nouerat esse nationes, a quibus Angli vel Saxones, qui nunc Britanniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur; unde hactenus a uicina gente Brettonum corrupte Garmani nuncupantur. Sunt autem Fresones, Rugini, Danai, Hunni, antiqui Saxones, Boructuari. Sunt alii perplures hisdem in partibus populi paganis adhuc ritibus seruientes, ad quos uenire praefatus Christi miles circumnaugata Brittania disposuit, siquos forte ex illis ereptos Satanae ad Christum transferre ualeret; uel, si hoc fieri non possit, Romam uenire ad uidenda atque adoranda beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum Christi limina cogitauit.

[At that time the venerable servant of Christ and priest Egbert, a man to be named with all honor, was living a life of exile in Ireland, as had been said before, so that he might reach his heavenly fatherland. He planned to bring blessings 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. He knew that there were very many peoples in Germany from whom the Angles and Saxons, who now live in Britain, derive their origin; hence even to this day they are called Garmani by their neighbors the Britons. Now these people are the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Boruhtware (Bructeri); there are also many other nations in the same land who are still practicing heathen rites to whom this soldier of Christ proposed to go, after sailing round Britain, to try if he could to deliver any of them from Satan and bring them to Christ. But if he could not do this, he intended to go to Rome, there to visit and worship at the shrines of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ.]¹⁷⁹

The story of Egbert shows that as early as the 680’s, less than eighty years after Augustine of Canterbury received the pallium from Pope Gregory I in Rome, an Anglo-Saxon churchman was contemplating his Christian duty to evangelize the heathen.

Moreover, in doing so, Egbert thought first of his own people – not, as one might consider from Bede’s narrative history, the as-yet unchristianized South Saxons or other pockets of pagan peoples to be found on his own island, but rather those peoples from whom “the Angles and Saxons, who now live in Britain, derive their origin” (a quibus Angli vel Saxones, qui nunc Britanniam incolunt) – the continental Germani. Egbert’s desire to “undertake the apostolic task” (initio operum apostolici) across the sea appears

¹⁷⁹ Bede, HE V 9.
to be a further extension of his status as an “exile,” a *peregrinus* in Ireland. But what is interesting about Egbert’s intention is that he has considered an alternative plan: if all else failed in the continental mission, he “intended to go to Rome, there to visit and worship at the shrines of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ” (*Romam uenire ad uidenda atque adoranda beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum Christi limina cogitauit*). Egbert’s equation of missionary work among his continental ancestors with pilgrimage to the holy places of Rome, specifically to the shrines of the apostles and martyrs, illustrates several important facets of the position of the early Anglo-Saxon church that would continue to influence how Anglo-Saxon Christians viewed themselves.

The first factor highlighted in the story of Egbert is the way that Anglo-Saxon churchmen perceived their allegiance to the see at Rome in terms of apostolic origin and a model for emulation. Bede has Egbert imagine that seeking contact with the remains of the apostles and martyrs in Rome at their shrines and with the representative of Saints Peter on earth through pilgrimage as an act equal to, or nearly equal to, fulfillment of Christ’s injunction to “carry the word of God” to the heathen nations. The promptness with which Christian Anglo-Saxon churchmen and women took up the cause of extending specifically Roman ecclesiastical influence on the continent remains an insistent question. Why do the Anglo-Saxons identify so immediately and so strongly with the figures of the apostles and the ideologies of the see of Rome? Are we to read this as a complete identification of the Anglo-Saxon church with the papal conception of universal Christianity which they inherited from the Gregorian missions and the textual tradition of Bede? Or, might we also detect in this early story a move to replay their own conversion experience in another setting, this time casting themselves in the traditionally
Roman role of the apostolic messengers of God’s word and casting their Germanic brethren on the continent - a people similar to them, yet different – in the role of the recipients of divine revelation? Seen in this light, the move to Christianize “the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Bructeri” becomes more complex and perhaps reveals the ways in which the Anglo-Saxons not only adopted the specifically Gregorian ideals of Christian mission, but also by internalizing them and taking on the Roman apostolic authority that those ideals and traditions entail, appropriated for themselves a new Christian identity, including, but also exceeding, the universal Christian identity that was preached to them, and that they preached to others in turn.

Bede’s description of the missions of two of Egbert’s followers, Wilfrid and Willibrord, further underscores the intimate connection between Roman authority and missionary endeavors by showing how these two preachers of the Word moved between Rome and Frisia as a means of supporting their apostolic work abroad. Of Willibrord and his followers Bede relates,

Primis sane temporibus adventus eorum in Fresiam, mox ut conperiit Uilbrord datam sibi a principe licentiam ibidem praedicandi, acceleravit uenire Romam, cuius sedi apostolicae tunc Sergius papa praeerat, ut cum eis licentia et benedictione desideratum evangelizandi gentibus opus iniret; simul et reliquias beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum Christi ab eo se sperans accipere, ut dum in gente cui praelicare destructis idolis ecclesias institueret, haberet in promtu reliquias sanctorum quas ibi introduceret, quibusque ibidem depositis, consequenter in eorum honorem, quorum essent illae, singula quaeque loca dedicaret. Sed et alia perplura, quae tanti operis negotium quaerebat, uel ibi discere uel inde accipere cupiebat. In quibus omnibus cum sui uoti compos esset effectus, ad praedicandum rediit.

[On their first arrival in Frisia, Willibrord, as soon as he heard that the king had given him permission to preach, hurried to Rome where Pope Sergius was ruling over the apostolic see, in order to begin the missionary task he wished to undertake with the pope’s permission and approval. At the same time he hoped to
receive some relics of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ in order that, when he had destroyed their idols and founded churches in the nation to which he was preaching, he might have relics of the saints ready to put into them, dedicating each church in honour of the saint whose relics they were. He also wished to learn about and obtain many other things necessary for so great a task. And when he had all that he wanted, he returned to his preaching.]

Willibrord’s voluntary and unprompted attempt to secure the approval of the see of Peter for his apostolic work in Frisia reveals the depths of the Anglo-Saxon devotion, not to the person or the authority of the pope, but to the traditions of the apostles and the presence of their legacy and relics in Rome. Willibrord’s gathering of relics from the apostles and martyrs to establish in his missionary foundations in Frisia further disseminated Anglo-Saxon practices of apostle veneration and close ecclesiastical ties to Rome within the newly converted regions of Germania.

Bede’s *Historia* contains the only extant contemporaneous account of the Anglo-Saxon missions to the continent penned in England, and the exceptional popularity of his work ensured the perpetuation of these traditions across Europe and through the centuries. His text not only recounts the history of the English church, but establishes it firmly in a Roman and apostolic tradition. Bede’s situation of the work of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in the larger context of salvation history and as an example of the special destiny of the English people had far-reaching effects, and also impressed upon its readers the significance of religious writing as an apostolic undertaking in itself. As Roger Ray reminds us, “soon after Bede’s death his writings were called to the continent by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries, the chief of whom, Boniface, thought Bede as *candela ecclesiae*, the lamp of the church, presumably of all the church. Apparently Bede was to

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180 Bede, *HE* V.11.
Boniface what Gregory was to Bede, a catholic apostle.”

Bede’s works, taken together with the well-documented early Anglo-Saxon fascination with Rome and its relics, books, liturgy, and culture of the apostles, show the pervasiveness and influence of apostolic discourse in Anglo-Saxon religious circles from the age of conversion and beyond. It is directly out of this culture of apostolic veneration and emulation that the famous Anglo-Saxon missionary, Boniface, emerged.

In the centuries after Bede, the veneration of the apostles as universal saints in England appears to have given way somewhat to a rise in interest in and culting of Anglo-Saxon local saints. However, it is important to note that our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon saints, such as Wilfrid, whose lives were lived and written about in the shadow of their apostolic patron saints, has much to do with the resurgence of interest in pre-Viking-age English saints during the period of the Benedictine Reform. Furthermore, all of the vernacular texts which deal with the apostles, including the works of Cynewulf (probably late 9th-early 11th c.), the Andreas-poet, the Blickling homilist and Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 950- c. 1010), date from the later period. This evidence alone shows a remarkable degree of literary enthusiasm for writing about the apostles, although the nature of the interest in these figures is markedly different from what we notice in the earlier Anglo-Latin literature. Whereas Stephen of Ripon, Aldhelm, Bede, and the writers of the Bonifatian circle tended to use the apostles as touchpoints or models for hagiographic and historical comparisons, the later vernacular traditions put their conceptions of the apostles to largely personal, penitential, or homiletic ends.

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182 Cubitt, “Universal and Local Saints,” 449-453; Rollason, Saints and Relics.
183 Cubitt, “Universal and Local Saints,” 450.
interpretation of the apostles as human followers of Christ, with flaws and dilemmas as well as moments of triumph and martyrdom, speaks to the shift toward the pastoral in later Anglo-Saxon religious culture. In the hands of the Old English poets Cynewulf and the *Andreas*-poet, the inherited Roman and early Anglo-Saxon apostolic discourses of sanctity and the conversion of others are reinterpreted as apostolic discourses that speak to the continual process of the conversion of the Christian self.
CHAPTER 1

THE CREATION OF AN ANGLO-SAXON MISSIONARY SAINT
IN THE LETTERS OF SAINT BONIFACE

Introduction

Only seventy-five years after the first Roman missionaries had been sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great, the missionary known to history as Boniface was born near Exeter in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex between the years 672-675. A child oblate to the monastery of Exeter, he was later transferred to the monastery of Nursling where he lived, learned and taught for twenty years. Winfrid (his given name, by which he was known in his early life) excelled in the monastic educational program of his age and became a renowned Latin grammarian and rhetorician, as well as a religious scholar steeped in the language and lore of the Old and New Testaments. By 705 he was consecrated as a priest and began taking on important diplomatic and administrative errands, representing Nursling at synods and church assemblies. But despite his success in English monastic circles, Winfrid determined to leave England behind in order to preach and minister to the still heathen or incompletely Christianized peoples of northern Europe, especially the Saxons, who were, as he would later put it, “of one blood and one bone” (de uno sanguine et de uno osse) with his own people.

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185 Boniface’s letters have been edited by Michael Tangl as Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae Selectae, Tomus I (Berlin, 1955), and this edition of the Latin texts will be referred to throughout this study. This quote comes from Tangl letter #46. Modern English translations of the Bonifatian correspondence are from The Letters of Boniface, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), here Emerton letter #36. Letters will henceforth be referred to by editor’s name and letter number in each edition.
In 716, Winfrid organized a private missionary expedition to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Frisians, a pagan Germanic people on the continent. Of course, Winfrid was not the first Anglo-Saxon churchman to undertake the task of converting the heathen there; Wilfrid of Ripon and Willibrord preceded Winfrid in Frisia by several years.\(^{186}\) However, their ventures had proved only marginally successful up to this point. Winfrid arrived in Frisia just as the political realities of changing religious affiliation were revealing themselves to Frisian rulers such as the pagan king Radbod. Radbod rightly perceived a connection between accepting Christianity and submitting to Frankish domination, and he ejected the Christian missionaries from his realm when Charles Martel became Mayor of the Palace.\(^{187}\) Winfrid returned with his companions to England only months after they had set out.

From this early experience, Winfrid learned that without the support of stable political and religious connections, the Christian missionaries in the pagan and semi-Christian regions of the continent would be unable to sustain themselves through difficult circumstances or find necessary protection and peace for their work. After a sojourn of three years back at Nursling, he resumed his missionary engagements abroad, but this time with a difference: he sought the advice and support of the pope in Rome.\(^{188}\) In 719, Winfrid met with Pope Gregory II, who gave him the name of *Bonifatius* and officially sanctioned his desire to preach to the heathen Germanic peoples of Europe. The newly-renamed Boniface rejoined Willibrord in Frisia, preaching and working there for a few years, and went on to work in the regions of Hesse, Thuringia, Saxony, and Bavaria, establishing churches,


Questions about the origins of Boniface’s motivations for taking on the missionary life have often been approached by focusing on Boniface’s inheritance of a Romanocentric Christian outlook on the one hand, and a desire for self-imposed spiritual exile, for a life of *peregrinatio pro amore Christi*, on the other. There is substantial evidence for both views. However, Boniface’s letters and career demonstrate that he considered himself to be called by God, not sent by Rome, to engage in his lifelong mission abroad. He was, in this regard, significantly unlike the wandering monks of the Celtic Christian tradition, because he set out on his journeys with specific destinations in mind and with the primary intention of converting and Christianizing peoples, rather than pursuing a life of rigorous asceticism.

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the simple dichotomy of Roman versus Celtic Christian influence in the early Anglo-Saxon church, and suggest that there may be another source of inspiration behind the decisions of Boniface, Willibrord, and their Anglo-Saxon followers to spread the Word of God to the *gentes in Germaniae partibus* (to the peoples in regions of Germania). In the pages that follow, I will argue that the fundamental inspiration for the Anglo-Saxon missions to the continent developed out of the early English church’s particular veneration for the words and deeds of the apostles, especially the Apostle Paul. This veneration, communicated through the textual culture of the early monasteries in its liturgical, exegetical, hagiographical, and historical manifestations, encouraged the adoption of an apostolic identity both on an individual level, as we see most clearly in the example of Boniface himself, and on a communal level, as we see in the letters of his correspondents on the island and across Germania, and in the perpetuation of an Anglo-Saxon conception of apostolic legacy in the later hagiographical traditions of Mainz, Fulda, and Utrecht.

We can trace the formation and influence of this apostolic identity discursively; the examples of the apostles spoke to early Anglo-Saxon churchmen through the language of the Bible, and these churchmen spoke to each other about the apostles through the shared Christian discourses of typology and exegesis. The letters of

21–46; for a more general discussion of the topic, see also Dee Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700-1500* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001).

194 Tangl #17.


196 As G. W. H. Lampe, “The Exposition and Exegesis of Scripture to Gregory the Great,” *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 2: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation, ed. G. W. H. Lampe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 157, explains, “Typology…detected and set forth the fulfilment of the divine purpose in the Gospel events. In them the saving acts of God in ancient times were seen to be recapitulated: Jesus acted like a new Moses or a new Elijah; his death and ressurection were a
Bonifatian correspondence speak this subtle but familiar language of scriptural analogy, using it to communicate, and to some degree, to create, a position of religious authority rooted in the apostolic life.197 Boniface and his correspondents – from popes to priests to palace mayors – use the biblical language of apostleship to describe his work, and Boniface himself develops an implicit but nonetheless very deliberate sense of identification with the Apostle Paul in his letters. This shared discursive practice of allusion, quotation, and interpretation of biblical passages relating to the Pauline Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel accounts of preaching and ministry constitutes and reinforces the religious authority of Boniface and shapes the Anglo-Saxons’ interpretation of his life, his work, and its relevance for their church and people after his death.

197 Mary Garrison’s discussion in her article “The Social World of Alcuin,” Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court. Proceedings of the Third Germania Latina Conference held at the University of Groningen, May 1995, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. McDonald, Germania Latina, 3; Mediaevalia Groningana, 22 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 70-79, of Alcuin’s creation and use of by-names from religious and classical contexts to designate members of his epistolary, familiar and intellectual circles offers a slightly later parallel instance of constitutive discursive practices in an Anglo-Carolingian milieu. Garrison explains that “For men, Alcuin generally selected the names of holy monks and virgins, rather than apostles, martyrs or confessors; his choice implies that he wanted by-names which would evoke models of Christian virtue accessible for his correspondents. He could count on their acquaintance with these names from a variety of sources: the litany, hymns, poems, and vitae. As several testimonies will demonstrate, his addresses were indeed alert to the implications of these names.….[the by-names] evoke not only the common ideals and shared literary culture of Alcuin and his correspondents, but also some of the ways in which this shared background could be used….Alcuin’s propensity for using by-names, then, might be seen as his enchantment of the world: articulating and elaborating structures of meaning to express relationships, define groups, and call attention to boundaries of groups while subtly employing those larger structures of meaning to persuade or to exert influence; in this respect, the Carolingian nicknames are not merely descriptive or prescriptive, but constitutive of a social vision: Alcuin’s world.”
The details of Boniface’s nearly forty-year career as a missionary and papal legate on the continent are preserved in several important textual sources, the most significant of which is the so-called ‘Bonifatian correspondence.’ This collection of letters was initially compiled from the drafts of Boniface’s own archive at the request of Bishop Lull, Boniface’s close associate and episcopal successor in Mainz. Michael Tangl, the modern editor of the Bonifatian correspondence, posits the existence of two groups of letters, one comprised of the familiar letters exchanged between Boniface and his correspondents in England and on the continent known as the \textit{collectio communis}, and another grouping of letters exchanged between Boniface and the various popes with whom he worked, known as the \textit{collectio pontificia}.\footnote{See Tangl’s introduction to the letters for a more detailed treatment of the manuscript contents and their relations. The term ‘Bonifatian correspondence’ is taken from Andy Orchard’s essay, “Old Sources, New Resources: finding the right formula for Boniface,” \textit{ASE} 30 (2001): 16, although Orchard notes that this term is “something of a misnomer.” It is used here for convenience’s sake.} Whereas the originals of both of these groups are now lost, the Bonifatian correspondence has come down to us today through three main manuscripts: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, lat. 751 (Mainz, s. ix\textsuperscript{med}); Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 8112 (Mainz, s. viii(ix)); and Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Rastatt 22 (Mainz, s. ix\textsuperscript{med}). Of these three manuscript collections, Vienna 751 is believed to be closest to the original \textit{collectio communis} gathered by Lull and his associates at Mainz and also contains Lull’s letters (the \textit{collectio Lulli}).\footnote{Patrick Sims-Williams explains in “A Rescension of Boniface’s Letter to Eadburg about the Monk of Wenlock’s Vision,” \textit{Latin Learning and English Lore, I: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge}, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe and Andy Orchard, Toronto Old English Series 14 (Toronto: U of Toronto P., 2005), 198-199, that the two manuscripts from Mainz, CLM 8112 and Rastatt (Tangl’s Codices 1 and 2) were based on versions of the \textit{collectio pontificia} and \textit{collectio communis} that “appear to have passed to Fulda for a time, where Otloh of St. Emmeram made extracts of them during his sojourn at Fulda in 1062-66,” whereas the Vienna 751 manuscript (Tangl’s Codex #3) “was put together by a mid-ninth century Mainz scribe, partly from drafts of the \textit{collectio communis} and partly from a miscellaneous collection of drafts and originals which had probably been assembled at Mainz by Lull himself.”} The two other manuscripts were likewise written at Mainz, the Munich manuscript and the Karlsruhe manuscript both contain
elements of the *collectio communis* and *collectio pontificia* groupings.\(^{200}\) The letters collected in these manuscripts, supplemented by records from the papal curia and the early *vitae Bonifatii* written on the continent, form the basis of my study of perceptions of Boniface’s life and work during his own lifetime and shortly thereafter.

**Petrine Primacy, Apostolic Succession and Apostolic Discourse in the Age of Boniface**

Any discussion of the concept of apostleship in the early Middle Ages must begin with the construction of the identity of the papacy. From our modern perspective, it is easy to presume that the bishop of Rome always enjoyed supreme ecclesiastical authority. In fact, this was not the case. Rome was valued from the early Christian period for its historical and imperial importance, as well as for being the place where Peter and Paul were martyred and entombed,\(^{201}\) however, this esteem did not necessarily translate into a recognition of authority. It was not until the papacy of Damasus (366-384) that the Roman church first asserted its status as the apostolic see (*sedes apostolica*). As Walter Ullman explains,

> This designation was to become standard throughout the following millennium and claimed a monopolistic position for the Roman church according it superior rank and primary position among all other churches….the great ideological advance which this Roman synod of 382 made was that the historic justification of the pre-eminence of the Roman church was replaced by the assertion of a divine ordinance which had made St. Peter (and St. Paul, according to the synodal decree) its founder.\(^{202}\)

In the centuries which followed Pope Damasus’s decree, the See of Rome supported its claims to primacy by constructing a juristic argument based on the concept of the apostolic succession, whereby each pope literally inherited the authority of Peter by taking on his

\(^{200}\) For further information about the manuscript relations of the Boniface correspondence, see the introduction to Reinhold Rau, *Briefe des Bonifatius und Willibalds Leben des Bonifatius*, Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe IVb (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 9-22.


\(^{202}\) Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1972), 10-11; Southern 95.
identity, or *persona*, in the legal sense. Subsequent popes, most notably Leo the Great, developed the twin concepts of Petrine primacy and the apostolic succession to support their assertion of authority with respect to the imperial church of Constantinople. The Constantinopolitan church did not take kindly to this imposition. By the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) attempts to convince the imperial government and its church to recognize the primacy of Rome had become utterly futile. Meanwhile, in what now appears to be an unrelated development, Gregory initiated the process of converting the Germanic peoples of northern and western Europe and extending Roman ecclesiastical influence and missionary efforts, especially to Britain.

As Alan Thacker and others have pointed out, the early English church had a “veneration of things Roman in matters of sainthood” that manifested itself in a “remarkable – almost obsessive – interest in the apostles and apostolic status.” Thacker remarks that

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203 Ullmann 12-13, 20.
204 See, for example, the statement of Leo the Great on the subject of Roman authority being derived from the Petrine Primacy, ca. 440-461, in *A History of Christianity: Readings in the History of the Church*, Volume 1: The Early and Medieval Church, ed. Ray C. Petry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 189-90, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, caused his truth to be promulgated through the apostles. And while his duty was placed on all the apostles, the Lord made St. Peter the head of them all, that from their head his gifts should flow out into all the body. So that if anyone separates himself from St. Peter he should know that he has no share in the divine blessing. If any dissensions in regard to church matters should arise among you, we wish you to settle them and report to us all the terms of the settlement, so that we may confirm your just and reasonable decisions. Constantinople has its own glory and by the mercy of God has become the seat of the empire. But secular matters are based on one thing, ecclesiastical matters on another. For nothing will stand which is not built on the rock [Peter] which the Lord has laid in the foundation [Matt. 16:18]…Your city is royal, but you cannot make it apostolic [as Rome is, because its church was founded by St. Peter].”
205 Ullmann’s view (54-55) that Gregory’s decision to convert the English was motivated by his withdrawal from Constantinople has been disproven by Robert Markus, “Gregory the Great’s Europe,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31.5 (1981): 30.
the Anglo-Saxon veneration of Peter, Paul, and indeed even the least of the apostles and their companions manifested itself not only in church dedications and the proliferation of apostolic relics from Rome, but in the development of the “liturgical commemoration of the apostles beyond the Roman cycle” and a strong tendency to interpret the lives and deeds of contemporary Anglo-Saxon churchmen in terms of “apostolic status.” What is particularly interesting about the Anglo-Saxon devotion to the figures of the apostles and their enthusiastic support of the primacy of St. Peter and his representative in Rome is that it appears to have developed more or less independently of direct papal influence. That is, it was initiated and perpetuated by the Anglo-Saxons themselves.

The reality is that in the seventh and eighth centuries, the popes in Rome lacked the degree of influence in Europe that we are accustomed to presume they had. As DeLogu explains, the doctrine of St. Peter’s primacy in fact pertained only to the pope’s “pre-eminence in the guardianship of the faith and in the duty of preaching, rather than as a power of jurisdiction over the universal church.” Moreover, the papacy lacked the reach, the infrastructure, or the “jurisdictional tools” that would enable them to consistently exercise any kind of direct authority over the far-flung provinces of Europe. What this means is the devotion of the Anglo-Saxons to the see of Peter, while certainly not discouraged by the office of the pope in Rome, was not the outgrowth of any kind of deliberate program initiated or sustained by the Apostolic See. According to DeLogu, it was rather the Anglo-

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207 Thacker, “In Search of Saints,” 274. Thacker very briefly discusses Anglo-Saxon interpretations of the careers of Wilfrid of Ripon and Gregory the Great in this vein. He does not mention Boniface or the other Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the continent.

208 Southern 97.


Saxons themselves who “sought contacts with the papacy, in order to get instructions, relics, and blessings, than the other way around. And the popes met the demand.” The papacy exercised its function as the foremost see of the universal church primarily by responding to the requests of others for approval and confirmation in documentary form, or by constructing establishments for the reception and care of pilgrims to Rome. As Southern explains,

Western Christian unity was centered on Rome, but it was created less by papal activity than by the spontaneous impulses which led men to St Peter. So far as it came from papal action, this unity involved a conscious rejection of Byzantine political and ecclesiastical claims. But so far as it came from popular impulses it represented a simple gravitation towards the visible source of supernatural power.

This relation between Rome and Anglo-Saxon England is extremely significant for our understanding of Boniface’s missionary project, because it compels us to revise our expectations concerning the exercise of apostolic authority, and to rethink the ways in which both parties – the Roman representative of St. Peter, and the Anglo-Saxon devotee of St. Paul – use discourses of apostleship to articulate their identities as religious leaders and to represent their relationships to their colleagues and constituents, and, especially, to one another. Rather than viewing the biblical language of apostleship as a discursive practice handed down from the papacy to Boniface and his cohort (as a deliberate authorization of Boniface’s mission), I argue that Boniface, his Anglo-Saxon and Frankish correspondents, and the various popes under whose auspices he worked all shared the discourse of apostleship. As fellow Christians, imbued with the words and examples of the apostles of

211 DeLogu 213.
212 Southern 97; Delogu 213-14. This relation is implicit in Pope Leo the Great’s statement of the Primacy of Peter when he says “if any dissensions in regard to church matters should arise among you, we wish you to settle them and report to us all the terms of the settlement, so that we may confirm your just and reasonable decisions.”
213 Southern 97.
Christ, these three groups used this language to express their shared faith and allegiance to Peter, and to cement the bonds of Christian identity through the written word.

Boniface’s close relationships with various popes during his missionary career are well-known. He followed his compatriot Willibrord in voluntarily seeking papal approval for his second mission in 719, and this act initiated a partnership between the popes and missionary which lasted until Boniface’s death in 754.214 Boniface had, of course, already begun the mission when he sought the advice and support of the pope. Far from initiating Boniface’s mission to the heathen, the pope was largely rubber-stamping it. Yet, for Boniface, as for his predecessors Willibrord and Wilfrid, that rubber stamp was a meaningful bit of bureaucracy. It conferred a very real degree of apostolic dignity to the mission by associating it directly with the legacy of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles. Also, the pope’s approval brought with it peace of mind. As Heinz Löwe explains,


Papal approval, then, had concrete as well as supernatural benefits, but what Boniface understood well was that in order to gain access to those benefits, one had to seek them in

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person, in Rome, at the threshold of the apostles. To do so was to recognize the primacy and authority, not of the pope, but of St. Peter himself.  

The result of Boniface’s consultation with Pope Gregory II in Rome is recorded in a document written by the pope entrusting Boniface with the task of preaching to the heathen. While this document does not specify which heathen people Boniface is to preach to, it does specify the apostolic nature of the undertaking, as well as the significance of Boniface’s decision to seek the support of the Apostolic See. The letter begins by acknowledging the consonance between Boniface’s chosen task and the pope’s own “special care” in “spreading the divine words” \( (ad\dispensionem\ verbi\ divini,\ cuius\ per\ gratiam\ Dei\ curam\ gerimus) \). Gregory II goes on to describe Boniface’s missionary task in the simple and general terms of teaching and preaching the Old and New Testaments \( (praedicationem\ utriusque\ testamenti\ mentibus\ indoctis) \), and liberating the ignorant from the “bonds of infidelity” \( (infidelitatis\ errore\ detentas) \). Despite the generality of the ‘job description’ he offers Boniface, Gregory II is very precise about who is in charge. In his recourse to the Apostolic See, Gregory states, Boniface has “test[ed his] design as a single member of a body submits itself to the sovereignty of the head;” Boniface’s “humble submission to the direction of the head has now placed [his] feet on the right path” and has made him “as it were a perfectly articulated member of this body” \( (Idcirco\ quia\ praemissi\ conatus\ pium\ affectum\ usque\ ad\ apostolicae\ sedis\ modesta\ praevisione\ perduxisti\ consultum,\ ut\ membrum\ ex\ membro\ (1\ Cor.\ 12:27)\ proprii\ corporis\ caput\ requirens\ motum\ mentis\ probares\ capitisque\ arbitrio\ humiliter\ te\ submittens\ eius\ directioni\ iusto\ tramite\ properans\ solidati) \).  

\(^{216}\) Southern 94.  
\(^{217}\) Tangl #12, Emerton #4.  
\(^{218}\) Tangl #12, Emerton #4.  
\(^{219}\) Emerton #4; Tangl #12.
This expression of the pope as the head of the body of the church alludes to a passage from Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians:

But now God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they all were one member, where would be the body? But now there are many members indeed, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand: I need not thy help. Nor again the head to the feet: I have no need of you. Yea, much more those that seem to be the more feeble members of the body are more necessary. And such as we think to be the less honorable members of the body, about these we put more abundant honor….  

The emphasis in this statement is on the community of the church and the harmony of its members working together as a united entity. All the church’s members, even the “feeble” ones, are exalted in this corporeal schema. Paul does go on in the letter to clarify that “God indeed hath set some in the church; first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly doctors” and so on, which may seem to suggest a notion of vertical hierarchy with apostles as the primum membrum, however, he negates this suggestion by exclaiming “Are all apostles? Are all prophets?...But be zealous for the better gifts.” The ultimate message Paul conveys to the Corinthians in this passage is that charismatic gifts are nothing without charity, and no one member of the body of the church ought to be exalted over another. Rather, in the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, each member is to be the “servant of servants.”

In addition to the passage from Corinthians, Pope Gregory II’s statement also recalls (I think, deliberately) the language which Pope Leo the Great used in his statement of Petrine primacy: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, caused his truth to be promulgated

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220 Emerton #4; Tangl #12.
221 1 Cor. 12:18-23.
222 1 Cor. 12:24-31.
223 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 9:19. See also Markus, “Papacy and Hierarchy,” 3 and Ullman, Short History of the Papacy, 56-58.
through the apostles. And while his duty was placed on all the apostles, the Lord made St. Peter the head of them all, that from their head his gifts should flow out into all the body.”

In the context of his letter to Boniface, this corporeal image of unity is used to assert the guiding role of the papacy in articulating and authorizing Boniface’s mission. Boniface has “submitted” and this submission to the “head” of the apostles signals his willingness to conform to the dictates of the body which the head governs. The source of the head’s governing power, Gregory II assures Boniface in the next line of his text, is the “unshaken authority of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, whose government we administer by divine dispensation in his Holy See” (*per inconcussam auctoritatem beati Petri apostolorum principis, cuius doctrinae magisterii divina dispensatione fungimur et locum sacrae sedis amministramus*). Gregory, like Leo, modifies Paul’s sense of the body of Christ as a figure for the church so that it also incorporates the Petrine ideology of papal primacy. St. Peter (and his representative on earth, the pope) becomes the head of the body, not of Christ, but of the apostles, and through them, church itself. The authority of the see of Peter rests upon the “feet” of men like Boniface, and these men, the apostles who dispense the gifts of the spirit through their teaching, are therefore worthy of honor.

In seeking the approval of Pope Gregory II for his mission, Boniface acknowledges the primacy of Peter as head of the Church, and in doing so, gains admittance to the company of the apostles. He becomes part of the apostolic succession through this act of papal authorization, despite the fact that he has not yet received the pallium. Pope Gregory II gains both the allegiance of Boniface and the assurance that this mission will be carried out in accordance with the teachings of the Church, as well as an

224 Emerton #4; Tangl #12.
opportunity to claim, in a sense, that Boniface’s mission to the peoples of Germania operates under his direction. This collusion is negotiated through the words of Paul, as interpreted by Boniface and Gregory in the context of their shared faith, and their shared belief in the doctrine of the apostolic succession.

In the case of Pope Gregory II, his comparisons of Boniface to the apostles function typologically, encouraging the recipients of his letters to recognize in Boniface and his work parallels with Saint Paul. In a letter addressed to Charles Martel, the leader of the Franks, Gregory explicitly likens Boniface to the Apostle to the Gentiles:

…ut eum in omnibus necessitatibus adiuvetis et contra quoslibet adversarios, quibus in Domino praevalitis, instantissime defendatis certissime retinentes Deo vos exhibere, quaecunque huic promptissimo impenderitis favore, qui sanctis apostolis suis ad lucem gentium destinatis suscipientibus eos se suscipiendum predixit (Matt. 10:40). Quorum institutionibus per nos informatus premissus antistes in sorte predicationis procedit.

[we pray you to help him in every need and to defend him against every enemy over whom you may prevail in the Lord’s name, bearing in mind that whatever support you solicitously give to him will be given to God, who said that those who received his holy apostles, sent forth as a light to the Gentiles, would be receiving Himself (Matt. 10:40). This prelate, instructed by us in the apostolic doctrine, goes forth to undertake this missionary work.]226

Here Gregory manifests the support which Boniface requested from him in 719 in the form of a written recommendation of his work to the political and religious leaders in the regions where he is to preach. The rationale behind his recommendation proceeds from a passage in Matthew: “He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.” In the context of the letter, the allusion to Matthew 10:40 reminds Charles Martel that by receiving Boniface, he is receiving Christ himself, and

226 Tangl #20; Emerton #12. Similar sentiments are expressed in other letters by Gregory II and Gregory III in the Bonifatian Correspondence. See also Tangl #17, 19, and 21 and 25.
therefore directly helping Christ in the cause of spreading salvation. In its biblical context in the Gospel of Matthew, this line occurs at the conclusion of one of Christ’s speeches to the twelve Apostles, where he instructs them on the apostolic life. Gregory’s allusion adds credence to his designation of Boniface as a “holy apostle” and a “light to the Gentiles” (sanctis apostolis suis ad lucem gentium). We know that the overall message was not lost on Charles Martel. In a letter dated from the following year and “signed with [his] own hand and sealed with [his] own ring” (manu propria subter firmavi et de anulo nostro subter sigillavimus), this mayor of the palace commends Boniface to the officials of Francia as an “apostolic man in Christ” (apostolicus vir in Christo).227

Gregory II’s letter to Boniface dated to December 4, 724, builds upon his construction of an apostolic identity for Boniface in its words of encouragement and guidance gathered from significant Gospel passages. Gregory writes,


[Moved by zeal for the task entrusted to us, as well as by the Gospel precept, ‘Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest’ (Matt. 9:38), we directed you, reverend brother, in imitation of the apostles ordered by the Lord: ‘Go forth and preach the Gospel!’ (Matt. 10.8)...‘Freely ye have received; freely give’ (Mark 16:15) into the lands of the West, for the enlightenment of the people of Germany sitting in the shadow of death (Luke 1:79), expecting you to reap profit therefrom, for the future, like that faithful servant in the Scripture dealing with his talent (Matt. 25:20).’]228

227 Emerton #14; Tangl #22.
228 Tangl #24; Emerton #16.
This passage forms an evocative catena of biblical quotations and allusions, all of which have direct relevance for the construction of Boniface’s identity as an apostle. Gregory begins with one of the most frequently used biblical images in the correspondence of Boniface and his circle: the image of the harvest.229 Taken from Matthew 9:38, just prior to Christ’s instructions to the apostles, these lines refer to the calling of God’s ‘laborers,’ his servants in the harvest of faith among the multitudes. As an imitator of the apostles, Boniface takes on the role of the farmer, whose seed is the instruction he has received in the Scripture as well as his faith, and who gives of it in the form of his preaching. This metaphor is elaborated at the beginning of another reply from Gregory II sent to Boniface in 726, concerning a letter brought to Rome by Deneuald:

Detulit etiam a te missas litteras, ubi indicasti, quod ager dominicus, qui incultus iacebat et spinarum aculeis ex infidelitate riguerat, vomerem tuae doctrine exarantem semen verbi suscepit et fertilem messem protulit fidelitatis.

[He also brought a letter from you showing that the field of the Lord which had been lying fallow, bristling with thorns of unbelief, has received the plowshare of your instruction, plowing in the seed of the Word, and bringing forth the harvest of true belief.]230

This image of the harvest is repeated frequently by both Anglo-Saxon and papal correspondents,231 and forms another shared language for discussing the trials and triumphs of mission. The choice of this metaphor deliberately situates Boniface in the context of the twelve apostles called by Christ to labor in his fields; but it is also a striking metaphor for the territorial expansion of Christianity, particularly Roman Christianity as symbolized by the pope himself, into the lands of the West (in partibus

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229 Clay (209) notes that this image is based on two Gospel parables from Matthew, the parable of the sower and that of the cockle of the field (Matt. 13:18; 13:37-40), and suggest that this metaphor was often used by Boniface and his correspondents because “it could be used to describe both success and adversity in vivid terms.”

230 Tangl #26; Emerton #18.

231 In his appendix 2.3, Clay cites 14 usages of this metaphor in the Bonifatian corpus of letters.
Esperiarum). These lands and their peoples are characterized as “fallow” (*incultus*) and “in the shadow of death” (*in umbra mortis*). In an image which reflects the sometimes forceful nature of the missionary life, Gregory applauds Boniface’s application of the “plowshare of instruction” (*vomer tuae doctrinae*), his subduing of the “thorns of unbelief” which have hitherto dominated the lands to which he has been sent.

In many of his letters, Pope Gregory II encouraged Boniface to “reap the profit” of souls by following the way of life and keeping the resolve of the first apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. In a letter dated December 4, 724, Gregory heartens Boniface to “hold fast to [his] faith in God, proclaim the word of truth” and to “cease not to preach the word of salvation ‘in season and out of season’” (*sed fixam in Deo tenens fiduciam veritatis verbum denuntia…Ipse vero oportune inportune praedicare quae sunt salutis ne desinas*). Gregory brings in these allusions to 2 Timothy 4:2 in order to comfort Boniface in his weariness by reminding him of the significance of his work, the necessity of resolve and stamina, and the fact that others have gone before him on his apostolic path. In the passage to which Gregory II refers, Paul goes on to exhort Timothy, from one apostle to another, to “be vigilant, labor in all things, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry” (*tu vero vigila in omnibus labora opus fac evangelistae ministerium tuum imple*). Gregory II reminds Boniface that if he perseveres like Paul and like Timothy, he “will be able to say with the Apostle: ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished my

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233 Emerton #16; Tangl #24.
234 2 Tim. 4:5.
course, I have kept the faith’” (‘Bonum’ enim ‘certamen,’ si perseveraveris, possis cum apostolo dicere, ‘certavim cursum consummavi, fidem servavi’).235

Boniface and the Expression of a Pauline Apostolic Identity

The letters exchanged between Boniface and Gregory II and his successors, Gregory III (731-741), Zacharias (741-752), and Stephen II (752-752) clearly articulate their expectations for Boniface’s mission through their common adoption of Pauline rhetoric of apostleship. This biblical language expresses and reflects how they view their roles in the process of the evangelization of the Germanic peoples, as well as their consciousness that Boniface is participating in the tradition of Christ’s apostles. Throughout the Bonifatian correspondence, representatives of the Church of Rome insistently lay claim to the legacy of Peter, using this claim to legitimize their own authority and to authorize the work of others. Boniface and his circle of Anglo-Saxon and Frankish Christians shared a strong belief in the doctrine of Petrine primacy, and understood the pope to be an embodiment of the persona of Peter. What this meant for Boniface was that, as one who wished to follow in the footsteps of the apostles, the role of Peter was closed to him – who could aspire to emulate the dignity of the Prince of the Apostles, whose representative still breathed on earth? But the role of Paul remained open to him. By adopting the voice of Paul in his correspondence, Boniface presented himself to his supporters, as well as Gregory II and his successors, as the Paul to the pope’s Peter.

235 2 Tim. 4:6-7 quoted in Tangl #24. Pope Gregory II’s gestures of support to Boniface were furthered by his successors, Gregory III, Zacharias, and Stephen II. Gregory III’s letter to Boniface on the organization of the Church in Bavaria in 739 (Emerton #35; Tangl #45) is very similar to Gregory II’s letters discussed above, as are Tangl letters #57, #80, and #82 from Pope Zacharias and #90 from Cardinal-Bishop Benedict.
In a well-known passage from his 735 letter to Abbess Eadburga, Boniface asks his friend to write the Epistles of Peter in gold for him. This passage is often presented as evidence for Boniface’s flashy missionary tactics, since he writes that he needs the letters written in precious gold specifically to “impress honor and reverence for the Sacred Scriptures visibly upon the carnally minded to whom I preach” (ad honorem et reverentiam sanctarum scripturarum ante oculos carnalium in praedicando). But another purpose for his request emerges in the next line of the letter: “I desire to have ever present before me the words of him who is my guide upon the road” (et quia dicta eius, qui me in hoc iter direxit, maxime semper in praesentia cupiam habere).

Boniface’s recognition of Peter as a guide grows out of his characteristically Anglo-Saxon enthusiasm for the authority of the Prince of the Apostles and fascination with the presence of Peter’s relics in Rome as well as the person of his representative, the pope. The relationship Boniface established with the Apostolic See was a relationship to the Apostle Peter, as the text of Boniface’s “oath” to Pope Gregory II in 722 makes clear. The text of Boniface’s oath, to which he repeatedly refers throughout his subsequent correspondence, begins as follows:

Promitto ego Bonifatius gratia Dei episcopus vobis, beato Petro apostolorum principi vicarioque tuo beato papae Gregorio successoribusque eius per patrem et

236 Emerton #26; Tangl #35.
237 Emerton #26; Tangl #35.
238 Emerton #26; Tangl #35.
239 Southern 94-96: “For the western church from the 7th to the 11th centuries the existence of the tomb of St Peter was the most significant fact in Christendom. The body within the tomb of St Peter which would one day clothe the doorkeeper of heaven, was the link between the presence in heaven and the church on earth. It was pre-eminently through this continuing physical presence that St Peter continued to curse, to cure, and to guarantee. Men thought of him being there in Rome….English missionaries, who transformed the position of the papacy in the western church by going to Rome for authority in their missions to Germany, were not thinking of the authority of the papacy but of St. Peter.”
240 Noble, “Introduction,” xiii: Prior to consecration as bishop, Gregory required Boniface to make a statement of faith and to swear an oath of allegiance to himself and his successors. Fearing that his ‘Insular’ accent might lead to misunderstanding, Boniface asked the pope to let him issue his oath in writing rather than speech, which Gregory permitted.
filium et spiritum sanctum, trinitatem inseparabilem, et hoc sacratissimum corpus
tuum me omnem fidel et puritatem sanctae fidei catholicae exhibere….

[I, Boniface, by the grace of God bishop, promise to you, O blessed Peter, Chief
of the Apostles, and to your vicar, the blessed Pope Gregory and to his successors,
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the indivisible Trinity, and
of this, thy most sacred body, that I will show entire faith and sincerity toward
holy catholic faith….]²⁴¹

This oath is made directly to Peter himself, presumably at the shrines of the apostles at St.
Peter’s Church, where so many of his countrymen and women sought the refuge of
pilgrimage.²⁴² Should he fail to uphold his pledge to maintain orthodoxy or report and
correct those who oppose the “institutions of the holy Fathers,” Boniface calls upon
himself the “punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, who dared to defraud you [Peter] by
making a false declaration of property” (ultionem Annaniae et Saffire incurram, qui vobis
etiam de rebus propriis fraudem facere vel falsum dicere presumserunt).²⁴³ Here
Boniface alludes to the scene in the Acts of the Apostles, where God strikes down
Ananias and Sapphira through the accusation of Peter for withholding a portion of the
profits from their lands from apostles while claiming to give all they had.²⁴⁴ Ananias and
Sapphira signify a hypocritical and lukewarm attitude toward the apostolic life, but in the
context of Boniface’s letter, they also suggest the power of Peter, and thereby the See of
Peter, to enforce the will of God. These two figures function as anti-apostles, in their will

²⁴¹ Emerton #8; Tangl #16.
²⁴² Pilgrimage to the shrines of Peter and Paul in Rome is discussed in several letters of the Bonifatian
correspondence, especially Tangl #14, #27, and #105. For more on Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage to Rome, see
Debra Birch, Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change (Woodbridge: Boydell and
Brewer, 1998), Dee Dyas, Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700-1500 (Brewer: Cambridge,
2001), and Eámonn Ó Carragáin, “The City of Rome in the World of Bede,” Jarrow Lecture, 1994. For
detailed discussion of Anglo-Saxon place pilgrimage in the context of the missions to the continent, see my
article “Rome, Jerusalem, Germany: Pilgrimage and the Anglo-Saxon Continental Missions in Huneberg of
Heidenheim’s Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald,” Medieval Travels and Travelers, Real and Imagined, ed.
²⁴³ Emerton #8; Tangl #16. In the context of the biblical episode, Peter makes it clear that Ananias and
Sapphira have defrauded God himself. In the context of Boniface’s letter, addressed as it is to Peter and his
vicar, it seems more likely that “you” refers to the addressee directly, and perhaps God indirectly.
to preserve their self-interest over the communal good, and in their unwillingness to submit to the authority of Peter. By calling upon himself the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira should he default on his promises, Boniface strongly affirms his status as a true follower of Peter, and his devotion to the apostolic life of selfless communion.  

Although Boniface had an “undoubtedly sincere love” for St. Peter, the teachings and apostolic life of St. Paul appear to have made the strongest impression on him throughout his career. As Eugen Ewig has noted, “Wie der erste Heidenapostel Paulus hatte aber Bonifatius nicht nur gegen Götterglauben, Rohheit und Unwissenheit, sondern auch gegen die falsi fratres zu kämpfen, und manche Stelle in seinen Briefen erinnert an den anderen servus Jesu Christi.” The parallels between the life and work of the Apostle to the Gentiles and Boniface’s own undertakings were in no way coincidental. As we have seen, the popes with whom Boniface worked and corresponded encouraged him to personally identify with Paul and to use Paul’s account of his works and struggles as a model for his own. Ever a zealous student of the Scriptures, Boniface sought out commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, asking his former student, Abbot Dudo, for “a part of a treatise upon the Apostle Paul, which I lack. I have tracts upon two epistles, one upon Romans, and the other upon First Corinthians” (ut mihi in adiutorium divinae scientiae partem tractatus super apostolum Paulum, quae mihi deest, mittere digneris. Habeo enim super duas epistolas tractatus, id est ad Romanos et ad

245 Levison, England and the Continent, 72.
246 Ullman, Short History of the Papacy, 66-67.
Corintheos primam).\textsuperscript{249} This treatise, Boniface says, is meant to be “an aid in sacred learning” (\textit{in audiutorum divinae scientiae}), but added to his collection of treatises on Romans and Corinthians, such commentaries, along with the biblical texts themselves, would have formed an invaluable source of advice and inspiration for a man who saw himself as walking in the footsteps of this Apostle.\textsuperscript{250}

As an early letter (ca. 720) sent to Boniface from the English nun Bugga reveals, Boniface considered himself to be called by God to evangelize the peoples of Germania.\textsuperscript{251} While he sought the approval of the pope in all he did, and swore an oath of obedience to the see of Rome, it is clear from his letters that Boniface approached the peoples of Thuringia, Hesse, Bavaria, Saxony, and Frisia not as a representative of Rome, but

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\textsuperscript{249} Emerton \#25; Tangl \#34.

\textsuperscript{250} Hermann Schüling’s article on “Die Handbibliothek des Bonifatius: Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der ersten Hälfte des 8. Jahrhunderts,” \textit{Archiv für Geisteswissenschaft des Buchwesens} 4 (1961): 337-38, reconstructs and outlines the contents of Boniface’s portable personal library during his time on the continent. Schüling explains that Boniface definitely had copies of a passionary, the letters of Gregory, some writings of Bede, several letters, perhaps including the letters of Peter which he requested, and treatises on Romans and 1 Corinthians. He asked for the letters of Peter in gold, and a commentary on the additional letters of Paul. In addition to these works, we know he used copies of Gregory’s \textit{Pastoral Care} and the sermons of Cesarius of Arles, and possibly had in his collection the works contained in the Ragyndrudis Codex (Isidore’s \textit{Synonyma}, Ambrose’s \textit{De bono mortis}, and the texts of the \textit{Disputatio beati Cerealis episcopi Castellensis contra Maximinum Arriomanitum}, the \textit{Epistula Agnelli episcopi Ravennatensis ad Arminium}, and \textit{De ratione fidei}, among others), the Cadmug Evangeliar, a Psalter and the \textit{Dialogus ecclesiasticae institutionis} by his friend Ecbert of York. To this list we may add the Codex Fuldensis, which appears to have contained the full text of the New Testament, though the glosses by Boniface (if he is Glossator A) and Lull (if he is Glossator B) occur only on the text of the Epistle of James. Schüling characterizes Boniface’s ‘Handbibliothek’ as containing works that would be of practical use to a preacher, missionary and reformer of the Church.

\textsuperscript{251} Emerton \#7; Tangl \#15: Bugga writes, ‘‘\ldots in scriptione beatitudinis tuae agnovi – multipliciter misericordiam suam tribuit, ut te transeuntem per ignotos pagos piissime conduxit. Primum pontificem glorious sedis ad desiderium mentis tuae blandiendum inclinavit. Postea inimicum catholicae ecclesiae Rathbodum coram te consternuit. Deinde per somnium temet ipso revelavit, quod debuisti manifeste messem Dei metere et congregare sanctorum aninmarum manipulos in horream regni caelestis.’’ [\ldots I learn from the letter of Your Holiness, He has shown His mercy to you in many ways, leading you gently through lands unknown. First, He inclined the pontiff of the Glorious See to grant the desire of your heart. Next he laid low before you Radbod, that enemy of the Catholic Church. Then he revealed to you in a dream that it was your duty to reap the harvest of God, gathering in sheaves of holy souls into the storehouse of the heavenly kingdom].
but as an Anglo-Saxon. Much as Paul approached the Greek-speaking Gentiles as a fellow Greek-speaker, and the Romans as a fellow citizen of Rome, Boniface approached the pagan peoples of the continent as a member of one of the gentes Germaniae (peoples of Germania). In his study of the use of the terms Germania and Germanicum John-Henry Clay explains that Boniface and his correspondents never use the Greek and Latin noun Germani ‘Germans’ to describe the peoples among whom they worked, and that, while they frequently use Germania and Germanicum in their letters, they understood these terms “to be primarily geographical, not ethnic, in meaning.” Clay further notes that,

when Boniface describes himself as an exul Germanicus, he was not using it as an ethnic term, which the literal English translation of ‘a Germanic exile’ might imply; rather, he meant ‘an exile in Germania.’ The title of legatus Germaniae ‘Germanic [papal] legate,’ which Boniface appears to have applied to himself from 738 at the latest, also referred to his geographical zone of responsibility, not his ethnicity….Germania was thus a convenient geographical signifier that covered a wide area of various gentes….indeed, Boniface and the popes often referred to his mission among the gens/gentes Germaniae when writing to one another, but when the popes wrote directly to the peoples they always took care to use the appropriate tribal names: Hessi, Thuringi, Altsaxones and so on.

These various gentes were linked together by their related languages and the general region which they occupied in Europe, but they were differentiated from one another by an ethnic construct of tribal identity. This helps us to understand why Boniface, in his 738 letter to the Anglo-Saxon people asking them to pray for the conversion of the pagan Saxons (paganorum Saxonum), is so careful to address his audience in England as “all God-fearing catholics of the stock and race of the Angles” (generaliter omnibus catholicis Deum timentibus de stirpe et prosapia Anglorum), and

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252 Interestingly, however, he approached Frankish leaders and ecclesiastical officials very much as a representative of Rome.
253 Tangl #59.
identifies himself as one of their own (procreatis eiusdem generis vernaculus).\textsuperscript{255}

Boniface appeals to the insular Anglo-Saxons to pity and pray for their fellow Saxones, “for they themselves are saying: ‘We are of one blood and one bone with you’” (quia ipse solent dicere: ‘De uno sanguine et de uno osse sumus’).\textsuperscript{256} This letter gives us a sense of how Boniface himself constructs and represents his relationship to those people he worked to “gather among the children of Mother Church” (adgregentur filiis mater ecclesiae). His awareness of the Anglo-Saxon people’s ethnic relation to the continental Saxons in particular motivates his special concern for the conversion of this kindred gens over and above his general commitment to all the gentes in the region of Germania.\textsuperscript{257}

The rationale for his endeavor to convert the pagan Saxons is based on a recognition of their mutual kinship, their connection as peoples who share “one blood and one bone.”\textsuperscript{258}

The response to Boniface’s letter sent by Bishop Torhthelm of Leicester shows that at least one of the Anglo-Saxon recipients or readers shared Boniface’s notion of ethnic affiliation with the continental Saxons. Torhthelm writes,

Desiderabiles litteras excellentiae vestrae suscepimus. Quas relegentes cognovimus tuam piissimam devotionem ferventissimumque amorem, quem habes propter beatam vitam, ut dextera Domini protegente meditares die ac nocte ad fidem catholicam et apostolicam pro tuae animae redemptione corda paganorum Saxonum converti. Quis enim audiens haec suavita non laetetur? Quis non exultet et gaudeat in his operibus, quia gens nostra Christo omnipotenti deo credat?

\textsuperscript{255} Emerton #36; Tangl #46.
\textsuperscript{256} Emerton #36; Tangl #46.
\textsuperscript{257} In light of material presented above, it seems unlikely that Boniface could have made the same ‘blood and bone’ argument to support his mission to the other peoples of Germania, such as the Hessians and Thuringians. However, the awareness of a general relation between the gentes Germaniae enabled him to present himself as one who shared their cultural background, though (as he seems to have perceived it) to a lesser degree than the Saxons. Ironically, however, his least successful mission was to the Saxons. Unlike his Insular Anglo-Saxon correspondents, the paganorum Saxones do not seem to have bought into his argument of kinship as a rationale for conversion at all.
\textsuperscript{258} A similar point is made in Nicholas Howe, \textit{Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England} (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 126-127, though Howe does not observe the semantic distinction between gentes Germaniae and Saxones.
[We have received the welcome letter of Your Excellency and as we read it we felt your most loyal devotion and fervent love toward the holy life, so that your thoughts dwell day and night, under the protecting hand of God, upon the conversion of the pagan Saxons to the catholic and apostolic faith for the redemption of your own soul. Who would not rejoice to hear these pleasant things? Who would not exult and be glad at such accomplishments, whereby people of our own race are coming to believe in Christ the Almighty God?]259

For Torhthelm, his delight in the success of Boniface’s missions has both universal and particular dimensions: to bring all nations to the “catholic and apostolic faith” is a cause for rejoicing, but to bring gens nostra to belief in Christ is a cause for exultation. Bishop Daniel of Worcester’s instructions on how to convert the pagans of Germania, written to Boniface between 723-724, also evince a degree of cultural awareness in advocating the use of reasoned argument to persuade the pagans to turn from polytheism to monotheism rather than rashly tearing down their temples and condemning their beliefs outright.260 Daniel writes that Boniface should not argue with them “offensively or so as to anger them, but calmly and with great moderation” (non quasi insultando vel iritando eos, sed placide ac magna obicere moderatione debes), by “comparing their superstitions with our Christian doctrines” (id est christianis, huiusmodi conparandae sunt dogmatibus superstitionis) and reminding them that Christianity has everywhere triumphed, attended by prosperity and wealth.261 The thrust of this argument is that the prosperity and respect gained by the Anglo-Saxon people is related to their acceptance of the Christian faith, and that the pagan Germanic peoples of the continent could likewise gain a more favorable position in the world through conversion to Christianity. Boniface is to use his

259 Emerton #37; Tangl #47.
260 Tangl #23; Emerton #15.
261 Emerton #15; Tangl #23. Compare Torhthelm’s advice on the method of conversion with Bede’s account of Paulinus’s reasoned discussion of the advantages of Christianity with King Edwin’s priest Coifi, and Coifi’s apparently immediate recognition of the benefits the new religion in the Historia Ecclesiastica II.13. One wonders whether Torhthelm himself was familiar with a version of this story, perhaps even Bede’s.
knowledge and awareness of the Germanic people’s own cultural background to persuade them to belief in Christ. His status as a fellow Saxon both induces and motivates him to convert the peoples of the Anglo-Saxons’ ancestral homeland.

An early letter from one of Boniface’s female correspondents in England shows the readiness of some members of the Anglo-Saxon church to ascribe apostolic significance to Boniface’s work, even before he sought the support of the pope. As early as 716-718, Abbess Egburga writes to Boniface, “You, on the resurrection day, when the twelve apostles shall sit upon their twelve seats, shall sit there also, and as many as you shall have redeemed, over so many shall you wear a crown of gold before the judgment seat of the King Eternal” (Tu autem in regeneratione, cum sederint duodecim apostoli in sedibus XII, sedibis et ibi; et quantos labore proprio adquesieris, de tantis ante tribunal aeterni regis dux futurus deauratus gaudebis).\(^2\)

In the letters which he composed himself, however, Boniface adopts a more subtle and humble means of conveying the relationship he perceived between his work on the continent and that of the first apostles, particularly Paul. Rather than explicitly likening his experiences to those of Paul, Boniface expresses his successes, struggles and feelings by means of biblical allusions, usually to Acts of the Apostles or the Pauline Epistles. Often these references occur in quick succession, one right after another, piled up with little explanation, conveying meaning through recognition and association rather than articulating Boniface’s thoughts and circumstances directly. A passage from a letter

\(^2\) Emerton #5; Tangl #13.
written by Boniface to Abbot Huetbert of Wearmouth requesting copies of Bede’s exegetical works exemplifies this pattern of apostolic discourse:

Fraternitatis vestrae pietatem intimis obsecramus praecibus, ut nos inter feras et ignaras gentes Germaniae laborantes et grana evangelica plantantes vestris sacrosanctis orationibus adjuvemur et precibus santitatis vestrae in nobis sevus Babylonicae ardo restinguatur flammae et sparsa sulcis ad fructum multiplicata surgant semina. Quia iuxta dictum apostoli ‘neque qui plantat neque qui inrigat est aliquid, sed Deus qui incrementum dat’ (1 Cor. 3:6); ut ‘detur nobis sermo in apertione oris’ (Eph. 6:19) et ‘sermo Domini currat et clarificetur’ (2 Thess. 3:1). Interea rogamus, ut aliqua de opusculis sagacissimi investagoris scriptuarum Bedan monachi, quem nuper in domo Dei apud vos vice candellae ecclesiastice scientia scriptuarum fulsisse audivimus, conscripta nobis transmittere dignemini.

[We earnestly beseech your brotherly piety to aid us with your most holy prayers as we labor among the ignorant and savage peoples of Germany, planting the seeds of the Gospel, so that by the prayers of Your Holiness the raging heat of these Babylonian flames may be held in check and the seed strewn in the furrows may spring up into manifold fruition. For, in the words of the Apostle, ‘Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God giveth the increase’ (1 Cor. 3:6); and ‘Utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth’ (Eph. 6:19); and ‘That the word of the Lord may run and be glorified’ (2 Thess. 3:1). Meantime we beg you to be so kind as to copy and send us some of the treatises of that keenest investigator of the Scriptures, the monk Bede, who, we have learned, shone forth among you of late as a lantern of the Church, by his spiritual scholarship.] 263

Aside from his request for the works of Bede (and later, a cloak) and his gift to Huetbert of a “coverlet of goat-hair,” this letter is mainly a tissue of biblical quotations and allusions containing references to three Pauline Epistles: 1 Corinthians 3:6, Ephesians 6:19, and 2 Thessalonians 3:1. This string of allusions speaks for Boniface, presupposing Huetbert’s familiarity with these passages and awareness of the correct hermeneutic in which to interpret them. The complicity of the reader is essential to the construction of meaning within the framework of the correspondents’ shared faith and understanding.

The passage begins with allusions to the ‘harvest’ metaphor familiar from our treatment of Pope Gregory II’s letters above, which immediately leads into the a citation

263 Tangl #76; Emerton #60.
of 1 Corinthians 3:6: “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God giveth the increase.” The imagery of this passage reiterates the concept of sowing the seeds of the Gospel; however, in the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the image to argue that there should be no dissension among the Corinthians over whether they should claim to be the followers of Paul “who has planted” or Apollo “who has watered.” Boniface uses this passage to remind Huetbert of the necessity of his prayers for the success of his mission because, like Paul, Boniface realizes that it is only through the intervention of God and the support of prayers that the harvest of souls will increase.

Without pause, Boniface goes on to evoke a passage from Ephesians 6:19. Here, Boniface relies on Huetbert’s familiarity with Scripture and ability to interpret his allusions correctly when he quotes the line “And for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence to make known the mystery of the Gospel.”264 This line comes near the conclusion of the letter to the Ephesians, where Paul indicates to his addressees the desired object of their prayers. Here, Boniface is aligning himself with Paul – in taking on Paul’s words, he takes on his persona, placing Huetbert in the role of the Ephesians. Boniface asks Huetbert to pray that he may maintain his confidence in preaching so that, like Paul, he “may be bold to speak according as [he] ought.”265 Boniface concludes the thought with yet another citation, taken from 2 Thessalonians 3:1: “For the rest, brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may run and be glorified, even as among you.”266 This clarifies (as if there were any doubt) what exactly Huetbert is supposed to pray for: that Boniface may be confident to preach, so that the Germanic peoples of the continent may receive the word of God, just as the Anglo-Saxons.

264 Eph. 6:19.
265 Eph. 6:20.
266 2 Thess. 3:1.
However, this citation serves another function. It comments directly upon the source of the “raging heat of these Babylonian flames” to which Boniface refers at the beginning of his letter. The second request which Paul makes in 2 Thessalonians 3 is that the people pray “that we may be delivered from importunate and evil men: for all men have not faith.”

This way of thinking and writing thoroughly shapes Boniface’s own concept of his work and its purpose and leads him to develop a deep, abiding and meaningful sense of identification with the figures and experiences of the apostles beyond the general “unquestionable Germanic veneration for St. Peter and his successors.” In internalizing a Pauline apostolic discourse and encouraging others to view his work and experiences through that lens, Boniface is able to claim for his work an influence and significance which, while in keeping with Pope Gregory II’s initial vision, goes beyond it, leading Boniface to shape the trajectory of his life and even his death in apostolic terms.

However, it is important to stress that Boniface’s internalization of Pauline rhetoric was less a calculated bid to gain power and authority than a natural mode of self-expression that grew out of his life-long engagement with the Bible. The significance and strength

267 2 Thess. 3:2.
268 Ullmann, *Short History of the Papacy*, 70.
269 The glosses written in a manuscript copy of the Epistle of James in Fulda, Landesbibliothek, HS Bonifatianus 1 (CLA 1196), Codex Fuldensis, fols. 435v-441v, in what M. B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communicaton, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon, 1991), 142, believes is very likely to be Boniface’s own hand (Parkes labels this hand Glossator A), provide an excellent example of just how natural this mode of self-expression was for Boniface. Parkes (136) notes that Glossator A’s comments on James show a persistant “emphasis on the apostolic ministry” of James which is independent of other commentaries on James from his own time. More significant, however, is the following observation by Parkes (140): “to James 1.21 ‘In mansuetudine suscipite insitum uerbum,’ Glossator A comments ‘id est quod modo praedico uobis, hoc est euangelium’…Glossator A’s terse use of the first person singular is striking, and the obvious Pauline echoes merely emphasize the fact that this interpretation rests on a sense of his own proper ‘apostolic’ authority.” If Parkes is correct that this gloss is in the hand of Boniface himself, then it shows that Boniface’s identification with Paul was so thorough that he glossed his own manuscripts (apparently for himself – note, as Parkes does, the unusual use of the first-person pronoun) using the same language of
of this hermeneutic becomes apparent when we see the complicity of Boniface’s fellow-correspondents and their ability and willingness to respond to his Pauline allusions in kind. They express their support of Boniface’s missionary and reform projects through their participation in these discursive practices; their ability to recognize, interpret and engage with this biblical language supplies the meaning to his words and, in doing so, systematically constitutes Boniface as an *apostolicus vir*.

**Aldebert and the Limits of Apostolic Identity**

Boniface’s correspondence routinely reveals the extent to which Boniface felt himself and his work to be imperiled by “importunate and evil men,” many of whom were nominally Christians, often bishops and priests. In a letter dated between 742 and 746 to his close friend and mentor, Bishop Daniel of Winchester, Boniface elaborates on this constant source of anxiety in greater detail. He writes,

> Sunt enim nobis iuxta dictum apostoli non solum ‘foris pugne et intus timores’ (2 Cor. 7:5), sed etiam intus pugnae simul cum timore, maxime semper per falsos sacerdotes et hypocritas, qui et Deo adversantur et sibi perduntur et populum per plurima scandalis et varios errores seducunt dicentes populis…et semen verbi, quod de sinu catholicae et apostolicae ecclesiae sumptum et nobis commendatum seminare aliquantulum studemus, illi cum lolio superseminare et suffocare nituntur vel in herbam pestiferi generis convertere. Et quod plantamus non inrigant ut crescat, sed evellere student ut marcescat, offerentes populis et docentes novas sectas et diversi generis errores.

[We have not only, as the Apostle says, ‘fightings without and fears within’ (2 Cor. 7:5), but we have fightings within as well as fears, caused especially by false priests and hypocrites, enemies of God, ruining themselves, misleading the people with scandals and false doctrines…they strive to cover and choke with weeds or to turn into poisonous grain the seed of the Word which we have received from the bosom of the Catholic and Apostolic Church and have tried to sow. What we plant they do not water that it may increase but try to uproot that it may wither]
away, offering to the people and teaching them new divisions and errors of divers sorts.]270

Boniface likens his troubles with heretics and schismatics to Paul’s description to the Corinthians of his tribulation in Macedonia: “Combats without, fears within.”271 But for Boniface, the ultimate source of tribulation comes from the “fightings within” which he experiences at the hands of other Christians. In this letter, Boniface asks Daniel for advice on how to deal with such hypocrites, whose false doctrine misleads the newly converted people, diverting and distracting them from the true Church. Moreover, Boniface informs Daniel of his personal and moral dilemma: he has sworn an oath to correct or eradicate all those whom he finds in error, yet these same people have the favor and support of the Frankish chieftains. He is bound to exercise the authority which Rome has given him as the legate of the Apostolic See, but fears that in doing so he may be jeopardizing his larger goal of effecting the conversion of the Germanic peoples in the regions bordering Francia. To alienate the Frankish chieftains and their churchmen would be to sabotage his own cause as a missionary.

Bishop Daniel of Worchester fully recognized the significance of the implicit parallels Boniface was making. Responding directly to Boniface’s concerns in the letter cited above, Bishop Daniel writes,

Unde vos operam dare primitus oportet, ut incoepio gloriosa, quae est, ut arbitror, apostolicis coequanda certaminibus, nullatenus propter illorum deseratur insidias, qui dolis instructi salutiferae solent resistere doctrine.

[You ought, therefore, above all things to make every effort that the glorious beginning which, to my mind, is worthy of comparison with the struggles of the apostles, shall on no account be abandoned because of the traps set by foxy men who make a practice of resisting the doctrine of salvation.]272

270 Tangl #63; Emerton #51.
271 See also Emerton #53; Tangl #65.
272 Tangl #64; Emerton #52, written in response to Tangl #63; Emerton #51.
Here, Bishop Daniel lays open the meaning of Boniface’s implicit allusions. Boniface should not be discouraged by those who oppose and undermine his labors because they add to the worthiness of his undertaking, and glorify it by likening it to that of the biblical apostles. For, as Bishop Daniel points out, “Paul the Apostle declares that he was involved in these same dangers (2 Cor. 11:26), and other founders of the Christian religion admit that they suffered in the same way and predicted that their followers would have to suffer also” *(A quibus se periculis implicatum Paulus apostolus adserebat (2 Cor. 11:26)). Et ceteri christiane religionis conditores id ipsum aut se passos aut posteris patiendum fore fatentur)*.273 Thus, he answers Boniface’s lament of “fightings without and fears within” with his own allusion to 2 Corinthians 11:26, reminding Boniface of the glory that comes with apostolic suffering.274 Regarding Boniface’s moral dilemma, Bishop Daniel likewise advises him to continue to model himself on the apostles, specifically Peter and Paul, and recognize that, according to the Acts of the Apostles, “useful deceit may at times be practiced. For example, ‘Cephas withdrew and separated himself, fearing them’ (Gal. 2:12); and Paul, the Vessel of Election, shaved his head and circumcised Timothy (Acts 9:15; 18:18)” *(…legimus, quod utilis simulatio adsumenda sit in tempore. Unde et Cephas ‘subtrahebat et segregabat se, timens eos’ et reliqua; et vas electionis totondit capud et Timotheum circumcidit)*.275 Even Peter and Paul were willing to compromise when it came to dealing with new converts and tricky political and religious situations. Daniel reminds Boniface that he has to take on this willingness to endure suffering with patience and to compromise when necessary to ensure the success of his missions in Germania.

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273 Tangl #64; Emerton #52.
274 In 2 Cor. 11:23-28, Paul writes of the extreme difficulties he endures as an apostle of Christ.
275 Emerton #52; Tangl #64.
Letters exchanged between Boniface and Pope Zacharias between the years 744 and 746 frequently concern Boniface’s attempts to reform or overcome the false brethren in his midst, whose presence and influence undermined his missionary efforts in Bavaria and Francia. One of the most troublesome characters to plague Boniface’s work (or so he claims) was a ‘bishop’ named Aldebert.276 Aldebert first appears in the correspondence in a letter from Pope Zacharias to Boniface dated June 22, 744. Responding to an earlier letter (now lost) from Boniface, Pope Zacharias writes:

Retulisti etiam nobis, karissime frater, quod duos pseudo-prophetas in eadem Francorum provintia repperisses, quos non pseudoprophetas, sed magis pseudochristianos appellare debemus. Ex quibus unum quidem et novum Simonem iuxta tenorem tuarum syllabarum repperimus…Et cruces statuens in campis et oratoriola illo populum seducebat reliquiens ecclesias publicas, concurrens ad illa signa, quae ab eo false fiebant. Et sanctitatis nomine se vocari censuit et in suo nomine ecclesias consecraret adfirmans se etiam angelorum nomina scire, quorum in tuis sillabis nos conscripta direxisisti; quae nomina nos non angelorum, sed magis demoniorum adfirmamus.

[You report to us, dear brother, that you have discovered in that same province of the Franks two pseudo-prophets, whom we should call not pseudo-prophets but pseudo-Christians. One of them we have found to be a new Simon according to the tenor of your letters…He set up crosses and oratories in the fields and seduced the people to desert the public churches and flock to him, deceived by false miracles which he there performed. He claimed the title of ‘Your Holiness,’ consecrated churches in his own name, and declared that he knew the names of the angels, as you described in your letter; but we declare that they are names, not of angels but rather of demons.]277

Presumably echoing Boniface’s words, Zacharias describes Aldebert as a kind of charismatic cult leader who perverts the traditions of orthodox Christian religious practice by applying them to himself in order to gain glory and honor. Pope Zacharias

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277 Tangl #57; Emerton #45.
calls Aldebert a “new Simon,” comparing him with Simon the magician of Acts 8:9-11. The biblical Simon is described as “seducing the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one: to whom they all gave ear, from the least to the greatest, saying: This man is the power of God, which is called great. And they were attentive to him, because, for a long time, he had bewitched them with his magical practices.” Like Ananias and Sapphira, the figure of Simon appears to signify the abuse of apostolic influence for selfish ends. His miracles come not from God, but from magic, and he seduces people into worshipping him directly rather than converting them to the worship of God. Threatened by the true gifts of healing practiced by Philip, Peter and John, Simon tries to “purchase the gift of God with money,” only to be rebuked by Peter and compelled to penance.278 Significantly, however, Zacharias appears to be quoting, or at least interpreting out, this comparison of Aldebert to Simon from Boniface’s own reports, since he writes “we have found [one of them, i.e., Aldebert] to be a new Simon according to the tenor of your letters” (ex quibus unum quidem et novum Simonem iuxta tenorem tuarum syllabarum repperimus, emphasis mine). If this is so, and it seems likely that it is,279 then it is Boniface himself who is suggesting that Aldebert represents a “new Simon” to the pope, perhaps as a means of arguing that the pope should, in his role as the representative of Peter, replay this biblical drama by punishing Aldebert and compelling him to repent. Through this association of Aldebert with Simon, Boniface begins to construct a representation of this Frankish figure as a false apostle.

279 A review of the Bonifatian collectio pontificia immediately reveals that the letters sent by popes in response to Boniface’s own often repeat Boniface’s words verbatim before discussing or responding to the matter at hand.
As Jeffrey Russell has pointed out, the accounts of Aldebert presented in the letters of Boniface and the records of the German synod of Soissons (744) and the papal synod in Rome (745) offer us a strongly biased interpretation of his activities as a religious figure in Francia. There is no doubt, Russell notes, that Aldebert was an “eccentric” and that many of his practices fell far outside the norm, and were, in fact, heretical. However, Russell suggests,

Aldebert held positions close to those of Reform Dissidents. He dressed humbly, carried himself humbly, and went about preaching the apostolic life to the people. He, like many later reformers, attacked the authority of the pope and discouraged people from visiting Rome. It is true that he suffered delusions as to his own holiness, but it was the apostolic life and not dualism or any other doctrine that he preached. And the people followed him for this reason: whether or not he was a charlatan, whether or not he was mad, it was his championing of apostolic simplicity that attracted them.

Boniface objected to absolutely everything about Aldebert. However, historians Jeffrey Russell and Nicola Zeddies have argued convincingly that the offenses of Aldebert about which Boniface has the least to say formed his true underlying motivations for attacking this wayward charismatic ‘holy man.’ Boniface’s account of Aldebert to the papal synod in Rome (745) mentions that, among his many crimes, Aldebert “bribed unlearned bishops, who ordained him against the rules of the canons” (deinde conduxit episcopos indoctos, qui se contra precepta canonum absolute ordinarunt). Boniface had a well-known distaste for the particularly Frankish vice of simony, not only because it was a sin and an affront to canon law, but also because these appointments of bishops in return for money or favors created allegiances between the beneficiaries of these offices and the

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280 Russell 235.
281 Russell 240.
282 Emerton #48; Tangl #59.
283 Boniface was constantly lamenting the appointment of unqualified or unworthy bishops for money or benefits to others – even going so far as to accuse Zacharias himself of practicing simony. See Tangl #58; Emerton #46. The purchase, special arrangement, or inheritance of episcopal offices was a common practice in Francia through the eighth century.
Frankish nobility or other church authorities. Opposition to these well-connected clerics could make one very unpopular in Frankish circles. This is perhaps alluded to when Boniface complains that his attempts to silence Aldebert caused him to “suffer many insults and persecutions” (mul\tas i\n\uri\as et \per\se\c\c\e\n\es\e\n\s\e\s\p\a\s\s\u\m\) in Frankish synods called to address the matter, as well as “the persecution and enmity and cursing of many peoples” (pro\pt\e\r\e\r\t \i\s\t\o\s\s \e\n\i\m\i\c\c\i\t\i\a\s \e\t \m\a\l\e\d\i\c\c\i\o\n\e\s \m\u\l\t\o\r\u\m \p\o\p\o\u\l\o\r\u\m \p\a\t\i\o\r) generally.284 The real difficulty which Boniface faced in opposing what he viewed as Aldebert’s blasphemous activities was that his enemy had the support and protection of the Frankish nobility and episcopate.285 It is for this reason that Boniface was obliged to seek the assistance of the see of Peter in his dealings with Aldebert.

In his appeals to Rome, Boniface bases his case against the Frankish heretic on Aldebert’s unauthorized assumption of apostolic status. He implicitly argues (among many other things) that Aldebert’s purchase of the bishop’s seat excludes him from the apostolic succession, and, as such, invalidates his claims to apostolic authority. The written records of the Roman Synod of 745 where the practices of Aldebert are officially condemned make it clear that his major violation is proclaiming himself to be a saint while living and claiming that he is equal or superior to the Apostles Peter and Paul. Directly after Boniface mentions that Aldebert “bribed unlearned bishops, who ordained him against the rules of the canons” (deinde conduxit episcopos indoctos, qui se contra

\[\text{284 Emerton } \#48; \text{Tangl } \#59.\]
\[\text{285 Zeddies } 251.\]
Boniface tells us in tones of outrage that Aldebert

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Tum demum in tantam superbiam elatus est, ut se aequiperaret apostolis Christi. Et dedignabatur in alicuius honore apostolorum vel martyrum ecclesiam consecrare. Et interrogavit, quid voluissent homines visitando limina sanctorum apostolorum... Postea in proprio honore suo dedicavit oratoria vel, ut verius dicam, sordidavit. Fecit cruciculas et oratoriola in campis et ad fontes vel ubicumque sibi visum fuit et iussit ibi publicas orationes celebrare, donec multitudines populorum spretis ceteris episcopis et dimissis antiquis ecclesiis in talibus locis conventus celebrabant dicentes: ‘Merita sancti Aldeberti adiuvabunt nos.’ Unguluas suas et capillos dedit ad honorificandum et portandum cum reliquis sancti Petri principis apostolorum.

[then rose to such audacity that he declared himself equal with the apostles of Christ. He scorned to dedicate a church in honor of any one of the apostles or martyrs and asked why men should desire to visit the shrines of the holy apostles... Later he dedicated – or rather defiled – oratories to himself. He set crosses and small oratories in the fields or at springs or wherever he pleased and ordered public prayers to be said there until multitudes of people, scorning other bishops and deserting the established churches, held their celebrations in such places saying: ‘The merits of Saint Aldebert will help us.’ He distributed his own fingernails and hairs from his head to be honored [as sacred objects] and carried about with the relics of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles.]

As Boniface sees it, Aldebert’s assumption of apostolic status not only circumvents the institutions of the Church and the authority of the Pope, but seeks to overturn the religious establishment by directing the people away from the true Church. This man blasphemously claims equality with the apostles, treating his own living body like that of the saints, creating relics from his hair and nails which he sacrilegiously mingles with those of Peter. In “scorning to dedicate any churches to the apostles or martyrs” and suggesting that there is no reason to “visit the shrines of the holy apostles” in Rome, Aldebert rejects what Boniface believes to be the appropriate channels of ecclesiastical

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286 Emerton #48; Tangl #59.
287 Tangl #59; Emerton #48.
authority and disassociates himself and his believers from the center of orthodox religious
power in Rome.288

Boniface’s backlash against Aldebert’s assumption of a rival form of apostolic
status reveals what is at stake in the exercise of apostolic discourse. In his letter of
complaint, read before the Roman Synod, Boniface says of Aldebert:

…quod eis sanctissimum apostolum abstulissem ostensorem abstraxissem. Sed
pietas vestra audienti vitam eius iudicet ex fructu, utrum vestimentis ovium
indutus, intus autem lupus rapax fuisset an anon. In primeva enim acete ypochrita
fuit dicens, quod sibi angelus Domini in specie hominis de extremis finibus mundi
mire et tamen incerte sanctitatis reliquias attulisset et exinde potuisset omnia,
quaecumque poposceret, a Deo inpetrare…et multitudinem rusticorum dicentium,
quod ipse esset vir apostolicae sanctitatis et signa et prodigia multa fecisset.

[(the people) say that I have taken from them a most holy apostle and robbed
them of a patron and intercessor, a doer of righteousness and a worker of
miracles. But let your Holiness hear the story of his life and judge by the fruits
whether he be a ravening wolf in sheep’s clothing or not. In early life he was a
swindler, declaring that an angel of the Lord in human form had brought to him
from the ends of the earth relics of marvelous but uncertain holiness, by which he
could obtain from God whatsoever he might wish…also a multitude of simple
folk who said that he was a man of apostolic sanctity and had performed many
signs and wonders.]289

While these reports perhaps seem humorous to modern readers, the success of Aldebert’s
claims to “apostolic sanctity” clearly unnerved Boniface and disturbed the pope’s
counselors. The Frankish people were willing to believe in this man who called himself
saint and apostle without the sanction of the Church or the authorization of the apostolic
succession. In this respect, Aldebert was an apostle to the people, but not to the Church.

Following Boniface’s lead, Pope Zacharias and the members of the synod deny Aldebert

288 As Zeddies (220) notes, Aldebert and his fellow heretic Clemens were two Frankish religious leaders
who did not see things Boniface’s way. Many of the hardships Boniface faced in his work were caused by
the difficulty of attempting to reorganize and reform the church of an entire region, including those
religious personnel who were already present prior to his arrival, according to his personal vision. This, as
one can imagine, was not always appreciated by the local clergy.
289 Emerton #48; Tangl #59.
the name of apostle, and the legitimacy that comes with it, referring to him instead as a 
pseudo-prophet, a pseudo-Christian (*pseudo-propheta, pseudo-Christianus*) a 
hypocrite (*ypocrita*), a servant of Satan (*ministrus Satanae*) and a forerunner of the 
Antichrist (*cursore Antikristi*).291

The source of Boniface’s and the papal synod’s outrage is Aldebert’s deliberate 
manipulation of the discourses of sanctity and apostolicity – his recognition and 
redeployment of sources of religious influence and *auctoritas* for uses at odds with 
Boniface’s reformist agenda. In the recorded remarks from the synod, the members 
exclaim, “what apostle or saint ever handed out his own hairs or fingernails to the people 
for relics, as this sacrilegious and pernicious Aldebert has tried to do?” (‘*Quis enim 
aliquo apostolorum aut quidlibet sanctorum ex capillis suis aut ungulis pro 
sanctualia populis tribuerunt, ut iste sacrilegus et perniciosus agere contaus est 
Aldebertus?*’).292 Aldebert abuses every convention of the cult of saints and relics, even 
going so far as to write his own saint’s *vita*, read as evidence against him at the second 
session of the synod, where he proclaims himself to be “born a saint by the will of God” 
(*electione Dei natum sanctum*). The members of the synod see Boniface’s identification 
of Aldebert as a schismatic and blasphemer and his attempts to strip him of religious 
orders and force him into penance as a credit to his mission and the popes who sponsor 
it.293 But, interestingly, they do not seem to have viewed Aldebert to be as dangerous as 
Boniface claimed him to be. Boniface had asked that the pope excommunicate Aldebert

290 Emerton #45; Tangl #57.
291 Emerton #48; Tangl #59.
292 Tangl #59; Emerton #48.
293 Emerton #48; Tangl #59: Epiphanius sanctissimus episcopus sanctae ecclesiae Silve Candide dixit: 
‘Certe, apostolicae domine, ex divina inspiratione motum est cor sancti vestri apostolatus, ut predictum 
Bonifatium sanctissimum fratrem nostrum episcopum quamque Francorum principes commoneretis, 
quatenus in partibus illis post longa tempora concilium aggregaretur sacerdotum, ut haec scismata 
quamque blasphemiae usuaque sancto vestro apostolatiui minime celarentur.’
and remove him from all human contact – a much harsher sentence than the papal synod’s ruling that Aldebert repent his errors, and only be anathematized if he should fail to do so. Both Russell and Zeddies claim that Zacharias and the papal synod thought that Aldebert was a madman, and that Boniface was “not free from fanatical rashness.”

While they agreed that Aldebert was a blasphemer and a violator of church law and religious decency, their investment in policing the boundaries of apostolic authority and influence in Francia was, by necessity, less vital than Boniface’s own.

The incident concerning Aldebert is instructive in demonstrating the limits of apostolic discourse. Both Boniface and Aldebert are attempting to represent themselves in an apostolic role; however, Boniface does so indirectly and in close contact with the papacy. The negative *exemplum* of Aldebert clearly delineates what is holy about Boniface’s assumption of apostolic status by its contrast. While others may claim that Boniface is an apostle, or is like an apostle, Boniface never directly states this himself. Rather, he develops and conveys his apostolic identity typologically in the manner discussed above, always with reference and deference to the true apostles of the early church. Aldebert, on the other hand, appears to lack the humility and reverence of Boniface before the church, the see of Rome, and the holy saints and apostles. To Boniface and the papal synod, Aldebert is far worse than a mere crackpot leading the country folk astray. In their letters and records, Aldebert functions as a false apostle, who, like Simon and like Ananias and Sapphira, must be overcome by Boniface and the representative of St. Peter to restore order to the Frankish church.

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294 Russell 242.
295 Russell 242; Zeddies 240. Russell suggests that “the pope’s hesitation in accepting Boniface’s reports without reservation implies that the historian himself ought to exercise caution here.”
Aldebert’s challenge to Boniface’s apostolic authority actually serves to
legitimate it further by sharpening the distinctions between the two men. In fact, Pope
Zacharias’s initial letter in response to Boniface concerning Aldebert contains one of the
clearest statements of Boniface’s apostolic status in the entire body of correspondence.
The letter begins,

Legimus in libro actuum apostolorum sanctum spiritum apostolis precepisse:
‘Separate mihi Barnaban et Paulum in opus, quod adsumpserim eos’ (Acts 13:2),
id est, ut per predicationem christianae religionis et eiusdem spiritus sancti
gratiam mundum inluminarent universum. Quorum inluminatio predicationis
atque doctrina Christi presidio mansit et manet catholica Dei ecclesia praefulgens
horum et beati apostolorum principis Petri inluminata doctrinis. Et eorum sequi
pedem ex inspiratione divina tuam sanctissimam fraternitatem in partibus illis
esse credimus destinatam, ut etiam instar eorum idem spiritus sanctus in eodem te
adsumpsit opere ad inluminationem gentium illarum.

[We read in the book of the Acts of the Apostles that the Holy Spirit commanded
the Apostles saying: ‘Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I
have called them’ (Acts 13:2), i.e., that through the preaching of the Christian
religion and the grace of that same Holy Spirit they might enlighten the whole
world. Through the light of their preaching and of the teaching of Christ the
universal Church of God has stood and still stands shining forth in the splendor of
their doctrine and that of the blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles. It is our belief
that you, most holy brother, have likewise been chosen by divine inspiration to
follow in their footsteps in those lands and that the same Holy Spirit has called
you to the same work of enlightenment for those peoples.]^296

For Pope Zacharias, Boniface’s work is situated firmly in the traditions of the Acts of the
Apostles, and like Paul, he is filled with the Holy Spirit and called to be a light to the
gentiles of Germania. There is no doubt about the validity of his apostolic status. He is
called to do “the same work” as Paul. Here again the choice of biblical reference is
significant: in the quotation’s immediate context in Acts 13:2, the work which Barnabas
and Paul are called upon to perform is the defeat of “Elymas the magician” of Paphos.
Encountering this magician, Paul says to him “O full of all guile, of all deceit, child of the

^296 Emerton #45; Tangl #57.
devil, enemy of justice, thou ceasest not to pervert the right ways of the Lord.” These words could as easily characterize Boniface’s views of Aldebert as they do Paul’s views of Elymas the magician. Pope Zacharias can assume that Boniface will recognize the appropriateness of his allusion to Acts because they have this scriptural vocabulary in common. His choice to reply to Boniface’s early reports of Aldebert with this particular passage shows how the pope is able to express his cooperation with and support for his legate in Germania through their shared language of apostleship.

Furthermore, Zacharias’s statements preserve the careful deliniation we noted previously between the pope’s status as the earthly representative of “the blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles” (*beatus apostolorum princeps Petrus*) and Boniface’s status as the follower of Paul. Boniface’s reward, Zacharias tells him, for his unflagging efforts to preach the Gospel to the heathen and to eradicate seducers of the people such as Aldebert is that Boniface will become “partaker and companion of the apostles with the chosen saints of God” (*credimus, esse inveniaris particeps et apostolorum consors*).\(^{297}\)

**Boniface’s Apostolic *Auctoritas* in Rome and Anglo-Saxon England**

Boniface’s sense of apostolic authority is sanctioned and encouraged by the See of Peter, but his exercise of that authority operates independently of Rome. Boniface’s occasional written critiques of the actions (or inactions) of various popes, particularly Pope Zacharias, show how his identification with the apostles allows him to construct a persona that, when moved by a righteous indignation, can speak out, even against the representative of St. Peter to whom he is devoted. In a letter from early in 742 written to Pope Zacharias on the occasion of his accession to the papacy, Boniface accuses the

\(^{297}\) Tangl #57; Emerton #45.
Apostolic See of condoning incestuous marriages between cousins and widows of family members, allowing adulterous and fornicating clergymen to remain in orders throughout Francia, and turning a blind eye to the pagan New Year’s festival of the *Lupercalia* and other heathen practices such as the wearing of amulets and practicing of divination in the vicinity of Peter’s church.\(^{298}\) By inconsistently observing canon law and implicitly condoning pagan practices in Rome, Boniface argues, the Apostolic See impedes the success of his missions abroad by making Boniface’s followers seem like hypocrites. He reminds the pope, “It is of such things that the Apostle says reprovingly: ‘Ye observe days and times; I fear I have labored with you in vain’” (*De talibus ait apostolus increpans*: ‘*Dies observatis et tempora; timeo, ne since causa laboraverium in vobis*’ (Gal. 4:10-11)).\(^{299}\) Quoting Galatians, Boniface accuses the people of Rome, and by extension, the Church of Rome, of backsliding into pagan traditions. He grounds his critique of the see of Peter in the words of Paul.

In his reply to Boniface’s accusations, Pope Zacharias calmly addresses each of them one-by-one, either ruling in favor of Boniface’s suggestions or explaining to him the steps that are being taken to rectify the situations with which Boniface is displeased.\(^{300}\) But Boniface’s later expressions of criticism regarding the pope’s sending of the pallium meet with a harsher response. While the original letter from Boniface to Pope Zacharias is lost, we do have Zacharias’s strongly-worded reply:

> Repperimus etiam in memoratis tuis litteris, quae nimis nostros animos conturbavit, quod talia a te nobis referantur, quasi nos corruptores simus canonum et patrum rescindere traditiones quaeramus ac per hoc, quod absit, cum nostris clericis in simoniacam heresim incidamus accipientes et conpellentes, quorum pallia tribuimus, ut nobis deinceps tale aliquid minime tua fraternitas scribat, quia

\(^{298}\) Emerton #40; Tangl #50.  
\(^{299}\) Emerton #40; Tangl #50.  
\(^{300}\) Emerton #41; Tangl #51.
fastidiosum a nobis et injuriosum suscipitur, dum illud nobis ingeritur, quod nos omnimodo detestatur.

[We also find in your aforesaid letter very disturbing references to us, implying that we are violators of the canons and are trying to nullify the traditions of the fathers to this end and have fallen – which God forbid! – into the heresy of simony, together with our clergy, by accepting gifts from those to whom we send the pallium and even compelling them to make payment in money. But, dearest brother, we pray Your Holiness never in future to write anything of the sort, for we take it as a grievous insult to be charged with an offense which we especially detest.]\(^{301}\)

It is one thing to recommend that the pope help clean up the streets of Rome, but it is another thing to accuse him of practicing simony. Historians speculate that perhaps this accusation grew out of a controversy regarding the appointment of three bishops in Francia, and that Boniface was trying to break up “collusion between papal officials and Frankish dignitaries by which the candidates [for bishop] were to profit.”\(^{302}\) Whatever Boniface’s motives may have been here, it remains striking that he appears to have been so direct, perhaps even insultingly direct, with the office of his superior when others made no such attempts to reform the Papal See. His recognition as a man of apostolic character and authority enables him to contemplate exercising an influence even over the representative of the church of Rome.

Boniface routinely explains his exercise of moral authority in “teaching or in restraining or in admonition or in protecting all classes of the clergy or the laity” as part of his duties as an archbishop and the fulfillment of his oath to Rome, especially when he writes letters of criticism and rebuke to his fellow Englishmen.\(^{303}\) Boniface wrote a remarkable series of letters of correction between the years 746-747 regarding the sinful

\(^{301}\) Tangl #58; Emerton #46.
\(^{302}\) Emerton 75.
\(^{303}\) Emerton #62; Tangl #78: *Nam labor nostri ministerii unius et eiusdem causae esse dinoscitur et equalis speculatio in curis ecclesiarium sive populorum nobis credita est sive in docendo sive in artando et monendo sive in defendendo canonicos gradus vel plebeos.*
life of King Ethelbald of Mercia, and the general welfare and reputation of the English church and people abroad. In the very lengthy letter to King Ethelbert, Boniface condemns the King’s unwillingness to take a lawful wife, and his infamous predilection for fornication with “holy nuns and virgins consecrated to God” (*hoc scelus ignominiae maximae cum sanctis monialibus et sacratis Deo virginibus per monasteria commissum sit*).\(^{304}\) Even the heathen Saxons, Boniface laments, recognize the sanctity and importance of faithful marriage to one wife. By persisting in the “filth of wantonness and [being] involved in the mire of adultery and sunk in the whirlpool of lust as in an abyss of hell” (*putrudine iuxoriae inquinatus et foetore adulterii involuntus et voragine libidinis quasi puteo infernii demersus fueras*),\(^{305}\) King Ethelbert has given the English people a bad example, and has caused the reputation of the Anglo-Saxons to plummet in the eyes of their neighbors and allies, and even among the heathens. Boniface sternly rebukes the King for depriving churches and monasteries of their property and abusing monks and abbots, promising him madness and an ignoble death as well as the degeneration of the English race if he fails to turn away from his vices and repent his sinful life.\(^{306}\)

Boniface also directs letters to King Ethelbert’s religious advisors and associates, the priest Herefrid and Archbishop Egbert of York, urging them to support him in his crusade to reform the king’s behavior. In his letter to Egbert, Boniface explains his intervention in English affairs as follows:

> Nam catholica et apostolica Romana ecclesia, quando indignum ac vilem predicatorem ad predicandum Germaniae erroneis vel paganis gentibus direxit, praecipit mihi, ut ex auctoritate Romani pontificis, si alicubi viderem inter

\(^{304}\) Emerton #57; Tangl #73.
\(^{305}\) Emerton #57; Tangl #73.
\(^{306}\) Emerton #57; Tangl #73: *Longum est enim enumerare, quanti spiritales medici huius peccati venenum et horrendum viuperabant et terribiliter prohibebant; quia pene omnibus peccatis gravior et deterior est fornicatio et veraciter dici potest laqueus mortis et puteus inferni et vorago perditionis.*
christianos pergens populos erroneos vel ecclesiasticas regulas mala consuetudine depravatas vel homines per invium a catholica fide abductos, ad viam salutis invitare et revocare totius viribus niterer.

[The Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome, in sending me as an unworthy and humble preacher to the erring or pagan peoples of Germany, enjoined upon me by authority of the Roman pontiff that if, as I went among Christians, I should find people in error, or church rules perverted by evil practices, or men led away from the catholic faith into pathless ways, I should strive with all my strength to call them back in to the way of salvation. Desiring to follow this precept, I sent a letter of exhortation and admonition to Ethelbald, king of Mercia, with the advice and consent of the bishops who are working with me.]³⁰⁷

What is interesting about Boniface’s rationale is that he never returned to England after his departure in 719, so he can hardly say that he was “going among the Christians” there. Moreover, it is clear from the oath that he refers to that the “people in error” (populos erroneos) whom he was enjoined to correct were the imperfectly Christianized Bavarians and Thuringians, as well as some erring Franks, like Aldebert. Boniface’s claim that he is merely doing the bidding of the Pope seems as unlikely in this circumstance as it does in Boniface’s critiques of the Pope himself. One doubts that the Pope took such a special interest in the sexual appetites of the king of Mercia. Rather, Boniface’s statements serve the important rhetorical purpose of protecting him from accusations of impertinence and reassuring the recipients of these somewhat vituperative letters that his authority is derived from an appropriate source – the apostolic succession (ex auctoritate Romani pontificis – according to the authority of the Roman pontiff).³⁰⁸ Just as Boniface believes that the Pope’s lax attitude toward the lingering pagan practices in Rome undermines the success of his missions abroad, he likewise perceives the failure of Anglo-Saxon political

³⁰⁷ Tangl #75; Emerton #59.
³⁰⁸ Emerton #59; Tangl #75.
and religious leaders to consistently uphold Christian values and practices to be
detrimental to his conversion of the heathen.\textsuperscript{309}

In this respect, Boniface’s criticism is not reserved for England’s secular
authorities, but also extends to the nation’s ecclesiastical leaders. In another lengthy letter
from about the same time addressed to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury, the highest
church authority in England, Boniface levels with his colleague about the state of the
English church and people. Addressing Cuthbert as one archbishop to another, Boniface
urges him to adopt the declarations of the synods he has led in Francia and to stop the
frequent pilgrimages of English women to Rome, for “there are very few towns in
Lombardy or Frankland or Gaul where there is not a courtesan or harlot of English stock”
(\textit{Perpauce enim sunt civitates in Longobardia vel in Francia aut in Gallia, in qua non sit
adultera vel meretrix generis Anglorum}).\textsuperscript{310} Furthermore, he insists that Cuthbert should
refuse communion to secular leaders who take over the leadership of monasteries by
force, eschew flashy manners of dress, avoid drunkenness, and desist from allowing
monks to be forced into laboring on royal buildings.\textsuperscript{311} Boniface reminds him over and
over again of the greater responsibilities of archbishops over other bishops and priests.

He writes to Cuthbert,

\begin{quote}
Nunc autem, quod mihi in tali periculo posito iustum et cautum esse videtur, 
salubre consilium vestrum querens et scire desiderans insinuo libertatem 
precandì; dico, ut in actibus apostolorum Paulus apostolus sacerdotibus
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{309} Boniface’s letter (Emerton #58; Tangl #74) concerning Ethelbert’s misdeeds to the English priest
Herefrid makes a similar point: \textit{Bonis et laudibus gentis nostrae laetamur et gaudeamus, peccatis autem 
eius et vituperationibus eius tribulamur et contristamur. Obprobrium namque generis nostri patimur sive a 
christianis sive a paganis dicitur, quod gens Anglorum spreto more ceterarum gentium et despecto 
apostolico praecepto. [The well-doing and fair fame of our race is our joy and delight; their sins and their 
evil repute fill us with grief and sorrow. We suffer from the disgrace of our people whether it be told by 
Christians or pagans that the English race reject the usages of other peoples and the apostolic 
commands…].}

\textsuperscript{310} Emerton #62; Tangl #78.

\textsuperscript{311} Emerton #62; Tangl #78.

Regnum, inquit, Dei inter vos ambulans predicavi, ut me alienum ab omnium perditione servarem (Ezech. 3:17; John 10:2). Nam apostolus episcopum, propheta speculatorem, salvator mundi pastorem acesiae sacerdotem appellat; et omnes tacentem peccata populi doctorem reum sanguinis animarum perditarum sub silentio esse conprobant (2 Thess. 3:9).

[I suggest that it is time to speak freely. I say, as the Apostle Paul said in the Acts of the Apostles: ‘Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood’ (Acts 20:26-8). He says, ‘I have walked among you preaching the kingdom of God that I might keep myself guiltless of the destruction of all’ (Ezech. 3:17; John 10:2). The Apostle calls the priest ‘bishop,’ the prophet calls him ‘watchman,’ and the Savior of the world calls him ‘shepherd of the Church.’ They all agree that the teacher and guide who hides the sins of the people in silence becomes thereby guilty of the blood of lost souls (2. Thess. 3:9).] 312

Boniface exhorts his fellow archbishop to practice what he preaches, and to ensure that other members of the church do so as well, using the words of Paul in his speech to the Ephesians before he makes his fateful trip to Jerusalem. Like Paul, Boniface does not “shun to declare the counsel of God,” regardless of who he may be addressing, and he intimates that Cuthbert should do likewise. As he says in the next line of his letter, “dread necessity impels us to present ourselves as an example to the faithful according to the word of the Apostle” (...horribilis et maxima necessitas cogit, ut iuxta dictum apostoli nos formam debeamus exhibere fidelibus). 313 His affection for the English church and homeland and his practice of the apostolic life encourage him to speak out against those things which he believes are leading the Anglo-Saxon people astray. By adopting a Pauline stance toward hypocrisy and justifying his critique of Cuthbert with Paul’s

312 Tangl #78; Emerton #62.
313 Emerton #62; Tangl #78.
words, Boniface exemplifies this apostolic model of authority to his colleague and partner in the apostolic succession.

**Conclusion**

In 753, Boniface determined to return to the site of his first missionary work, Frisia, which, despite Willibrord’s long-standing efforts, had remained heathen in the regions north-east of the Zuider Zee. His letters reveal that he was concerned to secure Roman control of the late Willibrord’s see at Utrecht which was in danger of being commandeered by the Archbishop of Cologne. But one also suspects that he was motivated to leave the now contained regions of Germania, where he and his cohort had enjoyed such success in their missions and reform work, to reclaim in the Frisian wilderness the heathen peoples he had once tried, and failed, to convert. He left behind his close associate and protégé Lull to assume episcopal control of his see at Mainz.

Boniface was famously killed with a large group of his companions by a group of Frisians in the province of Dokkum on the morning of June 5, 754. The news of

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315 Boniface’s 753 letter to Pope Stephen II, Emerton #89; Tangl #109. See also Greenaway, *Saint Boniface: Three Biographical Studies*, 78-79.
317 Emerton #76; Tangl #93 (ca. 752).
318 John P. Hermann’s essay “Boniface and Dokkum,” 5, cautions against the tendency in Anglo-Saxon studies to “blandly eulogize” the martyrdom of Boniface by unquestioningly following the tone and outline of Willibald’s account of the event in his *Vita Bonifatii*, which is, naturally, a very biased source. It is for this reason that I avoid recounting the customary narrative of the martyrdom. We do not know what happened; we only know what Willibald dramatically and sympathetically imagined to have happened. Hermann also points out that, while the conventional explanation for why Boniface was martyred is that he was attacked by a band of drunken, marauding pagan thieves, this is not necessarily to be believed. There were plenty of very good reasons why the Frisians might have wanted to retaliate against this incursion of Christian missionaries, whom they rightly interpreted as being tied to the Frankish mayor of the palace Charles Martel and representing his imperial interests. Hermann reminds us that while the murder of Boniface and his companions was a tragic event, and their personal pacifism was worthy of admiration, we
Boniface’s end was met with an immediate and impassioned response from representatives of the English church as well, especially from Boniface’s long-time correspondent, Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury. Shortly after the martyrdom in 754, Cuthbert writes a letter of consolation to Bishop Lull, characterizing Boniface as a “leader and standard-bearer,” who,

\[
\text{ut longe lateque ferocissimas nationes per devia diutius errantes de lata ac spatiosa voragine perditionis perpetuae ad splendifluas semitas supernae patriae per sacrae exhortationis incitamenta et per exempla pietatis ac bonitatis ipse ductor et signifer antecedendo et adversa quaeque opitulante Deo fortiter expugnando feliciter perduceret.}
\]

[going on before and breaking down opposition with the help of God, brought most savage peoples from their long and devious wanderings in the wide abyss of eternal perdition into the glorious pathways of the heavenly fatherland by the inspiration of his holy words and by the example of his pious and gentle life.]\(^{320}\)

Lest his words be dismissed as mere panegyric, Cuthbert hastens to add to his catalogue of Boniface’s deeds and virtues a reminder that the truth of his claims may be plainly seen in those regions where Boniface preached.\(^{321}\) Cuthbert goes on to say,

\[
\text{Unde igitur post incomparabile toto orbe apostolicae electionis et numeri mysterium aliorumque tunc temporis evangelizantium discipulorum Christi ministerium hunc inter egregios et optimos orthodoxae fidei doctores et amabiliter habemus et laudabiliter veneramur.}
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[For this reason we hold this man in reverend affection among the greatest and most distinguished teachers of the orthodox faith since that incomparable mystery of the

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as scholars are also bound to recall the far bloodier and more devastating acts of retaliation against the Frisians of Dokkum led by the Franks. This counter-attack “can fairly be described as massive….the conventional estimate of Frisian deaths is ten thousand….the slaughter was large enough to bring about the political and cultural capitulation of the large free Frisian population north of Utrecht.”


\(^{320}\) Tangl #111; Emerton #90.

\(^{321}\) Emerton #90; Tangl #111: *Quod ita actium veraciter fieri etiam rerum effectus gloriosus quam dieta demonstrant et in illis quoque locis, quos ante eum nullus aliquando evangelizandi causa doctor adire temptabat.*
choice of the apostles for the whole world and the ministry of the disciples of Christ preaching the Gospel at that time.]\textsuperscript{322}

As we have seen, Cuthbert was not alone in his recognition of Boniface’s missions in these terms. His comparison of Boniface to the apostles of Christ is the culmination of a tradition, beginning early in Boniface’s thirty-nine year career as preacher, bishop and papal legate to the gentes Germaniae. Yet Cuthbert’s statement here affirms, in strong and impressive language, the degree to which members of the church in Anglo-Saxon England perceived Boniface’s work in terms of apostolic discourse. As Archbishop of Canterbury, Cuthbert speaks for the whole church of England when he says that Boniface is one of the greatest teachers of the Christian faith since Christ chose the twelve apostles to minister in his name. He situates Boniface in the context of biblical history, claiming that his life and work participate in the apostolic legacy and fulfill Christ’s commandment to “teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19)…“even to the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:18).

For Cuthbert, Boniface’s martyrdom is a source of pride, that

\begin{quote}
\textit{quod tam praeclarum speculatorem caelestis bibliothecae tamque egregium Christi militem cum multis bene educatis et optime instructis discipulis gens Anglorum advena Brittania meruit palam omnibus spiritales agones et ad multarum per Dei omnipotentis gratiam salutem animarum de sese procul laudabiliter emittere.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{323} [the English people (coming from Britain) were found worthy…to send out this gifted student of heavenly learning, this noble soldier of Christ, with many pupils well taught and trained, (before the eyes of all in a praiseworthy fashion) to far-off spiritual conflicts and for the salvation of many souls through the grace of Almighty God.]

For a brief span of time, the Anglo-Saxon church found in Boniface a native-born martyr, an apostle from the \textit{gens Anglorum advena Brittania} (the people of the Angles, coming

\textsuperscript{322} Tangl #111; Emerton #90.
\textsuperscript{323} Emerton #90; Tangl #111. Emendations in parenthesis are my own.
from Britain).\textsuperscript{324} This geographic and ethnic designation distinguishes Boniface and his disciples, along with their exceptional reputation for learning, from the “savage peoples” (\textit{ferocissimus nationes}), as Cuthbert calls them, to whom they ministered. Cuthbert describes Boniface’s missionary enterprise by using the motif of spiritual warfare or \textit{spiritales agones} which is so pervasive in Anglo-Saxon Christian writing, but it is interesting that he connects Boniface’s success as a “noble soldier of Christ” with his excellent education and book-learning. In this way he links two aspects of Boniface’s reputation which we will see reflected later in Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii}: his reputation as a scholar at home in England, and his renown as a ‘spiritual warrior,’ that is to say, a martyr and defender of the faith, abroad. In Cuthbert’s eulogy, Boniface’s exceptional mastery of Christian scholarship and his determined labors to extend the faith of the

\textsuperscript{324} In contrast to the very active culting of Boniface on the continent (even to the present day), it seems that the period of Boniface’s remembrance and veneration in Anglo-Saxon England was, in fact, quite brief. In “Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England,” \textit{Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West}, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 443, Caty Cubitt explains that “a Southumbrian council decreed shortly after his death that his feast-day should be celebrated, throughout the Canterbury province and his name is frequently included in tenth and eleventh-century calendars. However, his name is a notable omission from the Old English Martyrology. Boniface lacked two vital ingredients in the propagation of a cult, a monastery in England committed to his cult (preferably housing his body or corporeal relics) and a mention in the \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}.” Furthermore, it appears that the corpus of his letters did not circulate widely within England after his death, nor were they ever collected. Levison (280-281) notes that “many of the original letters sent to England must have existed there for a while; but only a few have left any traces.” William of Malmesbury apparently knew the complete versions of Boniface’s letters to King Ethelbald of Mercia and Cuthbert of Canterbury (Tangl # 73, 78), and abbreviated them in his \textit{Gesta regum}. Also, eight leaves of an eighth-century copy of letter #78 escaped the Cotton fire, and have survived. Finally, a version of letter #10 has come down to us from Anglo-Saxon England, and in Latin and in an Old English translation. This is Boniface’s early account of the monk of Wenlock’s vision of the next world that he wrote to Abbess Eadburgha in 717. In “An Old English Translation of a Letter from Wynfrith to Eadburgha (AD 716-717) in Cotton Ms. Otho C II,” in \textit{Studies in the History of Old English Literature} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 205-206, Kenneth Sisam, explains that the letter was chiefly of interest for its subject matter rather than the person or memory of its author; in fact, the letter has been revised so as to remove almost all information, including greetings, names, dates and circumstantial details, which would identify it as a letter pertaining to Boniface (or, here, Wynfrith, since the letter was written before he changed his name). For a more thorough and up-to-date account of the manuscript versions of this letter, see Patrick Sims-Williams, “A Recension of Boniface’s Letter to Eadburg about the Monk of Wenlock’s Vision,” in \textit{Latin Learning and English Lore. I: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge}, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 194-214.
universal Church to the *ferocissimus nationes* of Germania increases the fame of the Anglo-Saxon *gens*.

Cuthbert is concerned to stress that the deeds of Boniface publicly legitimate the Christian faith and culture of the Anglo-Saxon peoples in the eyes of the world, and openly show the fruits of the harvest planted by Gregory the Great’s Roman mission. Cuthbert reports in his letter that a general synod of the English church “decided to celebrate annually the day of Boniface’s martyrdom and of the company who perished with him,” saying, “We desire him to be our especial patron, together with St. Gregory [the Great] and St. Augustine [of Canterbury], and we surely believe that he is such before Christ our Lord” (*eius diem natalicii cohortis cum eo martyrizantis insinuantes statuimus annua frequentatione sollemniter celebrare: ut pote quem specialiter nobis cum beato Gregorio et Augustino et partonum quaerimus et habere indubitanter credimus coram in Christo domino*). Boniface was briefly venerated as a national patron saint of the English church, in the company of his predecessors in the apostolic life, Pope Gregory I, who gave the first impetus for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people, and Augustine, who carried out Gregory’s vision to expand Roman Christianity to distant Britain. By situating Boniface in the company of these two Roman missionary saints, Cuthbert and the Southumbrian synod effectively reconstruct the line of apostolic succession, tracing it from Boniface to the apostolates of Peter and Paul, from Canterbury to Rome.

In the letters and documents which he authored, Boniface takes on the persona of an apostle by reminiscence and suggestion only. However, his correspondents – especially his fellow Anglo-Saxons – did not share his sense of humble reservation. For

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325 Emerton #90; Tangl #111. See also Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 139-140.
them, Boniface’s work was a contemporary embodiment of apostleship, the expression of what the Gospel message of spreading the salvation of mankind meant for them in their own time. In recent years, historians have begun to criticize the validity of the popular idea of Boniface as the ‘Apostle to the Germans,’ suggesting that this is primarily a carefully constructed image cultivated in various hagiographical texts – some quite removed from Boniface’s own time – and driven by the ecclesiastical and political interests of his successors on the continent. They claim that Boniface rarely if ever lived the missionary life he dreamt of as a young monk in England; that he was, Ian Wood says, “a teacher, organizer, and reformer…always a Christianizer, but only occasionally a missionary.” This may be true, if we use the modern concept of ‘missionary’ as our standard of evaluation. However, as Wood himself points out, the ‘category of ‘missionary’ is not an early medieval one, but a modern catch-all…there

326 Wood, The Missionary Life, 58-59; see also the recent turn toward interpreting Boniface’s work in Bavaria as a minimal reorganization of existing ecclesiastical structures, the so-called ‘continuity paradigm;’ Friedrich Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich: Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert), 2nd ed. (Munich: 1988); S. Freund, Von den Agilulfingern zu den Karolingern: Bayerns Bischöfe zwischen Kirchenorganisation, Reichsintegration und Karolingischer Reform (Munich: 2004), and Hans-Constantin Faussner, Die ersten zwölf Jahrhunderte der Regio Boioarica aus rechtshistorischer Sicht, Studien zur Rechts- und Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte 17 (Sigmaringen, 1997).

327 Wood 59.

328 In his study Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, American Society of Missiology 16 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007), 389, David Bosch describes an incredible variety of conceptions of mission and the meaning and practice of mission throughout history, and into our own era, for the major Christian denominations. But he notes that “during the preceding centuries (before the 1950’s), mission was understood in a variety of ways. Sometimes it was interpreted primarily in soteriological terms: as saving individuals from eternal damnation. Or it was understood in cultural terms: as introducing people from the East and South to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West. Often it was perceived in ecclesiastical categories: as the expansion of the church (or of a specific denomination). Sometimes it was defined salvation-historically: as the process by which the world – evolutionary or by means of a cataclysmic event – would be transformed into the kingdom of God. In all these instances, and in various, frequently conflicting ways, the intrinsic relationship between christology, soteriology, and the doctrine of the Trinity, so important for the early church, was gradually displaced by one of several versions of the doctrine of grace.” However, it seems to me that, at least in academic circles (as opposed to religious circles), a skeptic’s view of mission along the lines of either the cultural or ecclesiastical interpretations of mission predominate, perhaps as a result of our increased awareness of the ways in which mission is often put in the service (willingly and knowingly, or not) of cultural hegemony and imperialist political agendas. But alongside this skeptical conception, one also perceives an equally skewed idealization of the modern missionary which acts as a counterpoint: the evangelist’s selfless encounter with the pure pagan.
was not a Latin word ‘missionarius.’ The words ‘missionary’ and ‘missionary work,’ with all their modern imperial and cultural associations, do not necessarily convey how early medieval Christians would have perceived themselves, their work, or the work of others. But, I would argue, the word ‘apostolic’ does. The corpus of the Bonifatian correspondence reveals the depth of Boniface’s identification with the figures of the apostles, and the extent to which this identity was recognized, encouraged and celebrated by his associates in England and on the continent. Boniface’s letters do lament the frequent distractions, difficulties, and perils he suffered abroad, and reveal his bureaucratic work as a papal legate and ecclesiastical organizer. Yet to see these events and circumstances as somehow preventing him from the ‘true’ work of a ‘missionary’ is to accept our anachronistic modern ideal of the missionary as fact. Wood appears to consider Boniface’s “missionary ambition” as an uncomplicated desire to teach and preach to heathen peoples who had never before encountered Christianity. According to this interpretation, Boniface’s other activities, ecclesiastical, missionary, reformist or otherwise, appear disappointing and insincere by modern standards.

But if one turns, as Boniface and his correspondents so frequently did, to the most comprehensive and explicit biblical examples of what we would call “missionary work,” the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul, a very different picture of the work of

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329 Wood 247. According to Noble, “Introduction,” xxx, prior to 1610, “the people whom we would come to call missionaries were generally called ‘pilgrims’, or simply ‘priests,’ ‘monks’, ‘nuns’, ‘man/woman of God’, ‘saint’ or some similar term.” In the letters of Boniface and his circle, the Latin words which Emerton translates using the phrases “mission” or “missionary work” vary, including praedicatio (preaching), ministerium (service, ministry), labor (work), opera (service) and peregrinatio (pilgrimage). This indicates that medieval conceptions of what we call ‘missionary work’ were not all-encompassing, but rather consisted of various types of religious service related to notions of travel and self-exile, which could be combined in various ways, to greater or lesser extents.

330 Bosch (302-303) points out “that the very origin of the term ‘mission,’ as we still use it today, presupposes the ambience of the West’s colonization of overseas territories and its subjugation of their inhabitants. Therefore, since the sixteenth century, if one said ‘mission,’ one in a sense also said ‘colonialism.’ Modern missions originated in the context of modern Western colonialism.”
conversion emerges. Boniface and his correspondents were operating on an apostolic model where suffering and administration went hand-in-hand with preaching the Gospel and confirming the faithful as well as the not-so-faithful in right belief. In Paul’s letters, the work of administration and reform combines constantly with the work of preaching, baptism and religious education; in fact, they are inseparable.

By cultivating an apostolic identity based on the model of Paul, Boniface was able to establish a partnership between himself and the representatives of Peter in Rome that articulated the ascendency of the fledgeling Anglo-Saxon church in early medieval western Europe. This, as we have seen, was a point of pride for the Archbishop of Canterbury, who saw Boniface’s missionary career and martyrdom as the fulfilment of an ideal of sanctity that originated in the apostles, and was carried to Britain by the missionary endeavors of Augustine of Canterbury, his forbear, under Gregory the Great. Although the Insular veneration of Boniface as apostolic saint and martyr was relatively short-lived, the cult of Boniface flourished in the monastic and episcopal centers which he established on the continent. In these centers, and at Fulda, Utrecht, and Mainz in particular, Boniface left behind large communities of colleagues, many of them fellow Anglo-Saxons. His successors were devoted to his memory and determined to continue his project of converting the wayward and the heathen, as well as consolidating and reforming Christianity in the provinces of Germania. Part of this work, as we have seen, was to collect and edit the corpus of Boniface’s letters, a task undertaken by Boniface’s protégé and successor at Mainz, Bishop Lull. But to establish the cult of Boniface as an apostolic saint and martyr on the continent, Boniface’s successors knew they needed a different kind of text: a *vita Bonifatii*. 
CHAPTER 2

PAULINE APOSTOLIC DISCOURSE AS INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT IN THE EARLIEST \textit{Vita Bonifatii}

Introduction

The first hagiographic treatment of Boniface emerged, like the collections of his letters and the manuscripts which contained them, from the milieu of Boniface’s protégé Lull in Mainz.\footnote{Theodor Schieffer notes in his article on Willibald of Mainz in \textit{Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon}, Vol. 10, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1977), col. 1154, “Möglicherweise war Willibald auch an der gleichzeitig in Mainz erfolgten Redaktion der Briefsammlung des Bonifatius beteiligt.” Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} has come down to us in several manuscript versions, the earliest and most significant being Munich, CLM 1086 (ca. 800, probably from Eichstätt), Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, Aug. CXXXVI (ca. 820, from Reichenau), and the fragmentary Darmstadt, Landesbibliothek Hs. 4271 (ca. 820, from Mainz).} Willibald, an Anglo-Saxon canon at Mainz, was commissioned by Lull and his colleague, Megingoz, the bishop of Würzburg, to write a life of Boniface between 763 and 768.\footnote{Willibald tells us this himself at the beginning of his Prologue to the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}. For further details, see Walter Berschin, \textit{Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter}, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1991), 8 ff., and Thomas F. X. Noble, “Introduction to Willibald’s \textit{The Life of Saint Boniface},” in \textit{Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints’ Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages}, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 107.} In the Prologue of the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}, Willibald tells us that by the time of his writing, Boniface’s fame was such that “religious-minded and orthodox men….in the region of Tuscany, or in the marches of Gaul, or at the portals of Germany, or even in the furthest reaches of Britain” had begun to request a written account his life, miracles, and martyrdom.\footnote{The standard translation of Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} is that of C. H. Talbot, which was first published in \textit{The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany}, ed. and trans. C. H. Talbot (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954) 25-65. This translation has been updated and reprinted in \textit{Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints’ Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages}, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (see previous note), with a new translation of Willibald’s Prologue by Thomas Head. I will be citing the translations of this newer version of Talbot’s text, which I will refer to as Noble and Head, so as not to confuse the reader with Talbot’s original edition. The standard edition Willibald’s Latin text of the \textit{Vita Bonifatii} remains \textit{Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo}, ed. Wilhelm Levison, MGH SGH 57, \textit{Vitae Sanctorum} \textit{Bonifatii archeepiscopo}
his subject, it nonetheless suggests that Willibald envisioned a larger audience for the

*Vita Bonifatii* than his two local patrons or their dioceses; he proposed to tell the story of

one of the few known martyrs of his age to the whole of Christian Europe, including

Boniface’s Anglo-Saxon homeland.334 Despite the fact that Willibald himself had never

met Boniface, he was particularly well situated to write the story of his life. Like

Boniface, he probably came from Wessex, and his Latin bears the marks of the

Aldhelmian style common to Boniface and several of his West Saxon religious

 correspondents.335 He was able to gain eyewitness information about Boniface from those

who knew him in life, “his disciples” (*discipulis eius*) and “holy men who lived in daily

contact” (*religiosis viris…qui cottidiano eius conloquio…praesentati*) with the saint,


334 However, it does not appear that he was successful in this endeavor; while his *Vita Bonifatii* certainly

circulated among Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent, there is no indication that it was known in

Anglo-Saxon England itself.


63, discusses the profound influence of Aldhelm’s poetry and writing style on Boniface and his circle,

arguing that, because of Boniface’s own “literary allegiance to Aldhelm in all literary matters,” it was

“Boniface who carried the spark of octosyllabic rhythm to Germany and handed over the form to the next

generation of English abroad.” Orchard shows that even the prose letters of Boniface and Lul, Willibald’s

patron, are shot through with phrases and vocabulary from Aldhelm’s works, which implies a clear avenue

of influence for Willibald’s acquisition of an Aldhelmian style on the continent, although he may have

acquired this style through his early literary training in England. Berschin writes in *Biographie und


Dieser Stil ist auf dem Kontinent zu Lebzeiten Aldhelms nicht heimisch geworden und war spätestens um

730 auch in England eigentlich überholt durch den latenten Klassismus des Beda Venerabili. Aber er hielt

sich doch hier und dort im südlichen England auf…Diese auf den Kontinent verpflanzte englische

Biographie trägt zunächst noch das damals schon altertümliche Gepräge des Aldhelmstils.” Theodor

Schieffer likewise comments on the shared West Saxon ‘Aldhelmian’ style of Boniface, Lull and Willibald

such as Lull and Megingoz themselves. And unlike most hagiographers, he had access to the saint’s own words in the form of his letters.

In addition to being well informed, Willibald also appears to have been fairly well read. He lists the ecclesiastical histories of Hegesippus and Eusebius of Caesarea, and Gregory the Great’s *Dialogi* as his literary models. Willibald’s references to Church historians demonstrate the *vita*’s affiliations with historical writing. However, the literary model about which Willibald has the most to say is Gregory’s *Dialogi*, a collection of the lives of Italian saints written in the form of a dialogue. Addressing his patrons Lull and Megingoz in the Prologue, Willibald writes,

...necnon et Gregorius, qui erat vir beatae memoriae litterarum studiis eruditissimis, glorioso apostolicae sedis culmine praeidens, beatorum scribens confessorum vitam, dialecticum miro ostendens moderamine morem – quattuorque logica expressit ratiocinatione libros, qui hucusque ecclesiarium inserta bibliothicis, elugubratem posteris scientiae adferunt dignitatem – ita beati viri vitam praecelsaque eius virtutes et cultum pietatis atque abstinentiae robor praesentibus ac post secuturis saeculis iubetis demonstrare.

[...as Gregory, of blessed memory (who was a most learned man in the study of literature and presided from the glorious heights of the Apostolic See) composed the life of the blessed confessors, in the process demonstrating in his wonderful style his mastery of the arts of expression, in four books that to this day are found in the libraries of churches and furnish to posterity the hard-won knowledge; in that same manner you order me to unfold before my contemporaries and for later generations the life, the excellent virtues, the practical piety, and the ascetic habits of the blessed man.]

Willibald praises Gregory’s work for its style, for the erudition and preeminence of its author, and for its continued importance: this collection of saints’ lives was available for

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336 Noble and Head 111; Levison 2, 4.
337 Willibald does not directly refer to the letters, yet it is clear from the outline he provides of Boniface’s career as well as from numerous citations and echoes in the text that he had access to the Bonifatian correspondence which Lull archived at Mainz.
338 Noble and Head 110; Levison 3.
339 Wood 62. Interestingly, however, Willibald was not influenced by Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, which he did not know.
340 Levison 3; Noble and Head 110.
consultation in the monastic and cathedral libraries of his day.\textsuperscript{341} By placing his panegyric to Gregory’s \textit{Dialogi} at the end of the list of models, Willibald emphasizes the connection between this august work and his own. He too will endeavor to produce a book that “furnishes to posterity the hard-won dignity of knowledge”\textsuperscript{342} of his saint in the manner of Gregory the Great.

This claim is significant for several reasons. First, it elevates Boniface to the level of the saints treated in the \textit{Dialogi}, including St. Benedict of Nursia, by implying that Boniface is worthy of similar literary treatment.\textsuperscript{343} Furthermore, this claim suggests that perhaps Willibald’s \textit{vita}, like Gregory’s collection of the lives of Italian saints, might be at least partly motivated by a desire to promote the religious achievements of his countrymen. As Thomas F. X. Noble points out, Gregory’s \textit{Dialogi} were “intended to show, among other things, that Italy was no less richly endowed with saints than any other areas.”\textsuperscript{344} The idea that Willibald may be holding Boniface up to his audience as an exemplary Anglo-Saxon saint in the same way that Gregory advanced the cause of his fellow Italians is worth considering. While Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} was not the earliest life of an Anglo-Saxon saint, it was the earliest to be written by an Anglo-Saxon living

\textsuperscript{341} \textit{Codices Latini Antiquiores} notes six extant manuscripts containing Gregory’s \textit{Dialogi} dated earlier than the ninth century, all of them with provenances in England, Ireland, or in Anglo-Saxon centers on the Continent: CLA 218, London, Sloan 1044, fol. 3 (s. VIII\textsuperscript{2}, Ireland); CLA 922, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 213 (s. VIII\textsuperscript{med}, St. Gall); CLA 1070, Bonn, Universitätsbibliothek S 366 (s. VIII-IX, Anglo-Saxon center on Continent, possibly Werden); CLA 1262, Munich, CLM 6293 (s. VIII-IX, Southern Bavaria, possibly Freising); CLA 1406, Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M. P. TH. F. 19 (s. VIII-IX, west German scriptorium with Anglo-Saxon connections, possibly Lorsch); CLA 1595, Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka Fragm. R. 1 (s. VII-VIII, Northumbria).

\textsuperscript{342} Noble and Head 110, Levison 3.

\textsuperscript{343} St. Benedict receives the most detailed discussion of all the saints mentioned in Gregory’s work, with the story of his life occupying the entire second book of the work. It is worth noting that two of the three allusions or echoes of Gregory’s \textit{Dialogues} included in Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} come from book II, on the life of St. Benedict of Nursia. The import of the comparison becomes clearer when we recall Boniface’s personal preference for establishing monastic houses under the Benedictine Rule in the regions where he worked. See also the entry on the Rule of St. Benedict, forthcoming in \textit{Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture}.

\textsuperscript{344} Noble and Head 110, note 9.
outside of Britain.\textsuperscript{345} As the first of a large collection of saints’ lives relating to Boniface and his circle,\textsuperscript{346} many of which were written by or about other Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the Continent, Willibald’s \textit{vita} became highly influential, at least in the areas on the continent where Boniface was actively venerated in the centuries following his death.\textsuperscript{347}

Indeed, Petra Kehl has argued that Willibald wrote the \textit{Vita Bonifatii} with a specifically Anglo-Saxon audience in mind. Kehl observes that the contents of the \textit{Vita Bonifatii} “wurde unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Erbauung und Belehrung des Lesers ausgewählt sowie der hagiographischen Erfordernisse und dürfte stark an den Interessen eines angelsächsischen Publikums, sei es in England oder auf dem Festland, orientiert geworden sein.”\textsuperscript{348} Kehl bases her claim on what she sees as the two-fold emphasis of

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\textsuperscript{345} Indeed, Willibald’s work was written about half a century after the earliest lives of Anglo-Saxon saints, which include the \textit{Vitae S. Cuthberti} written by the anonymous monk of Lindisfarne (BHL 2019, ca. 698-705) and Bede (BHL 2020 and 2021, with the later life dated ca. 720), the \textit{Vita S. Wilfridi} by Eddius Stephanus (BHL 8889, written 710-731), and the \textit{Vita S. Guthlacii} by Felix (BHL 3723, written 720-749). However, Petra Kehl (73, note 364) observes the unlikelihood that Willibald was influenced by either the \textit{Vita Wilfridi} or the \textit{Vita Cuthberti}, because these two works were not very well known in England, let alone on the continent in Willibald’s time.

\textsuperscript{346} As Berschin 18 and Kehl 75 note, Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} is the direct source and primary stylistic influence for Hygeburg’s \textit{Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis et vita Wynnebaldi abbatis Heidenheimensis auctore sanctimoniale Heidenheimensis}, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores 15.1: 80-117. J. T. Palmer has argued in “The Frankish Cult of Martyrs and the Case of the Two Saints Boniface,” \textit{Revue Benedictine} 114:2 (2004) 326-348 that Willibald’s \textit{Vita Bonifatii} influenced the development of the Frankish cults of the martyrs St. Kilian in Würzburg and St. Emmeram in Freising and the hagiographic texts which grew out of these cults, Arbeo’s \textit{Vita Corbiniani} and \textit{Passio Haimhrammi} and the anonymous \textit{Passio Kiliani}. Likewise, Ian Wood has demonstrated the many links between Willibald’s work and subsequent missionary lives, such as Eigil’s \textit{Vita Sturmi}, Rudolf’s \textit{Vita Leobaee}, Liudger’s \textit{Vita Gregorii}, and the anonymous \textit{Vita Lebuini} in \textit{The Missionary Life} 53. Willibald’s work also lies behind the many later iterations of Boniface’s \textit{vita} which Berschin 13 sees as having been written to counteract the “Fremdheit” or strangeness of Willibald’s antiquated Anglo-Saxon style.

\textsuperscript{347} These areas include regions of Boniface’s major monastic foundations, such as Fritzlar, Amöneburg, Ohrdruf, and above all, Fulda (and these foundations’ sister houses), as well as his diocese of Mainz, and the site of his martyrdom at Dokkum and the diocese of Utrecht. Palmer’s research (cited above) suggests that Boniface was venerated (perhaps in different ways and for different reasons) in all areas of Carolingian influence, including those outside of the major foundations and missions. For a discussion of the posthumous veneration of Boniface in England, see Chapter 1 above.

\textsuperscript{348} Kehl 75.
Willibald’s depiction of Boniface as monk and missionary.\textsuperscript{349} The story of Boniface as a learned monk and exemplary \textit{peregrinus} was meant to appeal to the Insular Anglo-Saxon audience, whereas the accounts of his preaching, episcopal duties, and disputes, and martyrdom presented a meaningful example for Boniface’s countrymen abroad.\textsuperscript{350} While I would not go so far as to claim that Willibald was writing only for an audience of fellow Anglo-Saxons, I agree with Kehl’s suggestion that the \textit{vita} shows signs of being influenced by, or even written in response to, the letters of praise and veneration sent by Boniface’s Anglo-Saxon correspondents Cuthbert of Canterbury and Milred of Worcester in the aftermath of his martyrdom.\textsuperscript{351} The structure of the text’s prologue,\textsuperscript{352} the emphasis on Boniface’s learning and success at Nursling, and the surprising scarcity of miracle stories in the \textit{vita}\textsuperscript{353} all show, as Kehl asserts, that Willibald is writing hagiography for an Anglo-Saxon audience as well as a generally Christian public.

Tellingly, it is in the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}’s lack of miracles and wonders that Kehl sees the influence of Gregory the Great on Anglo-Saxon hagiography. She writes, “Der sparsame Gebrauch von Wunderberichten….hängt vielleicht damit zusammen, daß bereits der von den Angelsachsen viel verehrte Gregor der Große bei der Beurteilung

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\item \textsuperscript{349} Kehl 71.
\item \textsuperscript{350} Kehl 75.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Kehl 62-63.
\item \textsuperscript{352} Kehl 65.
\item \textsuperscript{353} Kehl 70; As mentioned in the introduction, some Anglo-Saxon hagiographic works do appear to avoid representing their subjects primarily as miracle-workers. We will discuss the dearth of miracle stories in Willibald’s life of Boniface later in this chapter; however, we will also discuss a similar avoidance of miracle stories related to the apostles in Cynewulf’s Old English poetic account of the lives and deaths of the apostles in Chapter 4 below. Kehl attributes the Anglo-Saxon reticence to present many miracles as the outgrowth of Gregory the Great’s advice in the \textit{Libellus Responsorium} (documented in Bede’s \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}) not to glory overmuch in one’s miracles when there is still work of conversion to be done. This letter was most likely fraudulent; however, Boniface himself knew of it, and requested a copy from England when he was unable to locate one in the papal archives. The complication in Kehl’s point here is that Gregory’s actual \textit{Dialogi} themselves glorify miracles. If Willibald was in fact modeling his account of Boniface on Gregory’s life of Benedict, one would expect him to have presented many more miracles in his \textit{Vita Bonifatii} than he does.
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eines Heiligen dem Wirken von Wundern geringere Bedeutung beimaß als der Gabe des Lehrens, die ja an Bonifatius herausgestellt wird.”

We know that Willibald was familiar with Gregory’s attitude toward saints and miracles, not only because he highlights the *Dialogi* as a literary model, but also because, of the three texts he singles out for mention in his Prologue, only the *Dialogi* are reflected in the actual content and wording of the text. Willibald’s text echoes Gregory’s words in three separate passages, suggesting a deeper literary indebtedness to the *Dialogi* than to the ecclesiastical histories of Hegesippus and Eusebius. These ecclesiastical histories seem to have had almost no direct influence on the wording, form, or content of Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii*. Willibald’s text may appear more ‘historical’ than hagiographic because of its author’s careful research, unusually direct and well-informed living and textual sources, and his general avoidance of miracles. However, neither the history of Hegesippus nor that of Eusebius actually influences the *Vita Bonifatii* on the textual or generic levels.

**Willibald’s Scriptural Hermeneutic: The Words of the Apostle**

The *Vita Bonifatii* is, first and foremost, a saint’s life; despite its dearth of the miraculous, it participates in the conventions and topoi of the genre. But in the early Middle Ages, both history and hagiography were thought to serve a common purpose: to

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354 Kehl 70.
355 See Levison’s source notes on pages 3, 17, and 24 of the *Vita Bonifatii*.
356 While this may simply reflect the hazards of manuscript preservation in the early Middle Ages, it would appear from the manuscript record that Gregory’s *Dialogi* was in greater circulation in the eighth century than these other two texts: CLA records no extant copies of the Hegesippus text before the ninth century, and only one partial manuscript copy of Eusebius-Rufinus’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (CLA 1515, Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Lat. Ser. N. 3644, s. VIII) which they place as being “written in England, presumably in the north, or possibly in an Anglo-Saxon foundation on the Continent,” compared with the six copies of Gregory’s *Dialogi* listed above.
provide the conscientious reader with positive examples to be imitated, and negative examples to be avoided.\textsuperscript{357} Willibald repeatedly recognizes this convention by stressing Boniface’s holy life as a model for imitation.\textsuperscript{358} In addition to listing in his Prologue the qualities of Boniface’s life which he intends to present – his exceedingly lofty virtues (\textit{praecelsaeque eius virtutes}), cultivated piety (\textit{cultum pietatis}), and vigorous abstinence (\textit{abstinentiae robor})\textsuperscript{359} – Willibald reiterates and adds to the list at the beginning of each chapter of his work, continually reminding his audience of the exemplary function of the story of Boniface’s life. In these introductory passages, the qualities listed, such as the “blessed life” (\textit{beata vita}) and “divine contemplation” (\textit{divina contemplati[o]}), and “perseverance in fasting and abstinence” (\textit{diuturnam parsimoniae continentiam})\textsuperscript{360} of the saint, are certainly general.

Yet the narrative account of Boniface’s life is highly specific, focused on the details of his experiences as verified by Willibald’s sources. What this means is that the reader must do critical work, in some cases, to uncover the exemplary virtues alluded to in the chapter prefaces within the stories told in the chapters themselves. Thus, Willibald relies on his readers’ familiarity with the conventions of hagiography and saintly virtues to interpret the specific incidents in Boniface’s life in the exemplary context he provides at the opening of each chapter. Similarly, and perhaps more significantly, Willibald extends this interpretive exercise to the conclusions of chapters one through seven by presenting the reader with a biblical quotation which he applies to Boniface’s life. These

\textsuperscript{357} As Walter Berschin 10 notes, “Das Heiligenleben ist für die Engländerein Stück Historiographie.” This is especially true if we recall the seamless integration of hagiographic contents into Bede’s \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica}.

\textsuperscript{358} Levison 4: \textit{ex tantae rei relatione profuturum legentibus praebebat exemplum, dum his quisque instruitur formulis et ad meliora profectus sui perfectione perducitur}.

\textsuperscript{359} My translation here; Levison 3.

\textsuperscript{360} Noble and Head 110, 111; Levison 4, 11.
quotations, which Ian Wood calls “scriptural epilogues” are derived primarily from the
Pauline Epistles, with the exception of the first one, which comes from the Gospel of
Matthew. Initially, many of these scriptural epilogues do not appear to be immediately
relevant to the context in which they occur in the vita. However, if we consider
Willibald’s Vita Bonifatii in the context of the larger tradition of Anglo-Saxon missionary
writing exemplified by the Bonifatian correspondence, it becomes possible to interpret
Willibald’s oblique Pauline allusions as pertaining to Boniface’s life and career,
especially as these are represented in his letters.361

Willibald’s text shows his adoption of the apostolic discourse used by Boniface
and his correspondents, as well as other Anglo-Saxon authors, such as Bede and
Aldhelm, to characterize missionary work. I argue that Willibald’s repeated comparisons
of the experiences of the Apostle Paul to major and even mundane elements of
Boniface’s life and character are neither clumsy nor at odds with the content of the
narrative. Indeed, the deliberateness of their occurrence – they are woven regularly into
the very structure of the vita – militates against such a dismissal. Rather, Willibald’s
inclusion of (occasionally obscure) scriptural comparisons of Boniface to Paul are
intended to prompt the reader into typological reflection,362 with each scriptural reference
calling up in the Christian audience’s minds a host of other, related passages as well as
the larger biblical contexts in which the quoted passages are embedded. Much like

361 On the other hand, Ian Wood (62) sees these epilogues as in tension with the text’s depiction of
Boniface’s life, which he claims “scarcely supports any reading of the saint as being primarily a
missionary.” In fact, Wood perceives both the introductory and concluding sections of each chapter to be
incongruous with the narrative. He writes, “despite the claims to have discussed Boniface’s virtues, these
virtues never really become a criterion for Willibald in organizing his material. Further, for all the allusions
to the apostle Paul, the hagiographer sticks closely enough to information in Boniface’s letters to show that
for the most part the martyr’s career on the continent was devoted to improving standards and organizing
churches.”

362 Berschin (12) likewise maintains that these scriptural quotations “soll nicht nur mit einer auctoritas
kraftvoll abschließen, sondern will auch den Leser in eine bestimmte Richtung lenken.”
Boniface’s use of Paul’s words and experiences to characterize his own, Willibald’s allusions ask his audience to recognize their shared membership in a Christian culture based on scriptural knowledge, and to apply that knowledge hermeneutically to interpret Boniface’s life as the fulfillment of the words and experiences of the Apostle Paul in their own time.

In investigating Willibald’s representation of Boniface in his *Vita Bonifatii*, I hope to demonstrate that the contents of the *vita*, like the letters of Boniface, map the contemporary realities of the Anglo-Saxons working to convert and Christianize the peoples of Frisia, Hessia, Thuringia, and Bavaria onto a Pauline apostolic model in ways that only seem incongruous from a modern missionary perspective. The *Vita Bonifatii*’s focus on issues of religious learning, preaching, traveling, building up solid church infrastructures and monastic foundations, eradicating sacrilegious and syncretistic practices, and, of course, martyrdom, knowingly reflect the concerns common to the letters of both Paul and Boniface.

The first three chapters of Willibald’s text cover the early life of Boniface, specifically his childhood and education in the monasteries of Exeter and Nursling in Wessex, and his work as a learned teacher and respected priest in his middle age.363 Chapter one presents the reader with a very typical account of Boniface’s desire to enter the monastic life, overcoming the opposition of his parents in order to “enter the service of God” (*Dei se servitio subiugare studivit*) and “pursue the heavenly [treasure] and devote himself to the study of sacred letters” (*caeleste adquirere sibi thesaurum et sacris*).

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363 As Berschin (11) notes, “nach älteren Vorbildern hat Willibald Teil des traditionellen römischen Altertumsschemas (7 Jahre Infantia, 7 Jahre Pueritia, 14 Jahre Adolescentia, bis 50 Juventus, danach Senectus) benützt, um das Leben des Bonifatius als einem gegliederten Weg darzustellen.”
se coniungere litterarum studiis anxius anhelabat). Chapters 2 and 3, however, focus largely on the saint’s ascetic and intellectual attainments, specifically his program of scriptural study. Willibald tells us that Boniface’s trusted and intimate friends (fideles confamiliaritatis illius viri) recalled the saint’s habits of “continual studies” (cottidiana eius studia) and his mastery of the arts of grammar and rhetoric and the writing of verses but also in the simple historical exposition and the three-fold spiritual understanding of the Scriptures (tam grammaticae artis eloquentia et metrorum...quam etiam historiae simplici expositione et spiritualis tripertita intelligentiae interpretatione). This accords well with what we know of Boniface’s career as a teacher of grammar and rhetoric. Petra Kehl observes that Willibald’s emphasis on Boniface’s learning may reflect his continued reputation in England as a famous teacher. She notes that “Bonifatius auch nach seinem Tode noch für seine Gelehramkeit in seiner Heimat berühmt war, davon zeugt der bereits besprochene Brief Cuthberts.” That Willibald may be drawing on his knowledge of Boniface’s fame in the field of monastic education in Wessex to present his protagonist as an ideal teacher seems likely. But it is interesting that Willibald highlights Boniface’s scriptural study in particular, mentioning it thirteen times in the first three chapters of the work, and often in the context of following the teaching of the apostles.

Willibald concludes his second chapter with the image of Boniface as a beloved but humble teacher, who attracted both men and virgins (vrorum quam etiam virginum Christi) who “flocked to hear him and under his guidance studied the whole extent of the Scriptures” (ad eum confluxere et... numerosa scripturarum volumina legendo

364 Noble and Head 111; Levison 5-6.
365 My translation; Levison 8-9.
366 Kehl 71.
In this way, Willibald writes in the scriptural epilogue to this chapter,

Boniface

Quem ita superna sublevavit gratia, ut iuxta egregii praedicatoris exemplar et
gentium doctoris vocem ‘formam habens sanorum verborum in fide et dilectione
Iesu Christi’ (2 Tim. 1:13)….‘sollicite curans se ipsum probabilem exhibere Deo,
operarium inconfusibilem, recte tractantem verbum veritatis’ (2 Tim. 2:15).

[Guided and sustained as he was by supernatural grace, he followed both the
example and the teaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles: ‘Follow the pattern of the
sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in
Christ Jesus’ (2 Tim. 1:13)….‘Do your best to present yourself to God as one
approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word
of truth’” (2 Tim. 2:15).]

Willibald chooses these two quotations from Paul’s second epistle to Timothy, a text in
which Paul provides Timothy with instructions on how he is to “do the work of an
evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Willibald suggests that in assiduously reading and interpreting
biblical texts and teaching them to others, Boniface is following the “pattern and words”
of Paul himself. 2 Timothy does not deal directly with the reading or teaching of
Scripture (per se), but in it Paul does outline his status as “a preacher and an apostle and
teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11) and encourages Timothy to pass on his teaching to
“faithful men who shall be fit to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). The citations from 2
Timothy appended to the conclusion of the second chapter of the Vita Bonifatii encourage
the reader to see the correspondence between Boniface’s Christian education as a young
monk, and his future work as a preacher and an ordainer of “faithful men who shall be fit
to teach others.” His mastery of the arts of Latin grammar, rhetoric, and biblical exegesis
enable him to “rightly handle the word of truth” in his capacity as a preacher and a
teacher of the Gentiles.

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367 Noble and Head 114; Levison 10.
368 Levison 11; Noble and Head 114.
In the prefatory statements to chapter 3 Willibald builds on the scriptural epilogue of the preceding chapter by promising the reader that he will “show that the venerable and holy Boniface was an example for us of the eternal life in his evenly balanced moderation and that he laid before us the precepts of apostolic learning” (*ut et aequa libraminis moderatione exemplar nobis aeternitatis et patens fiat apostolicae eruditionis norma*). Here Willibald has Boniface move from following the example of Paul to serving as an example in his own right. Willibald claims that learning about Boniface’s life can teach the reader how to understand and enact the “precepts of apostolic learning” in their own lives. The body of chapter 3 elaborates on what Willibald means by this by treating the themes of Boniface’s ascetic practices and sacred learning and teaching in further detail. Willibald writes,

> Et ab infantia sua usque ad decrepitam aetatis senectutem praeteritorum non mediocriter patrum sapientiam imitatus est, dum prophetarum iugiter et apostolorum verba stilo sanctitatis conscripta et gloriosam martyrum passionem litterarum apicibus insertam, sed et evangelicam domini Dei nostri traditionem cottidiae commendabat memoriae et secundum apostolum, ‘sive manducasset sive bibisset sive aliud aliquid egisset, laudis semper praecentium et devotae fastigium iubilationis tam mente quam etiam ore persolvebat Deo’ (1 Cor. 10:31).

[From the early days of his childhood even to infirm old age he imitated in particular the practice of the ancient fathers in daily committing to memory the writings of the prophets and apostles, the narratives of the passion of the martyrs and the Gospel teaching of our Lord. To quote the words of the Apostle: ‘whether he ate or drank or whatsoever else he did, he always praised and thanked God in heart and word’ (1 Cor. 10:31).]

Willibald depicts Boniface’s continual reading and memorization of the scriptures and lives of saints and martyrs as an imitation of the fathers of the church, but also as a realization of Paul’s injunction to the Corinthians to praise and thank God without ceasing. In the context of Willibald’s text, this verse takes on a meaning not present in the

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369 Noble and Head 115; Levison 11.
370 Levison 11-12; Noble and Head 115.
first letter to the Corinthians. In Paul’s letter, he is giving advice to the Corinthians not to concern themselves with the dietary restrictions of the Jews, but also not to offend them or anyone else by being too insistent on one practice or the other (1 Cor. 10:32). In the context of the Vita, however, Willibald seems to suggest that Boniface’s memorization of the Scriptures enables him to ponder them continually to the glory of God, ruminating on them in his mind even as he eats and drinks with his body. For in the next line, Willibald adds, “as the psalmist says, ‘I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth (Ps. 33:2)’” (iuxta illud psalmigraphi: ‘Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore; semper laus eius in ore meo’). But Willibald stresses that the main purpose of Boniface’s “divine contemplation” (divina contemplatio) was not personal edification, but rather, preaching and spreading God’s word. It is the active not the contemplative life that is encouraged by the “precepts of apostolic learning” demonstrated by Boniface. As Willibald explains,

In tantum enim scriptuarum exarsit desiderio, ut omni se intentione earum imitatione et auditione sepius coniungeret; et quae ob doctrinam populorum conscripta sunt, ipse quippe populis mira eloqui dissertitudine et sollertissima parabularum adsertione efficaciter praedicando retexuit.

[To such a degree was he inflamed with a love of the Scriptures that he applied all his energies to learning and practicing their counsels, and those matters that were written for the instruction of the people he paraphrased and explained to them with striking eloquence, shrewdly spicing it with parables.] 

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371 Noble and Head 115; Levison 12. Although Willibald is not discussing Boniface’s composition of biblical poetry or transformation of Latin literature into Old English verse, the comparison with Bede’s account of Caedmon in the Historia Ecclesiastica IV.22 is relevant, because both express a connection between the absorption and contemplation of spiritual texts and their meanings through digestive metaphors and images. Also, in both cases, the recipient of the holy Scripture is depicted as a clean vessel for the carrying and dissemination of this wisdom through their individual conformation to the saintly way of life, and through their active preaching of this knowledge to others. See Gernot Wieland’s “Cædmon, The Clean Animal,” American Benedictine Review 35.2 (1984): 194-203 and Michael Casey, Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina (Liguori: Mont, 1996), for a fuller discussion of the concept of ruminatio.

372 Levison 12; Noble and Head 115.
Boniface’s monastic pursuit of spiritual learning leads to his willful enactment and spreading of the Gospel message, and his ability, as a preacher, to tailor his message to his audience. Willibald goes on to say that Boniface’s tactful awareness of the needs and concerns of others, as well as his disregard for wealth and power meant that he was able “in the words of the Apostle…‘[to] become all things to all men that he might by all means save some’” (sed iuxta apostolum omnibus omnia factus est, ut omnes lucrificaret).373 This invocation of Paul’s words374 from 1 Corinthians 9:22 reflects Willibald’s awareness of Boniface’s missionary approach of evoking a shared Germanic ethnic background and language with the peoples among whom he worked in his preaching. Willibald concludes the chapter by explaining that Boniface’s desire to be ordained a priest was consonant with the canonical age and the appropriately humble desire to serve God. But even in the priesthood, Willibald states, Boniface maintained the discipline and “fasting and abstinence” of a monk, “in imitation of the great Fathers of the Old and New Testament” (utriusque testamenti imitatus est patres). The scriptural epilogue which follows this remark emphasizes the importance of Boniface’s ascetic practices as part of his endeavor to follow the way of life of the Apostle Paul, and to preach the Word of God by living it himself. As Willibald asserts, “With the Apostle of the Gentiles [Boniface] could say; ‘I castigate my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified’ (1 Cor. 9:27)” (et cum egregio gentium diceret doctore: ‘Castigo corpus meum et servituti subicio, ne forte, alis predicans, ipse reprobus efficiar ’).375 Thus, Willibald links the elements of Scriptural study, teaching the

373 Noble and Head 115; Levison 12.
374 “And I became to the Jews a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all” (1 Cor. 9:20-22).
375 Noble and Head 115-116; Levison 13.
Gospel message to the people, humility, and asceticism in his portrayal of Boniface as an ideal priest and preacher.

A Harvest without Fruit: Justifying Boniface’s early missions to Frisia

The picture of Boniface as monk and priest developed in the first three chapters of the vita prepares the reader to understand Willibald’s interpretation of the story of Boniface’s mission to the Frisian people which lies at the center of the narrative. Boniface’s initial decision to undertake a missionary journey to Frisia appears to grow out of his ascetic practice and his humble desire to escape his growing fame as an ecclesiastical leader in Wessex. In this respect, Willibald’s version of Boniface’s first departure seems to owe much to the early Christian, and particularly Irish, tradition of peregrinatio. He writes, “he began carefully and cautiously to turn his mind to other things, to shun the company of his relatives and acquaintances and to set his heart not on remaining in his native land but on traveling abroad” (coeperat ad alia multa sollicitudinis cura adtentius properare et peregrina magis quam paternae hereditatis terrarum loca desiderare). However, the interest in the ascetic aspects of his journey disappears from the vita soon after this statement. Willibald directs us instead to focus on Boniface’s dedication to preaching to the heathen.

An interesting feature of Willibald’s discussion of Boniface’s first two missionary journeys to Frisia is precisely this emphasis on the saint’s dedication. His opening remarks point out that the virtues illustrated by Boniface’s life in chapter four are “his

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376 The Frisian mission is treated in chapters 4 and 5 out of 8 original chapters; chapter 9 was a later addition.
377 Noble and Head 117; Levison 15.
378 Kehl (72) writes “doch die peregrinatio ist bei Bonifatius nicht asketischer Selbstzweck. Sie ist bei ihm von Anfang an verbunden mit dem Wunsch nach Missionisierung der Germanen auf dem Festland.”
constancy in the projects he had undertaken and his zeal in bringing others to their desired end” (*quanta suarum perseverantia virium et coeptis bonis inheserat et ad alia quaeque festine properando animum incitaret*). Moreover, Willibald emphasizes that the evidence for this particular virtue of “constancy” has been “learned from the account of trustworthy witnesses” (*quae et fidelium didicimus relatione virorum*).379

I believe that this emphasis on Boniface’s constancy and ability to see things through to the end indicates a degree of discomfort, perhaps on the part of Willibald, or perhaps reflecting the discomfort of others (such as the followers of the late Willibrord), with the saint’s constant travel, and the intermittent nature of his work in Frisia. Of the places where Boniface was active on the continent, Frisia was one of the few areas other than Saxony where many of the people were still thoroughly pagan, and had actively resisted conversion to Christianity. It was also the only area where other Anglo-Saxon churchmen, namely Wilfrid of Ripon and Willibrord, had been engaging in missionary work.381 Whereas Willibrord remained in Frisia throughout his missionary career,382

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379 Noble and Head 116; Levison 13.
380 Noble and Head 116; Levison 13.
381 Irish and Frankish missionaries had, of course, been active in some areas of Germania for quite some time before Boniface’s arrival. For more information on the Irish and Frankish missionary presence on the Continent, see especially Wilhelm Levison’s *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Ian Wood’s *The Missionary Life*, the comprehensive collection of essays edited by Knut Schäferdiek in *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte* 2, vol. 1: Die Kirche des früheren Mittelalters (Münster 1978) and Wolfert van Egmond’s essay on the Frankish missions in Frisia and Saxony, “Converting Monks: Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Frisia and Saxony,” *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. Guyda Armstrong and Ian Wood (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 34-75.
Boniface worked in Frisia on three separate occasions.\textsuperscript{383} Years of work in other parts of the continent separate each of these periods of Boniface’s missionary activity in Frisia.

Willibald defends the saint from accusations of inconstancy or lack of diligence by foreshadowing Boniface’s eventual martyrdom in Frisian lands and invoking the example of the Apostle Paul, whose frequent travels and trials often kept him from returning to the places close to his heart. After discussing the dangerous political conflict between Charles Martel and the Frisian leader Radbod and the obstacles it presented to Boniface in 716, Willibald underscores the saint’s forethought in planning for a future mission. He stresses that this later mission was to be carried out at a more opportune time, and that “on this purpose of his, [Boniface’s] glorious martyrdom many years later set its seal” \textit{(Quod etiam, multis transactis annorum curriculis, gloriosa matryrii testificatio conprobavit)}.\textsuperscript{384} Thus he makes it clear that Boniface was not abandoning the Frisians because the going was tough; he planned to return to them when the time was right, and was prepared to lay down his life for their spiritual wellbeing.

Willibald’s concluding paragraph to chapter four strengthens his defense of Boniface’s decision to return to Nursling with carefully chosen biblical allusions and comparisons. Willibald comments,

\textsuperscript{383} Boniface’s first missionary journey to Frisia was brief, lasting less than all of 716. The second mission to Frisia took place from 719-722. His final mission to Frisia also lasted less than one year, beginning in Winter 754 and concluding with his martyrdom in Dokkum on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of June in 754.

\textsuperscript{384} Willibald writes, “when the man of God perceived the wicked perversity of Radbod he came to Utrecht and, after waiting for a few days, spoke with the king, who had also gone there. And having traveled about the country and examined many parts of it to discover what possibility there might be of preaching the Gospel in the future, he decided that if at any time he could see his way to approach the people he would minister to them the Word of God” \textit{(Tum vir Dei, perspecta perversitatis nequita, pervenit ad Trecht, ibique aliaquintis expectatatis diebus, advenientem regem Raedbodum adlocutus est, et multis illarum circumvavallatis ac conspectis terrarum partibus, utrum sibi in futurum praedicationis uspiam patesceret locus, perquiereret, proponensque animo, ut, si quanus in parte huius populi evangeli unquam aditus claresceret, verbi quidem Dei semina ministraret)}. Noble and Head 118; Levison 16-17.
Sed quia sanctorum singulare munus est sanctitatis, ut, dum ad tempus suum sine spiritualis viore germinis laborem minime pollentem perspicient, ad alia prorsus loca foecundo laboris cum fructu migrant.

[It is a strange thing in the sanctity of the saints that when they perceive that their labors are frustrated for a time and bear no spiritual fruit they betake themselves to other places where the results are more palpable, for there is nothing to be gained if one stays in a place without reaping a harvest of souls.]

Not only does this passage reiterate Boniface’s favorite scriptural metaphor for mission, the metaphor of the harvest adapted from Matthew 13, but it also subtly reminds the reader that by turning away from the Frisians for a time, Boniface is actually following Christ’s own advice to his apostles. In the Great Commission, Christ instructs the messengers of His Word, saying, “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet” (Matt. 10:14).

The combination of the metaphor of the mission as harvest and the Christian messenger’s permission to depart from those who will not receive him may have been suggested to Willibald by his reading of Gregory’s Dialogi, since Gregory also brings these concepts together in a similarly-worded passage in his Vita S. Benedicti (Book II):

“Et saepe agitur in animo perfectorum, quia, cum laborem suum sine fructu esse considerant, in locum alium ad laborem cum fructu migrant.”

Rather than remain in Frisia “to no purpose,” Willibald presents Boniface as obeying the apostolic injunction by forsaking “the pastures that lay parched through lack of heavenly and fruitful dew” (iam arida caelestis rore fecunditatis relinquaret arva) and going back to Wessex with a mind to return to the site of his first missionary work in the years to come. Willibald’s

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385 Levison 17; Noble and Head 118.
386 On the development and use of metaphor of the mission as harvest in Boniface’s letters, see my chapter 1 above, and Clay 209-211, and his Appendix 2.3.
387 Dialogi II.3, noted in Levison 17.
description of the lack of ‘dew’ from heaven (*caelestis ros*) conveys his view that it was not God’s will for the Frisians to receive the Gospel from Boniface at this time. If the mission fields of Frisia remained fruitless in 716, Willibald implies, it was not because Boniface failed to ‘water’ them with his preaching.

The return of Boniface to Nursling for the period spanning the autumn of 716 to spring of 718 is at first glance curiously associated with a rather mundane statement from Paul’s Epistle to Titus at the end of chapter four. Willibald asserts that by returning to his monastery, Boniface “fulfilled that passage in the writings of the Apostle to the Gentiles, where it says, ‘For I have decided to spend the winter there’ (Ti 3:12)” (*et apostolicam gentium doctoris vocem imitaretur, dicentis, ‘Ibi enim constitui hiemare’*). Here again I suspect that Willibald was relying on his audience’s familiarity with Paul’s letter to Titus and the context of the quoted verse, since the simple statement that both Paul and Boniface determined to spend a winter somewhere hardly seems meaningful in itself. In part, the significance of the comparison rests in the reminder that Paul was in a constant state of travel, and chose to move himself to different locales in the Mediterranean world in order to make the most of his missionary work, and in order be a good shepherd to all the churches which were under his care.

Paul’s letter to Titus deals with such necessary pastoral movements, and the passage Willibald excerpted as the chapter’s scriptural epilogue concerns Paul’s organization of his ministers Artemas, Tychicus, and Titus to travel to meet him in Nicopolis (Ti 3:12-13). But here Paul also deals with the importance of sowing the seeds of good works where they would be most likely to take root. In the next verse Paul writes, “And let our men also learn to excel in good works for necessary uses: that they

388 Noble and Head 118; Levison 17-18.
be not unfruitful” (Ti 3:14). Thus, Willibald uses the allusion to a seemingly straightforward verse from Paul’s Epistle to Titus to conjure up a host of meaningful thematic connections between Boniface’s decision to depart from Frisia and the itinerant nature of the apostolic life as exemplified by Paul.

Both the language of mission as harvest and the anxiety concerning Boniface’s repeated departure from Frisia reappear in Willibald’s account of Boniface’s second trip to the region during the years 719-722. Having received the encouragement of Pope Gregory II in his pursuit of missionary endeavors, Boniface heard of the death of Radbod while in Thuringia. Willibald depicts Boniface as conscious of his earlier vow to return to the Frisians. In his missionary zeal, Boniface “joyfully took ship and sailed up the river. In this way he, [desiring that Frisia also should receive the word of God,] reached [soils] that had hitherto been left [uncultivated] by the preaching of the Gospel” (albeum quidem fluminis, magno gavisus gaudio, navigio ascendit, optans, quod etiam Fresia recipisset verbum Dei, et ad incultas caelesti praedicatione terras pervenit).

Upon his return to Frisia, Boniface goes farther than he had before, seeking true pagans in need of salvation, pagans whom Willibald describes as living in incultae terrae – uncultivated lands. Talbot’s English translation of this passage obscures Willibald’s deliberate echo of the language he had earlier used to characterize Boniface’s departure from the Frisians in his first missionary attempt. The metaphor of Frisia as a “parched pasture” (arida arva) returns here in the phrase incultae terrae, and Willibald’s description of the uncultivated lands “reached by heavenly preaching” (caelestis praedicatio…pervenit) recalls his earlier figure of preaching as heavenly dew (caelestis

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389 Noble and Head 122; Levison 23. Bracketed portions of the translation are my emendations to Noble and Head’s revision of Talbot.
Willibald presents Boniface’s second journey to Frisia as the fulfillment of his thwarted hopes for the people. This time, he tells us, God allows Boniface to “scatter abroad the seeds of Christian teaching to feed with wholesome doctrine those who had been famished by pagan superstition” (doctrinae caelestis semina ministravit et, verbi Dei fame expulsa, familicam paganicae superstitionis multitudinem aeterna praedicationis refecit pabulo).  

Willibald represents Boniface’s second mission to the Frisians as dramatic and foreordained. He lists the outcome of Boniface’s efforts in a highly compressed, and highly revealing, sentence:

Cumque desiderantis repente mentem spontaneus operis sequeretur effectus, et votiva praedistinatae doctrinae lux, domino Deo dispensante, claresceret, Carlique ducis gloriosi super Fresones roboratum esset imperium, iam bucina caelestis verbi increpuit et praedicatorum, adveniente superni roris fertilitate, vox intonuit, Dei etiam per Willibrordum virum venerabilem ac cooperatores eius propagatus est sermo.

[The results of this (plan…) were swift and spontaneous. The (predestined, promised) divine light illuminated their hearts, the authority of the glorious leader Charles over the Frisians was strengthened, the word of truth was blazoned abroad, (the fertile dews came forth from on high,) the voice of preachers filled the land and the venerable Willibrord with his fellow missionaries propagated the Gospel.]  

The relationship between Boniface, Charles Martel, and Willibrord sketched in these lines tells the reader much about Willibald’s perceptions of mission and his political, and perhaps hagiographical, perspectives. Boniface’s own personal interest in the Frisians, his determination to convert them to Christianity, motivates the illumination of the Frisian people with the light of the Gospel. In the passage cited above, the activities of both Charles Martel and Willibrord ac cooperatores eius are subordinated to Boniface’s

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390 Noble and Head 122; Levison 23.
391 Levison 23-24; Noble and Head 122. Portions of the translation in parentheses are my emendations to Noble and Head’s revision of Talbot.
“work” (*opus*), which is presented as the primary force in the conversion of the Frisians. Willibald’s casual insertion of the phrase “*claresceret Carlique ducis gloriosi super Fresones roboratum esset imperium*” naturalizes the very real historical connection between Christianization and Frankish imperial domination in Frisia. 392 But even as he suggests that these two occurrences of Christian conversion and subjection to Carolingian leaders go together, Willibald also makes the case that without the aid of Boniface, Charles Martel’s authority in Frisia would have been weakened.

More surprising perhaps is Willibald’s choice to displace Willibrord’s authority. Willibrord preceded Boniface in Frisia by several years – long before Boniface’s first missionary attempt in 716. He was an archbishop by the time Boniface returned to Frisia in 719, whereas Boniface was merely a priest. It is clear from the letters and the reality on the ground that Boniface came to Frisia deliberately to work “under the direction of Willibrord” after the death of Radbod. 393 For these reasons it seems particularly striking that Willibrord is first mentioned in the *Vita Bonifatii* here near the end of chapter 5, and that this mention is tacked on to a long list of Boniface’s own accomplishments. Willibrord’s efforts are again subordinated to Boniface’s in Willibald’s next account of their cooperation:

> Sed quia messe quidem multa operarios inesse paucos cerneret (Matt. 9:37), sanctus hic Dei famulus cooperator etiam factus est per tres instanter annos Willibrordi archiepiscopi, multumque in Christo laborans, non parvum Domino populum, destructis delubrorum fanis et exstructis ecclesiarum oratoris, praefato pontifici opitulante, adquisivit.

[When he saw that the harvest was abundant but the laborers were few (Matt. 9:37), the holy servant of God offered his services for three years to Archbishop Willibrord and labored in Christ indefatigably. He destroyed pagan temples and

392 Ian Wood has noted the “pro-Carolingian bias” in Willibald’s discussion of semi-paganism in Thuringia (62-63). Here we see that it extends to his account of the Frisians as well.

393 Wood 59.
shrines, built churches and chapels, and with the help of Willibrord gained numerous converts to the church.[394]

Willibald phrases this in such a way that Willibrord helps Boniface convert the Frisians, despite the fact that it is Boniface who had first offered to serve Willibrord. Perhaps this is merely because the *vita* is about Boniface, not his predecessor and compatriot Willibrord. But the awkwardness inherent in Willibald’s depiction of the argument over whether Boniface should take over the Frisian mission and the archbishopric of Utrecht cannot be overlooked. Willibrord urges Boniface to agree to be his successor, and Boniface declines, at first out of humility. But in Willibald’s hands, the amicable disagreement between the two missionaries becomes “a kind of spiritual contest” (*velud in spiritale quodam stadio positus*) fought in words.395 Boniface wins this “contest” by appealing to his promise to serve an even higher authority: the pope. Boniface reminds Willibrord that he was “sent to the barbarian regions of the west” (*apostolicae sedis legationem fungens ad occidentales barbarorum regiones*) as an envoy by Pope Gregory II and that he was thus bound by an oath to serve his master in “those lands to which [he] was originally dispatched by the Apostolic See” (*has quas primitus a sede apostolica missus sum terras distinando*).396

There are several potential explanations for Willibald’s awkward treatment of Willibrord in the *Vita Bonifatii*. Discomfort over the periodic nature of Boniface’s Frisian missions and the author’s desire to heighten the reader’s feelings of suspense over Boniface’s already foreshadowed martyrdom are only two of these. Furthermore, the awkwardness might reflect attitudes at Mainz toward the see of Utrecht. Boniface fought

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394 Levison 24; Noble and Head 122.
396 Noble and Head 123; Levison 25.
with the Archbishop of Cologne for control over the see of Utrecht in the years before he was killed, and later Utrecht sought to rival Fulda as the center of Boniface’s posthumous cult. But this episode also sets out several other strands which run through the remainder of the vita, namely, Boniface’s strict obedience to canon law and his close, loyal relationship with the Apostolic See.

Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii* conscientiously represents Boniface’s collaboration with the papacy, particularly with Popes Gregory II and Gregory III. Drawing upon Boniface’s correspondence for evidence, Willibald elaborates on each of Boniface’s trips to Rome, concentrating on his face to face meetings with the popes, and their plans for his work abroad. In his account of Boniface’s initial audience with Pope Gregory II, Willibald focuses on Gregory’s willingness to support the work of Boniface “that was closest to his heart” by sending him on a reconnaissance mission: he “was sent by the blessed pope to make a report on the savage peoples of Germany. The purpose was to discover whether the uncultivated [fields of their] hearts, [having been tilled by the ploughshare of the Gospel] were ready to receive the seed of [preaching]” (*a beatissimo papae ad inspiciendos inmanissimos Germaniae populos directus est, ut, an inculta cordium arva, evangelico arata vomere, praedicationis recipere semen voluissent, consideraret*). This account is slightly different from that presented in Gregory II’s letter to Boniface, which, as we have seen, enjoins Boniface to “preach and teach the Old

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397 Emerton #89; Tangl #109.
398 Boniface initially excuses himself from Willibrord’s offer by arguing that he had not yet reached the canonical age of fifty required for the office of archbishop. Recall Willibald’s emphasis on the fact that Boniface did not seek the office of the priesthood prior to reaching the canonical age of thirty.
399 However, as Wood notes, Willibald does not mention either Popes Zacharias or Stephen in his work.
400 Noble and Head 121; Levison 22. Portions of the translation in square brackets are my emendations to Noble and Head’s revision of Talbot.
and New Testaments” to “the heathen.” However in presenting Boniface’s first mission to “Germania” as a fact-finding endeavor, Willibald does echo the general nature of Boniface’s initial Missionsbeauftrag, and also helps to explain why Boniface was able to move so freely from Thuringia to Frisia and then back to Hesse and Thuringia again in his early missionary years. Perhaps this restructuring of Boniface’s first papally-supported mission in this way was intended to alleviate precisely the type of discomfort noted in Willibald’s account of the Frisian mission and dispute with Willibrord.

Boniface’s subsequent meetings with the pope follow the pattern set out in Willibald’s account of this first contact. Boniface and his retinue arrive, travel-weary, at the shrines of the apostles, where, after giving thanks to Saint Peter, they seek an audience with the pope. This audience is negotiated through the presentation of letters of recommendation, and then proceeds in a discussion of the progress of the mission. Once Boniface reveals his recent successes in converting and baptizing the heathen and the heretic, the pope increases his religious authority and responsibility, first by raising him to the level of bishop, and later archbishop.

It is interesting that Willibrord represents Boniface conversing with the popes about his work and concerns as a missionary. During his account of Boniface’s first meeting with Gregory II, Willibald notes that the pope “met with Boniface on a daily basis and discussed his plans assiduously” (sedulum deinceps cum eo habebat cottidianae disputationis conloquium). On his second trip to Rome, after Boniface presented Gregory II with a written confession of faith, Willibald states that the two churchmen “discussed and debated many other matters relating to holy religion and the true faith”

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401 Tangl #12; Emerton #4.
402 Noble and Head 121; Levison 21.
(alia de relegione sanctitatis et fidei veritate sciscitando profert) as well as “how the people who previously had been steeped in error and wickedness had received his preaching of the true faith” (qualiter populi, per devia prius facinorum oberantes, fidei documenta sua praedicatione perciperent). The pope accepts Boniface’s reports on the success of his missionary endeavors, and offers advice on “the day-to-day needs of the church and the progress of the people” (de rebus, quae ad cottidianam ecclesiae Dei necessitatem populique proventum pertinebant). In creating this depiction of Boniface’s relationships with Pope’s Gregory II and III, Willibald draws on the corpus of Boniface’s correspondence with the popes, transposing the contents of the letters into hypothetical reconstructions of conversations and interactions. The imagined conversations become a means of conveying the relationship between pope and missionary and the development of a shared project of the conversion of the Germanic peoples.

Willibald’s discussion of Boniface’s elevation to the episcopate shows the importance of this partnership, and its effect in securing for Boniface the protection necessary for his work. Significantly, Boniface’s ordination took place on the feast of St. Andrew, another apostle to the Gentiles, and the most popular apostle after Peter and Paul. Boniface’s renaming and episcopal ordination on Andrew’s feast symbolically asserted the Anglo-Saxon’s participation in the mission of the apostles, his inclusion in that circle of preachers and teachers which extended back in time to the first followers of Christ. But it also quietly asserted Boniface’s status as subordinate to the Pope, his

403 Noble and Head 125; Levison 29.
404 Noble and Head 124; Levison 27.
405 For a discussion of the cult of Andrew in Anglo-Saxon England, see the introduction and Chapter 5 below.
master, who, in his role as the representative of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, could
provide superior religious guidance, assistance, and support. In this episode, Willibald
indicates how Pope Gregory II was able to extend papal influence in regulating church
practice and ecclesiastical organization. Upon ordaining Boniface as a bishop, the pope
“put into his hands the book in which the most sacred laws and canons of the church and
the decrees of episcopal synods had been inscribed or compiled, commanding him that
henceforth this norm of church conduct and belief should be kept inviolate and that the
people under his jurisdiction should be taught on these lines” (etique libellum, in quo
sacratissima ecclesiasticae constitutionis iura pontificalibus sunt digesta conventibus,
accomodavit et, ut ex hoc inconvulsa apud se pontificalis haec disciplinatae institutionis
ordo permaneret populique subiecti his inbuantur exemplis, imperavit).\textsuperscript{406} This passage
looks forward to Willibald’s later account of Boniface’s work reforming religious
practice and ecclesiastical organization and instituting frequent councils to ensure the
correct understanding and practice of canon law in Francia and in other lands, treated in
chapter eight of the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}.

Willibald accurately portrays Boniface maintaining his close relationship with the
new representative of St. Peter after Gregory II’s death in 741.\textsuperscript{407} However, Willibald
fails to even mention the two other popes under whom Boniface worked: Pope Zacharias
and Pope Stephen, which is surprising since, as Ian Wood points out, both of these men
“had an infinitely higher profile in Carolingian politics than did Gregory II or Gregory
III.”\textsuperscript{408} Perhaps one explanation for this omission on Willibald’s part is that the letters
exchanged between Boniface and Zacharias and Stephen are often related to details of the

\textsuperscript{406} Noble and Head 126; Levison 30.
\textsuperscript{407} Noble and Head 128; Levison 34-35.
\textsuperscript{408} Wood 63.
missions and ecclesiastical organization, or disputes about how best to handle heretics, or even, as we saw in the earlier chapter, criticism of the pope’s actions and inactions. Only Gregory II and Gregory III were really involved in the early conception of the missions, and only these two popes played major roles in advancing Boniface’s career in the church.

**Missionaries, Monasteries, and the Apostolic Life in the *Vita Bonifatii***

Willibald presents Boniface’s first missionary journeys to Bavaria and Thuringia (prior to his work with Willibrord in Frisia) as the fulfillment of Pope Gregory II’s plan to gather information about the heathen peoples by making the conventional comparison of his work there to that of the bee gathering the good nectar and avoiding the bad.409 Boniface’s missionary efforts in these liminal zones of Frankish influence proceeded from the top down, beginning with the “senators of each tribe and the princes of the whole people” (*senatores denique plebis totiusque populi principes*),410 and focusing mainly on reclaiming lapsed or heretical Christians to the true faith, or correcting the syncretistic practices of those imperfectly Christianized or misled by “the perversity of their teachers” (*pravis seducti doctoribus*).411 The bee metaphor is thus particularly apt here. In Thuringia, as in many areas of Germania where Boniface was active, the missionaries were not preaching to heathen peoples, but rather to people who may have believed themselves to be Christian, but were mixing pagan practices with elements of

409 Noble and Head 121; Levison 22.  
410 Noble and Head 122; Levison 23.  
411 Noble and Head 122: In Thuringia, Boniface works to “recall them to the true way of knowledge and the light of understanding that for the great part they had lost through the perversity of their teachers.” Levison 23: *eosque ad veram agnitionis viam et intellegentiae lucem provocavit, quam olim ante maxime siquidem ex parte, pravis seducti doctoribus, perdiderunt.*
Christian religion and unknowingly committing acts contrary to canon law and Catholic
document for lack of proper Christian catechesis or maintenance of church hierarchy.
Boniface and his fellow missionaries were compelled to carefully discriminate between
the Christian practices they found in Thuringia, as Willibald puts it, “to use an illustration
from the words of the apostle, ‘test[ing] all things and hold[ing] on to what is good”
( secundum quandam apostolicae ratiocinationis eloqui similitudinem omnia probat et
quod bonum est tent, 1 Thess. 5:21).412

The correction of erring Christians emerges as a major theme in Willibald’s
treatment of Boniface’s missions to the Hessians and Thuringians, reflecting the
historical reality on the ground in Boniface’s time. While there is some attempt by
Willibald to differentiate between Boniface’s missions to pagans “untouched by the
preaching of the Gospel” (the Frisians, Saxons and Hessians) and his missions to nominal
Christians in need of reform and religious education (the Thuringians, some Hessians and
the Bavarians), this distinction, so central in the modern historiography of Boniface,413
does not appear to be of much importance to the vita’s author. In fact, one gets the
impression that Willibald shared Boniface’s impassioned belief in the necessity of
correcting the semi-pagan practices of the imperfectly Christianized, and did not see this
as a bureaucratic distraction from “real” missionary work among the heathen.

His description of Boniface’s arrival and work in Hessia following his departure
from Frisia shows Boniface enacting the apostolic injunction to spread right belief and to
educate both pagans and Christians in the ways of the universal church. In Frisia,

412 Noble and Head 122; Levison 22.
413 We have already discussed this issue in Chapter 1 above; see also Wood’s Missionary Life, von
Padberg’s Mission und Christianisierung, James Palmer’s “Defining Paganism in the Carolingian World,”
Early Medieval Europe 15 (2007): 402-425, and Jonathan Couser’s recent article “Inventing Paganism in
Willibald tells us, “many came through [Boniface’s] instruction to the knowledge of the truth” (*multique ab eo spirituali doctrinae educati ad agnitionem veritatis*). He presents Boniface’s movement to Hessia as a necessary departure to another region equally in need of preaching (*alias Germaniae praedicandi causa partes adiit*). The depictions of the religious practices of the pagan and semi-pagan peoples in and near the regions of Hessia and Thuringia in the *Vita Bonifatii* allow the reader to perceive the earnestness of the situation for Willibald, and perhaps also for his patron Lull, who, as Boniface’s successor at Mainz, oversaw part of the mission to Saxony carried out from the monastery at Hersfeld. The account of the mission to the Hessians begins with Boniface’s reform of the two brothers who ruled the Frankish-influenced area around Amöneburg just outside of Hessia. These brothers, Dettic and Deorulf,

…*eosque a sacreliga idulorum censura, qua sub quodam christianitatis nomine male abusi sunt, evocavit ac plurimam populi turbam, rectae patefacta intellegentiae viae, errorum deposito horrore, a malivola gentilitatis superstitione retraxit.*

[…he converted from the sacrilegious worship of idols which was practiced under the cloak of Christianity. He turned away also from the superstitions of paganism a great multitude of the people by revealing to them the path of right understanding, and induced them to forsake their horrible and erroneous beliefs.]  

Willibald uses strong language: their mixture of idol-worship and Christianity is “sacrilegious” (*sacreliga idulorum*). Their beliefs are “horrible and erroneous” (*errorum deposito horrore*). The people practice “the ill-disposed superstitions of [paganism]” (*malivola gentilitatis superstitione*). This is not a simple matter of correcting the technicalities of worship and belief. For Boniface, Willibald implies, Dettic, Deorulf and

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414 Noble and Head 124; Levison 26.  
415 Wood 61.  
416 Levison 26-27; Noble and Head 124.
the people they represent are in a state of spiritual jeopardy which must be rectified for
the salvation of their souls and the future integrity of the Christian church in Germania.
Their religion is more problematic than pure paganism, because, they are committing
sacrilege by continuing to observe some pagan practices after having been baptized.

Willibald reports that Boniface’s missionary methodology typically begins at the
top, by re-Christianizing the rulers of the region. Once he has educated the high-ranking
persons through “preaching the Gospel” (*sermonibus euangelicis*) he moves on to
reforming the clergy, teaching them to “observ[e] the canonical decrees” and
“admonishing and instructing…priests” (*ad canonicae constitutionis rectitudine correxit,
admonuit atque instruxit*).417 The process of correcting and reforming the imperfectly
Christian peoples near Hessia does not seem to interfere with the conversion of the
pagans in the interior of Hessia, for directly after his account of Dettic and Deorulf,
Willibald writes, “Similarly [Boniface] delivered the people of Hesse, who up to that
time practiced pagan ritual, from the captivity of the devil by preaching the Gospel as far
as the borders of Saxony” (*Similiter et iuxta fines Saxonum Hessorum populum paganicis
adhuc ritibus oberrantem a demoniorum evangelica praedicando mandata captivitate
liberavit*).418

Willibald significantly emphasizes Hessia’s proximity to Saxony, the region of
Germania which was most staunchly pagan, the object of Boniface’s grander plans for the
conversion of his peoples’ continental ancestors.419 John-Henry Clay’s recent research
has demonstrated how Boniface’s work of conversion and religious reform in the areas of

417 Noble and Head 122; Levison 23.
418 Noble and Head 124; Levison 27.
419 See Boniface’s famous letter to the Anglo-Saxons concerning the conversion of the Saxon peoples:
Emerton #36; Tangl #46, discussed in Chapter 1 above.
Hessia and Thuringia was partially undertaken to secure the regions bordering Saxony and provide a stable, Christian home-base for future missionary expeditions to the Saxon people. Boniface’s letters clearly show his intentions and hopes for a Saxon mission, particularly after 737, when the military exploits of Charles Martel against the Saxons suggested that the area might soon be opened up to Christian influence by the point of the sword. But these hopes went unfulfilled. In the words of Theodor Schieffer,


The silence of Willibald on this disappointing phase of Boniface’s career is hardly surprising – the hagiographer does not further the glory of the saint by lingering on his lack of judgment or failure to achieve his goals. Discussing Boniface’s inability to carry out the hoped- and planned-for Saxon mission would not be in keeping with Willibald’s stated intention to show the saint’s “constancy in the projects he had undertaken” (*coeptis bonis inheserat*) and “zeal in bringing others to their desired end” (*ad alia quaeque festine properando animum incitaret*). Still, the specter of the Saxon mission lingers in Willibald’s text, beneath the surface, in his treatments of Boniface’s Hessian and Thuringian missions. Here Willibald reframes Saxony as a symbolic representation of

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420 Clay 235-277.
421 Wood 60.
422 Schieffer 165.
423 Noble and Head 116; Levison 13.
extreme paganism, and the moral darkness that implies for a Christian audience.\footnote{Clay 206-208; von Padberg 37.}

Hessia’s proximity to Saxony accounts for its peoples’ continued devotion to pagan gods and customs. By mentioning that Boniface was able to “preach the Gospel as far as the borders of Saxony,” Willibald rhetorically transforms Boniface’s failure to convert the kindred Saxons into an expression of his success in the Hessian mission.

Preaching, religious education, and post-baptismal confirmation\footnote{Noble and Head 126: “Now many of the Hessians who at that time had acknowledged the Catholic faith were confirmed by the grace of the Holy Spirit and received the laying on of hands.” Leision 30-31: \textit{Cum vero Hessorum iam multi, catholica fide subditi ac septiformis spiritus gratia confirmati, manus impositionem acciperunt.}
\textit{Levison, 30-31: Cum vero Hessorum iam multi, catholica fide subditi ac septiformis spiritus gratia confirmati, manus impositionem acciperunt, et alii quidem, nondum animo confortati, intererate fidei documenta integre percipere rennuuerunt; alii etiam lignis et fontibus clanculo, alii autem aperte sacrificabant; alii vero aruspecia et divinationes, prestigia atque incantationes occulte, alii quidem manifeste exercerant; alii sacrificandi ritus incoluerunt; alii etiam, quibus mens sanior inerat, omni abiecta gentilitatis profanatione, nihil horum comisserunt.}}

emerge in this section of the \textit{Vita Bonifatii} as the primary weapons with which Boniface combats both sacrilege and ignorance of Christ in the regions of Hessia and Thuringia. Willibald depicts the pagans of these Germanic regions in a wholly conventional Christian idiom (\textit{gentilitatis profanatio}) who practice nature worship, sacrifice, divination, and prayer to idols.\footnote{Levison, 30-31: \textit{Cum vero Hessorum iam multi, catholica fide subditi ac septiformis spiritus gratia confirmati, manus impositionem acciperunt, et alii quidem, nondum animo confortati, intererate fidei documenta integre percipere rennuuerunt; alii etiam lignis et fontibus clanculo, alii autem aperte sacrificabant; alii vero aruspecia et divinationes, prestigia atque incantationes occulte, alii quidem manifeste exercerant; alii sacrificandi ritus incoluerunt; alii etiam, quibus mens sanior inerat, omni abiecta gentilitatis profanatione, nihil horum comisserunt.}}

While this description does not tell the reader much about what the pagan practices of the Hessians were actually like, it implicitly portrays Boniface in the role of an apostle to the Gentiles. By showing Boniface’s work of “converting many thousands of people from long-standing pagan practices and baptizing them”\footnote{Noble and Head 128; Levison 34.} as well as “confirming them in the grace of the Holy Spirit” through the “laying on of hands”\footnote{Noble and Head 126; Levison 30.} Willibald highlights Boniface’s personal commitment to the continued spiritual education and welfare of his converts, and his status as a priest and teacher of people both Christian and non-Christian.
But even the apostles knew that sometimes teaching alone was not enough to inspire faith in Christ. Sometimes, it takes a miracle to convert the heathen. The *Vita Bonifatii* records just one such miracle: Boniface’s destruction of the sacred oak of Thunær (Thor), which Willibald calls the “Oak of Jupiter” (*robor Iobis*) at Geismar.

Based on a similar episode from the *Vita Martini* of Sulpicius Severus, this miracle stands alone in the text as the dramatic climax of the narrative, a powerful demonstration of God’s support of Boniface’s mission.

Cumque, mentis constantia confortatus, arborem succidisset, - magna quippe aderat copia paganorum, qui et inimicum deorum suorum intra se diligentissime devotabant, - sed ad modicum quidem arbore praeciso, confestim inmensa roboris moles, divino desuper flatu exagitata, palmitum contracto culmine, corruit et quasi superni nutus solatio in quattuor etiam partes disrupta est, et quattuor ingentis magnitudinis aequali longitudine trunci absque fratrum labore adstantium apparuerunt. Quo viso, prius devotantes pagani etiam versa vice benedictionem Domino, pristina abiecta maledictione, credentes reddiderunt.

[Taking his courage in his hands (for a great crowd of pagans stood by watching and bitterly cursing in their hearts the enemy of the gods), he cut the first notch. But when he had made a superficial cut, suddenly the oak’s vast bulk, shaken by a mighty blast of wind from above, crashed to the ground shivering its topmost branches into fragments in its fall. As if by the express will of God (for the brethren present had done nothing to cause it) the oak burst asunder into four parts, each part having a trunk of equal length. At the sight of this extraordinary spectacle the heathens who had been cursing ceased to revile and began, on the contrary, to believe and bless the Lord.]  

By felling the tree, Boniface transforms the pagans’ sacred landscape. After the destruction of the oak by the Christian God, the tree and the land on which it stood can no longer be interpreted as an expression of the old gods’ power and presence in the natural

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429 Compare Willibald’s account of Boniface’s miraculous felling of the Oak of Thor with Chapter 13 of the *Vita Martini* by Sulpicius Severus in *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. Jacque Fontaine, Sources Chrétienes 133, vol. 1 (Paris, 1967); translated by F. R. Hoare, “The Life of St. Martin of Tours,” *Soldiers of Christ*, eds. Noble and Head, 15-16. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between the felling of the Oak at Geismar, Boniface’s early foundation of Fritzlar, and the network of churches established by Boniface and his followers in Hessia see Clay 235-259. Clay (253) notes that several of these churches were dedicated to St. Martin as well as St. Peter.  
430 Levison 31; Noble and Head 126-127.
world. The miracle results in the immediate conversion of the pagan onlookers and the superimposition of Christianity on the land when Boniface builds an oratory dedicated to Saint Peter out of the wood of the tree.\textsuperscript{431} While this miracle is isolated in the text, recent archaeological and toponymic research suggests that the practice of supplanting or countering pagan holy sites with the construction of Christian buildings was widespread throughout the area of Boniface’s missionary work.\textsuperscript{432} In depicting Boniface’s role in transforming the Hessians’ ‘Oak of Jupiter’ into an oratorio...\textit{in honore sancti Petri apostoli} Willibald merges history and legend, simultaneously informing us of Boniface’s missionary practice and linking Boniface to other missionary saints, such as Martin, and the original missionary miracle-workers, the apostles.

The oratory dedicated to Peter near Geismar later grew into one of Boniface’s great monastic foundations: Fritzlar in the heart of Hessia. Though we briefly hear of the building of churches and monasteries at Fritzlar and Amöneburg,\textsuperscript{433} Willibald’s description of the beginnings of the monastery at Ohrdruf in Thuringia provides the best insight into the way Boniface’s successors wished their founder’s monastic legacy to be perceived. After converting the pagans and banishing heretics in the region, Willibald tells us,

\textsuperscript{431} Noble and Head 126-127: “Thereupon the holy bishop took counsel with the brethren, built an oratory from the timber of the oak and dedicated it to Saint Peter the Apostle.” Levison 32: Tunc autem summae sanctitatis antistes, consilio initio cum fratribus, ligneum ex supradictae arboris metallo oratorium construxit eamque in honore sancti Petri apostoli dedicavit.

\textsuperscript{432} Clay 235-259.

\textsuperscript{433} Noble and Head 128-129: After his elevation to archbishop by Pope Gregory III, Willibald tells us how Boniface “built two churches. One was in Frideslare [Fritzlar], which he dedicated to Saint Peter, prince of the apostles. The other was in Amanburch [Amöneburg], which he dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel. He attached two monasteries to these two churches and invited a large number of monks to serve God there, with the result that even to this day praise and blessing and thanksgiving are offered to the Lord our God.” Levison 35: duas videlicet ecclesias Domino fabricavit: unam quippe in Frideslare, quam in honore sancti Petri principis apostolorum consecravit, et alteram in Hemanaburch; hanc etiam in honore sancti Michaelis archangeli dedicavit. Duo quoque monasteriola duobus inuniunt ecclesiis hiisque non minimum servientium Deo multitudinem subrogavit, ita ut usque hodie gloria et benedicto et gratiarum actio domino Deo devote confertur.
Boniface, assisted by a few helpers, gathered in an abundant harvest. At first he suffered from extreme want and lacked even the necessaries of life, but, through straightened circumstances and in deep distress, he continued to preach the Word of God. Little by little the number of believers increased, the preachers grew more numerous, the church buildings were restored and the Word of God was published far and wide. At the same time the servants of God, monks of genuinely ascetic habits, were grouped together in one body and they constructed a monastery in the place called Orthorpf. In the manner of the apostles, they procured food and clothing by their own hands and contented themselves with constant labor (1 Cor. 4:12).

In this passage, Willibald draws on several themes and motifs for representing missionary work made familiar by Boniface in his letters. The mention of few helpers gathering an abundant harvest obviously echoes the frequent invocations of this biblical metaphor throughout the correspondence and in Willibald’s own depiction of Boniface’s Frisian mission. Moreover, Willibald’s portrayal of the struggles and suffering of Boniface and his followers resonates with Boniface’s own frequent evocation of the tribulations of the Apostle Paul.

Most striking, however, is Willibald’s characterization of the monks at Ohrdruf, which is very close to Boniface’s own description to Pope Zacharias of the monastic community he established at Fulda. Boniface writes in his letter to the Pope,

Est preterea locus silvaticus in heremo vastissime solitudinis in mediationum praedictionis nostrae, in quo monasterium construentes monachos constituimus

434 Levison 33-34; Noble and Head 127-128.
435 Clay 209-211.
436 Clay 211-214.
sub regula sancti patris Benedicti viventes, viros stricte abstinentiae, absque carne et vino, absque sicera et servis, proprio manum suarum labore contentos.

[There is a wooded place in the midst of a vast wilderness situated among the peoples to whom I am preaching. There I have placed a group of monks living under the rule of St. Benedict who are building a monastery. They are men of ascetic habits, who abstain from wine and spirits, keeping no servants, but are content with the labor of their own hands.] \(^{437}\)

Both descriptions emphasize the isolation and deprivation of the place where the monastery is being built, as well as the construction of the monastery by ascetic monks living the communal life of the apostles by providing for themselves through manual labor. It is certainly possible that this was the state of affairs at the inception of all of Boniface’s monastic foundations, and that Willibald is picking up Boniface’s language from his letter about Fulda and using it to characterize the foundation of Ohrdruf. But Fulda, the monastery which was ultimately the most famous of Boniface’s foundations, does get noticeably short shrift in the *Vita Bonifatii*. Willibald has Boniface, prior to his martyrdom in Frisia, tell his episcopal successor Lull to “finish the construction of the basilica at Fulda, which is now in the process of being built and bring thither this body of mine now wasted by the toil of years” (*aedificationem basilicae iam inchoatae ad Fuldan conple ibidemque meum multis annorum curriculis corpus inveteratum perduc*), and he twice casually mentions the monastery at Fulda in the story of the transport and interment of Boniface’s body later on in the *vita*. But Willibald does not discuss the foundation of Fulda in detail, and has nothing specific to say about it other than that Boniface wished to be buried there.

One wonders whether this transposition of Boniface’s laudatory description of the apostolic life of the first monks at Fulda onto the story of the earlier foundation of

\(^{437}\) Emerton #68; Tangl #84.
Ohrdruf might be a result of the on-going conflict with Fulda concerning the exile of one of Boniface’s other disciples, Abbot Sturm. As Ian Wood notes,

Willibald wrote his *Vita Bonifatii* either during or immediately after the exile of Sturm, abbot of Fulda, which took place between 763 and 765….If Willibald wrote before 765 he may have been concerned about the implications for Boniface’s reputation of the supposed treason of Sturm, abbot of the martyr’s beloved monastery. If he wrote after 765, Willibald may have been conscious of criticism of Lull’s intervention at Fulda during Sturm’s absence.\(^{438}\)

Wood suggests that Willibald remains tight-lipped about Fulda because he is “not much interested in monasticism.”\(^{439}\) However, it seems to me that Willibald is interested in monasticism,\(^{440}\) but as an illustration of a religious and apostolic ideal. The first three chapters of the *Vita Bonifatii* focus entirely on Boniface’s monastic life in England and his status as an exceptional and obedient monk. Fritzlar and Amöneburg, while not elaborated on in great detail, are discussed at the conclusion of chapter 6, where Willibald assures the reader that Boniface “invited a large number of monks to serve God there, with the result that even to this day praise and blessing and thanksgiving are offered to the Lord our God” (*hiisque non minimam servientium Deo multitudinem subrogavit, ita ut usque hodie gloria et benedicto et gratiarum actio domino Deo devote confertur*).\(^{441}\) Willibald uses Boniface’s words about Fulda to characterize Ohrdruf as an example of the ideal monastic community, thus shifting attention away from Fulda, and toward the earlier foundations in Hessia and Thuringia, perhaps because of the ongoing conflict referred to above. Notably, Willibald’s discussion of Boniface’s ability to attract Anglo-

\(^{438}\) Wood 63.
\(^{439}\) Wood 63.
\(^{440}\) Petra Kehl likewise sees monasticism as an important part of Willibald’s characterization of Boniface. See *Kult und Nachleben* 71.
\(^{441}\) Noble and Head 128-129; Levison 35.
Saxon monks and nuns to aid in his continental missions follows directly from his description of the apostolic life of the monks of Ohrdruf. He writes,

Sique sanctae rumor praedicationis eius diffamatus est in tantumque inolevit, ut per maximam iam Europae partem fama eius perstreperet. Et ex Britannie partibus servorum Dei plurima ad eum…virorum congregationis convenerat multitudo. Quorum quippe quam plurimi regulari se eius institutioine subdiderunt populumque ab erratica gentilitatis profanatione plurimis in locis evocavere. Et alii quidem in provincia Hessorum, alii etiam in Thyringea dispersi late per populum, pagos ac vicos verbum Dei praedicabant.

[By this means the report of his preaching reached far-off lands so that within a short space of time his fame resounded throughout the greater part of Europe. From Britain an exceedingly large number of holy men came to this aid….Of these a considerable number put themselves under his rule and his guidance, and by their help the population in many places was recalled from their errors and profane rites of the heathen gods. While some were in the province of Hesse and others scattered widely among the people of Thuringia, they preached the word of God in the countryside and the villages.] 442

Willibald clearly links the report of Boniface’s rigorous monastic establishments, such as Ohrdruf, to the spread of his fame throughout Christian lands and his ability to draw religious persons from his homeland to staff these monasteries and preach to the people. Willibald mentions explicitly that many of these Englishmen submitted themselves to Boniface’s *regulari…institutione*, that is, his “rule” and “arrangements,” which suggests that the Anglo-Saxon monastics who came over willingly adopted the ascetic discipline of Boniface’s largely Benedictine monastic foundations. 443 Willibald’s depiction of the combination of communal monastic discipline with active, wide-ranging preaching and pastoral care based on the way of life of the first apostles reflects the historical reality of Boniface’s missionary practice, and the allure of this practice for other religious Anglo-Saxons with monastic and missionary inclinations.

442 Levison 34; Noble and Head 128.
443 Willibald was presumably one of these Anglo-Saxon monks himself. On the Benedictinism of Boniface’s monastic foundations, see Nikola Proktsch, “Monastic Observance in the Early Monastic Foundations of Boniface.” *Regula Benedicti Studia* 20 (2001): 129-39.
The scriptural epilogue at the conclusion of chapter six further underscores the significance of the monastic foundations in Hessia and Thuringia for Boniface by linking the saint’s desire to return to these lands to Paul’s desire to return to Rome. After narrating Boniface’s elevation to the archiepiscopate and his subsequent journeys to Bavaria and elsewhere to “preach and make visitations of all the churches” as well as correct heretics, Willibald concludes with this statement:

Et ad fratres sub suae dioeceseon gubernationis constitutos rursus migravit, iuxta illus apostoli cupiditatem habens veniendi ad fratres (Romans 15:23).

[After this he departed from them [the Bavarians] and returned to the people of his own diocese being moved by a desire, as the apostle puts it, to come to his own brethren (Romans 15:23).]

In the passage to which Willibald refers here, Paul writes to the Romans that he has been preaching the Gospel “from Jerusalem round about, as far as unto Illyricum” (ab Hierusalem per circitum usque in Illyricum...praedicavi evangelium), but that the desire to return to the church in Rome has been with him for many years. Willibald uses this allusion to draw parallels between Boniface’s constant movement back and forth between the sites of his missionary work (Hesse, Thuringia, Bavaria) and all their churches and Paul’s peripatetic wanderings throughout the Mediterranean world. His use of the words diocesan and fratres are especially telling in this instance, since Boniface technically did not have a diocese at the time when these events are supposed to have taken place.

Willibald retrospectively has Boniface desire to return to the brethren – that is, the monks – of the region which would later become his diocese in Mainz. Boniface did not receive his fixed see at Mainz until 746. Based on Willibald’s (admittedly muddled) chronology, the journey to Bavaria, the condemnation of the schismatic Eremwulf, and Boniface’s

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444 Levison 36; Noble and Head 129.
445 Romans 15:19-25.
“return to his own brethren” all seem to be taking place sometime between Boniface’s acceptance of the archiepiscopal pallium in 732 and Boniface’s third journey to Rome in 737-8. Fulda was not founded until 744. What this means is that Fulda could not be included in the monasteries that were part of Boniface’s future diocese of Mainz during the period Willibald is referring to. The monasteries to which Willibald’s Boniface wishes to return at this point in the text are Ohrdruf, Fritzlar, and Amöneburg. Writing from Mainz himself, Willibald may be claiming a privileged place for the diocese as an active center of Boniface’s cult apart from Fulda because these other monasteries were the earliest Bonifatian foundations, and, Willibald suggests, were closer to Boniface’s heart during his work in Hessia and Thuringia.

The Representation of Boniface’s Martyrdom in a Pastoral Context

Chapter eight of the *Vita Bonifatii* differs structurally from the seven which come before it, in that it lacks both the prefatory statements concerning the saint’s virtues and a concluding scriptural epilogue. This chapter, which treats Boniface’s promotion of synodal councils in Francia, his appointment of Lull as his successor, and the story of his martyrdom at Dokkum, was originally the last chapter of the *Vita*. Willibald portrays Boniface’s reinstitution of annual synods and councils in Francia as an integral part of his life-long work as a preacher (*per omnem aetatem suam praedicationis studium exercuit*)

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and a “legate of the Roman Church and Apostolic See” (*Romanae ecclesiae sedisque apostolicae legatus*). The practice of holding synods and church councils had fallen off in the Frankish realms due to war and a general climate of violence. Boniface encouraged Carloman to “summon the episcopal synods...in order that both present and later generations should learn spiritual wisdom and should make the knowledge of Christianity available to all. Only in this way could unsuspecting souls escape being ensnared” (*Carlomannum ducem ad congregandum supradictum synodorum conventum sepissime incitavit, ut tam praesentibus quam posteris spiritalis scientiae sapientia patesceret et, aversa animarum circumventione, cognitio christianitatis innotesceret*). From Willibald’s perspective, the ultimate goal of Boniface’s revival of annual church councils was more pastoral than political. While the alliances between Boniface, Carloman, and the Roman pontiffs are made apparent here, the salvation of souls, the promotion of Christian knowledge, and the unity of the Church emerge as the ultimate purposes for reform. Willibald compares Boniface’s councils in the Frankish territories with the councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), arguing that Boniface was continuing the great councils of the early church fathers, who “eradicated heresy” (*eraticata hereticorum*) and “urged later developments in Christian divine law” (*legis divinae augerentur incrementa*). Boniface’s letters concerning the establishment and decisions of these Frankish church councils likewise convey the pastoral motives which underlie them. In his account of the synods to Cuthbert of Canterbury in 747, he details several outcomes of the meeting in order to

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447 Noble and Head 131; Levison 41.
448 Noble and Head 132; Levison 43.
449 Noble and Head 131-2; Levison 41-42.
encourage the English archbishop to adopt the same rulings in his church. These fall into three general categories: faithfulness and obedience to the Roman church and the Pontiff who is the vicar of St. Peter, the education and correction of the lives of priests, monks, and bishops, and the clarification and enforcement of the pastoral duties of priests, bishops, and archbishops. Concerning the third category, Boniface writes:

Statuimus, ut per annos singulos unusquisque presbiter episcopo suo in quadragissima rationem ministerii sui reddat, sive de fide catholica sive de baptismo sive de omni ordine ministerii sui. Statuimus, ut singulis annis unusquisque episcopus parrochiam suam sollicite circumueat, populum confirmare et plebes docere et investigare et prohibere observationes, divinos vel sortilogos, auguria, filacteria, incantationes vel omnes spurcitias gentilium….Statuimus, quod proprium sit metropolitani iuxta canonum statuta subiectorum sibi episcoporum investigare mores et sollicitudinem circa populos, qualis sit, et moneat, ut episcopi a sinodo venientes in propria parrochia cum presbiteris et abbatibus conventum habentes precepta sinodi servare insinuando percipiant.

[We have ordered every priest annually during Lent to render to his bishop an account of his ministry, the state of the Catholic faith, baptism, and every detail of his administration. We have decreed that every bishop shall make an annual visitation of his diocese confirming and instructing the people, seeking out and forbidding pagan rites, divination, fortune-telling, soothsaying, charms, incantations, and all Gentile vileness….We have decreed that it shall be the special duty of the metropolitan to enquire into the conduct of the bishops under him and their care for the people. He shall require them, on their return from the synod, each to hold a meeting in his own diocese with his priests and abbots and urge them to carry out the synodal decrees.]

The goal of these church councils was in part to build up a better trained, more active clergy, and provide avenues of communication and oversight for each class in the ecclesiastical hierarchy in order to increase the effectiveness and reach of pastoral care for the people. Boniface’s emphasis on the bishop’s role in post-baptismal confirmation and the importance of making frequent visitations to everyone in the diocese reflects his own episcopal practice. Drawing on Boniface’s own letters and accounts of his practice.

450 Talbot 35.
451 Tangl #78, 164, l. 25-30 and 165, l. 1-3; 5-10; Talbot #35, 130-1.
promotion of synods and church councils in Francia, Willibald conveys Boniface’s sense of urgency in reforming the infrastructure of the church and shows how the revival of annual synods, as well as his careful selection and establishment of qualified priests and bishops throughout Francia and Germania, made manifest the saint’s apostolic care for his churches.

Willibald narrates the events included in his eighth chapter chronologically, but he does not split the long section concerning Boniface’s martyrdom in Frisia off on its own, despite the fact that combining it with the description of Boniface’s conciliar work and organization of the see of Mainz makes for a very long chapter. In recounting the story of the last years of Boniface’s life, Willibald presents the saint’s final journey to Frisia as something which grows out of his work as a preacher and ecclesiastical organizer, and not as a mission which stands at odds with his desire to reform the Frankish church. Boniface’s martyrdom, like the martyrdom of Paul, functions as the consummation of his systematic reformation of Christian churches and zealous conversion of pagans across a wide expanse of peoples and territories.

The decision to travel to Frisia is presented by Willibald as foreordained by God and personally meaningful for Boniface, who deliberately chooses to end his life in the dangerous mission fields of Frisia “from which he had departed in body though not in spirit” (ad Fresiam, olim corpore, non quidem mente omisam). Here again Willibald emphasizes Boniface’s mindfulness of the Frisians, and his constancy in returning to

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452 Willibald goes on to discuss Boniface’s appointment of (the other) Willibald to the see of Eichstätt and Burchard to the see of Würzburg, as well as his consecration of Lull as his successor to the see of Mainz. See Noble and Head 132-133, and Tangl 43-44.
453 Chapter eight is twice as long as most of the other chapters, with the exception of chapter six, which is still two pages shorter than chapter eight.
454 Noble and Head 133; Levison 46.
them at the end of his life. The letters written by Boniface in the last years of his life do suggest his awareness of his own age and the nearness of death, and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there is certainly reason to believe that Boniface interpreted his own work as fitting the model of the saint’s life. But it is really Willibald’s text which points out clearly the interpretation of Boniface’s journey to Frisia as the intentional fulfillment of a saint’s desire to sacrifice his life in the service of God.

Willibald’s account of Boniface’s preparations for the mission to Frisia as well as the manner in which he died stresses Boniface’s dedication to pastoral care. Prior to leaving Lull in charge of the see of Mainz, Boniface prophesies his own death, but is careful to specify to his successor how he must carry on the work he has begun. Willibald tells us that Boniface “drew up the plans for the construction of further churches and for the evangelization of the people” (insulauit eique per ordinem de ecclesiarum structura et populi doctrina proposuit) and instructed Lull to “bring to completion the building of the churches [he] began in Thuringia. Earnestly recall the people from the paths of error, finish the construction of the basilica at Fulda” (structuram in Thyringea a me ceptam ecclesiarum ad perfectionis terminum deduc; tu populum ab erroris invio instantissime

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455 Emerton #87; Tangl #107.
456 As Katy Cubitt puts it in “Memory” (37-38), “Boniface’s martyrdom was the culmination of a lifetime’s reading.”
457 I say “interpretation” because this is certainly not the only way to read Boniface’s decision to seek martyrdom in Frisia. John P. Hermann “Boniface and Dokkum: Terror, Repetition, Allegory” in Medievalia et Humanistica, New Series 22, ed. Paul Maurice Clogan (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 24-29, critiques the tendency of Anglo-Saxon scholars to sympathize with Boniface’s plight as a martyr and thus overlook the violence of the Frankish against the Frisians as obvious and necessary punishment for the murder of a saint. He writes, “The fruits of Boniface’s struggle were spiritual: Boniface accomplished his life mission, converted the Frisians, and attained sainthood. The fruits of the spiritales agones that Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote of were also worldly and historical. Boniface’s missionary efforts were at the same time expressions of Frankish imperialism, and to resist him was to resist the political designs of the Franks. While it goes too far to say that Boniface provoked Frisian retaliation, it is fair to say that blaming his martyrdom on brigands effaces the politics of violence in free Frisia, casting resistance as mere adventurism. Willibald effaces the politics of missionary activity, but we need not join him in doing so.”
These instructions to continue Boniface’s work of building churches and correcting the people show Willibald’s insistence that Boniface was not neglecting his duties as an archbishop and a missionary in the apostolic tradition by choosing to put himself in harm’s way. He wants to show that Boniface provided for the people and the missionaries under his care before taking on one last expedition to the marshy homeland of the Frisians.

As one might expect, the tone of Willibald’s narrative becomes tense and suspenseful as he moves closer to recounting the saint’s martyrdom. Suddenly, the journey to Frisia which Willibald had described in his account of the two previous trips as “favorable” and “joyful,” becomes filled with dangers. Willibald writes,

[Cumque periculosum fluminum marisque et ingentium aquarum evassit discrimen, in periculum iam sine periculo incedit, gentemque paganum Fresonum visitaret….Per omnem igitur Fresiam pergens, verbum Domini, paganico repulso ritu et erraneo gentilitatis more destructo, instanter praedicabat ecclesiasque, numine confecto dilubrorum, ingenti studio fabricavit. Et multa iam milia hominum, virorum ac mulierum, sed et parvulorum cum commilitione suo chorepiscopo Eoban baptizavit.

[Bravely hazarding the perils of the river, the sea and the wide expanse of the ocean, he passed through dangerous places without fear of danger, and visited the pagan Frisians….this, then, is how he traversed the whole of Frisia, destroying pagan worship and turning away the people from their pagan errors by his preaching of the Gospel. Pagan temples were overthrown and churches were built in their stead. Many thousands of men, women and children were baptized by him, assisted by his fellow missionary and suffragan bishop Eoban….]

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458 Noble and Head 134; Levison 46.
459 In describing Boniface’s first journey to Frisia, Willibald says he “came with favorable winds to Dorestad” (prospero ventorum flatu pervenit ad Dorster), Noble and Head 117; Levison 16; and mentions only that Boniface “joyfully took ship and sailed up the river” (quidem fluminis, magni gavisus gaudio, navigio ascedit) on his second journey to Frisia, Noble and Head 122; Levison 23. Interestingly, even in this account of the river journey, the trip is at first referred to as “safe.” Willibald writes, “taking with him a few companions, he went on board a ship and sailed down the Rhine. Eventually he reached the marshy country of Frisia, crossed safely over the stretch of water, which in their tongue is called Aelmere [Zuider Zee], and made a survey of the lands round about, which up until then had borne no fruit,” (Noble and Head 134).
460 Levison 47; Noble and Head 134.
By including the motif of the perilous sea journey in his narration of the events leading up to Boniface’s martyrdom, Willibald draws on a staple of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The elegiac accounts of hazardous sea voyages in Old English poems such as *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *Andreas*, and the heightened rhetorical mode of sea voyages less explicitly hazardous in heroic poems such as *Elene* and *Beowulf*, to name a few examples, attest to the Anglo-Saxons’ powerful symbolic association of the sea with suffering and death. As Frederick Holson explains, in classical, patristic, and Old English literature, the “journey on or to the sea indicates a change in ontological or social status.”\(^{461}\) There is, Holson says, “something of the heroic about anyone who is bold enough to travel on the sea at all,” allowing the sea-goer to be “born into the heroic world.”\(^{462}\) Willibald deliberately casts Boniface’s final sea-journey in this way to signal the conclusion of the *vita* and to inaugurate a shift to the heroic. As he shows Boniface perilously crossing the liminal space of the sea one last time, Willibald foreshadows the saint’s literal crossing over into the saintly realm of Boniface’s fellow sufferers, the apostles and martyrs.

Willibald’s association between Boniface’s heroic sea-journey and martyrdom of the apostles is strengthened by the striking verbal parallels between the *Vita Bonifatii* and the apostle Paul’s accounts of his own trials and suffering.\(^{463}\) Willibald echoes language from Paul’s well-known catalogue of afflictions in 2 Corinthians 11, where Paul defends his legitimacy as an apostle on the grounds of his frequent suffering. In this forceful passage Paul writes,

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\(^{462}\) Holson 214, 215.

\(^{463}\) See also Luke’s dramatic recounting of Paul’s shipwreck in Acts 27.
...sum ter naufragium feci nocte et die in profundo maris fui in itineribus saepe periculis fluminum periculis latronum periculis ex genere periculis ex gentibus periculis in civitate periculis in solitudine periculis in mari periculis in falsis fratibus...

[thrice I suffered shipwreck: a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren...] 464

Willibald’s repetition of the word periculum (trial, danger, peril) in his relation of Boniface’s voyage (periculosum fluminum...in periculum iam sine periculo) immediately calls to mind Paul’s repetition of periculis in 2 Corinthians. To the reader familiar with the Pauline rhetoric of affliction, the repetition suggests another connection between the two saints.

It is likely that Willibald’s vita was influenced both by the language of Paul and the currency of this language in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon missionary circle. The pervasiveness of the Pauline characterization of suffering through the rhetoric of the dangerous sea-voyage can also be seen in the letters of Boniface. In his stylistic analysis of Boniface’s letters, John-Henry Clay discusses the use of the tempestuous sea metaphor to articulate the suffering and danger inherent in missionary work in letters dated around 735. 465 I note that of the five passages Clay cites as examples of this motif in Boniface’s letters, three of them use language very similar to that employed by Willibald in his account of Boniface’s final sea voyage:

Tangl #30: periculosi maris tempestatibus quatior

Tangl #31: periculosi maris tempestatibus undique quatimur

464 2 Cor. 11: 25-26.
465 Clay 212. Clay treats this stylistic feature as the outworking of Augustine’s “metaphor of the church as a ship caught in a turbulent sea of sin,” whereas I trace it to Paul’s representation of his own dangerous sea journeys as integral to his status and experiences as an apostle of Christ.
Like Boniface himself, Willibald draws upon Paul’s argument in 2 Corinthians and elsewhere that his suffering and hardship validated, indeed proved, his apostolic status. In this way, Willibald subtly counters the views of some of Boniface’s contemporaries and near-contemporaries, such as Alcuin, who criticized the missionary’s decision to place himself in harm’s way.467

Willibald’s emphasis on Boniface’s defiance of danger and his triumph over his bodily frailty demonstrates the saint’s determination to overcome all obstacles of land and sea to carry the Christian faith, even as this passage looks forward to the perils he will face from the Gentiles (ex gentibus periculis). Willibald portrays the aged Boniface in vigorous action: traversing Frisia (Frisiam pergens), destroying pagan worship (paganico repulso ritu), overthrowing temples (numine contracto delubrorum), and building churches (ecclesias...fabricavit). This heightened description of Boniface’s courage in confronting a hostile landscape and people and his single-minded application of the missionary tactics of preaching and church building shapes the saint into the heroic type of the miles Christi.

However, it is important to remember that Boniface did not venture out into this wilderness alone. Willibald impresses upon the reader the apostolic significance of the saint’s last mission by comparing Boniface and the company of priests, deacons, and monks with whom he worked and died with the apostles of Christ. Assisted by “Wintrug,

466 Quoted in Clay 212.
467 Ian Wood (86-88) argues that Alcuin’s Vita Willibrordi may have been written as a negative response to “overemphasis on Boniface as a martyr” and that Alcuin’s failure to mention Boniface in his hagiographic account of his missionary kinsman was a deliberate “defensive action, designed to preserve Willibrord from unfavorable comparisons.” In his article “The Frankish Cult of Martyrs,” Revue Bénédictine 21 (2008): 342, 347, James T. Palmer also discusses critiques of Boniface by Alcuin and other contemporaries who “had reservations about Boniface retiring to seek his own martyrdom.”
Walthere, Ethelhere, priests; Hamrind, Scirbald, and Bosa, deacons; Wachar, Gundaecer, Illehere and Hathowulf, monks,\footnote{Willibald tells us, Boniface and his chorepiscopus Eoban}

Qui etiam in tantum vitae aeternae semen cum sancto Bonifatio late per populum devulgantes, domino Deo patrocinante, diffamaverunt, ut quibus iuxta apostolicae institutionis normam ‘cor erat unum et anima una’ (Acts 4:32) uma eademque et palma esset marteri et remuneratio triumphi.

[[were still spreading the seed of the eternal life] far and wide with great success and were so united in spirit that, in accordance with the teaching of apostolic practice they were ‘of one heart and soul’ (Acts 4:32). Thus they deserved to share in the same crown of martyrdom and the same final eternal reward.\footnote{Levison 48; Noble and Head 135.}]

This biblical passage cited here runs

multitudinis autem credentium erat cor et anima una nec quisquam eorum quae possidebant aliquid suum esse dicebat sed erant illis omnia communia et virtute magna redebant apostoli testimonium resurrectionis Iesu Christi Domini et gratia magna erat in omnibus illis.

[And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul. Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own: but all things were common unto them. And with great power did the Apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord: and great grace was in them all.\footnote{Acts 4:32-33.}]

This is the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}\textquotesingle{s} only direct allusion to the Acts of the Apostles, and it is very carefully placed to situate the last deeds of Boniface and his companions in an apostolic context. The inclusion of this comparison reiterates the apostolic community of missionaries over which Boniface presided by stressing the unity of their way of life and their Christian purpose. The spiritual unity and common, apostolic life of Boniface and his fellow missionaries will be rewarded with a common, apostolic death: martyrdom.

This comparision becomes even more striking when we notice that of the over fifty

\footnotesize{468 Noble and Head 135; Levison 48: \textit{Wintrung et Waltheri, simul et Ethelheri, sacerdotali presbiteratus officio praeditis; Hamund, Scirbald et Bosa, levitarum obsequio deputatis; Wacchar et Gundaecer, Illehere et Hathovulf, monasteriali monachorum ordine sublevatis.} \hfill 469 Levison 48; Noble and Head 135. \hfill 470 Acts 4:32-33.}
companions who are known to have died at Dokkum with Boniface, Willibald mentions only ten names – three priests, three deacons, and four monks. These ten men, plus Boniface and his suffragan bishop Eoban, total twelve. In Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii*, these men are the twelve named, and martyred, apostles to the Frisians.471

The story of Boniface’s martyrdom is well known and the difficulties inherent in it have been discussed extensively elsewhere.472 The exact nature and motivation of the pagan throng who overtook Boniface’s camp on that morning in Dokkum,473 the number of companions who perished with Boniface474 and the veracity of the pagans’ theft and Christian recovery of the books in caskets475 have all been the subjects of historical study and speculation in recent decades. Indeed, much scholarly attention has been centered on Willibald’s presentation of Boniface as a hero in the tradition of Germanic poetry,476 or the moving image supplied by the later anonymous *vitae* of Boniface “seeking to shield his head with the book he had been reading in the tent, ‘desiring to be defended in death

471 As far as I can tell, no one has picked up on Willibald’s allusion to the twelve apostles in only naming eleven of Boniface’s companions plus the saint.
474 Richard E. Sullivan points out in “The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan,” *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 706-707 that “two different accounts list the number that died with Boniface as fifty and fifty-three; see E martyrologio Fuldense, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRG usum scholarum (Hannover: 1905), 60; Bedae continuatio, a. 754, ed. Carolus Plummer, vol. I, 362.” I have also seen the number given as 52 or even 54 in the scholarship.
476 For example, Henry Mayr-Harting writes in his *Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition (London: Batsford, 1991), 227-228, that Willibald’s account of the martyrdom of Boniface has much in common with “the very picture of a lord surrounded by his faithful band, his comitatus, who share his fate in a surprise attack” in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*’s 757 entry on Cynwulf and Cynheahd, arguing that the depiction of Boniface and his clergy reflect the “relations between a secular leader and his war-band” and that the tale of the book-chests mistaken for treasure also has a heroic ring to it.
by the book he had loved to read in life.”

However, focusing on Willibald’s account of Boniface’s last words before the Frisians attack reveals the significance of the episode’s pastoral context.

Prior to his martyrdom, Boniface is presented conventionally, but not insignificantly, in his role as preacher and bishop, preparing to “confirm by laying on of hands all the neophytes [that day] and those who were recently baptized” (confirmationis neobitorum diem et nuper baptizatorum ab episcope manus impositionis). A staunch supporter of post-baptismal confirmation for the newly baptized, Boniface had argued throughout his career for the essential role of the bishop in ensuring the religious education of recent converts. Thus, Willibald shows us Boniface in a characteristically pastoral pose before his death, one which accords well with the episcopal ideal which he himself set out in numerous letters and synods, and which Willibald himself has been careful to construct throughout the vita by punctuating accounts of the saint’s missionary successes with statements concerning the confirmation of the faith by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands. But as Willibald tells us,

Cum autem praedictus dies inluxisset et aurora lucis, orto iam sole, prorumperet, tunc etiam versa vice pro amicis inimici et novi denique lictores pro noviciis fidei cultoribus advenerant, hostiumque ingens in castra, bibrantibus armis, astata ac scutata inruerat multitudo.

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477 Greenaway 80.
478 Records from synods, councils, and Boniface’s own letters routinely demonstrate the missionary’s concern with the bishop’s involvement in the pastoral care of his diocese, and the necessity for bishops to regularly observe priests and their congregations, especially by participating in annual rituals of post-baptismal confirmation, which, according to Boniface, could only be performed by the bishop himself. For example, Theodor Schieffer (210) reminds us that at Boniface’s Concilium Germanicum of April 743 “Die in Vergessenheit geratenen Rechte und Pflichten des Bischofs, namentlich seine Aufsichtsbefugnisse gegenüber dem Klerus, mußten von der Synode neu eingeschränkt werden. Jeder Priester unterstehe dem Bischof, in dessen Bezirk er wohne, und habe ihm regelmäßig in der Fastenzeit über seine Amtsführung, d. h. Taufen, Glaubenslehre, Gebet, Meßordnung, Rechenschaft abzulegen; am Gründonnerstag solle er das neue Salböl holen, vor dem Oberhirten auch über sich selber, insbesondere über seinen keuschen Lebenswandel, Zeugnis ablegen, so wie er auch mit dem Volk zum Empfang des Bischofs bei Visitations- und Firmungsreisen bereit sein müsse.”
When the appointed day arrived and the morning light was breaking through the clouds after sunrise, enemies came instead of friends, new executioners in place of new worshippers of the faith. A vast number of foes armed with spears and shields rushed into the camp brandishing their weapons.\textsuperscript{479}

At first, the reader is struck by the tragedy of humble priests and bishops doing God’s will overcome by “the frenzied mob of pagans” (\textit{confestim furens...paganorum tumultus}).\textsuperscript{480} The ambush of Christ’s soldiers in their camp presents a dramatic shift in fortune. But Willibald inverts the tragic dimension of these events by providing a Christian interpretation which reclaims the slaughter of Boniface and his companions in the heroic idiom of the \textit{Dream of the Rood}. Willibald’s Boniface chooses to sacrifice himself, and vocalizes this decision to embrace the heavenly reward of martyrdom in a long, sermon-like speech. As his last words in the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}, this passage deserves quoting at length:

Et confestatim increpando pueris pugnae interdixit certamen, dicens: ‘Cessate, pueri, a conflictu pugnaeque deponite bellum, quoniam scripturae testimonio veraciter erudimur, et ne malum pro malo, sed etiam bonum pro malis reddamus (1 Thess 5:15). Iam enim diu optatus adest dies et spontaneum resolutionis nostrae tempus inminet (cf. 2 Tim 4:6). Confortamini igitur in Domino et permissionis suae gratiam grantanter sufferte; sperante in eum, et liberavit animas vestras.’ Sed et adstantes tam presbiteros quam etiam diacones inferiorisque ordinis viros, Dei subditos servitio, patria admonens voce, ait: ‘Viri fratres, forti estote animo, et ne terreamini ab his, qui occidunt corpus, quoniam animam sine fine manentem necare non possunt (Matt 10:28); se gaudete in Domino et spei vestrae ancoram in Deum figite, quia extemplo perpetuae reddet vobis remunerationis mercedem et caelestis aulae sedem cum supernis angelorum civibus condonat. Nolite vos vana huius mundi delectatione subicere, nolite caducis gentilium adolationibus delectare; sed subitaneum hic constanter subite mortis articulum, ut regnare cum Christo possitis in evum.’

\textsuperscript{479} Noble and Head 135; Levison 49.
\textsuperscript{480} Noble and Head 136; Levison 50.
He has mercifully ordained. Put your trust in Him and He will grant deliverance to your souls'. And addressing himself like a loving father to the priests, deacons, and other clerics, all trained to the service of God, who stood about him, he gave them courage, saying: ‘Brethren, be of stout heart. Fear not them who kill the body, for they cannot slay the soul (Matt 10:28), which continues to live for ever. Rejoice in the Lord; anchor your hope in God, for without delay He will render to you the reward of eternal bliss and grant you an abode with the angels in His heaven above. Be not slaves to the transitory pleasures of this world. Be not seduced by the vain flattery of the heathen, but endure with steadfast mind the sudden onslaught of death, that you may be able to reign evermore with Christ.’

Boniface’s final speech is more than a call to pacifism before violence or Christian surrender to the will of God. It is the only concrete example of Boniface preaching in the entire *Vita Bonifatii*, and an illustration of his pastoral role as an archbishop. In putting together this ‘sermon,’ Willibald has Boniface echo and recall three significant passages from Scripture, two from the Pauline epistles, and one from the Gospel account of Christ’s commission to the apostles. Boniface first quotes Paul’s exhortation to the Thessalonians that they must “not render evil for evil,” thus appropriately using the Apostle’s words to encourage his companions in Christian pacifism and Christian faith in the power of goodness to overcome evil.

His second scriptural reference, while more indirect, is nonetheless more evocative. The verse Willibald has Boniface echo, 2 Timothy 4:6, concerns Paul’s disposition to die for his faith, and his acknowledgment to his disciple Timothy of his imminent death. Addressing Timothy from Rome shortly before his own martyrdom, Paul writes, “For I am even now ready to be sacrificed and the time of my dissolution is at hand” (*ego enim iam delibor et tempus meae resolutionibus instat*). This verse follows Paul’s injunction to Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” and prefaces the Apostle’s assertion that he has “fought a good fight, [he has] finished his course, [he has] kept the

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481 Levison 49-50; Noble and Head 135-136.
faith.” As we have seen, both of these verses, 2 Timothy 4:5 and 4:7, resonate in the corpus of Boniface’s letters, and occur in contexts where Boniface’s correspondents encourage him to pursue his mission with apostolic diligence and dedication. Here at the close of his Vita Bonifatii, Willibald enlists the language of Paul’s knowing self-sacrifice to portray Boniface as an apostolic martyr, and to show how Boniface, like Paul, exhorts his followers to “fight the good fight” in their lives and deaths. Paul’s “tempus meae resolutionibus” becomes Boniface’s and his companions’ “resolutionis tempus nostrae.”

For the third biblical citation in his speech, Willibald has Boniface recall the words of Christ himself, when he first commissioned his twelve disciples and instructed them in the ways of an apostle in Matthew 10. Among the lessons given by Jesus to his apostles, Christ admonishes them “fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell” (nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus animam autem non possunt occidere sed potius eum timete qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam). In this way, Boniface reminds his frightened company that, as Christ’s apostolic missionaries, they too must be willing to surrender their bodies to their worldly, but not spiritual, enemies. The killing of their bodies is the fulfillment of their endeavor to “preach upon the housetops” that which they “hear in the ear” (quod in aure auditis praedicate super tecta, Matt 10:27).

While some of the phrases Willibald puts in the mouth of Boniface pertain to the context and apply primarily to his soon-to-be-martyred companions, much of this exhortation remains broadly applicable to all Christians, and to an audience of clerics, monastics, and missionaries in particular. Boniface’s calls for faith in God’s mercy and willingness to endure suffering and bodily death are couched in the general terms of a
pastor seeking to embolden his congregation in belief and perseverance. In fact, the last statement of Boniface’s speech seems scarcely relevant to his immediate audience, since he commands his hearers “be not seduced by the vain flattery of the heathen” (nolite caducis gentilium adolationibus delectare). The Frisian attackers, be they pirates or rebel fighters, were hardly offering ‘vain flattery’ to Boniface and his cohort on that June morning.

What I am suggesting is that Willibald has deliberately constructed a dramatic ‘sermon’ for Boniface’s last words, one which speaks to the pathos of martyrdom, but also simultaneously addresses the hagiographer’s own contemporary audience of fellow missionaries and churchmen in Germania. Indeed, he interrupts the flow of the speech to assert that Boniface “address[ed] himself like a loving father to the priests, deacons, and other clerics, all trained to the service of God, who stood about him” (sed et adstantes tam presbyteros quam etiam diacones inferiorisque ordinis viros, Dei servitos servitio, patria admonens voce, ait).482 While this literally refers to Boniface’s company of fellow missionaries, the lack of specific names here and the generic designations of religious ordines and ‘servants of God’ equally applies to Willibald’s intended readership. Here, Boniface, the missionary archbishop and primary reason for their presence on the Continent, speaks to them “like a loving father” whose words of spiritual encouragement apply equally in their own time, and to their own situation in the liminal zones between Boniface’s newly Christian heartland, and the pagan regions of Saxony and uncharted Germania which extend into the east. It is for them, and for the larger audience of Christian Europe and Anglo-Saxon England that Willibald writes his life of Boniface,

482 Noble and Head 135; Levison 50.
and in his final words, the saint speaks to them as well as to “his disciples” who would “accept the crown of martyrdom” (discipulos ad coronam martyrii affabiliter). 483

Scriptural Epilogues and Typological Structure in the Vita Bonifatii

Willibald continues chapter eight of the Vita Bonifatii with a lengthy account of the Frisian attackers’ unknowing theft of Boniface’s chests of books and relics, the violent retribution of the Christians for Boniface’s murder and the resultant forced conversion of the remaining Frisians, and the saga of the much-contested and miracle-ridden journey of Boniface’s remains from Utrecht to Mainz to Fulda. 484 The last paragraph of this chapter, which was originally the final chapter of the work, 485 describes the posthumous healing miracles at Boniface’s tomb in Fulda, and ends with a formulaic recitation of the circumstances of Boniface’s life and martyrdom for his sanctity, a rehearsal of the fundamental information necessary for his commemoration as a saint, followed by an “Amen.” 486 This concluding formula with its prayer-like ending has

483 Noble and Head 135; Levison 50.

484 While these episodes are all extremely significant for an understanding of history, they are less important for our purposes and have been treated in scholarly detail elsewhere. For more information on these aspects of the conclusion of Willibald’s Vita Bonifatii, see especially Hermann’s “Boniface and Dokkum” and Wood’s The Missionary Life in addition to the standard historical biographies of Boniface, such as Schieffer’s Winfrid-Bonifatius und die christliche Grundlegung Europas. On the subject of the cults of Boniface at Utrecht, Mainz and Fulda, see Kehl, Kult und Nachleben des heiligen Bonifatius im Mittelalter, as well as Anton Brück, “Zur Bonifatiusverehrung in Mainz,” and Anton Mayer, “Religions- und kultgeschichtliche Züge in Bonifatianischen Quellen,” Sankt Bonifatius: Gedenkgabe zum zwölffundertsten Todestag (Fulda: Parzeller, 1954), among others.


486 Noble and Head 139: “God deigned to honor and enrich His servant, who possessed this great gift [of healing], and glorified him in the eyes of present and future ages, forty years after his pilgrimage was over, i.e., 716, which year is reckoned as the year of the Incarnation of our Lord seven hundred and fifty-five, the
prompted scholars such as P. Bruder to argue that Willibald intended his *Vita Bonifatii* to be read in a liturgical context. As Petra Kehl points out, the remarkably regular structure of the *vita*, with each chapter’s inclusion of a brief summary at the beginning and a scriptural epilogue at the end, suggests that the work was crafted to be read aloud, chapter by chapter, perhaps one chapter a day for the week leading up to the feast day of St. Boniface. Walter Berschin’s observation of the elegant symmetry of the *Vita Bonifatii*’s scriptural epilogues supports this assertion, as he notices that the first epilogue consists of a “*Herrenwort,*” that is, the words of Christ from the Gospel of Matthew, followed by six Pauline quotations, and concluding with a “doxology,” the “Amen” which forms the last word of the original text.

To Berschin’s point I would add that this structural element also appears to have a specific typological significance which is relevant to both the hagiographical and liturgical context of the work. Willibald uses these scriptural epilogues to enable the reader to chart Boniface’s journey toward fulfillment of the type of an apostle, specifically the type of Paul. By beginning his series of scriptural comparisons with a *Herrenwort,* Willibald is recognizing that Paul is himself a type of Christ, and that the

eighth indiction. He occupied the episcopal thirty-six years, six months, and six days. Thus, in the manner described above, on the fifth day of June, crowned with the palm of martyrdom, he departed to the Lord, to whom be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Levison 55, lines 5-13 and 56, lines 1-2: “...*qui suum dignatus est servum tanto munere decoratum ditare et honorare et, praesentibus ac secturis seculorum temporibus chorusca miraculorum patefactione ostensa, quadragesimo peregrinationis eius anno revoluto glorificare; qui et incarnationis Domini DCCLV, annus cum indicatione octava computatur. Sedit autem in episcopatu annos XXXVI menses VI et dies VI. Et sic ordine suprascripto die nonarum Iun, martyrii triumpho remuneratus, migravit ad Dominum, cui est honor et gloria in secula seculorum. Amen.*”


Kehl 64.

Berschin 12.
apostolic life is itself an *imitatio Christi*.490 The Gospel passage which Willibald chooses for the conclusion of chapter one is especially significant in this respect:

Sique vir Dei, carnale orbatus patre, adoptivum nostrae redemptionis secutus est patrem, terrenisque saeculi renuntians lucris, mercimonium deinceps aeternae hereditatis adquirere satagebat, ut iuxta veridicam veritatis vocem patrem reliquendo aut matrem aut agros aut alia, quae huius mundi sunt, centuplum acciperet et vitam aeternam possideret (Matt 19:29).

In this way the man of God was bereaved of his earthly father and embraced the adoptive Father of our redemption. He thus renounced all worldly and transitory possessions for the sake of acquiring the eternal inheritance in order that, to quote the words of the Gospel, by forsaking father and mother and lands and the other things of this world he might receive a hundredfold hereafter and possess everlasting life (Matt. 19:29).491

In the context of the Gospel passage, Christ utters the words alluded to by Willibald in response to the Apostle Peter’s question, “Behold, we have left all things, and we have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?” (Matt 19:27).492 Jesus answers with a statement of the reward that apostles and those who live like them, that is, those who forsake all worldly good and familiar connections for Jesus’ sake, will receive in heaven.

By citing these words at the beginning of the story of the saint’s life, Willibald signals Boniface’s conformity to Christ’s call to perfection and his worthiness to receive the promised reward in heaven. This conformity to Christ’s injunction initiates the

490 In *Events and their Afterlife* (151-52), A. C. Charity explains concerning Luke’s portrayal of Paul in Acts that “We move in a realm where typology, at least the typology of salvation, is still relevant after Christ although fulfilled in him. It is evident that, for Luke, Paul’s ‘passion’, like his master’s, begins in Jerusalem, and that, though the apostle’s martyrdom is more protracted, the events which will bring it on are henceforward in train. The Pauline theology of living ‘in Christ’ and dying ‘in him’ – ‘to share in his sufferings, in growing conformity with him, if only I may arrive at the reurrection of the dead’ (Phil. 3:11; 2 Cor. 4:10ff.) – has its counterpart here in life….Typology stays with us even in the new dispensation, in the Church’s and the believer’s commitment to the ‘imitation of Christ’….the presentation of the fate of Stephen and of Paul’s way to Jerusalem is typological in the way that frequently Gospel narratives themselves are: the narration of one event is designed to recall the circumstances surrounding another.”

491 Levison 7; Noble and Head 112.

492 The Apostle Peter also serves as a model for Boniface’s life, although his significance is dwarfed by the heavy resonance of Pauline allusions and comparisons in both the letters and Willibald’s *vita*. The significance of Peter for Boniface has been treated in Theodor Zwölfer, *Sankt Peter: Apostelfürst und Himmelspförner – seine Verehrung bei den Angelsachsen und Franken* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1929) and Luchesius Spätling, “Die Petrusverehrung in den Bonifatius-Briefen,” *Antonianum* 42 (1967): 531-552.
correspondence of Boniface to Paul, the apostle who most clearly saw himself as “living ‘in Christ’ and dying ‘in him.’”

The multiplication of Pauline scriptural epilogues in chapters two through seven forms a kind of spiritual gradus, a sequence of correspondences which accumulate in the mind of the reader who recognizes the biblical texts and recalls their scriptural contexts and significance. The intertextual weaving of these Paulusworte, as Berschin calls them, formalizes and crystallizes the typological resonances which, as we have seen, are scattered throughout the corpus of Boniface’s correspondence. By ending chapter eight with a recapitulation of Boniface’s martyrdom as an historical event, datable by religious and secular calendars, instead of another scriptural comparison, Willibald indicates to his readers that Boniface, by dying for the faith, has fulfilled the typological comparison.

In the words of A. C. Charity,

the typological presentation signals a life which grows out of a spiritual conformity to Christ and which participates in the new existence God opens up. It signals a life that is in this way the fruit of redemption, an ethical existence, ‘righteousness’ which is given from heaven (according to Eph. 2:8) through faith, and whose only form is the form Christ gave it. ‘Can you drink from the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ (Mark 10:38) is the question which this typology answers on behalf of its subject.

The vita’s final “Amen” answers this question for Boniface with an emphatic ‘yes’.

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493 Charity 151.
494 Kehl (77-78) explains that liturgical veneration of Boniface occurred first in Dokkum and Utrecht as well as in England soon after his martyrdom, although the earliest evidence for the celebration of the saint’s feast day on June 5th does appear until the Vita altera Bonifatii in the first half of the 9th century. The earliest liturgical manuscript to give Boniface’s feast day is the so-called Godescale-Evangelistary, which dates from the 8th century, and was commissioned by Charlemagne and his wife Hildegard. Kehl notes (78) that this manuscript “ist das erste kontinentale, nicht angelsächsische geprägte Kalendar überhaupt, das seinen Namen enthält und uns überliefert ist.” The Godescale-Evangelistar is believed to be derived from an Anglo-Saxon exemplar despite the absence of other Anglo-Saxon saints in the calendar overall. Boniface is also named in a litany from the 8th century known as Charlemange’s Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat. 13159).
495 Charity 152-3.
Beyond the *Vita Bonifatii*: Apostolic Discourse in the Wider Missionary Milieu

The saint, still alive to the memory of many of Willibald’s contemporaries (and to no one more than the work’s sponsor, Lull) moved in his martyrdom from the realm of historical time, into the eternal and cyclical time of the saints, into liturgical time. In his fulfillment of the type of Paul, he no longer needs to be compared to him, but rather, can take his place in the liturgical calendar and in the memories of Christians alongside the apostle. Whether Willibald initially intended the saint’s life for liturgical reading or not, his contemporaries and successors clearly interpreted the text this way. According to Petra Kehl, “nichtsdestoweniger fand sie [die *Vita Bonifatii*] im Rahmen der klösterlichen Liturgie Verwendung, wie eine Betrachtung der Überlieferungsform der ältesten Exemplare der Vita belegt.”

The currency of the link between Boniface and Paul in a liturgical context is independently attested by the text for a votive mass for Saint Boniface written in 801-802 by no less a figure than Alcuin of York, and sent in a letter to the monastery of Fulda, along with a pallium identical to that of St. Martin at Tours to decorate the tomb of their patron saint. Alcuin deliberately models the prayer for the votive mass on the prayer for the feast day of the Apostle Paul, essentially copying its form with a few changes of

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wording to fit the new context and application. In this way Alcuin both acknowledges Paul as Boniface’s forbear, and claims that this latter-day apostle is worthy of similar veneration and commemoration. Alcuin carried his comparison of Boniface with Paul even further in a poem written at the behest of his student Luidger which was intended to serve as the inscription for the church at Dokkum dedicated to both saints on the spot where Boniface and his companions were martyred. Alcuin concludes the verse with a prayer for the help of both Paul and Boniface together: Adiuvat hinc Paulus, doctor Bonifatius inde, / Haec illis quoniam constat simul aula dicata. Kehl claims that these lines are “die ersten Belege für einen ausdrücklichen Vergleich des Angelsachsen mit Paulus;” however, as I have shown above, overt comparisons between Boniface and Paul form a major discursive component of the early writings of Boniface and his circle, and especially the first Vita Bonifatii. There is little evidence for Alcuin’s knowledge of Boniface’s letters or Willibald’s Vita Bonifatii. However, it is precisely because of this lack of direct contact with other Bonifatian source materials that Alcuin’s liturgical and poetic texts show the widespread currency of Boniface’s association with Paul among Anglo-Saxons living within the Carolingian sphere of influence.

499 Kehl 76.
501 Kehl 76.
502 Wood 87; Kehl 56.
Alcuin’s own hagiographic treatment of an Anglo-Saxon missionary saint, the *Vita Willibrordi*,⁵⁰³ has been seen by some as a potential backlash against the dominance of Boniface’s legacy in the Frankish and Germanic realms because it asserts the success of Willibrord’s mission to the Frisians and fails to mention Boniface.⁵⁰⁴ Alcuin’s *Vita Willibrordi*, with its emphasis on preaching to the seeming exclusion of other concerns, may seem like a reaction against the kinds of ‘worldly’ employments which governed Boniface’s life and career if we see these two aspects of the missionary life – the bureaucratic and the pastoral – as somehow separate from one another.

However, this distinction produces a false dichotomy that obscures more than it illuminates. As I have shown above, Willibald situates his account of Boniface’s martyrdom, the very thing which Wood argues Alcuin objected to,⁵⁰⁵ in a pastoral context that the author of the *Vita Willibrordi*, with its valorization of preaching, baptism, and pastoral care, would not be opposed to.⁵⁰⁶ Moreover, both Willibald’s and Alcuin’s

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⁵⁰⁴ Wood 86-88. Wood’s view is, in part, an attempt to correct earlier, exaggerated views of Willibrord as a ‘lesser Boniface,’ as Eugene Honee explains in “St. Willibrord in Recent Historiography,” *Missions and Missionaries*, ed. Pieter Holtrop and Hugh McLeod, Studies in Church History Subsidia 13 (Woodbridge, 2000), 19: “According to the older historiography, Willibrord is said to have come to the continent full of the same Roman spirit which had inspired Wilfrid. Willibrord is described as a Benedictine monk who had devoted his heart and soul to the pope and who transplanted the diocesan structure of the Church as well as the Benedictine Rule from England to the continent.….Willibrord was not only looked upon as a pupil of Wilfrid but as a predecessor of Boniface. It is generally known that his younger contemporary not only worked as a missionary but also as a reformer of the Frankish church. In this capacity he made every effort, at a great many synods, to bring about the introduction of the Roman liturgy, Benedictine Rule, and the strict observance of canonical rules as they had been preserved in Rome. The truth is that Willibrord experts were inclined to attribute to Willibrord the same qualities which were demonstrably present in Boniface.” Honee’s characterization of older scholarship on these two missionary saints is correct; however, it does not follow that in order to see Willibrord as a figure independent of Boniface’s interests and concerns, we must also see him, and his hagiographer, Alcuin, as antagonistic toward those concerns, or dismissive of Boniface’s missionary practices, reformist views, and desire for martyrdom.
⁵⁰⁵ Wood (87) argues that Alcuin “rejects martyrdom as a serious aspect of evangelisation” and thus “denies the value of martyrdom and thus a portion of the Bonifatian tradition.”
⁵⁰⁶ The following passage, Chapter 8 of the *Vita Willibrordi* (Noble and Head 198), may be taken as indicative of the concerns and tone of the text as a whole: “Having received the blessing of the apostolic authority, the devoted preacher of God’s Word returned with increased confidence to the leader of the
vitae enlist a similar rhetoric of mission and apostleship,\textsuperscript{507} and both emphasize the importance of preaching over miracles,\textsuperscript{508} despite their apparent differences in tone, scope, and historical context.\textsuperscript{509} My point in gesturing towards these broad parallels between the works of Willibald and Alcuin is not to deny the distinctions between the

Franks. Pepin welcomed him with every mark of esteem and then dispatched him, armed with his authority to preach the Gospel, more especially in the northern parts of his dominions, where, owing to the scarcity of teachers and the obduracy of the inhabitants, the light of faith shone less brightly. The more clearly the man of God saw the need of overcoming the ignorance and arresting the spiritual famine in these districts, the more vigorously he preached the Word of God. How great was the success that, through the help of divine grace, attended his labours is attested to even in these days by the people whom in the cities, villages, and fortified towns he brought to the knowledge of truth and the worship of Almighty God by his holy admonitions. Other evidence is to be found in the churches that he built in each place and in the communities of monks and nuns whom he gathered together in various localities.”

\textsuperscript{507} In “Alcuin’s Narratives of Evangelism: The Life of St. Willibrord and the Northumbrian Hagiographical Tradition,” The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe 300-1300, ed. Martin Carver (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), 271-381, Kate Rambridge shows that Alcuin “asserts his conviction that the labor of evangelism is an apostolic responsibility conferred on the Church by Christ. He drives home his argument with emphatic reference to two passages from the Gospels which are crucial to the role of the Church in the age of conversion: these are Luke 10:2-3, which records Christ’s instructions to his disciples to preach amongst the people, and Matt. 20:1-16, which gives the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. These two passages deploy a figurative theme that recurs throughout the Bible: imagery of irrigation, nourishment, and cultivation….In the Gospel it most often occurs in Matthew and Luke, as well as in the letters of St. Paul. The language of nurture and nourishment, variously expressed in the images of sowing, irrigation, harvest and provision of food….is, in the Bible, the language of spiritual health and growth. The conjunction of this figurative theme with Christ’s command to his apostles resonates throughout the early medieval Church, and it is fundamental to Alcuin’s understanding of the imperative of evangelism.” These themes and the language of the harvest are also integral to the apostolic discourse exercised by Boniface, his correspondents and Willibald in his \textit{vita}, as I have shown above.

\textsuperscript{508} While the second half of the \textit{Vita Willibrordi} is, in fact, taken up with miracle stories, Alcuin expresses an attitude of resignation about having to report them, stating at the mid-point of the \textit{vita} that “the ministry of preaching the Gospel is to be preferred to the working of miracles and the showing of signs” but that he will “not suppress” the miracle stories about Willibrord since people want to hear them; Noble and Head 201.

\textsuperscript{509} Alcuin was writing his \textit{Vita Willibrordi} in the context of Charlemagne’s (often violent) attempts to convert the pagan Saxons and Avars to Christianity as a part of his program of imperial expansion. Reinhard Schneider’s article “Karl der Große: politisches Sendungsbewusstsein und Mission” \textit{Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte}, vol. 2.1 Die Kirche des früheren Mittelalters, ed. Knut Schäferdiek (Münster, 1978), 241-244, explains that Alcuin was deeply concerned that these peoples were being converted against their will, and without proper religious education to ensure their ability to maintain their new faith: “Riesig war die Aufgabe, die sich nach dem Taufvollzug bei der Lehre und Verkündigung christlichen Glaubensgutes sowie bei der kirchlichen Durchdringung des unterworfenen Landes ergab. Ob sich der reichsfürsächsische Klerus dieser Verpflichtung voll zu widmen verstand, ist nicht erkennbar. Nicht auszuschließen bleibt jedenfalls, daß eine entsprechende Feststellung Alkuins nicht nur punktuell die wahren Verhältnisse bezeichnet hat, wenn er einmal schrieb: ‘Würde mit der gleichen Beharrlichkeit das sanfte Joch Christi und seine leichte Last dem starren Sachsenvolk verkündigt, mit welcher Leistung der Zehnten und strenge Bußen für die leichtesten Vergehen gefordert werden, so würden sie vielleicht die Taufe nicht verabsähen.’” Some have read the heavy emphasis on preaching, baptism and religious education of the laity as a reflection of Alcuin’s anxieties about and a critique of Charlemagne’s policy of forced conversion.
two saints’ lives or the priorities and preferences of their authors. Rather, I am suggesting that, as a work which was written within the Anglo-Saxon missionary milieu on the continent, but independently of the direct textual tradition of Boniface’s letters and earliest saint’s life, the similarities in biblical rhetoric, pastoral emphasis, and monastic point of view between the Bonifatian texts and Alcuin’s *Vita Willibrordi* attest to the pervasiveness of the Anglo-Saxons’ distinctive way of thinking and speaking about mission as the fulfillment of an apostolic ideal.
CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETING APOSTOLHAD IN CYNEWULF’S THE FATES OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction

At the conclusion of Chapter 1 on the correspondence of Boniface I argued that the modern conception of what it means to be a “missionary” is essentially anachronistic for early medieval religious figures such as Boniface. Since the language of apostleship appears again and again in the descriptions of their contemporaries and followers, and was often used (implicitly or explicitly) by Anglo-Saxons religious working on the continent to describe themselves, the term “apostolic” better represents their self-identification. In Chapter 2, I showed how this conception of Boniface as an “apostolic man” led his first hagiographer, Willibald of Mainz, to compare his subject to the Apostle Paul. Willibald continually juxtaposes Boniface’s words and deeds with those of Paul in order to show Boniface as a contemporary fulfillment of the apostolic ideals of preaching and martyrdom. In my examination of this early Bonifatian material, I observed that the concept of apostolicity was not considered to be exclusive to the twelve disciples of Jesus, and that the designation of apostolicus serves as an available category of religious person and a model for Christian living in the early Anglo-Saxon missionary milieu of the eighth and ninth centuries.

The second half of my project considers how and why concepts of apostolic identity endure in Anglo-Saxon Christian literary culture, even after the island’s peoples have been converted (some more, some less), and the churches and monasteries founded
by Boniface and his followers in Germania have come into their own and are no longer in need of constant, direct support from English missionaries.  

Why do the examples of the apostles remain relevant (even prevalent) in Anglo-Saxon religious writing once England and much of western Europe has become securely Christian in faith and practice? How do the discursive conventions and significance of this apostolic identity change, particularly in the ninth and tenth centuries, when they are adapted to the comparatively novel medium of the written vernacular? These are some of the questions we will be exploring in the second half of this project as we look at three works of Old

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510 This happened primarily under the descendants of Charlemagne; as Wilhelm Levison explains in *England and the Continent* 165-16, that several Anglo-Saxon friends and pupils of Alcuin were appointed to important church and monastic positions within Francia during Charlemagne’s rule, but the last of these, Fridgus, who died in 834, “closed the series of Anglo-Saxon immigrations in the Carolingian age.” Thereafter Alcuin’s intellectual and religious legacy was carried out by native Franks and Germans whom he had trained; as Levison puts it, “the leadership in the intellectual revival had passed from the Anglo-Saxons to the great king and emperor [Charlemagne]; side by side with Echternach, Fulda and Hersfeld other monasteries which had no English founders now followed in the same line….Foreign contribution, like that of the Irishmen John [Eriugena] and Sedulius, became the exception.” This is not to say that all contact between Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent ceased, especially in religious circles; rather, the direction of influence shifted, to the extent that Alfred had to seek the assistance of the Franks and Germans “to restore learning in England when its decay had been aggravated by the invasions of the Vikings” less than sixty years after the death of Fridigis.

511 The following three chapters deal only with the major poetic representations of the apostles in the vernacular; the apostles are also featured in several other Old English works, including the Old English “Metrical Calendar,” ASPR VI, ed. E. V. K. Dobbie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 49-55; the Old English “Martyrology” (ed. G. Herzfeld, EETS os 116, London, 1900); Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), *Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 5 (London: Oxford, 1979), and *Lives of Saints*, Parts 1 and 2, ed. and trans. Walter Skeat, EETS 76, 82, 94, 114 (London: Trübner, 1881-1890), and the anonymous *Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, ed. R. Morris, EETS os 58, 63, 73 (London: Trübner, 1874-1880) and *Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. Donald Scragg, EETS os 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). In the future I hope to expand the scope of this project to include these works, especially the prose homiletic texts.

English religious poetry, Cynewulf’s *The Fates of the Apostles* and *Christ II: Ascension*, and finally, the anonymous *Andreas*.

The names of two Old English poets have come down to us. The first is Cædmon, the cowherd turned poet, whose single nine-line poem, known as “Cædmon’s Hymn,” was made famous by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. The second is Cynewulf, an otherwise unknown writer of religious poetry, whose four extant poems, known as *Fates of the Apostles, Christ II (Ascension), Juliana* and *Elene*, were signed by him in riddling fashion using the runic alphabet. These passages, usually called “runic epilogues” because of their placement at the conclusions of the poems, are often introduced by the poet’s lamentations on the state of his own soul and his fear of Judgment Day, and sometimes contain challenges to the reader to unscramble and decipher the runic letters and thus identify the name of the poet so that he can pray for his salvation. Aside from the vague and conventional information provided in his epilogues, Cynewulf’s poems provide very few clues about his life and circumstances, or where and when he lived. At the conclusion of *Elene*, the figure designated as ‘Cynewulf’ tells us that he is old (*frod*, line 1236a) and nearing death (*fus*, *þurh þæt fæcne hus*, literally, ‘eager to depart because of this fragile house,’ i.e., body, line 1236b),$^{513}$ but even these details may be more rhetorical than factual.$^{514}$

Critics have addressed the absence of details concerning the person who names himself as ‘Cynewulf’ by resorting to speculative biographical criticism, to postmodern skepticism about authorial agency, and linguistic, metrical and source analyses. The question of authorship in Old English poetry has always been a vexed one, and early

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$^{514}$ Earl Anderson, *Cynewulf: Structure, Style and Theme in his Poetry* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 18. Anderson refers to this as the “aged author topos.”
scholars of Cynewulf’s poetry were eager to identify him (by any means possible) as a
verifiable historical personage (whether a bishop, monk, priest, or “wandering minstrel”),
and to attribute more than half the corpus of existing Old English poetry to him or his
“school.”515 These early biographical constructions have been widely challenged and
have fallen out of favor. Opponents of biographical criticism, such as Daniel Calder, have
countered these views by arguing that Cynewulf is a “‘fictional’ character, existing only
in the poems he created,” and seeking to limit the corpus of Cynewulfian poetry to the
four signed works mentioned above.516 Despite this recognition of how little we can
know about Cynewulf as a person, the common practice of conflating the author of these
four poems with their named, shared speaker (as indeed the poems themselves prompt us
to do) has nonetheless led the majority of critics to attribute a stronger sense of “authorial
consciousness” to these works than is typical for most studies of anonymous Old English
poetry.517

515 See Daniel Calder, Cynewulf (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 12-21, for a thorough summary of early
scholarship on Cynewulf in this vein.
516 Calder 18.
517 This tendency to read the person of the author out of the figure named C-Y-N-(E)-W-U-L-F has recently
been questioned by Jacqueline Stodnick, “Cynewulf as Author: Medieval Reality or Modern Myth?,”
English Enigmatic Poems and the Play of the Texts, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout:
Brepols, 2006), 309. They see it as a misleading, anachronistic outgrowth of what Stodnick (37) calls “the
influence of the Romantic theory of composition on modern reading procedures” and “an authorial
paradigm which has its roots in eighteenth century England.” Stodnick and Niles argue that our desire for
an authored work, one whose author we can know and understand, has motivated Anglo-Saxonists to seek
out and characterize “‘Cynewulf” as if he were a flesh-and-blood person for the sole reason that we know
his name” and to privilege his works over those of anonymous poets. Indeed, Niles (287) goes so far as to
suggest that we should speak of “‘the Cynewulf-poet” rather than “‘Cynewulf” because [the term] is less
easily put into the service of autobiographical fantasies.” Stodnick’s and Niles’ points about the need to
distinguish carefully between the person of the author and the poems’ speakers are well founded, and may
be applied as a corrective to the problematic tendency to read too much interiority, too much personality
into a supposedly unified ‘Cynewulf’-figure. To dispense with the person of the author altogether and
proceed as if this figure does not exist seems extreme. Niles (287) argues that we base our ideas about
‘Cynewulf” on the mere fact of a name, and the presentation of “conventional pieties phrased in the
rhetoric of autobiography and personal aspiration.” This point of view overlooks two important aspects of
medieval literature in general and Cynewulf’s poetry in particular: the signal importance and authority of
tradition (what Niles calls “conventional pieties”) and the very real spiritual significance of each poem’s
Cynewulf’s runic signatures not only claim his poems as his, but ask for a specific response from his readership: prayers. As Barbara Raw has emphasized, Cynewulf chose to name himself as the author of his works in order to “seek the prayers of others for the safety of his soul and it was probably for this reason that he devised a form of signature which could not easily be lost or changed….At the end of Juliana Cynewulf completes his runic signature with an explicit plea to be remembered not simply as a poet but by his name.”518 The name ‘Cynewulf’ may not designate an unchanging, unified authorial consciousness to us, but in the economy of Christian belief, there is no distance between the person called ‘Cynewulf’ and the soul of the man who composed these four signed poems. Thus, while we cannot pin the name of ‘Cynewulf’ onto an historical individual or extrapolate specific details about his life, we also cannot deny the presence of ‘Cynewulf’ as an author, a subjectivity who is present in his works, and whose self-representation interacts with the poems’ various subject matters and audiences in ways which demand critical attention.519

518 Raw 6-7.
519 We do, after all, know some things about Cynewulf. Dialect features suggest that he was probably a Mercian (or perhaps a Northumbrian, like Bede) who lived and wrote sometime between AD 750 and 1000, but most likely between AD 850-950. R. D. Fulk’s analysis in his essay “Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect and
The four works of Cynewulf treat the history of the early Church extending from Christ’s Ascension and the missions of the apostles (in *Christ II: Ascension* and *Fates of the Apostles*), to the persecution of the Christians under the emperor Maximian (in *Juliana*) and the establishment of a Christian Roman empire under Constantine the Great (in *Elene*). While all of the Cynewulf-poet’s extant works may be said to deal with the apostolic themes of mission and conversion in some way, the poems *The Fates of the Apostles* and *Christ II: Ascension* are most explicitly concerned with the figures of the apostles and with Cynewulf’s understanding of his relationship to them as an Anglo-Saxon and a fellow Christian.

**The Fates of the Apostles**

The poem known to us as *The Fates of the Apostles* catalogs the missions and martyrdoms of the twelve apostles. This listing of the apostles’ journeys and deadly encounters with strange peoples around the world is framed by the autobiographical reflections of the poem’s author and speaker, who, in a double epilogue that reveals his

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Date” in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. Robert Bjork (London: Routledge, 2001), 15-18, specifies that the dates of the compilation of the Exeter and Vercelli manuscripts in which Cynewulf’s poems have come down to us mean that the poems could not have been composed after the 950s, whereas the spelling of his name (spelled ‘Cynewulf’ in two of his signed poems, and ‘Cynwulf’ in the other two – but never ‘Cyniwulf’ which represents an older spelling) indicates that they could not have been written before 750 if he was a Mercian, or before 850 if he was a Northumbrian. Based on metrical evidence, Fulk places Cynewulf’s poetry later than the works of the Junius manuscript, but before the works of King Alfred and later homiletic texts. Patrick Conner’s “On Dating Cynewulf,” 47, argues for narrowing the range of dates further to the second half of the tenth century based on Cynewulf’s use of a specific, datable source text (the augmented version of the Martyrology of Usuardus, which Conner suggests came to Anglo-Saxon England during the Benedictine Reform movement) in his poem *Fates of the Apostles*. However, in his article, “Did Cynewulf use a Martyrology?” *ASE* 29 (2000): 67-90, John McCulloh has strongly called into question Conner’s argument for the Martyrology of Usuardus, or indeed any martyrology, as a source for *Fates*, and argues that this dating could be off by as much as a century.

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name, laments his fear of death and damnation and begs the reader to pray for him to the apostles in heaven. *The Fates of the Apostles* has long been seen as the odd one out in Cynewulf’s corpus; its lack of narrative focus and its seemingly simplistic catalog form have often struck critics as dull and tedious. As Constance B. Hieatt has noted, “it is rapidly becoming a tradition to begin an essay on Cynewulf’s poetry with disapproving citations of the adverse criticism of earlier commentators.”

Though I hesitate to dispense with this venerable scholarly tradition, the practice of rehearsing negative statements about *The Fates of the Apostles* strikes me as far more tedious than the poem itself.

Yet, if the poem has had its detractors, it has had its defenders as well. Several scholars have attempted to rehabilitate the tarnished reputation of *The Fates of the Apostles* through the construction and imposition of elaborate schemes of a numeric, onomastic or geographic sort. While these attempts to see order in Cynewulf’s *Fates* have resulted in insightful readings of the poem and established the parameters for its

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523 See for example, James L. Boren’s argument in his essay “Form and Meaning in Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles*,” 58, that each of Cynewulf’s epitomes is structured around a “tripartite subject division of a rhetorical pattern” containing a “locative element,” a description of means to an end (usually death), and a “nominative element,” and that all together there are 12 variations on the pattern (except that he forgets to count Cynewulf, who makes an awkward 13th addition). Warren Ginsberg’s essay Cynewulf and His Sources: *The Fates of the Apostles,* *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 2 (1977): 108-114, argues that the poem is structured on the basis of etymologies of the apostles names, but he only discusses four of them, and fails to account for the other eight. Nicholas Howe’s chapter on *Fates* in his book on *Old English Catalogue Poems*, Anglistica 23 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1985), also constructs an argument for the order in which the apostles are listed by tracing their destinations on a map, and claiming that they follow an elaborate pattern crisscrossing the known world.
positive re-evaluation, the details of the complex schemas which critics such as Boren, Frese, and Ginsberg have created have not held up to closer scrutiny.524

We know that each of Cynewulf’s poems is based on one or more Latin sources, and reflects the interests of an Anglo-Saxon author trained to read and write in the religious tradition, most likely that of a monastery or cathedral school. When critics haven’t been lamenting the dreadfulness of *Fates* or imposing Procrustean rhetorical or formal patterns on the poem, they have been busily endeavoring to uncover the source texts Cynewulf used as the basis for his information about the apostles and the idiosyncratic order in which he presents them.525 To early readers of Cynewulf’s *Fates*, the brevity and extra-biblical nature of the information about the apostles given by Cynewulf in each of his poem’s epitomes suggested the form and content of the Latin genre of martyrologies, especially the martyrology attributed to Bede.526 However, Dom

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524 Constance Hieatt, and the authors of the two major monographs on the poetry of Cynewulf, Daniel Calder and Earl Anderson, have critiqued the systems of analysis used by these scholars to evaluate the poem. For example, Hieatt, Calder and Anderson argue against Boren’s perception of a tripartite pattern (consisting of “locative element,” “means to an end [death]” and “nominative element”) repeated in the poem twelve times, with Cynewulf being the twelfth, by pointing out that according to Boren’s own logic, Cynewulf’s double epilogue should count as the thirteenth, and not the twelfth instance of the pattern. This faulty numeric logic, taken to its conclusion, would suggest Cynewulf was representing himself as an extra apostle – an awkward addition to the iconic Twelve. However, Calder acknowledges that despite the fact that Boren’s tripartite pattern “belabor the obvious” and his numeric schema fails to work out, his “perception that Cynewulf…creates an analogy between himself as poet and the apostles as evangelists and martyrs has proved seminal.” See Hieatt 71ff., Anderson 74ff. and Calder 29ff. for their full critiques of Boren’s arguments, as well as those made by the scholars mentioned in the previous footnote. It is interesting to note that Hieatt (74) likewise constructs a numeric rationale for *Fates*: “in a postulated prologue of lines 1-15, two beguiling sums emerge. The epilogue has already been analyzed as two groups of 35 verses each, which means a total of 70 verses; similar divisions of the 15 lines of the prologue into verses gives 30: 70 plus 30 yields the satisfying round number 100. And, even more satisfactorily, the remaining lines, 16-87 – the central body of the poem – yield a total of exactly 144 verses (12 X 12).” Anderson (75-76) considers this particular numeric argument convincing.

525 John M. McCulloh has offered a very thorough and clear summary of the history of source criticism on *Fates*, and so only the major outlines of the debate will be briefly recapitulated here. For further details I direct readers to his essay, “Did Cynewulf use a Martyrology? Reconsidering the Sources of *The Fates of the Apostles*.”

526 Especially the poem’s early editor, G. P. Krapp, *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems* (Boston, 1906), xxix-xxxii. René Aigrain defines the genre of the martyrology as follows: “a martyrology is….a list of saints according to the dates on which they have customarily been celebrated in churches….while the mention of a saint in a calendar carries only, after the date, the name and
Henri Quentin has shown Bede’s martyrology as we now know it to be the product of centuries of accretion, with the majority of the material from the Bedan text that overlaps with the content of *Fates* having been added to the martyrology after Cynewulf is likely to have composed the poem. Thereafter, lists of the apostles and the locations of their remains which preface versions of the Hieronymian Martyrology, known as the *Notitia de Locis Apostolorum* and the *Breviarium Apostolorum* were considered as possible sources, along with treatises on the apostles such as Isidore of Seville’s *De ortu et obitu patrum* and an anonymous Hiberno-Latin text by the same title.

Yet, as J. E. Cross points out in his re-evaluation of the sources, while these lists could have been available to Cynewulf, “none of [these four texts] individually nor all of them collectively could have provided Cynewulf with all his factual details.” Cross argues that rather than looking to medieval sources for information on the apostles with a brief indication of place, many martyrologies append a resume, more or less extensive, of the saint’s history with the nature of his death, and the mention of the persecutors under which he suffered,” quoted in Calder (27). The martyrology’s similarities with the form of *Fates* initially appear obvious and quite logical. 

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528 This was first pointed out by G. L. Hamilton, “The Sources of *Fates of the Apostles* and *Andreas,*” *Modern Language Notes* 35 (1920): 385-395, esp. 387.

529 For examples of these lists, see Theodorus Schermann, *Prophetarum vitae fabulosae indices apostolorum discipulorumque domini* (Leipzig: Tübner, 1907). Schermann’s list ‘g’ (216-17) entitled *Quibus locis singuli apostoli iacent* also groups Peter and Paul together in Rome as the first item in the apostle list, and concludes the section on the apostles with Simon and Judas (another name for Thaddeus, as he is called in *Fates*, line 77). This list does not place them together or list them as dying in Persia. List ‘g’ also differs in the overall order of the apostles listed and several of the resting places it gives for them. Thus, while the similarities are suggestive, this list cannot be seen as an immediate source for *Fates*.

530 J. E. Cross, “Cynewulf’s Traditions about the Apostles in *Fates of the Apostles,*” *ASE* 8 (1979): 163-164. In his study of *The Apocrypha* for Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture, Instrumenta Anglistica Mediaevalia I (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2007), 37-56, 75, 78, Frederick M. Biggs digests the findings of Cross and others, listing the following apocryphal texts as potential sources for the contents of Cynewulf’s epitomes in *Fates*: the *Pseudo-Abdias Apostolic Histories* of Andrew, James the Less, and John; the apocryphal Martyrdoms (passiones) of Andrew, Bartholomew, James the Greater, and Matthew; the *Pseudo-Marcellus Martyrdom of Peter and Paul*; and the Martyrdoms of Philip, Simon and Jude, and Thomas. Biggs (75) also states that the *Breviarium Apostolorum* “has been discussed as a source for Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles* since Sarrazin (1889), but the problem has remained unsolved because there is too much overlap among possible sources.” About the *Noticia de locis apostolorum* Biggs (78) cites Kenneth Brooks’s comment that the “order of the apostles in *Fates* is closest to that found in this work,” but does not corroborate this statement.

531 Cross 163-164.
list-like and abbreviated formats, such as martyrologies and the *Breviarium Apostolorum*, we should consider that Cynewulf may have received his information from full-length narrative accounts of the apostles’ lives, particularly the so-called apocryphal *acta* and *passiones* in the Pseudo-Abdias, Pseudo-Mellitus, and Pseudo-Marcellus collections which circulated widely throughout the medieval West.\(^{532}\) Cross examines three major collections of apocryphal material about the apostles, and he determines that while none of these collections can account for the order in which Cynewulf presents the apostles in the poem, they do provide sources for all of the “distinctive information” about the apostles, as well as the “pairing of Peter and Paul and of Simon and Thaddeus.”\(^{533}\)

More recently, Patrick Conner has resurrected the argument for a martyrological source for *Fates*, arguing (following Hamilton) that the martyrology which Krapp originally considered to be Bede’s was actually that of Usuard of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.\(^{534}\) Earlier in his article, Conner argues on the basis of rhymes in Cynewulf’s poetry that Cynewulf could have been writing much later than has traditionally been thought – perhaps even as late as the tenth century.\(^{535}\) Since, Conner claims, Cynewulf’s poetry was much later, he would have been in a position to access texts of Usuard’s martyrology (hypothetically) brought to England by the Benedictine reformers, and to use them as the basis for his poem.

\(^{532}\) Cross 164ff.. This view has been espoused most recently by Aideen O’Leary in her study “Apostolic *Passiones* in Early Anglo-Saxon England,” *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Kathryn Powell and Donald Scragg. Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 119.

\(^{533}\) Cross 175.

\(^{534}\) Conner 36-37.

\(^{535}\) Conner 24-35.
Conner’s theory has since been disproven by John McCulloh, who shows that the pseudo-Bedan martyrology is not related to Usuard.\textsuperscript{536} But more importantly, after carefully outlining the contents and overlaps between \textit{Fates}, the \textit{Breviarium Apostolorum}, and the three main martyrological traditions which Cynewulf may have possibly known (the martyrologies of Ado of Vienne, Usuard, and the second recension of Florus), McCulloh convincingly argues that “none of them seems especially appropriate as a source for Cynewulf’s poem” because they “all omit too many specific details.”\textsuperscript{537} Rejecting the usual sources of martyrologies and apostle lists, McCulloh returns to Cross’s earlier suggestion that a collection of full-length apocryphal narratives of the apostles’ lives and deaths served as a source for Cynewulf’s \textit{Fates}. “A passionary,” McCulloh proposes, “could have inspired Cynewulf to treat the apostles as a hagiographical group distinct from other saints….have provided the order for his epitomes, and…furnished all or most of the details he relates.”\textsuperscript{538}

Ruling out the major martyrologies and apostle lists, apocryphal \textit{acta} and \textit{passiones} do seem to be the most likely sources for Cynewulf’s detailed information about each individual apostle’s mission and martyrdom. However, as both Cross and McCulloh point out, it is (as yet) impossible to identify a particular passionary that could have served as Cynewulf’s source text. This is especially true if we adhere to the suppositions, as both Cross and McCulloh seem to, that Cynewulf had an actual passionary in front of him as he composed out of which he could pick and choose various

\textsuperscript{536} McCulloh (71) notes that “Hamilton presents no evidence for his identification [of the pseudo-Bedan martyrrology with that of Usuard], but that Conner is not the only scholar who has been misled….In fact, the pseudo-Bedan martyrrology owes nothing to Usuard, but the confusion is understandable since the two texts represent independent abridgements of the martyrrology of Ado of Vienne.”

\textsuperscript{537} McCulloh 80.

\textsuperscript{538} McCulloh 83. Aideen O’Leary (119) also agrees with the assessments of McCulloh and Cross and is “currently completing a study of the \textit{Fates} to determine more precisely Cynewulf’s most likely source and its origin ([she thinks] that his main source was a group of \textit{passiones}).”
narrative details, and that the order of the texts within this hypothetical passionary determined the order in which he presented the apostles in his poem. These two ideas are certainly not out of the question, but, until we find such a passionary, they will have to remain speculative.

Scholars have also suggested liturgical models for Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles*, especially the Litany of the Saints. The medieval litany shares with the martyrology a list-like format superficially akin to that of *Fates*. Although the idea of the litany as source for *Fates* was first mentioned by Kenneth Sisam, its most eloquent spokesperson is Daniel Calder. Calder notes that the earliest litanies focused primarily on saints who had personal contact with Christ, especially the twelve apostles. The similarities between *Fates* and the litany’s list-like ritual invocation of the apostles, followed by a “responsive” request to *ora pro nobis*, suggested to Calder “that a very simple fusion occurred in Cynewulf’s mind when, for whatever reasons, he combined the biographies in the historical martyrologies with the ritual catalogues that comprised the Litanies of the Saints.” Calder’s observations about the ritual and iterative aspects of *Fates* as well as the dynamic relationship between the invocation of the apostles’ names and the concluding petitions in both the litany and *Fates* are, I think, very insightful. Yet, as we have discussed above, the theory linking *Fates* and the historical martyrologies has

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541 Calder 221.
542 Calder 221. James Anderson and Leslie Schilling also see the litany as a source of inspiration for *Fates* in their article “The Begang of Cynewulf’s Fates of the Apostles,” *Essays in Old, Middle, Modern English and Old Icelandic*, ed. Loren Gruber (Edwin Mellen, 2000), 23-47. Their essay makes several interesting points regarding the liturgical resonances of the word *begang* used by Cynewulf to designate his poem in line 89, but their assertion that *Fates* is meant to explicitly evoke the processional litany of Rogationtide and Cynewulf was a bishop, since only bishops could officiate at such processions, seems somewhat weakly supported.
been disproved by McCulloh, who instead supports Cross’s claim that Cynewulf derived his material from a collection of apocryphal passiones.

I would like to suggest an additional source for both the form and content of Cynewulf’s poem, one that combines elements of both source types: liturgical adaptations of the apocryphal Acts for the feast days of the apostles. Cynewulf hardly needed to have the manuscript of a martyrlogy or a passionary in front of him in order to draw on the content of the apocryphal acts of the apostles for his poem. The liturgy, particularly the reading and recitation of saints’ lives in the second nocturn of Matins in the Divine Office, would have afforded Cynewulf a working knowledge of the narrative details of apostolic passiones. Indeed, Cross himself points out that Cynewulf also could have gained his knowledge of the apostles from liturgical contexts:

as a religious of his period Cynewulf would have heard the stories of the saints, including the apostles, on their feast-days....He would have been remarkably inattentive, not to say undevout, if he had not recalled the few details about individual apostles from such hearing or reading.

The “stories of the saints” which Cross mentions above were almost certainly the so-called apocryphal Acts and the passion narratives that were excerpted out of these longer vitae. As Els Rose has recently shown in her study, Ritual Memory: The Apocryphal Acts and Liturgical Commemoration in the Early Medieval West, the apocryphal Acts of the apostles figured largely in both the mass and in the monastic liturgy, not only as lections, but also as inspiration and material for hymns, responsories, and antiphons sung on the

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544 Cross 164.
feast days of individual apostles.\textsuperscript{545} Despite the medieval controversy and concern over the orthodoxy, canonicity, and veritas of these narratives, the apocryphal Acts – as texts that provided edifying, exemplary biographical details for each individual apostle – were nonetheless widely adopted into the liturgical commemoration of the saints.\textsuperscript{546}

The liturgical applications of material from the apocryphal Acts and passiones have much in common with those features of Fates Calder previously associated with the Litany of the Saints. As Els Rose explains,

\begin{quote}
the liturgy of the hours [particularly the night office, matins] offered ample room for the recitation of saints’ lives and passions. The responsoria, verses that were sung in answer to the readings (responsories), and the refrains that were sung to introduce and conclude the psalms (antiphons), reflected on these readings. Often the sung texts contain quotations from the readings that are recited during the office.\textsuperscript{547}
\end{quote}

There are several interesting parallels between the structure and contents of these types responsories/antiphons and Cynewulf’s epitomes treating the adventures and deaths of the apostles. First, we notice that the responsories and antiphons sung to commemorate a saint on his or her feast day both excerpt and echo the hagiographic texts used in the lections, in our case, texts drawn from the apocryphal Acts of the apostles.\textsuperscript{548} These “chant texts,” as Rose refers to them,\textsuperscript{549} retell the story of the apostles’ lives through song, concentrating on particular details and involving the clerical or monastic

\textsuperscript{546} Rose 42-77.
\textsuperscript{547} Rose 103.
\textsuperscript{548} Rose (11) notes that the “antiphon functions as a kind of refrain, both preceding and concluding the psalm verses. It is mainly a repetition of a central verse of a psalm, or, particularly in the office of Matins, a short line referring to the central theme of the day often derived from one of the lessons. The responsory is sung in answer to each lesson and often repeats a central phrase of the lesson in question. Particularly during feast-days, both of the temporal and sanctoral cycle, these chants reflect on the main theme of the feast.”
\textsuperscript{549} Rose 104.
community in a constant exchange of words and music, the ultimate goal of which is to request the intercession and blessings of the apostle through veneration and prayer.

Often, the antiphons and responsories for the night office of an apostle’s feast either quote verbatim, or summarize and reflect on key aspects of the apostle’s *passio*, focusing especially on the apostle’s teaching, conversion of others, and martyrdom. For example, in Els Rose’s survey of material from the apocryphal Acts in a liturgical context, she gives the text of a sequence of antiphons and responsories for the feast of the Apostle Bartholomew from the 11th century north Italian *Antiphonal of Ivrea*.\(^550\) The material for the feast of Bartholomew from the *Antiphonal of Ivrea* is too extensive to be quoted in full here; below I offer Rose’s text and translation for the concluding antiphons of the third nocturn of the Night Office:\(^551\)

*In matutinis laudibus.* [In praises of the morning]

*ANT:* *Rex in Christum credens Polymius, desposito diademate ac purpura, Christi apostolum non deserebat.*\(^552\)

[ANT: King Polymius believed in Christ, and after he had put off his crown and purple, he did not abandon the apostle of Christ anymore.]

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\(^{550}\) Rose 13, 104ff.. It is worth noting here that I am not arguing for any sort of direct source relationship between any particular liturgical chant texts and *Fates*, but rather, I am suggesting that the practice of reciting antiphons and responsories containing material from and synopses of apocryphal Acts in the night office, which was widespread throughout Europe, including in Anglo-Saxon England, by Cynewulf’s time, may have inspired or provided Cynewulf with the material and general structure for his poem. Thus, I am citing Rose’s material from this Italian antiphonal not as a source, but as an example of the type of adaptation of apocryphal material typically found in liturgical ritual commemorations of saints, and apostles in particular. Unfortunately, Rose does not discuss any Anglo-Saxon antiphonals in her book, though she does discuss material from the apocryphal Acts which is included in the episcopal blessings found in the Canterbury Benedictional, an English manuscript dating from the second quarter of the 11th century, and thus just prior to the Norman Conquest. This shows that apocryphal material was being used in a liturgical context in late Anglo-Saxon England. Further research is necessary to clearly establish that the antiphonal and responsory traditions used elsewhere were also present in Anglo-Saxon England.

\(^{551}\) Rose 110-111.

\(^{552}\) Rose shows this antiphon to be based on chapter 8.20 of the *Passio Bartholomaei* – see 110. Translations are Rose’s.
ANT: Praecepto apostoli destructis a daemone simulacris, regi dixit Astragi Bartolomaeus: Ego jussi daemonibus quassare idola, ut gentes verum credant Deum qui regnat in coelis.553

[ANT: When all the idols were destroyed by the demon on the command of the Apostle, blessed Bartholomew said to the king Astrages: I commanded the demons to break down the idols, so that the peoples believe in the true God who reigns in heaven.]

ANT: Dixit regi Astragi sanctus apostolus: Ego deum quem colebat frater tuus vinctum ostendi, ipsumque feci frangere simulacrum suum.554

[ANT: The holy Apostle said to Astrages: I have shown the god your brother venerates in chains, and made him break his own idol.]

ANT: Jussu regis Astragi, beatus Bartholomaeus pro Christi nomine vivens decoriatus est, et amputatum est caput ipsius.555

[ANT: On the word of king Astrages, blessed Bartholomew was flayed alive for the name of Christ, and his head was cut off.]

ANT: Revelante apostolo, Polymium ordinarunt antistitem, qui multa in Christi nomine coepit miracula facere.556

[ANT: And on the revelation of the Apostle, they ordained Polymius as bishop, who started to perform many miracles in the name of Christ.]

In evangelio.

ANT: Postquam Licaoniam praedicavit beatus Bartholomaeus, ad Indos veniens, convertit eos ad Christum, et per martyrium penetravit coelos, ubi cum Deo perpetue gloriosus exsultat.557

[ANT: After he had preached in Lycaonia blessed Bartholomew came to the Indians and converted them to Christ. And through martyrdom he entered heaven, where the glorious (saint) rejoices forever with God.]

ANT: O quam multiplicibus Bartholomaeae fulgens egregie miraculis, qui pro Jesu nomine tanta sustinuisti pericula; nos tuis semper sacrís tuere precibus, ut mereamur ad superam ovantes pervenire patriam.

553 Rose shows this antiphon to be a paraphrase of chapter 6.17 of the Passio Bartholomaei – see 107.
554 Rose shows this antiphon to be based on chapter 8.22 of the Passio Bartholomaei – see 110.
555 Rose shows this antiphon to be based on chapter 9.23 of the Passio Bartholomaei – see 110.
556 Rose shows this antiphon to be based on chapter 9.24 of the Passio Bartholomaei – see 111.
557 Rose shows this antiphon to be a combination of chapter 1.1 of the Passio Bartholomaei and other materials – see 110.
[ANT: Bartholomew, who shines so eminently through many miracles, and who has endured so many perils in the name of Christ: protect us always through your holy prayers, so that we may be deemed worthy to arrive with joy at the fatherland above.]\footnote{Rose notes that “this is a prayer text, a free composition with no exact parallel in the \textit{Passio Bartolomaei}” – see 111.}

In this sequence of antiphons for the commemoration of the feast of Bartholomew, we notice the way in which each chant isolates an important aspect or episode recounted in the \textit{Passio Bartholomaei}, recounting it in a straightforward, report-like fashion. But the final two antiphons of the nocturn most clearly parallel Cynewulf’s treatment of each apostle or pair of apostles as well as the concluding epilogues of his poem where he asks the audience to appeal to the mercy of the apostles to pray on his behalf. The penultimate antiphon provides a summary of Bartholomew’s travels, conversion of two peoples (the Lycaonians and the Indians) and the martyrdom that enabled him to receive the heavenly reward all Christians aspire to attain. The final antiphon, however, is a “free composition,” a prayer, much like Cynewulf’s final request to his audience to “ask help for me in my sadness from the holy company [of the apostles], for peace and aid” (\textit{þæt he geomrum me / þone halgan heap helpe bidde, / friðes ond fultomes}, ll. 89b-91a).\footnote{Excerpts and quotations from \textit{The Fates of the Apostles} will be cited by line numbers.}

More interesting, however, than these possibly coincidental thematic parallels between the antiphonal adaptation of the apocryphal Acts and Cynewulf’s poem are the formal and performative similarities between the two types of commemorative texts. The chants of the Night Office are more than abbreviated epitomes of extrabiblical information about the apostles. They are also a form of collective, interactive rumination. The antiphons and responsories return again and again to key aspects of the apostles’ lives, repeating them aloud in the long, drawn out form of a song as a means of reflection.
as well as veneration. The refrain-like structure of the chants and the alternation of antiphons sung by each side of the choir to the other encourage the mindfulness and interactive participation of the clerics or monks engaged in the recitation of the Office, as it culminates in a request for prayers and the intercession of the saint. We will return to this interactive dimension of antiphons in our consideration of the double epilogue of *Fates* and Cynewulf’s appeal to his audience to engage with and respond to his recounting of the stories of the lives and deaths of the apostles through *þysses giddes begang* (the ‘course’ – but also ‘practice,’ ‘service,’ ‘worship’ or ‘cultivation’ – of this song, ll. 89a).

**Defining Apostolhad in The Fates of the Apostles**

As will be noticed from our survey of criticism concerning *Fates*, a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention has been directed toward the identification of a textual source (or sources) for the poem, the deciphering of its runic epilogues, or the formulation of complex numeric, geographical, or onomastical schemes to account for the order in which Cynewulf presents the twelve apostles. Relatively little attention has been paid to the contents of the poem itself, what it actually communicates about the apostles, or to the nature of Cynewulf’s relationship to, and identification with, these foundational Christian saints. Therefore, one object of this chapter (among others) is to examine the poem’s representation of *apostolhad* (‘apostleship,’ the state, office or condition of being an apostle, line 15b). In interrogating the meaning of this term for Cynewulf and his audience, we will analyze Cynewulf’s epitomes by asking the following questions: how

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560 Heffernan and Matter define an antiphon in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (715) as “the alternating singing or chanting made by one side of the choir to the other; a verse sometimes sung before the recitation of the psalms or other liturgical hymns.”
does the poet conceive of each apostle or pair of apostles? Of the apostles as a group? What does he wish to convey to his audience about them? What is the basis for these conceptions? And what kinds of themes or ideas are evoked by speaking or thinking about the apostles in these ways?

One feature of *Fates* which has often troubled critics is the lack of differentiation — one might say, character development — between the individual apostles presented in the body of the poem.\(^{561}\) The static and iterative nature of each apostle’s epitome has often been unfavorably compared with the perceived development of vivid, saintly personas in Cynewulf’s more narrative poems *Elene* and *Juliana*.\(^{562}\) Yet, as James Earl has pointed out, “absolute stasis” is the primary characteristic of all hagiography.\(^{563}\) Earl explains that

the hagiographers’ two-dimensional representations of the saints are most notable, by modern standards, for their conventionality, their lack of realism and depth, and their failure to represent the personalities (and very often the very lives) of their subjects. For the most part, they are utterly lacking in a sense of continuous narrative or psychological insight….The stasis that results from this lack of narrative is felt, by any reader who comes to the saints’ Lives not knowing what to expect, as a dullness and lack of direction.\(^{564}\)

Cynewulf’s enumeration of apostles in *Fates* compounds this perception of “dullness and lack of direction” by its repetition of essentially similar stories which vary only in locale, circumstantial detail, and the physical means by which each apostle meets his end. However, this “two-dimensional” aspect of Cynewulf’s apostle portraits as well as the

\(^{561}\) This perception lies behind attempts such as Boren’s to reduce the poem to a numerically complex repetition of nearly meaningless patterns.\(^{562}\) However, Earl (93) notes that “even in as romantic and unified a work as the Old English *Elene*, the quality of ‘stasis’ is very evident and, at times, obtrusive; the long scene in which Elene repeatedly confronts the Jews is certainly dull when measured by any standard that does not understand the static quality as one which the poet was trying to attain for positive aesthetic reasons.”\(^{563}\) Earl 92-93.\(^{564}\) Earl 93.
repetition of their near-identical fates foregrounds the shared qualities of the apostles and defines what Cynewulf means when he describes apostleship as a specific type of *had*.

*Had* is a word with a very wide range of meanings, but in a religious context, it generally has the force of “ecclesiastical rank.” The word *had* is used to gloss or translate Latin words such as *ordo, habitus*, and *species* and to refer to holy orders, and the rank and degree of clerical or monastic office. It is used as a suffix to designate office or rank in ecclesiastical contexts, producing compounds such as *bisceophad* (‘bishophood’), *mæsepreosthad* (‘masspriesthood’), *martyrhad* (martyrdom), *munuchad* (monkhood), *papanhad* (papal rank), *preosthad* (priesthood), and *sacerdhad* (also meaning priesthood). Thus, *apostolhad* may be seen as an attainable dignity or office of religious life, comparable to that of a bishop, priest, or monk. In his discussion of the extensive use of the word *had* in the poem *Guthlac A*, Christopher Jones cites the poem’s opening lines, which form a discourse on the “various hadas of the saints”:

> Monge sindon geond middangeard
> hadas under heofonum, þa þe in haligra
> rim arisāð. We þæs ryht magun
> æt æghwycum anra gehyran,
gif we halig bebodu healdan willað.

[There are many ranks of men throughout the world under heaven who are numbered among the holy; accordingly we can rightly belong to any of them if we will observe the holy commands.]

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565 According to Bosworth-Toller, volume I.511 and volume II.493.
566 Interestingly, a search of the Dictionary of Old English Corpus reveals that the word *apostolhad* only occurs twice in the corpus of Old English, here in *Fates of the Apostles*, line 14, and in the conclusion of the poem *Andreas*, line 1650b-1651a, where the apostle Andrew consecrates the first bishop of Mermedonia, Platan, *fore þam heremegene / purh apostolhad* (before the multitude through [his] apostleship). This appears to be a clear reference to the apostolic succession of bishops, and we will discuss this passage in *Andreas* further in the next chapter.
568 See notes 1 and 2 above.
Jones explains that the “allusion to the ‘many degrees under heaven’ is more than a universalizing device” because it touches on “the very difficult issue of spiritual merit and the possibility of moral equivalence among the various hadas. The Benedictine monk’s faithfulness to his own monastic calling equals participation in the haligra rim of confessors and martyrs; a singleness of purpose underlies all grades of the religious life.”

While Jones’s comments on Benedictinism itself in Guthlac A may or may not apply to Cynewulf, his observation about the “singleness of purpose” common to the various hadas under heofonum resonates with Cynewulf’s depictions of each of the twelve apostles in Fates, and the concept of apostolhad in general. Cynewulf’s epitomes emphasize five main qualities or characteristics, most of which are shared by several, if not all, of the apostles as he depicts them. These five characteristics may be listed in order of prevalence, as journeying; suffering/martyrdom; teaching/preaching; shunning worldly glory and possessions; and performing miracles. Each of these characteristic qualities corresponds to Christ’s halig bebodu (holy commands, Guthlac A, l. 5) to the apostles; in seeking to follow these same commands through his poetry, Cynewulf aspires to a version of apostolhad that will allow him to be numbered among the holy.

Cynewulf details the specific missionary journeys or destinations of the apostles in all ten of his epitomes. The poem’s marked interest in religious geography, in the claiming of various and distant lands for the Christian faith through teaching and martyrdom, impresses upon the reader a sense of Christianity’s seemingly inevitable

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569 Jones 271.
progression throughout the world. Beginning his account of the apostles’ fates with the
double martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome and widening out to include the diverse
regions of Achaia (Greece), Ephesus, Asia (specifically Hieropolis), India (twice),
Albania, Ethiopia, Jerusalem (twice), and Persia, Cynewulf’s poem provides a concrete
expression of the world-wide mission of the apostles. The continents of Europe, Asia
and Africa – the whole world, from a medieval perspective – are symbolically claimed
for Christianity through Cynewulf’s description of the agency of the apostles in this
poem.

As in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and the apostle lists based on these
acta, such as Isidore’s De ortu et obitu patrum or the anonymous Notitia de locis
apostolorum, the places where the apostles worked and died are described first and
foremost as heathen, or in the case of Mediterranean locales, filled with treacherous Jews
or tyrannical Gentile leaders. But it is no accident that Cynewulf begins his catalog of the
apostles in what the Anglo-Saxons would have considered to be a more familiar territory:
Rome. According to the concept of the apostolic succession, Christian churches are
legitimated by their lineage, their ability to trace their foundation back – through a
continuous history of conversion – to one of the original churches founded by Christ’s
disciples in the apostolic era. By thus listing the places where the apostles preached and
were martyred, Cynewulf foregrounds the establishment of the apostolic churches around
the world, and gives pride of place to England’s own immediate source of apostolic

570 Cynewulf’s interest in religious geography has been commented on by Nicholas Howe in The Old
English Catalogue Poems, Anglistica 23 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1985), 88-103, and
571 Howe, Migration, 114.
572 Fabienne Michelet makes a similar point in Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography
and Sense of Space in Old English Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 166-171, 197.
authority, the church of Peter and Paul in Rome. The importance of the direct connection between the Anglo-Saxon church and the *sedes apostolica* of Peter and Paul in Rome established through the Gregorian mission has already been stressed above, and need not be belabored here. However, I would call attention to several features of Cynewulf’s epitome on Peter and Paul in its poetic context, features which emphasize Rome’s place as the origin of apostolic authority for the whole world, England included:

Lof wide sprang,  
miht ond mærðo, ofer middangeard,  
þeodnes þegna, þrym unlytel.  
Halgan heape hlyt wisode  
þær hie dryhtnes æ deman sceoldon,  
reccan fore rincum. Sume on Romebyrig,  
frame, fyrdhwate, feorh ofgefon  
þurg Nerones nearwe searwe,  
Petrus ond Paulus. Is se apostolhad  
wide geweorðod ofer werþeoda! (Fates, lines 6b-15)

[Their praise sprang forth, their might and fame, widely across the earth; servants of the Lord, not lacking in majesty. Lot guided the holy group, as to where they should preach the Gospel of the Lord, recount it before men. Some, brave and bold in battle, gave up life in the city of Rome through the cruel cunning of Nero, Peter and Paul. The apostleship is widely honored among the nations of men!]

In this passage from the beginning of the poem, Cynewulf repeatedly refers to the widespread influence and fame of the apostles, using words such as *wide* (wide, lines 6b, 15a) and formulaic phrases such as *ofers middangeard* (over or across the earth, line 7b) and *ofers werþeoda* (among or across the nations or peoples, line 15b) to stress the universality of their mission to all places and all peoples. Their journeys, divinely ordained by lot, resulted in the spread not only of the Gospel message, but also the legacies of the apostles themselves, their lives and deeds, as well as their religious

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573 See especially Anderson (79) for a discussion of the apostolic succession with respect to *Fates of the Apostles*.
authority, throughout the world. It is in this expansionist context that Cynewulf introduces Peter and Paul, and though he has little to say about them in comparison with his treatment of the other apostles, his pointed reference to Rome by rig amply communicates the importance of their missions and martyrdoms. The initiation of Cynewulf’s list of the apostles with Peter and Paul implicitly stresses the primacy and authority of the Church of Rome, and, by logical extension, the legitimacy and authority of the Anglo-Saxon church as its direct descendant in the apostolic succession. In these few lines, Cynewulf deftly articulates his particularly Anglo-Saxon, Romanocentric vision of the Church and its history. He punctuates his statements concerning Peter and Paul with an exclamation of the universal honor bestowed upon the apostles (line 14b-15), thus establishing these two saints as the originators of the apostolic had.

575 The initial placement of Peter and Paul in the list of the apostles appears to be Cynewulf’s own authorial choice. Cross notes that Peter and Paul do not appear together at the beginning of any extant martyrological list or collection of apostolic passiones, and while he attributes Cynewulf’s placement of Peter and Paul first as a sign that we are missing his immediate source, both Hieatt (73-74) and Anderson (79) have pointed out that Cynewulf may have deliberately chosen to arrange the apostles in this order to honor the Church of Rome.

576 Hieatt (73-74) notes that “these two [Peter and Paul], the most celebrated of all, [are] allotted only three lines between them, when the number of lines devoted to the other apostles in the poem comes to an average of seven lines to each person[,] No other is treated in fewer than four or five lines, and the only other obviously paired apostles, Simon and Thaddeus, share ten lines, more than three times as many as those devoted to Peter and Paul.”

577 The Easby Cross may provide an interesting iconographic parallel to the order of the apostles in the structure of Cynewulf’s poem. This monumental stone shaft of a late 8th or early 9th century Anglo-Saxon stone cross, described by James Lang in “The apostles in Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the age of Alcuin,” Early Medieval Europe 8.2 (1999): 273, shows the apostles grouped under arched pillars which Lang reads as reference to the apostles whose teaching formed the “pillars” of the church (a biblical metaphor exploited by both Bede and Alcuin in their written works). The shaft of the cross shows four descending registers (the first now blank – Lang speculates that this register once showed Christ giving a blessing); the second register from the top shows the risen Christ displaying his wounds, flanked by Peter and Paul holding books. Beneath this register, the remaining ten apostles are shown in two groups of five seated under arches. They are relatively identical in appearance. Lang reads this image from bottom to top, arguing that “the iconography asserts the legitimacy and firmness of the New Law as it was taught by the apostles, whose metaphorical function is to support Christ.” I think you can also read this image from top to bottom as showing the primacy of Peter and Paul and their closeness to Christ, with the remaining ten apostles represented as a group whose apostolic lives are modeled not only on the life of Christ, depicted above, but also on the lives and teachings of Peter and Paul, who stand apart from them with Christ, holding books which may represent their apostolic teachings (the Epistles) as well as the New Law. It is important to note Lang’s argument that while stone crosses depicting the apostles were exclusively an early
At first, it seems difficult to account for the brevity of Cynewulf’s report on Peter and Paul. Constance Hieatt has suggested that Cynewulf uses Peter and Paul as “prototypes” of all other apostles “as Christ is a prototype to them,” and thus merely references them in what she considers to be a “prologue” to the poem. The first epitome, following closely on Cynewulf’s opening statements about his own sorrowful journey and concluding with the emphatic statement noted above, does seem to be separated from the other accounts of the apostles in a kind of “prologue.” However, it seems less likely that Cynewulf viewed Peter and Paul as “prototypes” of the other apostles, especially since their missions were all occurring within the same relative time-frame. Moreover, as Cynewulf’s poem makes clear, all twelve of them were following the model of Christ, whom they witnessed both literally, through their interactions with the living Jesus and the risen Christ, and figuratively, through their own ministries and martyrdoms. If Peter and Paul are prototypes of the apostolic had, they are so for Cynewulf and his audience more so than for the apostles whose epitomes follow theirs.

The brevity of Cynewulf’s treatment of Peter and Paul may actually be related to the fact that, of all the apostles, they were the most well-known and the most famous. Only Peter and Paul receive extensive treatment in the biblical Acts of the Apostles. Moreover, as we discussed above, Peter and Paul were the most actively culted apostles in Anglo-Saxon England, followed closely by Andrew (who, incidentally, follows them in Fates of the Apostles). The fates of Peter and Paul (unlike those of, say, Simon and Thaddeus), were anything but obscure in Anglo-Saxon religious circles, especially those

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Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, the motifs and concepts carved upon them were adapted from earlier and contemporaneous Mediterranean religious art, in this case, the imagery of the traditio legis found in Rome, Constantinople, Ravenna and Mustair.

578 Hieatt 73.
where religious habit and education would have brought them into contact with the biblical and apocryphal Acts, as well as Arator’s extensive poetic recounting of the lives of Peter and Paul. Perhaps Cynewulf recognized that these two particular examples of *se apostolhad* really, truly were *wide geweorðod over werþeoda*, and were sufficiently honored by their placement at the beginning of his poem.

Cynewulf describes the journeys of the apostles as extremely dangerous but voluntary undertakings, as an integral part of martyrdom. Cynewulf represents the will to travel as synonymous with the desire to suffer for one’s faith. Not only was travel understood as a form of hardship in and of itself (because of the separation from the safety, protection and comfort of one’s homeland and kin-group, as well as the real hazards of travel, such as robbery, disease, destitution and shipwreck), but it is treated in the poem as a means to an end, which is always the apostle’s mortal confrontation with hostile, unbelieving powers (except in the case of John, whom we will discuss below). Cynewulf’s treatment of the fates of Simon and Thaddeus particularly draws attention to their eagerness to undertake a journey, depicting their travels as an integral part of their willingness to endure suffering to spread the Gospel:579

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Næron ða twegen tohtan sæne,} \\
\text{lindgelaces, land Persea} \\
\text{sohton siðfrome, Simon ond Thaddeus,} \\
\text{beornas beadorofe! (Fates, lines 76-79a)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

[Nor were those two slow in strife, in the play of shields; in the land of the Persians Simon and Thaddeus, eager to journey, sought [strife] – men bold in battle!]

579 The epitomes for Andrew (ll. 16-17), Bartholomew (ll. 43-45) and Thomas (ll.51-52) also imply this connection: *Swylce Andreas in Achagia / for Egias aldre geneðde.* [Likewise, Andrew risked his life in Achaia before Aegaeas.]; *Huru, wide wearð wurd undyrne / pæt to Indeum aldre gelædde / beaducaeftig beorn, Bartholameus!* [Lo! The event became widely known, that the man cunning in battle ventured his life in India, Bartholomew!]; *Swylce Thomas eac briste geneðde / on Inde oðre dælas…* [Likewise also Thomas ventured for a time in other parts of India…].
For Simon and Thaddeus, the journey to the land of the Persians is synonymous with the “strife” that the two apostles face there. Their willingness to depart for this distant land is depicted in language reminiscent of the bold, reckless heroes of Old English poetry.580

But the motif of the apostle’s journey consistently suggests not only a link between literal travel and martyrdom, but also the intimate connection between travel, martyrdom, and the journey of the souls of the apostles to heaven. For this reason, Cynewulf emphasizes the concept of an apostolic journey even in cases where it seems less appropriate. For example, he uses the language of journeying to describe the experiences of the Apostle James the Greater, the brother of John the Evangelist, who was martyred in Jerusalem,

Næs his broðor læt,
siðes sæne,     ac ðurh sweordes bite
mid Iudeum      Iacob sceolde
fore Herode      ealdre gedælan… (Fates, lines 33b-36)

[Nor was his brother sluggish, slow on the journey, but through the bite of a sword Jacob was bound to part from life before Herod, among the Jews…]

In Cynewulf’s description of James’s “travel” a literal interpretation seems unlikely, since, presumably, James did not travel very far to attain his martyr’s crown. This is also implied by the litotes that John’s brother was not sæne, “sluggish” or “slow,” to seek death – which is to say, it happened very quickly, in part because he did not have to travel far. Combinations of the words sið- and sæne appear in a formulaic relation to

580 Cynewulf explains Simon and Thaddeus’s desire to depart on their missionary journey as eagerness for battle; his choice of martial metaphors to describe their eagerness links his poem to the heroic tradition. His use of the word lindgelaces, literally meaning ‘play of the (linden) shields,’ makes no sense except as a descriptor of their bravery and willingness to engage in the ‘battle’ for souls. Similar collocations using ‘lind-’ occur in the poems Beowulf (9 examples of this collocation there!), Judith, The Finnsburg Fragment, and The Battle of Maldon, not to mention religious poetry which likewise makes heavy use of martial language, including Genesis A & B, Exodus, Andreas and Cynewulf’s own poem, Elene. The word beadurofe, meaning ‘strong, bold or renowned in battle’ also appears in Beowulf as well as Andreas and Elene.
one another in these two epitomes of James and Simon and Thaddeus in *Fates*, but also in Cynewulf’s other poem *Elene* and the closely related work *Andreas*. Cynewulf uses his familiar collocation of *Næs...siðes sæne*, meaning ‘he was not slow [to go] on the journey,’ to link James’s willingness to undergo the “journey” from this life to the life hereafter to the more literal journeys of Simon and Thaddeus which, as we have seen, are described in very similar terms as *næron ō twegen tohtan sæne, /...sohton siðfrome*, (nor were those two slow in strife...[they were] eager to seek a journey, lines 76, 78a).

This connection is further concretized in Cynewulf’s description of the life and death of John the Evangelist, the only apostle whose earthly existence met a peaceful end. Here, Cynewulf uses the motif of the journey to compensate for the lack of a martyrdom story:

*He in Effessia ealle þrage
leode lærde, þanon lifes weg
sið gesohte, swegle dreamas,
beorhtne boldwelane.* (Fates, lines 30-33a)

[In Ephesus he constantly taught the people; thence through a journey he sought the way of life, the heavenly joys, the bright glorious dwelling.]

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581 *Elene*, line 219: *Elene ne wolde þæs siðfates sæne weorðan.*
582 *Andreas*, lines 202-3: *Eala, Andreas, þæt þu a woldest / þæs siðfates sæne weorþan;* and line 211: *Ne meaht ðu þæs siðfates sæne weorðan.*
583 This phrase pattern of *sæne* and its Latin parallel *tardus* (the word *sæne* glosses *tardus* in the Old English translation of the Benedictine Rule, 31.61.4) used with a negative verb or conjunction as a means of dramatic understatement may be traced back through several Latin sources, beginning with Ambrose’s *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* II.xix.292: *nescit tarda molimina sancti spiritus gratia*, which was later adopted by two early Anglo-Saxon authors, the anonymous writer of the *Vita Cuthberti*, VII.122,1-2, and Eddius Stephanus in his *Vita Wilfridi*, XIX, where he characterizes Ecgfrith as *tarda molimina nesciens* (no lover of belated exploits). See Dabney Bankert, Jessica Wegman, and Charles D. Wright, “Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England with Pseudo-Ambrose and Ambrosiaster,” *Old English Newsletter Subsidia* 25 (1997): 33-34.
584 Although these formulas certainly have the ring of heroic poetry about them, it is interesting to note that the examples of the collocation of *sið* and *sæne* all occur in the context of religiously-motivated journeys across the sea. To be *siðes sæne* is always seen as something very negative, which the saintly, such as James, Simon, Thaddeus and Elene, all reject in their eagerness to depart from their current location on the map, and from their mortal lives. Andrew is the exception to this rule, and we will discuss the implications of his *sæne* behavior in the next chapter.
The lines *panon lifes wieg / siðe gesohte* suggests John’s physical journey to Ephesus where he took up the apostolic calling; but it also refers to the widespread belief (originating in the Greek apocryphal Acts of John) that John alone among the apostles experienced bodily as well as spiritual assumption into heaven.\(^585\) For John, the “journey” was both the means to, and the means of, attaining the “heavenly joys” even without suffering physical death.\(^586\)

With the obvious exception of John, Cynewulf follows the tradition established in the apocryphal Acts by depicting the apostles above all as martyrs.\(^587\) The emphasis on each apostle’s individual choice to risk and endure execution resonates throughout the poem, forming the major theme and source of interest. Some apostles – Peter and Paul in particular, but also James the Greater, Philip, and James the Less – are described almost exclusively in terms of their martyrdom. In the accounts of their deaths, Cynewulf especially calls attention to the violence of the methods of execution, the public nature of the attempted humiliation of the saint, the heathenness or Judaism of the executioners, and the apostle’s heavenly reward. The epitome describing the martyrdom of James the Less is typical in this regard:

\[\text{Hyrde we } \text{hæt Iacob } \text{in Ierusalem}\]

\(^{585}\) In fact, Cynewulf’s description of John’s death is similar in content to John’s penultimate words, as they are reported in the Acts of John: “‘And grant me to accomplish the journey unto thee without suffering insolence or provocation, and to receive what thou hast promised unto them that live purely and have loved thee only’”; M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses with Other Narratives and Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 270. James notes that some Greek versions conclude with reports that John’s “body...was translated by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” to heaven, or that when people returned to his grave they could not find his body (270).

\(^{586}\) This is implicit in Christ’s promise to the disciple whom Jesus loved in in John 21:20-24.

\(^{587}\) As François Bovon notes in “Canonical and Apocryphal Acts of Apostles,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11:2 (2003): 176, a “major formal difference between the apocryphal and canonical acts is that in the apocryphal acts the life of each apostle finds its apex in martyrdom....This situation is very logical because the core of the message is a call to choose the unseen, manifested in a preference for the afterlife and an exhortation to despise the body. This is very different from the canonical Acts, which explicitly does not end with a martyrdom story.”
[We heard that Jacob suffered death before the priests in Jerusalem. Through the
swing of a club the resolute one fell, the blessed before the spiteful ones. He now
has eternal life with the King of Glory, as a reward for the fight.]

The brutality of James’s martyrdom is heightened by the near-rhyming alliterative half-
line ðurg stenges sweng used to describe his bludgeoning, as well as by Cynewulf’s
characterization of James’s death as a battle (wig) and a form of suffering (browode).
Cynewulf stresses that James’s death took place in public, fore sacerdum (in front of the
priests), and for æfestum (before the envious or spiteful ones), with these peoples being
implicitly differentiated from James by their persistence in Judaism.

Cynewulf’s attention to the particular method of each apostle’s martyrdom ranges
from the literal and specific galgan þehte (stretched [himself] out on the cross/gallows)
and on galgan...ahangen wæs (he was hung on the gallows/cross) used to describe
Andrew and Philip, respectively, to the more euphemistic wæpnum aswebban (put to
sleep by weapons) and feorh ofgefon (gave up life) used to describe Matthew
and Peter and Paul. But the emphasis on the means of execution is always present. The cumulative
effect of this emphasis is that of a varying catalog of violent deaths contrasted with the
static peacefulness of the eternal life in heaven granted to each apostle. Though the
apostles each suffered martyrdom in different ways – crucifixion, sword-stroke,
beheading, bludgeoning, and general ‘armed hostility’ (ðurh wæpenhete, l. 80a) – they all

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588 There may, however, be a legitimate explanation for Cynewulf’s lack of specificity concerning the
instrument of Matthew’s execution. Els Rose notes (167) that “when depicted as an apostle, Matthew holds
a spear, sword, or halberd as symbols of his martyrdom.” Perhaps this variety in the iconography of
Matthew may lie behind Cynewulf’s use of the generic term wæpnum.
share the same reward: *langsumre life, leohht unhwilen* (l. 20; a more enduring life, an everlasting light).

In the remaining epitomes, Cynewulf presents the torture and martyrdom of his subjects as the culmination of their apostolic lives of travel, teaching and preaching, and their determined renunciation of worldly glory. His discussion of the lives of John, Thomas and Matthew particularly emphasize the roles of the apostles in spreading Christian truth and belief through the eradication of paganism and the conversion of multitudes. Cynewulf praises John for his “continual” (*ealle þrage*, l. 30b) teaching of the Ephesians, perhaps alluding to John’s long life, and the fact that he remained in Ephesus for many years, and then returned to Ephesus after his exile in Patmos.

Cynewulf attaches significance to the linguistic means by which the apostles communicated this enlightening truth: speech and writing. Cynewulf stresses that Thomas moved his converts *þurh his halig word* (through his holy word, l. 53b), a reference to his preaching. The description of Matthew, though, is of greater interest for the way it highlights the continued influence of apostolic teaching through its preservation in writings both canonical and apocryphal. Cynewulf writes:

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Hwæt, we þæt gehyrdon þurg halige bec,
þæt mid Sigelwarum soð yppe wearð,
dryhtlic dom godes! Dæges or onwoc,
leohes geleafan, land wæs gefælsoð
þurh Matheus mære lare.
þone het Irtacus ðurh yrne hyge,
wælreow cyning, wæpnum aswebban. (Fates, lines 63-69)
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[Lo! We have heard from holy books that the truth was raised up among the Ethiopians, the lordly power of God! The dawn of day awoke, the belief in the Light; the land was cleansed through the famous teaching of Matthew. Then, Irtacus, king greedy for slaughter, commanded through his enraged spirit that Matthew be put to sleep by weapons.]
The teaching of Matthew is rightly designated as “famous” here because, like John, Matthew is an apostle as well as an evangelist. His Gospel continues to spread the truth about the life and teachings of Jesus, expanding the influence of his teaching beyond his immediate mission among the Ethiopians to all peoples in all places and all times. Presumably, however, the halig bec to which Cynewulf refers here cannot be the Gospel of Matthew, but must describe instead the apocryphal Acts that narrate the missionary adventures, teaching, and martyrdom of the apostle. Anderson has argued that the phrase “Hwæt, we þæt gehyrdon þurg halige bec” (l. 66) probably refers to the monastic practice of reading stories about the apostles aloud, because it makes use of the we gehyrdon formula, “which normally (as in Beowulf) indicates oral transmission of a traditional story, to refer instead to the reading of books.” But whereas Anderson envisions the monastic refectory as the scene for such “pious lections,” I would instead suggest that this may be a reference to the practice of reading of the apocryphal acts and passiones aloud in the monastic liturgy for the feast days of the apostles. Both are plausible, and it is likely that Cynewulf could have been referring to both forms of public reading. Either way, however, Cynewulf is calling attention to the textual transmission of Matthew’s apostolic life story and his Gospel teaching, reminding his readers of the ability of holy writings to both enlighten the minds and cleanse the souls of their readers and auditors, and that well beyond the lifetimes of their authors.

I see Cynewulf using this concept to subtly resolve the paradox in imagery which Daniel Calder has suggested governs this portion of the poem: “Matthew wakes the dawn of faith’s light for the Ethiopians through his teaching, but is then put to sleep by

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589 Anderson 19.
590 Anderson 20.
A fourth major thematic strand runs through Cynewulf’s poem: the individual apostle’s total rejection of worldly glory, possessions, power and royal favor. The conflict between the traditional interests of pagan or Jewish rulers and priests and the missionary intentions of early Christians forms a staple of the martyr’s *vita* in general and the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in particular. As François Bovon explains, these scenes of conflict pit the apostle against embittered rulers who attempt to turn him away from his focus on spiritual things through bribes, offers of royal favor, forced sacrifice to heathen idols, humiliation or torture. These conflicts are central to the apocrypha because they illustrate the “core of the message” of the apostolic life: the “call to choose the unseen, manifested in a preference for the afterlife and an exhortation to despise the body.”

Because this shunning of secular temptations and protection manifests itself in the form of the apostle’s willing martyrdom, it remains implicit in the biographies of all of the twelve. However, Cynewulf’s treatments of Bartholomew and the pair Simon and Thaddeus particularly emphasize their rejection of this world. Cynewulf tells us of Bartholomew that

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591 Calder, *Cynewulf*, 35.
592 Bovon 177.
Bartholomew’s choice between sacrificing to a heathen idol, and sacrificing himself for the sake of his belief in the Christian God is underscored by Cynewulf’s implicit juxtaposition of two forms of wealth and glory: the *wuldres dream* and *lifwela* of heaven and the earthly comforts and benefits which would presumably come from obeying Astrias. The homiletic tone of the formula *wuldres dream* signals that the glory Bartholomew prefers is not of this world, and the riches he pursues are spiritual rather than material (*haðengild*). Because Astrias, the pagan ruler, is blind in spirit (*hygeblind*), he cannot imagine that Bartholomew chooses a God and a life which is unseen.

Cynewulf likewise presents the martyrdoms of Simon and Thaddeus in the context of their rejection of worldly wealth and glory. He writes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{æðele sceoldon} \\
\text{ðurh wæpenhete} & \quad \text{weorc prowigan,} \\
\text{sigelean secan,} & \quad \text{ond þone soðan gefean,} \\
\text{dream æfter deaðe,} & \quad \text{þa gedæled wearð} \\
\text{lif wið lice,} & \quad \text{ond þas lænan gestreon,} \\
\text{idle æhtwelan,} & \quad \text{ealle forhogodan.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

[Fates, lines 79b-84]

[The noble ones were fated to suffer pain through armed hostility, to seek reward for victory and that true bliss, joy after death when the life became parted from the body and from this transitory treasure, vain possessions – they scorned all these.]

This epitome, with its emphasis on the transitory nature of earthly wealth and the superior joy of the saints’ heavenly reward achieved through suffering, forms the last in the series
of ten which come before Cynewulf’s double epilogue. This hardly seems accidental when we consider that these are the exact themes which Cynewulf treats in the two concluding passages of his poem, the runic epilogue which reveals his name and the final call for prayers for salvation and entrance into the “heavenly homeland.”

_Fates of the Apostles_ shows a very unusual lack of interest in miracles performed by the apostles. This feature is especially surprising when we consider that Cynewulf’s probable sources were the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. As François Bovon notes, “miracles, although present in the canonical acts, abound in the apocryphal acts in such proportion that the hero looks like a miracle-performing machine.” Yet Cynewulf records only one miracle ascribed to an apostle, Thomas’s resurrection of Gad:

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Syððan collenferð         cyninges broðor
awehte for weorodum,         wundorcraeft,
þurh dryhtnes miht,         þæt he of deaðe aras,
geong ond guðhwæt,         ond him wæs Gad nama,
ond ða þæm folce         feorg gesealde,
sin æt sæcce. (Fates, ll. 54-59a)
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[Afterward the one brave in spirit awoke the king’s brother before the people with wonderful skill, through the power of the Lord, so that he arose from death, young and ready for battle (and his name was Gad); and then he [Thomas] gave his own life to the people in the fight.]

The relation of this miracle is purely conventional, with little to note except its adoption of the martial language of secular heroic poetry to describe both Thomas and Gad.

Clearly, Cynewulf is more interested in the ironic contrast between Thomas bringing a heathen back to life, and the heathens killing Thomas than he is in the significance of the miracle itself, since he does not use this to perpetuate or establish any patterns in the poem as a whole. One wonders why Cynewulf chose to overlook miracle stories – such a ubiquitous, integral part of the lives of all of the apostles, both canonical and non-

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593 Bovon 171.
canonical – and focus instead on the themes of the journey, martyrdom, teaching and the rejection of treasures and worldly glory.

Obviously, these characteristics are common to all of the apostles and are in keeping with Jesus’ own example and his expressly stated commands to his disciples. But the fact that none of the characteristics which Cynewulf highlights are unexpected or out of the ordinary does not mean that they are unimportant; indeed, it is quite the opposite. The reiteration of the well-known fates of the apostles, mirroring Christ’s fate, impresses upon the reader the notion that the apostolic life has its own predictable trajectory. In Cynewulf’s conception, *se apostolhad* ceases to be a rarified concept unattainable by men living in the post-apostolic age, and becomes an imitable pattern that Christians, like Cynewulf himself, can attempt to follow to a greater or lesser extent. It may be that Cynewulf eschews extended treatment of the apostles’ miracles as a way to make the distance between apostolic heroes and mere mortals seem that much shorter.

**The Individual Apostle and the Twelve: Dual Conceptions of *Apostolhad***

Cynewulf’s humanization of the apostles as men and as models for contemporary Christians to follow extends only to his account of their deeds as historical persons on earth; this pattern breaks down in the framing portions of the poem where Cynewulf instead depicts the apostles as a powerful group of holy intercessors, seated in majesty with Christ in heaven, now and always. What this suggests is that a dual vision of the apostles operates throughout the poem, with Cynewulf representing the apostles as alternately human and saintly, individual and collective. This duality is signaled by shifts in the language and imagery Cynewulf uses to describe the apostles in the epitomes as
opposed to the poem’s prologue and epilogue. Furthermore, it appears to be supported by an analogous differentiation in the liturgy between characterizing individual apostles as preachers and martyrs (in the celebration of their feasts), and characterizing the Twelve as a group of intercessors in heaven who collectively share in the powers of binding and loosing which we typically associate with Peter alone (in the liturgical reception of Matthew 16:18-19 and 19:28).\footnote{594}

As we discussed in the Introductory chapter, the practice of culting of individual apostles, particularly Peter and Paul, but also Andrew, Matthew and the other apostles, co-existed with the veneration of the twelve apostles as a group in the early Middle Ages. Alan Thacker’s studies have tracked the development of these two forms of apostolic cult in early medieval Rome and Gaul, arguing that both practices were wide-spread in Rome beginning in the late 6th century, but that in Gaul, the veneration of individual apostles in the liturgy and church dedications was more common.\footnote{595} The Anglo-Saxon church, Thacker claims, combines elements and practices from both the Roman and Gallican forms of apostolic veneration, dedicating churches to and celebrating the feasts of the apostles as both individual saints and as a group of twelve, a \textit{halgan heap} (holy band, l. 9a) to use Cynewulf’s words.\footnote{596}

Els Rose’s research into the adaptation of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in early medieval liturgical worship expands on the findings of Thacker to reveal how the dual veneration of the apostles as individuals and as a “collegium” results in the development of two complementary ways of thinking about the apostles as religious figures. Rose’s investigation of the treatment of the apostles as individuals or pairs (she

\footnote{594}{Rose 286-291.}
\footnote{595}{Thacker, “In Search of Saints,” 265-274.}
\footnote{596}{Thacker, “In Search of Saints,” 273-274.}
discusses Bartholomew, Philip and James, Matthew, and Simon and Jude) reveals a similar configuration of emphases to those given by Cynewulf in the epitomes which we discussed in detail above. However, Rose also shows that the individual apostle was also venerated as “a typus, one of the Twelve,” and that in this context, the apostles become “interchangeable” with each being acknowledged as sharing in the “privileges of foundation and judgment granted to Peter.” 597 She traces examples in liturgical texts from England (The Canterbury Benedictional), Spain (The Old Spanish Mass and several Mozarabic hymns), Italy (the hymn Apostoli nobili victoria by Alfanus of Salerno) as well as hymns from indeterminate locations which clearly indicate that “the authority to loose and bind is attributed explicitly to Matthew, Bartholomew, Simon and Jude as well as to Peter alone: the power of the key as well as the privilege of judgment belong to all 12 apostles.” 598

I would argue that the dual representation of the apostles in Cynewulf’s Fates reflects the well-documented Anglo-Saxon appreciation for both the Roman and Gallic traditions of apostolic veneration, and shows how the apostles themselves operate simultaneously in the minds of Anglo-Saxon Christians as figures at once human and superhuman, both fundamentally like and unlike the persons of the author and his readers. This juxtaposition of the apostle as individual and typus, to use Rose’s term, organizes Cynewulf’s Fates and prompts the audience to grapple with this paradox which also forms a major theme in his other poem, Christ II: Ascension.

Cynewulf signals these two differing conceptions of the apostles through his control of descriptive language and imagery, specifically his characteristic deployment of

597 Rose 291.
598 Rose 289-291.
the martial metaphors and epithets common to the heroic tradition of Old English poetry. Critics have long recognized Cynewulf’s penchant for militaristic idiom, his immersion in the Germanic thought-world of secular poetics as well as Christian culture. Indeed, ample use of heroic diction and the heavy application of what John Hermann calls “motifs of spiritual warfare” are two of the hallmarks of the Cynewulfian poetic style. As we have noted in passing, Fates is no exception to this – in fact, its utilization of explicitly martial imagery to describe the apostles’ missions and martyrdoms is its most obvious quality. Cynewulf calls Peter and Paul frame, fyrdhwate (bold, eager for battle, l. 12a). Andrew, he tells us, is hildeheard (battle-hard, l. 21a) as he “stretches himself out on the cross after the war-play, before the clamor of the harrying ones” (heriges byrhtme, / æfter guðplegan gealgan þehte, ll. 21b-22), and Bartholomew is a beaducraftig beorn (a warrior skilled in battle, l. 44a). These are just a few examples.

I would point out that Cynewulf concentrates the battle imagery in the middle of the poem, in the section which treats each apostle individually as a teacher and martyr. This language of spiritual warfare applies to each apostle as a man, as a hero in the Christian sense of the secular term. Cynewulf depicts each apostle’s journey and willingness to suffer martyrdom before the multitudes as an act of heroism, a physical contest for the faith. Although their motivations are spiritual and divinely-inspired, their struggles are defined in the earthly terms of warfare, as a battle between men.

600 Andy Orchard, “Both Style and Substance: The Case for Cynewulf,” in Anglo-Saxon Styles, ed. Catherine Karkov and George Hardin Brown (New York: SUNY University Press, 2003), 293, notes this poetic style has been associated most strongly with the anonymous poem Andreas, which was formerly thought to have been authored by Cynewulf, but Orchard now believes to have been influenced by his work instead.
In the frame of the poem, however, Cynewulf refrains from using the imagery of warfare to characterize the apostles, whom he addresses and describes as a group. He does use secular epithets to depict the apostles at the beginning and ending of the poem, although these primarily refer to the apostles’ exalted station or relationship to Christ. In the prologue, the poet introduces the apostles, calling them *ædelingas* (princes, or ‘noble ones,’ l. 3a), stressing that they

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  ellen cyðdon,
torhte ond tireadige. Twelfe wæron,
daedum domfæste, dryhtne gecorene,
leofe on life. Lof wide sprang,
miht ond mærðo, ofer middangeard,
þeodnes þegna, þrym unlytel.
Halgan heape hlyt wisode
þær hie dryhtnes æ deman sceoldon,
reccan fore rincum. (ll. 3b-11a)
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[...bright and glorious, made their courage known. They were twelve, illustrious in deeds, chosen by the Lord, beloved in life. Their praise sprang forth, their might and fame, widely across the earth; servants of the Lord, not lacking in majesty. Lot guided the holy group, as to where they should preach the Gospel of the Lord, recount it before men.]

While formulaic phrases such as *ellen cyðdon* (made their courage known), *daedum domfæste* (illustrious in deeds), and *miht ond mærðo* (might and fame) retain the flavor of secular poetic descriptions of martial heroes, the prologue lacks the explicit comparisons between apostolic work and physical warfare common to the epitomes of individual apostles’ lives. Instead, Cynewulf focuses on the fame, glory, and high status of the apostles, emphasizing the paradox that their servitude to Christ exalts them above other men. Cynewulf’s initial depiction of the apostles emphasizes their group identity, their special status as the *twelfe*, the *halgan heape* (the holy band or assembly) – the servants chosen by the Lord (*dryhtne gecorene*). Cynewulf’s use of litotes to underscore the
majesty (*þrym unlytel*) of the apostles as a group suggests an image of the twelve apostles seated in glory with Christ in heaven, an image to which he returns in the poem’s conclusion.

Cynewulf transitions from the last of the epitomes (that of Simon and Thaddeus) to his runic epilogue with these words:

\[
\text{ðus ða æðelingas ende gesealdon,} \\
\text{XII tilmodige. Tir unbræcne} \\
\text{wegian on gewitte wuldres þegnas. (lines 85-87)}
\]

[Thus the princely ones yielded an end, the twelve good-hearted ones. The servants of renown bore in their minds glory unbroken.]

The words *æðelingas* and *þegnas*, as well as the number twelve (here given in numeral form) recall the language of the poem’s opening lines and reassert the apostles’ status as a group exalted in glory. Two lines later Cynewulf repeats the characterization of the apostles as a *halgan heap* (holy group or band, l. 90a), but this time in the context of asking his audience to pray to the apostles in heaven for their aid in securing his salvation. In the frame of his poem, Cynewulf’s depiction of the apostles shifts from a meditation on the apostles as individual teachers and martyrs to a consideration of their status as a glorious collective who reign in heaven with Christ, thus taking on the role of intercessors and judges. The dual function of the apostles in *Fates* may reflect the two distinct liturgical treatments of the apostles. As individuals, the apostles are Christian heroes who inspire and edify through their exemplary following of Christ’s teaching and sacrifice. As a group, the apostles serve as “friends” (*freondas*, l. 91b) and “kinder ones”
(liðra, l. 92a) who can provide “help and comfort” (friðes ond fultomes, l. 91a) for the speaker through their influence in heaven.⁶⁰¹

**Cynewulf’s Construction of an Apostolic Authorial Identity**

*Fates* represents the apostles as models for Christian living in this world and as saintly helpers in dwelling in majesty with God in the next. But the bracketing of these two idealizations of the apostles by statements concerning the spiritual anxieties of the speaker prompts the reader to compare Cynewulf with the protagonists of his poem. It is commonplace in studies of *Fates* for scholars to point to the wide gulf between the character of the speaker, shown as “troubled in spirit” (*on seocum sefan*, l. 2a), “sad” (*geomrum*, l. 89b), “lonely” (*ana*, l. 93b) and fearful of death and damnation, and the apostles, shown as brave, collegial, and happy to suffer pain and death for the sake of witnessing Christ and inspiring faith in others. Indeed, this is the initial sense one gets from reading through *Fates of the Apostles*. The speaker’s inadequacy and the apostles’ heroism appear to be thrown in sharp relief; the desperation of the speaker is seemingly caused by anxiety about his own failure to “measure up” to the glory of the apostles.⁶⁰²

Previously we noted five main emphases in Cynewulf’s descriptions of the individual apostles: the journey, martyrdom and suffering, teaching and preaching,

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⁶⁰¹ James Earl, “Typology and Iconographic Style in Early Medieval Hagiography,” in *Typology and English Medieval Literature*, ed. Hugh T. Keenan. (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 105, also calls attention to the representation of the saint on these two levels, the historical and the anagogical: “To examine the life of a saint from this [anagogical] viewpoint is to examine the saint who exists, and will exist eternally, in the Heavenly City. This is the reality of the saint which the *vita*, like the icon, relates to; it is not the saint of literal history, but the saint in glory, to whom the hagiographer asks us to raise our eyes and our prayers….it is important to note that the hagiographers in general do not spend much effort encouraging the reader to emulate the saints; more often, the reader is encouraged to pray to the saint and to ask for his intercession. The saint is as much an instrument of our salvation in this way as he is a model in a simple moral sense.”

⁶⁰² Calder, *Cynewulf*, 32-33.
shunning worldly glory and possessions, and (a general lack of) miracles. Notably, these are the very same aspects of his spiritual life and deeds which Cynewulf reflects on in the poem’s prologue, epilogue, and runic signature. As Nicholas Howe puts it, “here at the end, the scop casts himself as apostolorum imitator.” Calder, Rice, and Hieatt have all noted that Cynewulf’s self-description leads to “a proliferation of ironic contrasts” between his experiences and those of the apostles, all of which point to the fearful weakness of the speaker. However, I would argue that while these comparisons initially appear to reflect poorly on Cynewulf, they nonetheless show the poem’s speaker as emphatically engaging in the very same endeavors as the apostles he celebrates. Though Cynewulf’s versions of these actions take on more symbolic or rhetorical forms than those of the actual apostles, they are effective in setting the poem’s speaker up as a touchpoint for the audience’s own religious reflection, and an authoritative voice, one whose personal struggles with his body and soul only add credibility to his urgent message of repentance. Far from distancing Cynewulf from the apostles, the speaker’s rhetoric of self-depreciation and humilitas paradoxically works to bring him closer to them in spirit.

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604 Howe, Catalogue Poems, 99-100.
606 Rice (105-106) notes the paradoxical logic that underlies Cynewulf’s understanding of the apostles’ lives, but does not extend this logic to encompass Cynewulf’s self-understanding: “The paradox central to the Fates is that of Christ’s words to his disciples (Matt 16:24-5): Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. Qui enim voluerit animam suam salvam facere, perdet eam: qui autem perderit animam suam propter me, inveniet eam. The apostles in giving up their lives gained eternal life, in losing received everything, and in suffering ignominiously achieved glorious beatitude. Cynewulf presents these paradoxes as the clear logic of faith. He declares that the praise of the twelve and of their glorious deeds, power and fame, has spread throughout the earth. The manifestation of their might and glory which he chooses to expound, however, is what seems to the eye unenlightened by faith, proof of their weakness and defeat.”
The speaker’s account of his own troubled journey (siðgeomor, l. 1b) from this life to the next bookends the poem and provides its occasion.⁶⁰⁷ Though he represents himself as fearful, he is nonetheless emphatically on a journey towards death and (he hopes, though he fears not) towards everlasting life with the apostles in heaven. Death and the afterlife are depicted as the “unknown country” (eardwic uncuð, l. 93a), akin to the exotic, unknown places to which the apostles traveled.⁶⁰⁸ In this way Cynewulf’s account of his own ‘journey’ parallels the journeys of the apostles in both of the senses we discussed above: the earthly and the spiritual.⁶⁰⁹ Cynewulf tells us,

Ic sceall feor heonan,  
an elles forð,  
eardes neosan,  
sið asettan,  
nat ic sylфа hwær,  
of þisse worulde.  
Wic sindon uncuð,  
eard ond eðel…. (lines 109b-113a)

[I must go far hence, seek forth somewhere else in the earth, set out on a journey, I know myself not where, out from this world. Unknown are the places, the dwelling and the country….]

In these lines he underscores the fear and suffering he feels at the prospect of leaving this world and journeying to the next. But, in doing so, he also reminds us of his earlier depictions of the apostles’ journeys as an aspect of martyrdom, as well as a spiritual parallel to, and even substitute for, physical martyrdom or a literal missionary journey to an unfamiliar land.

⁶⁰⁷ Hieatt’s detailed discussion of the journey motif (69-70) is worth quoting here: “the journeys of the apostles are an integral part of the subject matter, but Cynewulf’s emphasis goes well beyond what would be simply dictated by sources. Notably, there is the significant repetition of the word ‘sið’. The poet is ‘sið geomor.’ Simon and Thaddeus were ‘siðfrome;’ John ‘siðe gesohte,’ nor was his brother James ‘siðes saene’; and the poet himself must, in the end, ‘sið asettan’. The journey motif, especially as embodied in the use of the word ‘sið,‘ is, then, a unifying element of the poem. Only after examining the journeys of the ‘siðfrome’ apostles can the poet contemplate his own sið without feeling siðgeomor, and finally advise us all to aim our individual journeys toward heaven.”

⁶⁰⁸ Howe, Catalogue Poems, 100.
⁶⁰⁹ Frese 331.
Cynewulf’s sorrow and queasy discomfort at the thought of leaving the “earthly part, the body, behind [him], the spoil of slaughter, as a comfort for worms” (lætan me on laste lic, eordan dæl, / wælreaf wunigea weormum to hroðre, ll. 94-95) certainly contrasts with the eagerness of the apostles to meet their ends. But the speaker’s penitential meditation on the weakness and decay of the flesh and the uncertainty of his own salvation is a powerful example of his spiritual suffering, and as such, binds him to the apostles as a fellow sufferer for the faith.

The rhetoric of suffering which permeates the poet’s self-reflections recalls the Pauline theme of suffering as a legitimation of apostleship and as a characteristic of apostolic ministry which, as we have shown above, was of signal importance in the Anglo-Saxon conception of what we would call “missionary work.” While Cynewulf does not depict himself as an apostle or even what we might call a “missionary,” he does attempt to engage in those aspects of the apostolic life which he believes are of greatest significance, even if he does so only on a symbolic or spiritual level. Indeed, even the implicitly negative comparisons between himself and the twelve apostles have their parallel in Paul’s self-designation as the “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 9:1). In

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610 Calder 32-33; Rice 111.
611 As Rice explains (107) Cynewulf’s “sadness…is the self-centered sorrow of the man weighted down by the consciousness of sin while contemplating the inevitability of death and the judgement it brings. Contemplation of death, especially one’s own, was a prominent feature of medieval penitential exhortation, no less in the Old English than in the Middle English period. It is a constant theme in the penitential homilies, which often vividly describe the decay and wormy gore of the grave as well as the fearful state of the soul in the interim between death and doomsday.”
612 As Karl Suso Frank, “Vita Apostolica: Ansätze zur apostolischen Lebensform in der alten Kirche” Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 82.2 (1971): 148, explains, the fact that Paul’s claim to apostleship was belated and contested paradoxically led to the perception of his eventual preeminence among the Twelve, and encouraged others to see apostleship as a role which could be taken up, a model to be imitated: “Dazu wird Paulus ganz den Zügen des Petrus angeglichen. Ja, in der Schilderung seiner Wirksamkeit übertrifft er den Erstapostel. Die Apg verleiht Paulus das greifbarste Profil, zugänglicher als das des Petrus und selbstverständlich aller übrigen Apostel. Damit führt die Apostelgeschichte zum Ergebnis: Paulus, der eigentlich Nicht-Apostel, wird zu der am meisten gezeichneten Apostelgestalt. Das erlaubt, dass sich gerade an seinem Bild die imitatio apostolorum aufhängen kann.”
Cynewulf’s poem as in Paul’s writings, suffering is represented as a necessary part of the apostolic calling, and both the apostles and their followers must persevere in their spreading of the Gospel message in the face of hardships both spiritual and physical.

Whereas the apostles’ hardships and suffering took the outward forms of dangerous travel to foreign shores, violent struggles and public martyrdom, Cynewulf’s suffering is inward, private. Earl Anderson has called attention to Cynewulf’s apparent reliance upon the “theology of the two forms of martyrdom, manifest and secret” in Fates. Anderson writes,

Ælfric develops this idea in his Catholic Homilies, for example in ‘In Natale Sanctorum Martirum’….‘there are two kinds of martyrdom: one secret, the other manifest. He who in persecution lays down his life for Christ’s belief, is openly a martyr. But he who through patience endures scorn and injury, and loves him who hates him, and despises his own vices and the prompting of the invisible devil, he is undoubtedly a martyr by secret deed’. In the ‘Natale Omnium Sanctorum’ for the first series of the Catholic Homilies, Ælfric describes the manifest martyrdom of the apostles, and then goes on to describe the ministry of holy priests, who were also martyrs even though they were not slain….All Christians can achieve martyrdom through perseverance in the faith, obedience to God’s commandments, and mortification of the flesh.”

Cynewulf undoubtedly subscribes to this alternative conception of martyrdom, one made popular by the vitae of monastic saints, for whom the ongoing internal struggle to maintain spiritual purity through ascetic practices supplanted the public sacrifice of the martyr. But whereas Anderson presents Cynewulf’s “secret martyrdom” as a cause for the speaker’s sense of personal inadequacy in comparison to the famous and heroic struggles of the apostles, I would stress that the poet’s attitude of humility and the

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613 Anderson 80.
614 Earl 94-95.
615 Anderson 80.
embedding of his name in runes actually works to heighten the expression of his struggles with the spirit and the flesh, thereby lending credence and legitimacy to his suffering.

Furthermore, Cynewulf’s admission of his own ongoing spiritual affliction adds another form of martyrdom, the inward martyrdom of the Christian man who “despises his own vices,” to the varied catalogue of apostolic ‘fates’ which he presents in the body of his poem. The final lines of *Fates of the Apostles* include both the poem’s speaker and his audience in a prayer that they might reach the same destination as the apostles, though they too are traveling there by different paths:

Ah utu we þe geornor to gode cleopigan,
sendan usse bene on þa beorhtan gesceafet,
þæt we þæs botles brucan motan,
hames in hehðo, þær is hihta mæst,
þær cyning engla clænum gildeð
lean unhwilen. Nu a his lof standeð,
mycel ond mære, ond his miht seomæþ,
ce ond edgiong, ofer ealle gesceafet. (lines 115-122)

[But let us then call out to God the more earnestly, send our prayers into the bright creation, so that we might enjoy that dwelling, a home on high. There is the greatest of comforts, where the King of Angels rewards the pure with eternal reward. Now His praise ever endures, great and glorious, and his might remains, eternal and ever-young, over all creation.]

When we take the opening and closing passages of *Fates of the Apostles* in earnest, the relationship between Cynewulf’s sense of personal spiritual affliction and his pastoral intention to educate his audience about the apostles and other saints through poetry becomes clear. Cynewulf’s fear and uncertainty about his own salvation motivates him to use his poetic talents to share with his audience of fellow Christians something he

616 Calder (38) notes that Cynewulf uses his runic signature to communicate this very idea: “the disclosure of his name has concomitant ironies; by concealing it in this passage on mutability, he creates an emblem of the spirit trapped in the flesh, the name in the text. Only through cutting his name from the context can we know who he is, and this intelleltual dissection symbolizes the coming split of the spirit and the body in his solitary journey.”
knows for certain to be true: the apostles preached the word of God to the ends of the earth, and their willingness to endure suffering even to the point of martyrdom granted them entrance to heaven, where they dwell with Christ eternally. From there, they continue to exercise their concern for their fellow men as intercessors and freondas (l. 91b). To enlist their aid, believing Christians must show concern for the needs of their own souls and the souls of others through repentance of sins, renunciation of the transitory treasures of this earth, and continual prayer. In sharing these teachings, Cynewulf enacts them himself, modeling these practices for his audience like a good pastor. In this way, his penitential attitude of humility and self-degradation becomes as much a part of his ministry as the heroic exempla of the fates of the apostles.

The didactic nature of Cynewulf’s poetry constantly impresses itself upon the reader, and we will explore this aspect of his work in greater depth and detail in the following chapter. But what is particularly striking about Fates of the Apostles as a poem is not only its educational and inspirational content, but also the interactive quality of Cynewulf’s teaching.617 In the double epilogue, Cynewulf calls upon his audience directly, asking them twice to actively exercise their faith on his behalf and their own:

 Nu ic þonne bidde beorn se ðe lufige  
 þysses giddes begang þæt he geomrum me  
 þone halgan heap helpe bidde,  
 friðes ond fultones. (lines 88-91a)

[Now, then, I ask the man who loves the content of this song, that he pray to the holy company for help for me in my sadness, for peace and aid.]

 Her mæg findan foreþances gleaw,  
 se ðe hine lysteð leoðgiddunga,  
 hwa þas fitte fegde ..........................

 ........................................  
 ........................................  Nu ðu cunnon miht

617 Rice 112; Frese 330.
Cynewulf's repeated invitations to the reader to ponder and approve of the contents of his “poetic song” (*leoðgiddunga*, l. 97b), its form (*fitte*, l. 98a) and its content (*begang*, 89a and 108a) foreground his creative involvement in the composition of the work, and draw attention to the reader's role as an active participant in the commemoration of the apostles and the speaker's search for salvation. They ask readers to engage in a religious and intellectual exercise designed to reinforce and affirm the connections between the poet, the apostles, and the audience as partakers of a shared Christian culture. Cynewulf appeals to his audience's appreciation of his subject matter: the lives of the apostles, implicitly asking them to recall other circumstances wherein they heard, and enjoyed, the poetic or musical recitation of similar religious content (ll. 89a-90b; ll. 107b-108a), presumably in the liturgy. By asking his audience to view his song in the larger context of liturgical or hagiographical commemoration of the apostles,\(^{618}\) Cynewulf reminds his readership that his poem draws on the common knowledge they share and value as Christian people.

Cynewulf translates his audience's pleasure of recall into a two-part intellectual exchange that, as Robert Rice puts it, "draws the concerned Christian out of pure

passivity and into an active role of involvement in the poet’s fate.”\(^{619}\) He prompts the reader to solve the riddle of the poem’s runic signature passage in order to ascertain the name of the one “who fashioned these fitts” (\textit{hwa pas fitte fegde}, l. 98a) and whose “name has been revealed to men in these words” (\textit{hwa on þam wordum wæs weðrum oncyðig}, l. 105). Once the readers have successfully uncovered the mystery of Cynewulf’s name through their recognition and understanding of the runic letters embedded in the signature passage, they are implored to take the poem’s lessons, the examples of the apostles, to heart. The poet repeatedly issues pleas for his audience’s prayers, encouraging them to commit acts of mercy by praying to the “holy company” for the salvation of his soul, and for a peaceful departure from this world. Rather than seeing Cynewulf’s requests for prayers to the apostles on his behalf as expressions of his groveling despair, we might read them as powerful illustrations of humility – an opportunity for his audience to exercise charity on behalf of a fellow Christian in recompense for the holy teaching of his song.

The resumptive call and response aspect of Cynewulf’s double epilogue culminates in the poem’s final exhortation, where the speaker exclaims,

\begin{quote}
Ah utu we þe geornor to gode cleopigan, sendan usse bene on þa beorhtan gesceaft, þæt we þæs botles brucan motan, hames in hehðo… (ll. 115-118a)
\end{quote}

[Let us then call out to God the more earnestly, send our prayers into the bright creation, so that we might enjoy that dwelling, a home on high…]

The homiletic, pastoral tone of this final passage is difficult to overlook, especially because Cynewulf uses the verb \textit{uton}, a word almost exclusively found in homiletic

\(^{619}\) Rice 111.
Furthermore, Cynewulf’s runic epilogue also models the apostolic virtue of shunning worldly glory for his readers. His repeated calls to his audience to focus on the runic passage as a means of extrapolating his name also encourage the reader to return again and again with greater concentration to the subject matter of those lines in which the secret of his name is revealed.

(F) þær on ende standeþ, eorlas þæs on eordan brucþ; ne moton hie awa aetsonme woruldwunigende. (W) sceal gedreosan; (U) on eole after tohreosan; læne lices frætewa, efne swa (L) toglideð. þonne (C) ond (Y) cæftes neosað níhtes nearowe, on him (N) ligeð, cyninges þeodom. (lines 96b-105b.)

[Wealth (F = feoh) stands at the end, earls enjoy it on earth. Nor may they always be together, dwelling in the world. Joy (W = wyn) shall pass away, (U = ?) in the homeland, after the transitory adornments of the body disperse, just as water (L = lagu = water) glides away. While (C = ? cen = torch?) and (Y = ? yr = bow?) continue to use their skill, constraint (N = nyd?), the servitude of the king, lies upon them in the distress of the night.]

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620 A simple search of the verb in Old English poetry on the Dictionary of Old English Concordance yields only 15 results, as opposed to 495 for homiletic prose texts. Of those examples found in poetry, most occur in the homiletic religious poems such as Seasons for Fasting, Homiletic Fragment I, and the homiletic portions of The Seafarer, The Partridge and The Whale.
While the actual meanings of some of the runic initialisms in this passage are contested by scholars (indeed, they positively elude solution), the overall theme of the signature portion of the poem is clear: the transitory nature of material wealth, human abilities, and earthly enjoyments. This is, of course, the theme of all four of Cynewulf’s runic signatures. But in *Fates of the Apostles*, Cynewulf’s characteristic meditations on the fleeting pleasures of this world show a greater relevance and connection to the content of this poem in particular than they do elsewhere in his corpus. The runic signature’s elegiac tone and reflection on the passing away of happiness and wealth deliberately recall the language which Cynewulf uses earlier to describe the selfless dispositions of the Apostles Bartholomew and Simon and Thaddeus. The apostles’ rejection of “transitory treasure, vain possessions” (†as lænan gestreon, *idle æhtwelan*, ll. 83b-84a) and their pursuit of the heavenly “joy of glory” (*wuldres dream*, l. 48b) and the “joy after death” (*dream after deaðe*, l. 82a) are revisited in this passage, where Cynewulf decries the “transitory adornments of the body” (*læne lices frætewa*, l. 102a) and the swiftness with which all earthly joy shall “glide away just like water” (*Wyn sceal gedreosan*; *U on eðle / … efne swa (L) toglideð*, ll. 98b-99a; 100b).

By embedding his name in this passage, Cynewulf focuses the attention of the reader on the connection between himself and his pastoral message. The examples of the

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622 Frese 330.
apostles have taught him the fleeting and corruptible nature of earthly existence, and have prompted him to look beyond this life to the one beyond, where the apostles enjoy their eternal reward. This, among others, is the message which he seeks to communicate to his audience, and in doing so, he both interprets the significance of the lives and martyrdoms of the apostles for his audience, and calls upon them to follow the apostles as he does. Only by fully recognizing their own implication in the failing excesses of this world – as Cynewulf does by literally entwining his own name in an expression of the ephemerality of human life – can Cynewulf’s readership hope to attain the “true bliss, joy after death” (soðan gefean, / dream æfter deaðe, ll. 81b-82a) enjoyed by Simon, Thaddeus, and all the apostles.

**Conclusion**

Our discussion of the interactive nature of the double epilogue of *Fates of the Apostles* and the ways in which Cynewulf both preaches about and models aspects of the apostolic life for his audience returns us to a consideration of the apocryphal and liturgical influences on the poem. By writing about the individual lives and deaths of the apostles in a commemorative vein and by encouraging his audience to appeal to the apostles as a collegium of saints who can intercede for their salvation, Cynewulf recalls the tone, structure and major themes found in the liturgical veneration of the apostles based on the apocryphal acts or *passiones*. The format of the liturgy of the hours necessitated participation and exchange of the whole religious community, as portions of the day’s hagiographical readings were re-iterated in a series of chants or songs containing quotations from the apocryphal Acts. Like Cynewulf’s poem, these antiphons
and responsories often concluded with a communal prayer, or request for prayers, for the protection, guidance and salvation of others as well as those partaking in the service. Cynewulf emphasizes the status of his work as a “song” (þysne sang, l. 1a; þysses giddes, l.89a; þisses galdres, 108a) and twice describes it with the word begang – a word which several scholars have pointed out has strong liturgical connotations623 - as a means of linking his poem to the rituals of apostolic veneration which likely underlie it.624

This connection between Fates of the Apostles and the recitation of apocryphal material about the apostles in the liturgy of the night office is significant. First, it illuminates the poem’s fluctuation of perspective from the geographic-historical (the apostles as exalted historical persons who spread Christianity around the world) to the personal-spiritual (the spiritual dilemmas of the poem’s speaker, and his concern for every Christian, especially those who read his poem, for their soul’s need and future salvation). The liturgical commemoration of the apostles puts the first of these two perspectives in the service of the other, by honoring the individual apostle’s acts of conversion and martyrdom through the reading, recitation and reiteration of his life. The apostle’s life is at once an edifying tale of Christian heroism, and an inspiring model of ideal Christian behavior. By interpreting the lives of the apostles in this way, participants in the liturgical context as well as Cynewulf and his readers can seek to conform their

623 Anderson and Schilling (30) explain that “among the multiple meanings of this word, Fates exploits chiefly two: begang as ‘way,’ ‘course,’ ‘progression,’ L. tenor [of argument], much like the usage in Vercelli Homily XI; and begang as ‘worship,’ ‘worship service,’” though these critics interpret begang as referring to the processional liturgy of Rogationtide.
624 Though Calder, “Martyrologies,” 30, is here speaking of the potential influence of the litany on Fates, his following observations about the ritual nature of the poem hold for my argument as well: “Cynewulf’s double plea for prayers expresses his notions of structural movement, a movement that is essentially ritualistic. Like that of the Litanies, the progression of Fates, including the epilogue, depends upon a ritual formula that partakes of incantation, of prayers and of ceremony.”
lives to the apostolic model in both literal and figurative ways as a means of seeking the favor and intercession of the apostles as a *collegium*.

Cynewulf’s intimate, penitential recollection of his own spiritual concerns is situated in the context of the epic struggles of the apostles to spread the Gospel message and endure hardship and strife in the service of Christ. This juxtaposition, at first so jarring, actually works to communicate the pastoral message that characterizes his poetry: all men can aspire to be like the saints, but not without a struggle, strife and suffering. As we will see in the next chapter, Cynewulf’s exercise of his poetic gifts enables him to overcome his spiritual weakness and follow the apostles, spreading his teaching among fellow Christians and reaffirming his participation in the community of believers in Anglo-Saxon England and beyond.
CHAPTER 4

APOSTOLHAD AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: CYNEWULF’S APOSTOLIC POETICS IN CHRIST II: ASCENSION

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that Cynewulf crafts a specific kind of apostolic identity for himself in Ascension by associating his poetic abilities with the spiritual gifts given at Pentecost to strengthen the apostles and enable them to preach the Gospel message “geond ealne yrmenne grund” (‘throughout the wide world,’ line 42b). His interpretation of the apostles as representatives of humanity, and his particular understanding of their role in Christ’s Ascension, permits Cynewulf to chart a spiritual trajectory for himself and his audience modeled on the experiences of the apostles as a group. His choice to diverge from the biblical narratives of the Ascension by showing the apostles grieving (instead of rejoicing) at Jesus’ departure highlights their initial spiritual weakness and confusion and creates a sympathetic connection between these saintly figures – more commonly represented as courageous heroes – and Christians living in the post-apostolic age.

In addition to revealing his recognition of his own spiritual infirmity in the apostles’ humanity, Cynewulf’s poem also explores its author’s realization that all people share the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ sent to the apostles. These gifts were thought to encompass many different abilities; but because of the emphasis on the gift of tongues in Acts of the Apostles, the gifts of the Spirit were also traditionally equated with
language and eloquence. Cynewulf calls attention to his exercise of poetic abilities as a way to associate himself with the apostles as a fellow missionary and preacher, whose poetry spreads the message of Christ’s continuing presence in the world to the Anglo-Saxon people in their ancestral tongue. From Cynewulf’s perspective, his willingness to use his God-given talents for Christian teaching and edification opens up the possibility of overcoming his sinful nature, and allows him to hope that he, and by extension, his audience as well, may someday arrive in the “port” of heaven (þære hyðe, lines 425a-427b).

The poem known either as Christ II or Ascension (or both) is the second item in the Exeter Book manuscript and forms the centerpiece of a triptych of poems dealing with aspects of Christ’s presence in the world. Although they were once thought to comprise one single poem in three parts, scholarly opinion is now unanimous in asserting separate authorship of these works. It remains unclear, however, whether they were written to go together, or composed separately and merely gathered by the manuscript’s compiler due to their shared subject matter. It is also unclear whether the poem identified as Cynewulf’s by its runic signature might have been deliberately composed as a bridge between the two other works. In any case, Cynewulf’s Ascension poem shares themes

625 The most recent edition of the poetic manuscript known as the Exeter Book is The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry, ed. Bernard Muir (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1994), but the careful edition of Christ II: Ascension done by A. S. Cook in The Christ of Cynewulf: A Poem in Three Parts (Boston: Athenaeum, 1900), 18-34 remains valuable despite the editor’s now disproven theory that Cynewulf authored all three Christ poems. Old English quotations of Christ II: Ascension, henceforth referred to simply as Ascension, will generally follow Muir’s edition and lineation except where otherwise specified. All quotations of Ascension in Modern English are my own translations.

626 Christ I is a series of lyrics on Christ’s Advent, and Christ III is a poem about Judgment Day.

627 Variously known as Christ I, II and III, or The Advent Lyrics, Ascension, and Judgment.

and motifs with both its neighbors, and the series in the manuscript context observes the chronology of Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, and second coming.

Cynewulf’s *Ascension* is based largely on the conclusion of a Latin Gospel homily by England’s favorite patron saint, Gregory the Great, though it also has long been known to include material from Bede’s hymn “In Ascensione Domini” (‘On the Ascension of the Lord’) and the Bible itself. In adapting Gregory’s text, Cynewulf produces what Daniel Calder calls a “poeticized sermon” that “represents a major departure from the whole previous tradition of Anglo-Saxon poetry, since it is undoubtedly the first meditative poem based on a Latin homily.” Rather than straightforwardly translating this Latin homily into Old English, Cynewulf uses Gregory’s text as a starting point for his own contemplation of the meaning of Christ’s Ascension for the apostles, the angels, and for mankind at the present time and on the day of Judgment. He frames his poem with the same seemingly obscure exegetical problem that Gregory sets up for his audience toward the end of his homily (why did the angels appear in bright clothes at Christ’s Ascension, but not at his Nativity?). Unlike Gregory, however, Cynewulf defers the answer of this question until much later in his poem, and then answers it only indirectly. Indeed, the poem itself is less an exercise in exegesis than

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629 Gregory the Great’s *Homilia in Evangelia XXIX: De Ascensione Domini*. As I discuss at length in Chapter 1, as the initiator of the Roman mission to Anglo-Saxon England in 597, Gregory the Great enjoyed special veneration in Anglo-Saxon England. His large corpus of homilies, commentaries, pastoral manuals and letters were widely circulated, read, translated and adapted in Anglo-Saxon England.


631 Calder, *Cynewulf*, 148. Most other Old English religious poetry is based on biblical (*Genesis A & B, Exodus, Christ and Satan, Judith*, etc.), liturgical (*Advent Lyrics*, the versions of prayers or the Lord’s Prayer, *Seasons of Fasting*, etc.), or hagiographic models (*Elene, Juliana, Andreas*, etc.), or is otherwise devotional in nature (*Dream of the Rood, The Phoenix*, etc.). Several Old English poems use homilies as sources, but only *Ascension* draws mainly on a homily for its content and form.
a rumination on the events and implications of the Ascension for all Christians. The apostles function in Ascension as Christ’s human audience and as his representatives in the world through the missionary office he bestows upon them at the Great Commission. Poised between the humility of Christ’s descent into human nature at the Nativity and the exaltation of Christ’s humanity into heaven at the Ascension, the apostles, Cynewulf, and his Anglo-Saxon audience stand with two feet on earth, but looking up to heaven with fear, hope and expectation.

**Between Heaven and Earth: Cynewulf’s Grieving Apostles**

In the homily which serves as the basis for Cynewulf’s poem, Gregory the Great expounds the standard Gospel pericope for Ascension Sunday, Mark 16:14-20. In this lection, Mark describes how Jesus “upbraids [the eleven apostles⁶³²] for their incredulity and hardness of heart.” Then, just prior to ascending into heaven before their eyes, Jesus gives them one final commission to “go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” promising prodigious signs, such as the ability to speak in tongues and handle serpents, to those who believe and are baptized, and damnation to those who “believeth not.”⁶³³ Though less detailed in its account of Christ’s Ascension than the

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⁶³² At this point in the narrative Judas has not yet been replaced by Matthias, so there are only eleven apostles.

⁶³³ Mark 16: 14-20: *Nouissime recumbentibus illis undecim apparuit: et exprobrauit incredulitatem illorum et duritiam cordis: quia his qui uiderant eum resurrexisse, non crediderant. Et dixit eis: Euntes in uniuersum mundum praedicate euangelium omni creaturae. Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit saluus erit, qui uero non crediderit condemnabitur. Signa autem eos qui crediderint haec sequentur. In nomine meo daemonia eicient, linguis loquentur nouis, serpentes tollent, et si mortiferum quid biberint, non eos nocebit. Super aegros manus imponent, et bene habebunt. Et Dominus quidem Iesus, postquam locutus est eis, assumptus est in caelum, et sedit a dextris Dei. Illi autem cooperant et sermonem confirmate sequentibus signis.* [At length he appeared to the eleven as they were at table: and he upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again. And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall he condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils. They
version in the Acts of the Apostles, this passage from the conclusion of Mark’s Gospel has the virtue of conciseley encapsulating three major, interrelated ideas: that the apostles at this juncture were worthy of rebuke for their lack of belief in Jesus’s resurrection, but that despite their faults He commissions them to preach the Gospel to the world, and that He promises to strengthen them, and other believers, with spiritual gifts if they persevere in their mission.

Since Cynewulf’s *Ascension* translates (however freely) only the last three sections of Gregory’s homily, the poem does not directly explicate this passage from Mark or discuss Gregory’s exegesis of it. Yet, in focusing narrowly on sections nine through eleven of Gregory’s Homily 29, scholars have largely neglected to notice the ways in which biblical and patristic portrayals of Jesus’ at times rather fraught relationship with the apostles (as in the passage from Mark’s Gospel) may have influenced Cynewulf’s poetic interpretation of the Ascension event and its meaning.634 By showing Jesus chastizing the apostles for their shortcomings635 just before reminding them of their monumental responsibility to “go forth preaching everywhere,” the passage from Mark 16 juxtaposes two aspects of the apostles as model Christians that, I will argue, remain in tension throughout Cynewulf’s poems *Ascension* and *Fates of the Apostles*: their human frailty and their superhuman heroism.

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634 Cynewulf’s detailed following of section 9 of Gregory’s work makes it likely that he read the entire homily, and even if he hadn’t, as a religious Anglo-Saxon man, he would have been familiar with the passage from the annual cycle of the liturgy, if not from his own scriptural study and monastic education.

635 Specifically, he seems to be rebuking them for their unwillingness to believe in his resurrection without seeing the ‘proof’ of his wounds.
In *Ascension*, Cynewulf elaborates on the suggestion of the apostles’ weakness and lack of understanding present in Mark 16:14 and other biblical accounts,⁶³⁶ but in doing so, he goes far beyond what is merely hinted at in Gregory’s exegesis of these passages, and takes the idea in a very different direction.⁶³⁷ Cynewulf draws on an alternative patristic tradition which interprets the apostles as grief-stricken by Jesus’s departure, and deliberately alters the facts of the biblical narratives in order to render the apostles more sympathetic to his audience and to reinforce his impassioned argument about the implications of Christ’s Ascension for mankind. By stressing the apostles’ sadness and confusion at the Ascension, Cynewulf momentarily shifts the perspective of the poem away from Christ resplendent in glory, surrounded by angels in the clouds, to focus instead on the very human, frail, and suffering apostles sorrowing at the loss of their Lord.

Once Cynewulf introduces his audience to the quandary of the angels’ white clothing that provides the occasion for the poem’s meditations, he begins to recount the story of the Ascension itself. Interestingly, Cynewulf does not follow Mark or Luke in beginning Christ’s final speech to His apostles with words of criticism or by chiding their

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⁶³⁷ Gregory explicates Jesus’s rebuke of the apostles in Mark 16:14 as follows: *Quod resurrectionem dominicam discipuli tarde crediderunt, non tam illorum infirmitas quam nostra, ut ita dicam, futura firmitas fuit. Ipsa namque resurrectio illis dubitantibus per multa argumenta monstrata est, quae dum nos legentes agnoscimus, quid aliud quam de illorum dubitatione solidarum? Minus enim mihi Maria Magdalene praestitit quae cito credidit, quam Thomas qui diu dubitauit. Ille etenim dubitando ualnerum cicatrices tetigit, et de nostro pectore dubietatis uulnus amputauit*, in Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Evangelia* XXIX.1, lines 1-8 in *PL* 76. [That the apostles were slow to believe in the Lord’s Ressurection happened, not so much because of their weakness of faith, but rather, if I may say so, for the sake of the future firmness of ours…. We must confess that nothing else than their doubt has made us so certain. Of less help to me is Mary Magdalene who believed so readily, than Thomas who doubted so long. For he by his doubting came to touch the scars of the of the wounds, and removed from our breast the wound of uncertainty] *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. M. F. Toal (Chicago: Henry Regners, 1958), 426.
Instead, he presents Christ’s last words as a jubilant, reassuring exhortation to his followers. “Rejoice in your hearts!” (Gefeoð ge on ferððe!), Christ declares, going on to instruct them that,

‘Næfre ic from hweorfe,
ac ic lufan symle læste wið eowic,
ond eow meaht giefe ond mid wunige,
awo to ealdre, þæt eow æfre ne bið
þurh gife mine godes onsien.
Farað nu geond ealne yrmenne grund,
geond widwegas, weoredum cyðað,
bodað ond bremæð beorhtne geleafan,
ond fulwiað folc under roderum.
Hweorfað to hæþnum, hergas breotaþ,
fyllað ond feogað, þeondsçype dwæscað,
þætinge sawað on sefan manna
þurh meahta sped. Ic eow mid wunige,
forð on frofre, ond eow friðe healde
strengþu staþolfæstre on stowa gehware.’ (Ascension, lines 37b-51)

[‘Never shall I leave you, but I shall always continue in love towards you, and give you power and dwell among you, forever and ever, so that, through my grace, you will never be in want of God. Go now throughout all the wide earth, throughout the distant regions, make known to the multitudes, preach and proclaim the bright belief, and baptize the people under the heavens. Turn them toward heaven, bring down the idols, fell and destroy them, and wash away hatred, sow peace in the hearts of men, through the fullness of your power. I will abide with you henceforth as a comfort, and keep you in peace with steadfast strength in all places.’]

Cynewulf emphasizes Christ’s continued presence among the apostles in the form of the Holy Spirit, and crafts a glowing elaboration of the goals of the apostles’ world-wide mission. Here Cynewulf draws on the version of Christ’s final speech in the Gospel of Matthew and embellishes it with more detailed instructions on how the apostles must go

638 Luke writes in Acts 1:6-8 that the apostles, inquiring whether the restoration of the kingdom of Israel was at hand because they would soon be baptized by the Holy Spirit, are answered by Christ: igitur qui convenerant interrogabant eum dicentes Domine si in tempore hoc restitues regnum Israhel dixit autem eis non est vestrum nosse tempora vel momenta quae Pater posuit in sua potestate sed accipietis virtutem supervenientis Spiritus Sancti in vos et eritis mihi testes in Hierusalem et in omni Iudaecæ et Samaria et usque ad ultimum terræ [It is not for [them] to know the time or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power, but you shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth].
about “teaching all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Cynewulf likewise amplifies Christ’s last assurance in Matthew that He will be with the apostles “all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28:20) by bracketing this speech with moving promises to remain with the apostles “in all places” (on stowa gehware) and “forever and ever” (awo to ealdre) in the forms of “power” (meaht, sped) and “grace” (giefe). Christ’s last words are represented here as almost a kind of pep-talk, an uplifting oration meant to remind the apostles of their duty to “preach and proclaim the bright belief” after he leaves them, and to reassure them of their ability to do so with the help of the Holy Spirit.

It is all the more striking, then, when Cynewulf departs from the biblical narratives by representing the apostles as overcome with sorrow and grief at the Ascension of their Lord:

[Our King departed through the roof of that temple where they looked on, those who yet kept watch over the track of the Beloved One in that meeting place, the chosen disciples. They saw the Lord ascend into the heights, the Son of God from the earth. They were sad in spirit, hot about the heart, mourning in mind, because they no longer might see him whom they loved beneath the sky….Then the men]
departed, going to Jerusalem, stout-hearted men, into the holy city, sad in mind, from whence they last had seen God rise up before their eyes, their King. There was a circle of weeping, overwhelmed in sorrow; the constant love was hot about their hearts, their breasts welled up within, their hearts’ coffers burned.]

The emotional reaction of the apostles depicted here directly contradicts Christ’s earlier exhortation in the poem that they “Rejoice in [their] hearts!” as well as Luke’s account that they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (*Et ipsi adorantes regressi sunt in Hierusalem cum gaudio magno*, Luke 24:52). This discourse on the sorrowful mourning of the apostles watching “the Son of God” ascend “from earth” does not feature at all in Gregory’s homily or in the accounts of the Ascension given in Acts or the Gospels, and is thus Cynewulf’s own striking adaptation of the well-known story. The description Cynewulf provides of the apostles’ emotions is moving: they express their deep, overwhelming love for their Lord in the traditional language of mourning so common in Old English heroic and elegiac poetry.

639 The account in Acts 1:12 simply notes the apostles’ return to Jerusalem with no mention of their emotional state.

640 Simon Nicholson observes in “The Expression of Emotional Distress in Old English Prose and Verse,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 19 (1995): 327-338, that while Old English poetry uses many words to designate the “heart, mind, or spirit” as a locus or point of origin for thoughts and emotions, these are usually used metaphorically and that while words such as *hatheortnes* (‘hotness about the heart’ or ‘hot-heartedness’) or *breostcearu* (‘cares in the breast,’ or ‘breast-cares’) initially appear to describe physical phenomena, they in fact only refer to mental states. He further points out that we are not to take the frequent imagery of emotion, care or thought being located or locked in the breast/heart as a description of a bodily symptom of emotional distress (such as heart palpitations) since this is clearly a metaphorical poetic convention. The metaphorical corollary of perceiving emotions or cares being ‘locked’ in the breast/heart is that when emotions run high, they are frequently depicted as boiling within and eventually overflowing or overwhelming their appropriate breast/heart enclosure, particularly in expressions of grief or sadness, as we see in this passage from *Ascension*.

641 Anderson, *Cynewulf* (59) notes the similarities between Cynewulf’s language of grief and that used by the Beowulf-poet and the poet of *Guthlac B*: “Of the mourners at Scyld’s funeral it is said that ‘him wæs geomor sefa / murnende mod’ (*Beowulf*, lines 49b-50a). Similar diction is used in *Guthlac B* to describe the reaction of the servant to Guthlac’s death: ‘Gnornsorge wæg / hat æt heortan, hyge geomurne’ (lines 1335b-36). “Song ahofun” in the *Ascension* passage reminds us of the lamentation sung by the “Geatisc meowle” at Beowulf’s funeral.” Similarly formulaic phrasing is also used in Cynewulf’s poem *Elene*: “him wæs geomor sefa, / hat æt heortan” (lines 60b-61a). The phrase *wopes hring* is conventionally used to depict collective and individual grief, and is found in several Old English poems, including *Andreas* (line 1278b), *Guthlac B* (line 1131b), and Cynewulf’s *Elene* (line 1339b). Various theories have been put forth to explain the meaning of the puzzling expression. In his notes on *Ascension*, Bernard Muir suggests
Peter Clemoes has interpreted Cynewulf’s choice to represent the apostles as grief-stricken and overcome with sadness as an extension of the *comitatus* imagery he uses to characterize the relationship between Christ as Lord and the apostles as his trusty, devoted *ðegna gedryht* (company of thanes).\(^{642}\) Clemoes considers the apostles’ mourning to be an appropriate reaction for this group of the first Christian *haeleðas* (warriors) deprived of their *hlaford* (lord).\(^{643}\) Both Clemoes and Daniel Calder argue that the main purpose of Cynewulf’s depiction of the apostles’ sadness is “simple contrast” with the poet’s account of the joy of the angels who receive Christ into heaven.\(^{644}\) They translating the phrase as “‘outpouring of tears,’ ‘sound of lamentation,’ or ‘sound of wailing’” (399-400), whereas Anderson interprets the phrase as a suggestion of the apostles’ (and Elene’s) religious *compunctio amoris* (compunction of love) which stems from their “contact with the holy” (166). In the context of *Ascension*, Anderson translates the phrase *wopes hring* as “ring of weeping” and sees it as an extension of the apostles surrounding Christ in a circle, looking up as he ascends through the roof of the temple. However, he interprets *wopes hring* in *Elene* as referring to a tear, or the eye-socket itself. For more on this subject, see Kenneth Brooks’s article “The Old English *wopes hring*,” *English and Germanic Studies* 2 (1949): 68-74.

\(^{642}\) *Ascension*, line 18. Clemoes argues that “the metaphorical connection which Cynewulf establishes between the narrative of the Ascension and the elements of heroic society stresses primarily the relationship between Christ the *brega, ðeoden, hlaford*, [ruler, prince and lord], and the apostles as his *ðegna gedryht, haeleðas, gesiðas* [company of thanes, fighting men, companions]” and goes on to describe the “symbolism of the *comitatus*” in the poem in the image of the apostles “responding to Christ as a single, undifferentiated body, obeying him, praising him, watching over him, [and] grieving for him in unison,” in “Cynewulf’s Image of the Ascension,” *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (New York: Routledge, 2001), 110-111.

\(^{643}\) Cynewulf uses traditional heroic diction to characterize the relationship of Christ and his apostles from the start of the poem, for example in the following description in lines 17-25 of the poem: ...

\[^{644}\] Calder, *Cynewulf* (53) writes, “Cynewulf imagines the two scenes which come after the Ascension in the boldest possible scheme: the disciples return to the earthly Jerusalem desolate at the loss of their leader; Christ returns triumphantly into the heavenly Jerusalem accompanied by a new band of angels.” Clemoes’s article mentioned above ultimately attributes Cynewulf’s configuration of the apostles assembled below the ascending Christ on earth and the throng of angels assembled in joy above him as he rises to heaven to the influence of liturgical and iconographic representations of the Ascension (117), as well as influence from the imagery of Bede’s *Ascension Hymn*. Brian Ó Broin refers to this as the “two fields” in his study “*Rex*
suggest that Cynewulf presents the apostles as grieving in order to accentuate the emotional gulf between the angels in heaven and the apostles on earth. Additionally, Clemoes suggests, this provides the poem with a clever antithetical structure that also speaks to the cultural concerns of his Anglo-Saxon audience, who would presumably delight in recognizing the familiar heroic motif of thanes mourning the loss of their lord. These explanations, though compelling, fail to account for the source of Cynewulf’s conception of the apostles as obedient

Despite its extrabiblical status, Cynewulf’s representation of the apostles’ grief and sadness draws on an accepted tradition represented in the homilies and commentaries of Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, and the Venerable Bede. This exegesis explains Jesus’ dwelling with the apostles for forty days after the Resurrection as well as the words of the angels to the apostles at Christ’s departure as concessions to the weakness and sorrow of the apostles at the departure of their lord and friend. This alternative understanding of the apostles’ reaction to Christ’s departure was first developed by John Chrysostom to help to explain one of the more cryptic moments

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*Cynewulf’s Image,* 110-111.


in the account of the Ascension given in Acts: the question the angels pose to the 
apostles.\footnote{In his version, Cynewulf extends the angels’ speech considerably to take up nearly twenty lines of 
poetry (lines 69b-87).} According to Acts 1:10-11:

\begin{quote}
Cumque intuerentur in caelum euntem illum, ecce duo uiri adstiterunt iuxta illos 
in uestibus albis: qui et dixerunt: Uiri Galilei, quid statis aspicientes in caelum?
Hic Jesus, qui adumtus est a uobis in caelum, sic ueniet quemadmodum uidistis 
eum euntem in caelum.
\end{quote}

[And while they (the apostles) were beholding him going up to heaven, behold 
two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said, ‘Ye men of Galilee, 
why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into 
heaven, shall so come, as you have seen him going into heaven.’]

Chrysostom explains this episode by claiming that the apostles required reassurance from 
the angels that Christ would return (at the Last Judgement) because their human, 
emotional attachment to Jesus as a man had caused them to begin grieving at his 
departure. Since Chrysostom was one of the Greek Fathers of the Church, it seems less 
likely that Cynewulf would have been familiar with his interpretation. However, as Brian 
Ó Broin points out, Bede’s commentary on this verse in his \textit{Expositio Actibus 
Apostolorum} 1:11a is quite close to Chrysostom’s.\footnote{Ó Broin 105.} Bede writes: “The angels appeared 
to them for two reasons, namely to console them in their sorrow at his Ascension by 
reminding them of his return, and to show that he had truly gone to heaven, not merely 
apparently so, as in the case of Elijah.”\footnote{Bede, \textit{Commentary on the Acts}, trans. Martin, 35.} Bede’s commentary on the Acts of the 
Apostles was the only commentary available on this book of the Bible in the Latin west, 
and it may have provided an indigenous source for Cynewulf’s sense that the apostles 
sorrowed and required consolation after the Ascension of their Lord.

The most likely source for Cynewulf’s idea of the grieving apostles, however, is
Augustine’s sermon *De Ascensione Domini IV*. In this sermon, Augustine explores the idea of the weakness and humanity of the apostles in order to explain why Christ stayed with the disciples for forty days following his Resurrection.652 The apostles’ love of the flesh which Jesus assumed out of his humility, Augustine argues, opened them up to the devil’s temptations, and made it difficult for them to accept Christ’s divine nature. Jesus thus remained with his disciples for forty days as a concession to their weakness, and in order to prove to them the reality of his Resurrection by eating, drinking and interacting with them. By affirming their faith in his Resurrection and making them witnesses to his Ascension into heaven, Christ enabled his apostles to begin to move beyond their attachment to his fleshly self. But, despite all this, Augustine conjectures, they grieved at his departure. In his homily, Augustine imagines the moment of Jesus’s parting from the apostles in deeply emotional terms:

Tanquam hoc diceret Apostolis suis: Non vultis me dimittere (quomodo unusquisque non vult dimittere amicum suum, tanquam dicens: Esto nobiscum aliquantum, refrigeratur anima nostra quando te videmus); sed melius est ut istam carnem non videatis, et divinitatem cogitetis. Tollo me a vobis exterius, et me ipso impleo vos interius.

[It is as though what [Jesus] was saying to the apostles was: “‘You don’t want to let me go – as nobody wants to let a friend go,’ as though you were saying, ‘Stay with us a little while, our souls are refreshed when we see you;’ but it is better that you should not see this flesh, and should turn your thoughts to my divinity. I am removing myself from you outwardly, and filling you with myself inwardly.’”]

652 Augustine, *Sermones de Tempore* 264.2: *De Ascensione Domini IV* in PL 38: Sane propter infirmitatem discipulorum suorum: non enim deerant etiam in illo numero, quos diabolus infidelitate tentaret, ita ut quidam discipulus ejus in ipsa specie in qua noverat, non tamen magis fidem haberet viventibus membris, quam recentibus cicatricibus; ergo ad eorum confirmationem dignatus est post resurrectionem vivere cum illis quadrarginta diebus integris….Verumtamen non illos voluit in carne remanere, nec carnali dilectione diutius retinere [Augustine, Sermon 264 in Hill and Rotelle, 226: Certainly, it was because of the weakness of his disciples; after all, there were not lacking among their number those whom the devil would tempt to unbelief; to this extent, indeed, that one of his disciples, seeing him in the aspect he was familiar with, would put less faith in a living body than in his recent wounds. So, for their encouragement he was prepared to live with them after his resurrection for the whole of forty days….However, he did not want them to remain fixed on his flesh, nor to be held down by merely a human love].

653 Augustine, *Sermones de Tempore* 264.4 in PL 38; Augustine, Sermon 264.4 in Hill and Rotelle, 230.
In Augustine’s interpretation, the apostles’ poignant attachment to the fleshly presence of Jesus on earth is a form of human weakness that borders on unbelief, and one which Christ must help them to overcome by ultimately removing the object of their affections from view. Like Chrysostom, Augustine bases this argument on John’s account of the Last Supper,654 where Christ reveals his awareness of his own death, saying to the apostles, “Do not let your heart be troubled, or be afraid. You have heard me say, ‘I go away and I am coming to you’. If you loved me, you would indeed rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.’”655 Again, despite his words of encouragement, the apostles fail to rejoice with Him. Instead, as Jesus says to them near the end of his speech, “because I have spoken these things, sorrow hath filled your heart.”656 The apostles’ fixation on Christ’s human form, their inability to grasp the divinity of the Father, and their doubts and confusion about the resurrection of the flesh were all interpreted by Augustine and other exegetes657 as symptoms of their humanity, the imperfect state of their understanding of Christ as God and man. “If there was any trace in [the apostles’] hearts of fleshly yearning,” Augustine writes, “it was presumably saddened in them…once the fleshly appearance was removed from their sight.”658

While there are, then, several patristic precedents for Cynewulf’s conception of

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654 Note that Chrysostom and Bede also base their argument concerning the grieving apostles on these passages from John’s Gospel.
656 John 16:6: Sed quia haec locutus sum uobis, tristitia impleuit cor uestrum.
657 This idea is also elucidated by Augustine in his Sermo de tempore 260: In die pentecostes 2.4, in PL 38, 1232; Kees Dekker notes in the context of tracing a similar notion in Ælfric’s homilies that it also appears in Gregory the Great’s Homilia in Evangelia 26, and Haymo of Auxerre’s Homilia 81, and a homily by Bede; see his article “Pentecost and Linguistic Self-Consciousness in Anglo-Saxon England,” JEGP (2005): 363, n. 62-63.
658 Augustine 264.4 in Hill and Rotelle 229: Subducto autem ab oculis carnali aspectu, jam illi hominem non viderunt. Si quid erat in cordibus eorum tractum de desiderio carnali, quasi contristatum est in ipsis.
the grieving apostles, the fact remains that Cynewulf departs from his main source text as well as the biblical accounts of the Ascension to include not one, but two, lengthy discourses on the sorrowing apostles.\(^{659}\) Why does he do this? 

Cynewulf’s decision to incorporate this theme shifts the perspective of the poem away from Christ resplendent in glory, surrounded by angels in the clouds, to focus on the very human, frail, and suffering apostles on earth. He does this, I would argue, in order to highlight the initial difficulty the apostles – and by extension, all humanity – face in achieving understanding of the divine nature of Christ, and overcoming their human weakness through belief. This image of the mournful, wailing apostles, staring in bewilderment toward the heavens in a wopes hring, being comforted (or chastised, depending on how one reads it) by Christ’s angelic attendants, speaks directly to the central theme of Cynewulf’s poem summarized in its final lines: the need for individual Christians to meditate on how they too may overcome their human weaknesses to ‘ascend with Christ’ (lines 312-316). By drawing on this particular exegetical tradition of the grieving apostles and elaborating on it with greater detail and pathos, Cynewulf portrays them as representatives of humanity.

Cynewulf’s elaboration of the contrast between the apostles’ sorrow and the angels’ jubilation at the Ascension further highlights humanity’s flawed understanding. When situated within the homiletic context from which it was drawn, the description recalls the often ambivalent representation of the apostles throughout the New Testament (and especially prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit). The apostles, unlike many other

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\(^{659}\) While Gregory does not represent the apostles as sorrowing, he does treat the issue of the apostles’ unbelief and hardness of heart introduced in the pericope for Ascension Sunday. Perhaps it is the example of doubting Thomas and the rebuke of Jesus reflected in this liturgical reading, along with Gregory’s explication of the reading, that brought to Cynewulf’s mind the exegetical topos of the grieving apostles.
post-Apostolic saints, are repeatedly shown in the Bible to be confused, slow to understand, easily misled, arrogant, emotionally and spiritually weak, and, as Augustine puts it, full of “fleshly yearning.” Yet they are able to overcome these weaknesses and undertake the mission which Christ commits to them through their willingness to accept and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the apostles become singularly imitable models for all Christians, and, I would argue, for Cynewulf as well.

In the works of Cynewulf we encounter another author who demonstrates an apostolic mode of self-fashioning. By signing his poems in runes and providing insights into his own spiritual states, Cynewulf’s poems speak, like Boniface’s letters, of an ‘ic’ who negotiates his own religious and personal identity as a Christian in relation to Christ’s apostles. In *Ascension*, Cynewulf’s perception of his relationship to the apostles hinges on his identification with their conversion, their suffering, and their acceptance of the divine gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable them to “preach and proclaim the bright belief…throughout the wide earth” (*bodiað and bremað beorhtne gelefan…geond ealne yrmenne grund*, lines 44, 42). Because of this, the theme of the miracle of Pentecost assumes a central role in Cynewulf’s poetic consciousness. From Cynewulf’s perspective, the elevation of the apostles, and thus all humankind, from a fixation on earthly, fleshly concerns to a transcendent, spiritual understanding of where to “establish their hopes” (*hyht stapelian*, line 425) is made possible through their reception of the Holy Spirit.

**Wisdom, Poetry, and the Holy Spirit’s Gifts to Men**

Since the time of Chrysostom the thematics of the Ascension have been bound up with the Pentecost descent of the Holy Spirit and Christ’s bestowal of spiritual gifts on
the apostles.\textsuperscript{660} Anglo-Saxon liturgical sources show that the descent of the Holy Spirit featured largely in Ascension celebrations throughout the liturgical week,\textsuperscript{661} not only on the Sunday after Ascension where one might expect the liturgy to look forward to the feast of Pentecost.\textsuperscript{662} The Anglo-Saxon church developed an interest in bringing these two events together liturgically as part of an increased emphasis on the missionary dimension of the Church (supported by a reading of Acts which focuses on Christ’s commission), and the importance of the apostles as the originators of the Apostolic Succession.\textsuperscript{663} This particular understanding linking Christ’s Ascension, the commission of the apostles, and the significance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the continuity of the Church was promoted by the dissemination (especially within Anglo-Saxon England) of Gregory the Great’s \textit{Homilia in Evangelia XXIX} as a standard liturgical reading for the Sunday after Ascension.\textsuperscript{664}

Gregory’s homily draws on Paul’s reinterpretation of Psalm 67:19\textsuperscript{665} in Ephesians 4:8-13\textsuperscript{666} as “‘Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men’” (\textit{dedit}...
dona hominibus) to argue that in ascending to heaven and descending to harrow Hell, Christ enabled the Holy Spirit to be sent to men.667 Gregory augments the list of gifts given by Paul in the passage from Ephesians with material from another Pauline enumeration of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12:4-11:668

Dedit uero dona hominibus, quia, misso desuper Spiritu, alii sermonuem sapientiae, alii seomonem scientiae, alii gratiam uirtutum, alii gratiam curationum, alii genera linguarum, alii interpretationem sermonum trubuit. Dedit ergo dona hominibus.669

[But ‘He gave gifts to men,’ because, when the Holy Spirit was sent from above, it allotted the word of wisdom to one, to another the grace of healings, to another the grace of virtues, to another the various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12.8). So He gave gifts to men.] 670

ascendit quid est nisi quia et descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae qui descendit ipse est et qui ascendit super omnes caelos ut impleret omnia et ipse dedit quosdam quidem apostolos quosdam autem prophetas alios vero evangelistas alios autem pastores et doctores ad consummationem sanctorum in opus ministerii in aedificationem corporis Christi donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei et agnitionis Filii Dei in virum perfectum in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi [But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ. Wherefore he saith: ‘Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men.’ Now that he ascended, what is it, but because he descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of fulness of Christ]. This reading contrasts with that given in the actual Psalm quoted, which says that men are themselves the gifts. See Ó Broin 8.

668 Letson, “Homiletic Nature,” 196. I Corinthians 12:4-11: “Now there are diversities of graces but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another, faith in the same spirit; to another, the grace of healings in one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the discerning of spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, interpretation of speeches. But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will.”

669 Gregory the Great, Homilia in Evangelia XXIX.X in PL 76: 1218-19.
In the context of Gregory’s work, this elaboration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit hearkens back to the signs which Christ promises his followers in the passage from Mark 16 with which he began, and looks forward to his next Homilia in Evangelia on Pentecost, which focuses on the Holy Spirit’s gift of tongues as a restoration of the “communion of one language” (communionem unius linguae) which was lost at Babel. It is perhaps for this reason that Gregory omits Paul’s references to gifts such as prophecy, miracles and the discerning of spirits to focus primarily on intellectual and linguistic gifts, such as wisdom and the ability to speak and interpret many languages.

Cynewulf follows Gregory in associating the gifts which Christ gave to men via the Holy Spirit with Christ’s Ascension into heaven and the descent into Hell at the Harrowing. Here again, however, he expands Gregory’s points considerably, altering the message to complement his earlier depictions of the apostles as representatives of human weakness. First, he expands both Gregory’s and Paul’s lists of divine gifts to include physical and intellectual as well as spiritual endowments, and to more aptly reflect the variety of skills and vocations represented throughout mankind. Where his sources are content to list only the miraculous gifts of tongues, healing, prophecy or the discerning of spirits, Cynewulf gives us an extensive list that draws on the Germanic motif represented in the Old English poems “The Gifts of Men” or “The Fates of Men.”

\[\text{Sumum wordlaþe wise sendeð} \]
\[\text{on his modes gemynd þurh his muþes gæst,} \]
\[\text{æðele ondgiet. Se mæg eal fela} \]

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671 Ó Broin 19.
672 Gregory the Great, Gospel Homily 30.
673 Anderson, *Cynewulf* (31) identifies Cynewulf’s list as combining the Latin religious doctrine of vocations which is based on I Corinthians 7:20 and a type of Germanic catalog of “gentlemanly accomplishments” known in Old Norse circles as ‘íþróttir’ which “include an array of skills: swordsmanship, horsemanship, seamanship, acrobatics, swimming, running, juggling, versifying, playing the harp, hunting, weapons craftsmanship, and so on.” He traces this type of catalog through Norse sources such as *Hyndlulóð*, Hávamál and the Old English poem “Gifts of Men.”
singan ond secgan þam bið snyttru cræft
bifoðan on ferðe. Sum mæg fingrum wel
hlude fore hæleþum hearpan stirgan,
gleobbeam gretan. Sum mæg godcunde
reccan ryhte æ. Sum mæg ryne tungla
secgan, side gesceaft. Sum mæg seanolice
wordcwide wratan. Sumum wiges sped
giefeð æt guðe, þonne gargetrum
ofor scildhreadan sceotend sendað,
flacor flangeweorc. Sum mæg fromlice
ofor sealne sæ sundwudu drifan,
hraeran holmþræce. Sum mæg heanne beam
stælgne gestigan. Sum mæg styled sweord,
wæpen gewyrcan. Sum con wonga bigong,
wegas wigielles. Swa se waldend us,
godbearn on grundum, his giefe bryttad. (Ascension, lines 225-244)

[To one He sends wise eloquence into the thought of his mind through the spirit
of his mouth, noble understanding. He can sing and tell about very many things
through the powers of understanding entrusted to his heart. One may pluck the
harp well and loudly with fingers before the men, play the harp. One may rightly
reckon the divine law. One may declare the course of the stars, the wide creation.
One may skillfully write a discourse. To one victory in war is given in battle,
when the bowmen send arrows over the shield, flying arrows. One may boldly
drive the sea-wood over the salt sea, stir the raging water. One may climb the
towering high tree. One may create a weapon, the tempered sword. One knows
the sweep of the plains, the far-reaching ways. Thus the Ruler, the Son of God on
earth, distributes His gifts.]

Critics have argued whether these talents and abilities – especially the more physical,
secular ones such as fighting, sailing, tree-climbing, or the making of weapons – ought to
be interpreted metaphorically, or regarded as mere topoi or charming representations of
daily activities in Anglo-Saxon England.674 I would point out, however, that the wide

674 For figurative readings of the “gifts of men” passage in Ascension, see Oliver J. H. Grosz, “Man’s
“God’s Presence through Grace in Cynewulf’s Christ II and the Relationship of this Theme to Christ I and
Christ III,” in ASE 3 (1974): 87-101. For studies of the sources of this theme, see J. E. Cross, “The Old
Germanic Concept of Nobility in the Gifts of Men and Beowulf,” Speculum 53 (1978): 1-15. Critics have
also been occupied with finding a meaningful structure to the list. See Peter Clemoes, Rhythm and Cosmic
Order in Old English Christian Literature, inaugural lecture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1970): 12-13. The fullest treatment of the individual gifts themselves and their significance is provided in
chapter 2 of Anderson, Cynewulf (28-44).
range and plenitude of gifts Cynewulf depicts Christ as bestowing on mankind calls to mind the comments which preface Paul’s list of gifts in I Corinthians 12:4-11: “Now there are diversities of graces but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit.”

Cynewulf’s listing of the diversity of man’s abilities speaks to the power of the Holy Spirit working in every person in different ways but toward the same end.

By widening his list of “diversities of graces” and “diversities of operations” to include apparently secular abilities and works, Cynewulf emphasizes to his audience that the Holy Spirit came, through the apostles, to all humanity. The implications of the Pentecost miracle which Cynewulf (following Paul and Gregory the Great) associates with Christ’s promises at the Ascension apply not just to clerics and monastics, but to every Christian person who is willing to accept the mission laid upon him by Christ, and to use his talents accordingly for the encouragement of faith and support of the Church.

The inclusion of physical abilities which, as Calder points out, “correspond to Christ’s descent to earth,” alongside those intellectual and spiritual gifts of man which “more nearly approximate divine power” is more than a clever variation on the “descent-ascent motif” so pervasive in the poem. It is also an implicit argument which strengthens the connections Cynewulf makes between the apostles, himself, and his audience by showing how the gifts of the Holy Spirit unite them as fellows in the service

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675 I Corinthians 12:4-11: *Divisiiones uero gratiarum sunt, idem autem Spiritus: et diuisiones ministratorum sunt, idem autem Dominus: et diuisiones operationum sunt, idem uero Deus, qui operatur omnia omnibus. Unicuique autem datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem.*

676 Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 32.

677 Ó Broin 123.

678 Calder, *Cynewulf*, 64.

of Christ. Most importantly from Cynewulf’s perspective, this interpretation holds out the possibility for individual Christians, with their limited understanding, to overcome human weakness and attain salvation through proper use of their abilities.

Cynewulf begins his passage on the gifts of men by telling us that Christ “established eternal habitations for us up among the angels, and also sowed and planted manifold wisdom of the mind in the hearts of men” (ða us geweorðade...ond us giefe sealde, / uppe mid englum ece stāþelas, / ond eac monigfealde modes snyttru / seow ond sette geond sefan monna).

The relationship between the Ascension of Christ and the ‘planting of wisdom in men’s hearts’ in the quotation above provides the reader with a significant insight into Cynewulf’s understanding of the Pentecost miracle. Prior to the Ascension, Cynewulf implies, men were not truly wise in mind, because they had not yet been blessed with the ability to recognize and interpret spiritual mysteries, or to turn their intellect toward the service of God. The establishment of “eternal habitations” for mankind in heaven and the establishment of “wisdom of the mind in men’s hearts” are two parallel events, both of which were made possible through Christ’s departure from the apostles. As Kees Dekker explains, this interpretation of the Pentecost miracle provides continuity between the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles, and those gifts that are available to believers in the post-Apostolic age. Ultimately based on a view expressed in Gregory the Great’s Regula Pastoralis, the idea of a correlation between the gifts of tongues and the gifts of wisdom and eloquence was current and influential in

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680 Ascension, lines 220a, 221b-224.
681 Gregory writes, Hic est enim quod super pastores primos in linguarum specie Spiritus sanctus insedit: quia nimium quos repleuerit, de se protinus loquentes facit. [For hence it is that the Holy Spirit alighted upon the first pastors under the appearance of tongues; because whomsoever He has filled, He himself at once makes eloquent]. Gregory the Great, Regula Pastoralis II.4, ed. Bruno Judic and Floribert Rommel, trans. C. Morel, 2 vols. SC 381, 382 (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 190.
Anglo-Saxon England. For Cynewulf and for Gregory, the ability of mankind to perceive, interpret, and propagate divine wisdom represents both the legacy of the apostles’ reception of the Holy Spirit, and the primary means by which one may emulate Christ’s Ascension and earn the reward he established for mankind.

Even as Cynewulf broadens the list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to better encompass the full range of humanity’s talents and abilities, he nonetheless follows Gregory in granting pride of place to intellectual gifts, particularly those concerned with language and understanding. Of the ten gifts of men discussed by Cynewulf in this passage, the first six are intellectual and all of these, even the gift of astronomical understanding, have something to do with language. Significantly, Cynewulf treats the gift of poetry first and in the greatest detail:

\[
\text{Sumum wordlaþe wise sendeð} \\
on his modes gemynd þurh his muþes gæst, \\
æðele ondgiet. Se mæg eal fela \\
singan ond secgan þam bið snyttru cræft \\
bifolen on ferþe. (Ascension, lines 225-229a)
\]

[To one He sends wise eloquence into the thought of his mind through the spirit of his mouth, noble understanding. He can sing and tell about very many things through the powers of wisdom entrusted to his heart.]

Poetry, in this instance, is tied to the gift of wisdom, of æðele ondgiet (noble understanding). The impetus to poetic expression and the processes of composition are

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682 For evidence of this, we may turn to Dekker’s study (351), which persuasively argues that this point of view shaped the linguistic self-consciousness of two of Anglo-Saxon England’s most prolific writers of religious prose, Bede and Ælfric of Eynsham, as well as the tradition of Anglo-Saxon iconographic representations of Pentecost.

683 Grosz, “Man’s Imitation,” 404-405.

684 *Ascension*, lines 232b-33a: *sum mæg ryne tungla secgan* [one may declare (lit. ‘say’) the course of the stars/planets]. Emphasis mine. The other non-poetic intellectual gifts mentioned by Cynewulf are the interpretation of divine law (*godcunde reccan ryhte æ*, lines 231b-32a), and the ability to “skillfully write a discourse” (*searolice wordcwide writan*, lines 233b-234a), both of which obviously pertain to reading and writing as well as the ability to educate others and share one’s knowledge.

685 This is the only gift which Cynewulf elaborates on for six and a half lines; the other gifts are all described in 1-3 lines, with only the gift of ability in battle being elaborated on for more than two lines (lines 234b-237a).
facilitated by the poet’s superior “powers of wisdom” (*snyttru creft*), that is, his mental faculties. The gift sent to him by the Holy Spirit is thus two-fold: the inspired individual gains knowledge and wisdom about “very many things” (*eal fela*) as well as the ability to turn that body of knowledge into words through “wise eloquence” (*wordlaþe wise*). Furthermore, the expression *eal fela / singan ond secgan* (‘sing and tell about very many things’) appears to have been a standard formula in Old English poetry for discussing a poet’s repertoire. Similar phrases incorporating the elements *eal* (meaning ‘fully, wholly, entirely,’ or, as it is used here, as an intensifier meaning ‘very’), *fela* (meaning ‘many’), and forms or derivatives of the verb *secgan*, appear in at least four other poems, always in contexts which discuss a poet’s mental treasury of stories or the contents of poetry or song. The most striking parallel with Cynewulf’s use of the formula is found in a one-line manuscript gloss which appears to be an alliterating line of a lost poem: “*Hwæt! Ic eallfeala ealde sæge*” (‘Lo! I tell about very many things of old’). The inclusion of the interjection *Hwæt* tells us that this line was probably at the beginning of a poem or new section or fitt of a longer poetic work, and suggests that this formula was used by poets to introduce the subject matter of their song.

The *Beowulf*-poet also uses this formula to describe the activities of Hrothgar’s *scop*:

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Hwilum cyninges þegn,
guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig,
se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena
worn gemunde, word oþer fand
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686 London, British Library Harley 208, fol. 88r (Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 304, item 229).
soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan
sið Beowulfes snytrum styrian,
ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,
wordum wrixlan . . . (Beowulf, lines 867b-74a)\(^688\)

[From time to time a thane of the king, a man fraught with exultant words, his mind full of songs, and who had in memory a great multitude of tales of antiquity – one word would conjoin with another, accurately linked – this man cleverly set about reconstructing Beowulf’s exploit, and successfully recited a skillful narrative, mixing words...]

Here the Beowulf-poet, like Cynewulf, metapoetically describes the processes of invention, composition, and performance, and imagines someone like himself singing of the deeds of his poem’s hero. The poet’s mind is “full of songs” and “a great multitude (ealfela) of ancient tales,” or ealdgesegena, which literally means ‘old traditions’ or ‘old sayings.’ In the case of the Beowulf example, these ealdgesegena are clearly heroic sagas, such as the tale of Sigemund and Fitela, which the poet intends to augment with his retelling of Beowulf’s recent triumphs. But in the context of Cynewulf’s poem, the eal fela or ‘very many things’ the poet knows and tells may refer to biblical stories, saints’ lives, or spiritual wisdom – all the subjects of Cynewulf’s compositions.\(^689\) As the Beowulf-poet explains, one practices the art of Old English poetry by accurately linking and conjoining a multitude of formulaic, time-honored words or phrases with one another (worn gemunde, word oper fand / soðe gebunden, line 270-271a), thereby “exchanging words” (wordum wrixlan, line 274a). Cynewulf’s use of a well-known vernacular poetic


\(^689\) Bede’s story of the poet Cædmon gives just such a list in his description of the divinely-inspired poet’s repertoire: “He sang the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole story of Genesis. He sang of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, the entry into the Promised Land, and many other events taken from the sacred Scripture: of the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of the Lord, of His ascension in to heaven, of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the apostles. He also made songs about the terrors of the future Judgment, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the joys of the heavenly kingdom. In addition he composed many other songs about the divine mercies and judgments in all of which he sought to turn his hearers away from delight in sin and arouse in them the love and practice of good works,” HE IV.24, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, 416-418.
idiom to characterize the depth and expression of a poet’s knowledge supports his connection between intellect and verbal gifts, and highlights Cynewulf’s own practice of this God-given ability (snyttru crafte, literally, the skill or ability of wisdom) to praise famous men, but in a Christian context.

Bede’s *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* provides a Latin literary source for Cynewulf’s conception of pairing the gifts of wisdom and eloquence in the Pentecost miracle:

> Spiritualiter autem varietas linguarum dona variarum significat gratiarum. Verum non incongrue Spiritus sanctus intelligitur ideo primum linguarum donum dedisse hominibus, quibus humana sapientia forinsecus et discitur, et docetur, ut ostenderet quam facile possit sapientes facere per sapientiam Dei quae eis internae est.⁶⁹⁰

[Spiritually, however, the variety of languages signifies gifts of a variety of graces. Truly, therefore, it is not inconsistent to understand that the Holy Spirit first gave to human beings the gift of languages, by which human wisdom is both learned and taught extrinsically, so that he might thereby show how easily he can make men wise through the wisdom of God, which is within them.]⁶⁹¹

In the context of Bede’s commentary, this is presented according to the traditional interpretation which sees the Pentecostal gift of tongues as a recovery of “the unity of languages which the pride of Babylon shattered” (*Unitatem linguarum quam superbia Babylonis disperserat, humilitas Ecclesiae recolligit*).⁶⁹² What is regained by the Holy Spirit’s gift of languages to human beings is mankind’s ability to express and share the wisdom of God, which was denied them after the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel. That the gift of language was renewed in the apostles themselves signifies that the purpose of the descent of the Holy Spirit was to imbue human beings with the potential to spread the Word of God by using language to teach in missionary and pastoral endeavors.

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⁶⁹⁰ Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, *PL* 92, II.4, Col. 947A.
⁶⁹² Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, *PL* 92, II.4, Col. 947A.
As we have discussed above, Cynewulf’s perspective on the sorrow of the apostles may have been influenced by Bede’s reading of the Ascension story in the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*. Here we see further similarities between Bede’s interpretation of the gift of language as a gift of wisdom and Cynewulf’s emphasis on the poet as the voice of the “manifold wisdom of the mind” (*monigfealde modes snytru*, line 223) that God has “sowed and planted in the hearts of men” (*seow ond sette geond sefan monna*, line 224). In building his interpretation of the gift of language on Bede’s commentary, Cynewulf combines what in Gregory’s homily are listed as two separate gifts, the “word of wisdom” and the “word of knowledge” (*alii sermonem sapientiae, alii sermonem scientiae*), with the concept of poetry in order to emphasize the importance of eloquence and the necessity of communicating of God’s wisdom to others, in this case through artistic means.

The next gift listed, “one may pluck the harp well and loudly with fingers before men, play the harp” (*Sum mæg fingrum wel / hlude fore hælepum hearpan stirgan, / gleobeam gretan*, lines 229b-331a), emphasizes both the artistic and performative aspects of the gifts of wisdom and language treated directly before it. The gift in lines 229b-231a above seems at first to pertain to musical skill only; however, we must recall that most, if not all, Old English poetry, even poetry written in manuscript, was composed to be recited to musical accompaniment. By placing the gift of music, specifically harping, directly after his expansion on the gift of poetry, Cynewulf reinforces his claim that inspired poetry is meant, above all, to be “sung and told” (*singan ond secgan*, line 228b) “well and loudly before men” (*wel / hlude fore hælepum*, lines 229b-230a).693

693 For evidence that these two gifts – the gift of poetic composition and the gift of music – could be united in one individual, we need only to turn to the well-known story of Cædmon cited in note 65 above, whose
Cynewulf’s understanding of poetry’s purpose is essentially apostolic. As one who has received the gift of poetic eloquence, the Christian poet is obliged to use his abilities to further the cause of the Church and, like the apostles, spread the “bright belief” (beorhtne geleafan, line 44b) and “sow peace in the hearts of men” (sibbe sawad on sefan manna, line 48). In this way, Cynewulf’s own poetic project becomes associated with the fulfilment of Christ’s commands to the apostles before his Ascension, and Cynewulf’s act of poetic composition demonstrates the ongoing presence of Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit among men long after the Pentecost.

A possible Latin analogue for this conception of poetry as the ever-present gift of the Holy Spirit is Arator’s mid-sixth century poem De Actibus Apostolorum (On the Acts of the Apostles). Like Cynewulf, Arator was a Christian poet fascinated by the subject of the lives and fates of the apostles. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, Arator’s poem is a versification and amplification of the biblical book of Acts written in the tradition of classical Latin poetry adapted to Christian themes. De Actibus Apostolorum shares with Cynewulf’s poetry preoccupations with its own creation and reason for being as a work of art, its status as an eloquent statement of the poet’s own belief and an attempt to spread the truth about the apostles in the highly wrought medium of verse. Consequently, one of the classical topoi which Arator turns to a Christian purpose is the invocation of the poet’s muse. What is interesting for our purposes is that Arator chooses to make his muse the Holy Spirit. He repeatedly appeals to its power to fill him with

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694 Several scholars have remarked on the appropriateness of Cynewulf’s attention to the gift of poetry in Ascension, and some of them have treated the subject in great detail; see especially Grosz, “Man’s Imitation,” 405-407; see also Anderson, Cynewulf, 28-44, and Calder, Cynewulf, 48ff.
695 Anderson, Cynewulf, 27 and Ó Broin, 165-66.
eloquence and to enable him to speak about “the labours of those by whose voice faith obtains a path in the world” and to “sing in verses the Acts which Luke related…[in] true poetry.”  

Arator speaks of or calls upon the Holy Spirit’s gift of eloquence thirteen times throughout his poem, always connecting the gifts of the “fostering Spirit” (Spiritus almus), as he calls it, to the miracle of Pentecost, and thus to the apostles themselves. For example, Arator’s exegesis of the appearance of the Holy Spirit as fire (at Pentecost) and as a dove (at baptism) quickly slips into an invocation of the poet’s muse:

Sacris bis Spiritus almus
Discipulis concessus erat; spiratus in illos
A Christo surgente semel; post, missus ab astris,
Nescia verba viris facundus detulit ignis.
Ne quid inexpertum studio meditemur inani,
Spiritus alme! veni, sine te non diceris unquam;
Munera da linguae, qui das in munere linguas.  

[Twice the fostering Spirit had been granted to the holy disciples: once it had been breathed upon them by the risen Christ; afterwards the eloquent fire sent from heaven brought the men unknown words. Lest we devise in our vain effort something untried, come, fostering Spirit! Without You, You are never spoken of; give the gifts of language, You who give languages as a gift.]  

Like Milton calling upon the “Heavenly Muse” to aid his pursuit of “things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme,” Arator exhorts the Holy Spirit to bring him the words which will enable him to pursue his own “advent’rous Song.”

For Arator, all language belongs to the Holy Spirit, all human speech and eloquence is due to its grace. Elsewhere he calls upon the “fostering Spirit,” begging,

tu nunc mihi largius ora,
...riga, sint ut tibi dogmata digna,
Quae dederis! tu vocis iter, tu semita vitae,
Tu dicture veni! qui per tua munera semper,

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697 Arator, De Actibus Apostolorum I.6, PL 68.
699 Milton, Paradise Lost I.1, lines 6, 16, 13.
Quod reddamus, agis, donique resuscipis usum.\textsuperscript{700}

[moisten my mouth more copiously, that the teachings which you have given might be worthy of You! You road of speech, You path of language, You who are to speak, come, You who, through Your favors, always set in motion what we give back and [who always] recover [our] employment through Your gift!]\textsuperscript{701}

Here Arator articulates his sense that since all language originates through the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit (it ‘sets it in motion’), all language thus honors and is reclaimed by that same Spirit – the gifts of speech and eloquence are given back to God when man uses them for His praise, or the furthering of belief and the Church. For Arator, nothing holy or worthwhile can be spoken, written or sung without the gifts of the “fostering Spirit.” Necessarily, then, anything which is spoken, written, or sung for the glory of God and the salvation of souls demonstrates the presence of the Holy Spirit at work. These acts of speech and writing connect the inspired individual to Christ’s apostles as the original recipients of this gift, this “new source of speaking which comes in many forms and alone is sufficient for the speech of eloquent persons from the whole world” (\textit{nova vocis origo / quae numerosa venit, totoque ex orbe disertis / Sufficit una loqui}).\textsuperscript{702}

Arator’s work on the Acts of the Apostles was widely known in Anglo-Saxon England, serving, as we have seen in Chapter 1 above, as the major source for Bede’s commentary on Acts,\textsuperscript{703} and forming an important part of the Anglo-Saxon monastic school curriculum as a model text for Latin poetic style.\textsuperscript{704} The widespread presence of

\textsuperscript{700} Arator, \textit{De Actibus Apostolorum}, II.10, \textit{PL} 68.
\textsuperscript{702} Arator, \textit{De Actibus Apostolorum}, I.6.
\textsuperscript{703} Bede notes in the preface to his own commentary on Acts, Arator “added not a few flowers of allegory” (\textit{percurrens nonnullos in eodem metro allegoriae flores admiscuit}) on which later Christian authors were able to draw.
\textsuperscript{704} Michael Lapidge, “Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages,” \textit{The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts Authors, and Readers}, ed. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame:}
Arator’s text in Anglo-Saxon England, the significant overlap in subject matter between Cynewulf’s Ascension and Fates of the Apostles with De Actibus Apostolorum, and Cynewulf’s frequent use of several of Arator’s favorite rhetorical features, including “polyptoton, paronomasis, and homoeoteleuton,” all suggest that the Anglo-Saxon poet may have been familiar with Arator’s work. Cynewulf probably did not have Arator’s poem in front of him as he worked, and does not appear to have used it as a direct source in any of his poems. But if De Actibus Apostolorum was ever part of Cynewulf’s study of Latin rhetoric, as Orchard conjectures it was, our Anglo-Saxon poet would have learned from Arator that poetry and verbal eloquence were gifts of the Holy Spirit, best used in the service of the Church. And he also would have learned that the subject matter of the Acts of the Apostles could make for great poetry.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Perseverance of the Church

Scholars of Cynewulf’s poetry have commented on the fact that the author of Ascension sees his exercise of poetic talent as an “Anglo-Saxon continuation of the apostolic ministry.” Following the tradition outlined above, Cynewulf understands the gifts of the Holy Spirit to encompass many abilities among men, but to be especially...

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705 Orchard, “Style and Substance,” 273.
707 Anderson, Cynewulf, 27; see also Calder, Cynewulf, 48 and Letson, “Homiletic Nature,” 197.
linked to eloquence and the use of linguistic skill for Christian purposes. Cynewulf’s poetic self-consciousness, his awareness of poetry as his particular God-given gift, comes through in all of his poems, and especially at the conclusion of *Ascension* and in conclusion of *The Fates of the Apostles*. In *Ascension*, Cynewulf’s draws upon his poetic skill as a way to associate himself with the apostles as a fellow preacher of God’s word. By beginning his poem with a representation of the grieving, all-too-human apostles and moving on to explore the implications for mankind of the emboldening gifts which Christ sent to them through the agency of the Holy Spirit, Cynewulf charts a spiritual trajectory for himself and his audience modeled on the experiences of the apostles as a group. This trajectory is appropriate to the subject of the feast of the Ascension in that it holds out hope to the author and his believing readers that they too may ascend and rise above their flawed human nature, if only they can harness the “fullness of power” (*mehta sped*, line 49b) given to them by Christ.

In the lines which follow the “gifts of men” passage in *Ascension*, Cynewulf adapts an exegetical discussion of the significance of the sun and the moon present in Gregory’s homily in order to further underline this theme of hope and mankind’s triumph over human weakness. Gregory presents an allegorical reading of the sun and the moon in a passage from Habacuc that he interprets as signifying the Ascension and its effects on the Church. Gregory treats it as a kind of digression from the subject at hand (which is the gifts God gave to men – *Dedit ergo dona hominibus*), by specifying that he is returning via this passage from Habacuc to the subject of Christ’s Ascension proper (*De hac ascensionis eius gloria etiam Habacuc ait*).708 Cynewulf, on the other hand, presents

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708 Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Evagelia XXIX.10*: *De hac ascensionis eius gloria etiam Habacuc ait*: *Elevatus est sol et luna stetit in ordine suo. Quis enim solis nomine nisi Dominus, et quae lunae nomine nisi*
his version of the sun and moon allegory as being integrally related to what has come before, when he begins this part of his poem with “Bi þon se witga cwæð / þæt ahæfen waren halge gimmas, / hædre heofontungol, healice upp, / sunne ond mona” (About that the prophet said that the sacred gems, the bright heavenly stars, should be raised up on high, lines 252b-255). “Bi þon” here can only refer back to the previous sentence, which concludes the ‘gifts of men’ passage with the statement

ðus god meahtig geofum unhneawum,  
cyning alwihta, crafhtum weorðah  
eorþan tudor; swylce eadgum blæd  
seleð on swegle, sibbe ræreþ  
cee to ealdre engla ond monna;  
swa he his weorc weorþað. (Ascension, lines 247-252a)

[thus mighty God, the King of all creatures, endows with gifts and honors with skills the offspring of earth; moreover, he gives glory in heaven to the blessed, establishes peace forever and ever between angels and men; in this way he honors his handiwork.]

The sun and moon allegory, then, has as much to do with the Ascension as with the gifts which accompanied it, at least as far as Cynewulf is concerned. This makes sense once we see the new direction in which Cynewulf takes Gregory’s interpretation.

As Charles D. Wright has shown, Cynewulf dramatically alters Gregory’s exegesis of the meaning of the sun and the moon passage from Habacuc. After making an argument which interprets both the sun (representing the Lord) and the moon

ecclesia designatur? Quousque enim Dominus ad caelos ascendit, sancta eius ecclesia aduersa mundi omnimundo formidauit; at postquam eius ascensione roborata est, aperte praedicauit quod occulte credidit. Elevatus est ergo sol et luna stetit in ordine suo, quia cum Dominus caelum petit, sancta eius ecclesia in auctoritate praedicationis excreuit. [Habucuc also says about the glory of His Ascension, ‘The sun was raised up and the moon stood its course.’ Who can be called the Sun except the Lord, and what the Moon except the Church? Until the Lord ascended into heaven, His holy Church feared the adversities of the world in every way; but after she was strengthened by His Ascension, she preached openly what she secretly believed. So, the ‘sun was raised up and the moon stood its course,’ because when the Lord sought heaven, His holy Church grew in the authority of her preaching].

(representing the Church, illuminated by the ‘light’ of the sun that is Christ) as being raised up at the Ascension, Cynewulf writes:

Swa hit on bocum cwip,
siþran of grundum godbearn astag,
cyning clænra gehwæs, þa seo circe her
æfyllendra eahtnysse bad
under hæþenra hyrda gewealdum.
þær ða synsceaðan soþes ne giemdon,
gæstes þearfe, ac hi godes tempel
bræcan ond bærndon, blodgyte worhtan,
feodan ond fyldon. Hwæþre forð bicwom
þurh gæstes giefe godes þegna blæd
æfter upstige ecan dryhtnes. (Ascension, lines 262b-272)

[Likewise as it says in books, after the Son of God ascended from earth, the King of all undefiled creatures, then the church of the faithful suffered persecution under the rule of heathen shepherds. Then the evil-doers did not take heed of the truth, the need of the spirit, but they broke and burned God’s temple, caused blood to be spilt, feuding and destruction. Yet there came forth through the grace of the spirit the glory of God’s disciples after the Ascension of the eternal Lord.]

Cynewulf describes violent persecutions taking place after Christ’s Ascension, which differs sharply from Gregory’s point that the Ascension enabled the early Christian Church to “preach openly what she secretly believed” (aperte praedicauit quod occulte credidit) and cease to fear the “adversities of the world” (adversa mundi omnimundo formidauit) that had plagued them before. As Wright explains, “Cynewulf’s modification coincides with a widespread patristic tradition that associated the image of the church as moon specifically with the persecutions it had endured in the apostolic and post-apostolic era.” I agree with Wright’s suggestions that Cynewulf adopted this alternative interpretation of the moon as a symbol for the persecuted church because it appealed to his own interest in the “heroic age of the church,” and because of its potential

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710 Wright, “Persecuted Church,” 297.
711 Wright, “Persecuted Church,” 298.
relevance for Anglo-Saxons living in a time of invasions and attacks from heathen Vikings.  

To these points I would add that the changes Cynewulf makes to Gregory’s exegesis of the sun and the moon enable him to make a more nuanced argument about the way that Christ intervenes to aid those who accept the “grace of the Spirit” (gastes giefe, line 271a). Cynewulf makes the historically accurate claim that the early Church, represented by the apostles, or “God’s thanes” (godes þegnas, line 271b), were opposed by the “rule of heathen shepherds” (haþenra hyrda gewealdum, line 266). These false leaders (the Romans, especially) persecuted the early Christians with violent attacks, destruction of their temples, and instigation of hatred among neighbors. In setting up this terrible scene for his audience, Cynewulf reminds them that the Church, like the individual believers who make it up, is in a state of constant struggle against outside forces, temptations, and its own inherent weaknesses as a human institution on earth. Even in the period after the Ascension, he tells us, Christians had to endure this terror, and to fear for their spiritual and physical survival in the face of persecution.

Yet: this is the key word. “Hwæþre forð bicwom / þurh gæstes giefe  godes þegna blæd / æfter upstige  ecan dryhtnes,” Cynewulf writes, “Yet there came forth through the grace of the Spirit the glory of God’s disciples after the Ascension of the eternal Lord.” Cynewulf’s alteration of Gregory’s passage on the sun and the moon enables him to make an argument for Christ’s intervention in the lives of his disciples at a time of desperation. Even in the worst of times, Cynewulf tells us, God will conspire to increase the glory of his disciples through the grace of the Spirit. Because of this grace of the Spirit, the Church lives on even in Cynewulf’s own time, which, if Wright is correct, was likely to

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712 Wright, “Persecuted Church,” 302-303.
have been a time of heathen (Viking) persecution as well. These modifications to Gregory’s exegesis reinforce the points Cynewulf makes about the apostles as representatives of a flawed humanity whose salvation is granted in their reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As such, it looks forward to the homiletic conclusion of the poem, which builds upon this uplifting lesson of Christ’s Ascension.

The second half of Ascension deals with the typically Cynewulfian preoccupations of the terrors of the Last Judgment and the anxieties the author feels concerning the salvation of his soul. However, Cynewulf’s tone and purpose in treating these themes differs markedly from his other poems. Cynewulf’s conclusions in Elene, Juliana, and especially, Fates of the Apostles focus primarily on the author’s obsessive concerns with his own sinful nature and have little to say about how to overcome this seemingly insurmountable obstacle to salvation, or the spiritual plights of others. The conclusion of Ascension, on the other hand, presents Cynewulf’s situation as a sinner as common to all mankind, and counsels his audience on ways that they can use the gifts which God has given them to repent their misdeeds through good works.

This difference can be partially explained by the fact that Ascension is a homiletic poem, one based on a source text whose purpose is to exhort the faithful to repentance and Christian living. Cynewulf does follow the general outline of Gregory’s concluding homiletic remarks, and this determines both his tone and the instructional content of the last one hundred and sixty lines of the poem. But he also embellishes Gregory’s rather terse and predictable exhortations considerably. For example, where Gregory concludes his section on the “leaps of Christ” with “therefore, dearest brothers, we should follow Him with our hearts where we believe He ascended with His body. Let us flee from
earthly desires” (Unde, fratres carissimi, oportet ut illic sequamur corde, ubi eum corpore ascendisse credimus. Desideria terrena fugiamus), Cynewulf writes:

Swa we men sculon
heortan gehygdum   hlypum styllan
of mægne in mægen,  mærþum tilgan
þæt we to þam hyhstan  hrofe gestigan
halgum weorcum,   þær is hyht ond blis,
geþungen þegnweorud.  Is us þearf micel
þæt we mid heortan  hælo secen,
þær we mid gæste   georne gelyfað
þæt þæt hælobearn  heonan up stige
mid usse lichoman,  lifgende god.
Forþon we a sculon  idle lustas,
synwunde forseon,  ond þæs sellran gefeon. (Ascension, lines 307-318)

[Thus we men should spring in leaps from strength to strength in the thoughts of our hearts, endeavor for glorious things so that we might ascend to the highest heights by means of holy deeds, where there is hope and bliss, an excellent host of thanes. It is very needful for us that we seek salvation with our heart, where we earnestly believe in spirit, so that the Christ-child may ascend up hence with our body, the living God. Therefore, we must always despise vain desires, the wounds of sin, and delight in the better part.]

To Gregory’s exhortation to flee earthly desires Cynewulf adds repeated calls for his audience to do good and holy deeds, instructing them that their actions, as well as their beliefs, will make it possible for them to attain salvation with Christ in heaven. While there is an implicit emphasis on Judgment here, the overall tone is hopeful. For Cynewulf, eschewing vain desires goes hand in hand with making good use of one’s God-given talents by channeling them into “holy deeds” (halgum weorcum, line 311a). It is by these means, he instructs his audience, that one can hope to join what he calls, in language reminiscent of the epithets he uses for the apostles, the “excellent host of thanes” (gehungen þegnweorud, line 312a).

Whereas the conclusions of Cynewulf’s other poems are largely preoccupied with the author’s sense of defeat and despair at ever achieving salvation, the attitude of the
poet at the conclusion of *Ascension* is noticeably more optimistic. In other poems, he restricts his gestures toward the audience or reader to pleas not for the care of their souls, but for his own.⁷¹³ In *Ascension*, however, Cynewulf places himself among the audience of the poem through his consistent use of the first-person plural pronoun, and by treating his dilemmas and needs as equal to the spiritual concerns of others. He inserts a long discourse on the need for all Christians to defend their souls from the temptations of the devil, and to make use of the divine aid which God sends to them for their protection.

Adopting the Gregorian motif of the “devil's arrows” which, though not included in his immediate source homily, commonly appears in Anglo-Saxon literature,⁷¹⁴ Cynewulf exclaims,

> Habbað we us to frosre  faeder on roderum  
> ælmeahtigne. He his aras þonan,  
> halig of heahhû,  hider onsendeð,  
> þa us gescildaþ  wið sceþþendra 
> eglum earhfarum,  þi læs unholdan 
> wunde gewyrcen,  þonne wrohtbora 
> in folc godes  forð onsendeð  
> of his brægdbogan  biterne stræl. 
> Forþon we fæste sculon  wið þam færscyte 
> symle wærlice  weardhe healdan,

⁷¹³ Compare the conclusion of *Ascension* with that of *Fates of the Apostles*: “Now then I pray the person who may be pleased by the rendering of this poem that he should pray to that holy flock for help, for sanctuary and support for my morbid self” (*Nu ic þonne bidde  beorn se de lufige / þysses giddes begang  þæt he geomrum me / þone halgan heap  helpe bidde, / friðes ond fultomes*, lines 88-91a); or *Juliana*: “I pray each person of humankind who recites this poem that, diligent and magnanimous, he will remember me by name and pray the ordaining Lord that he, Protector of the heavens, will afford me help” (*Bidde ic monna gehwone / gumena cynnes,  þe þis gied wræce, / þæt he mec neodful  bi noman minum / gemyne modig,  ond meotud bidde / þæt me heofona helm  helpe gefremme*, lines 718b-722).

[We have the Father in heaven as a comfort for us, the Almighty. From thence He will send hither His messengers, holy from the heights, to shield us against the grievous arrowflights of the harmful one, when the devil lets wounds be wrought, when the author of evil sends forth into the people of God a bitter arrow from his bent bow. Therefore we must always firmly and warily keep watch against the sudden shot, lest the point of poison penetrate, the bitter dart, under the body, the guile of fiends. That is a terrible wound, the most livid of gashes. Let us then defend ourselves, while we dwell on earth. Let us beseech the Father for protection, pray the Son of God and the merciful Spirit that they shield us against the weapons to enemies, the lying traps of the hateful ones....]

Cynewulf argues that his audience can change, can do their best to overcome their human weakness, doubt and love of earthly things by defending themselves against the devil’s arrows through prayer and through acceptance of the comforts the Father and the Son send to them in the form of the “merciful Spirit” (þone bliðan gæst, line 335b).

When Cynewulf does indulge in his characteristic penitential lament, he tries to soothe his troubled conscience by appealing to his exercise of the spiritual gift of poetry for the sake of others. He prefaces the runic signature portion of his poem by telling us that while he knows that Christ’s Ascension has opened up the way of salvation for him, he nonetheless “expect[s] and also dread[s] the sterner judgement for [himself]” because he has “not obeyed very well what [his] Savior commanded in books” (Huruc wene me / ond eac ondræde dom ðy reþran.../ he ic ne heold teala þæt me hælend min / on bocum bibead, lines 350-354a). Cynewulf’s humility and fear is surely very real; he imagines that he will have to “look upon terror, the punishment of sin” (Ic þæs brogan sceal
_geseon synwæce_, lines 354b-355a) in the Last Judgment. As Daniel Calder points out, Cynewulf imagines himself gazing up at Christ in Judgement, at the terrors of damnation which he fears may await him, in a way which deliberately parallels the “watchers of the Ascension, earthly and heavenly, who continually ‘stare’ at the miraculous event” before them.  

Here Cynewulf again implicitly compares himself with the apostles and the angels, but this time he focuses on his own status as a sinful, disobedient human being, one of many who will be “led in a throng before the presence of the eternal Judge” (*monig...on gemot læded / fore onsyne eces deman*, lines 356-357).

As the poet begins to meditate on the state of his own soul, fear seizes him. The runic signature embeds Cynewulf’s very name, and by extension, his very self, in a dreadful scenario of the Last Judgment:

> þonne [C = *cen*] cwacað, gehyreð cyning mæðlan, rodera ryhtend, sprecan reþe word  
> þam þe him ær in worulde wace hyrdon, þændan [Y = *yr*]ond [N = *nyd*] yþast meahtan frofire findan. þær sceal forht monig on þam wongstede werig bidan hwæt him æfter dædum deman wille wræpra wita. Biþ se [W = *wynn*] scæcen eorþan frætwa. [U = *ur*] wæs longe [L = *lagu*] flodum bilocen, lifwynna dæl, [F = *feoh*] on foldan. (*Ascension*, lines 358-367a)

[Then *cen* (literally ‘torch’ but here taken as *cene*, meaning ‘the bold ones’) will tremble, will hear the king pronounce, the ruler of heaven speak angry words to those who had been feeble in obeying him in this world, while *yr* (?) and *nyd* (need, lack) could find solace most easily. In that place many a one, terrified, shall await wearily what harsh penalties he will adjudge him in consequence of his deeds. The joy (*wynn*) of earthly treasures will have passed away. Our (*ur*) portion of life’s delights will long have been encompassed by the water’s floods (*lagu*), our wealth (*feoh*) in the world.]  

715 Calder, _Cynewulf_, 72.  
716 Cynewulf’s runic epilogues are notoriously problematic and difficult to translate in any convincing, definitive way. For this reason, I present R. L. Page’s translation of the runic epilogue, as reprinted in
The runic signature grows organically out of Cynewulf’s earlier consideration of the “sterner judgment” (*dom ðy reþran*, line 351b) that he anticipates for himself, and also fears for others (*monig beoð on gemot læded*, lines 356).

While the name of the runic letter ‘C’ usually means torch (‘*cen*’), in this runic signature critics have argued that the letter is better translated as ‘*cene*,’ meaning, ‘the bold ones,’ so as to fit with the plural verb of the sentence in which it appears and make better literal sense (torches, after all, cannot ‘hear’). However, Thomas Hill has argued persuasively in favor of a polysemous interpretation of the ‘C’ rune here as meaning both ‘torch’ and ‘the bold ones’ at the same time. He cites Cynewulf’s use of the ‘C’ rune to mean *cen* (torch) in *Elene*, line 1257b (‘*cen* *drusende*, meaning, ‘the torch flickers’), and traces the image of man’s life as a failing lantern, candle or light through several Latin sources.717 The “flickering torch,” Hill claims, is a common patristic “symbol for the instability of human life,” and this symbolism enables Cynewulf to craft his runic phrase “þonne [C = *cen*] cwacað” to mean both “the torches [of life] flicker” as well as “the bold ones tremble.”718

What is more interesting about this short half-line, however, is the implied connection between this ‘C’ (which could mean torches or bold men) and Cynewulf himself. The name of the rune is used here to initiate the line’s alliteration with ‘C.’ Elsewhere Cynewulf primarily uses the runic names to fill out a line with syllables, not

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Calder, *Cynewulf*, 72, since it seems like one of the least far-fetched interpretations of the epilogue I have encountered thus far.


set its alliterative poetic structure.\textsuperscript{719} This suggests that the ‘C’ rune, and its name, whether interpreted literally as \textit{cen} or more abstractly as \textit{cene}, is somehow significant to the line and the passage as a whole. Unlike the runic epilogues of Cynewulf’s other poems \textit{Fates of the Apostles} and \textit{Juliana}, which have scrambled runic letters, and groupings of runes which spell out Old English words, respectively, the signature passage in \textit{Ascension} spells out Cynewulf’s name in order, letter by letter, beginning with the rune which stands for his first initial, ‘C’. We might interpret this initial as a symbol for Cynewulf himself. Through this initial and its runic name, Cynewulf compares his life to the failing light of torches, whose fragile flames he imagines quaking and flicking (\textit{cwacað}, line 358a) when stirred by the mighty breath of Christ upon his return to earth. Even if we take the other interpretation of the ‘C’ rune as \textit{cene}, we are still struck by a comparison of the poet to one of those brave men who in their youth thought their wealth and glory would last forever, but who, growing old in life, tremble in fear for their souls. The verses “then…the ruler of heaven [will] speak angry words to those who had been feeble in obeying him in this world” (\textit{þonne…rodera ryhtend, sprecan reþe word / þam be him ær in worulde wace hyrdon}, lines 358b-360) recall Cynewulf’s earlier statement that he feels he has “not obeyed very well what [his] Savior commanded in books” (\textit{þe ic ne heold teala þæt me hælend min / on bocum bibead}, lines 353-354a), and reinforce Cynewulf’s sense that he will share the fate of others who have failed to follow God’s commandments.

\textit{Forþon ic leofra gehwone læran wille: Cynewulf’s Apostolic Poetics}

The theme of repentance before Judgment occupies the remaining portions of the

\textsuperscript{719} Hill, “The Failing Torch,” 158.
poem. What is uncharacteristic about the conclusion of *Ascension* when compared with the conclusions of Cynewulf’s other poems is the fact that this poem offers *a way out* of the depths of self-loathing and sin-stained abjection. Whereas Cynewulf’s other poems present the author as incapable of imagining his own salvation without the intervention of others’ prayers,720 *Ascension* holds out the hope that Cynewulf, and by extension any Christian, can change. By striving to make the best use of the talents and skills Christ has bestowed upon them through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they can work to merit salvation. Directly after the passage containing hisrunic signature, Cynewulf writes,

_Forþon ic leofra gehwone læran wille_
_þæt he ne agele gæstes þearfe,_
_ne on gylp geote, þenden god wille_
_þæt he her in worulde wunian mote,_
_somed siþian sawel in lice,_
in þam gæsthofe. Seyle gumena gehwylc
_on his geardagum georne biþencan_
_þæt us milde þicwom mehta waldend_
_æt ærestan þurh þæs engles word._ (Ascension, lines 376-383)

[Therefore I wish to teach each of the beloved, so that he will not neglect the soul’s need, nor pour himself out in boasting, while God is pleased that he might dwell here in the world, likewise that the soul should journey in the body, in that guest-house. So must every man think earnestly about his past days, about how the ruler of powers came to us mildly at first, through the words of the angel.]

In employing the gift of eloquence given to him by God, Cynewulf endeavors to overcome his human frailty and weakness in the hope of achieving salvation. As religious poetry, Cynewulf’s works convey holy wisdom to men. They impart the words and deeds of Christ and his saints. They advise, they admonish, and they inspire. This hortatory, evangelical dimension of Cynewulf’s poetic project links him most closely with the figures of the apostles and the mission made possible by their miraculous reception of the gift of language at Pentecost.

720 See my note above for examples from Cynewulf’s other poems *Fates of the Apostles* and *Juliana*. 
As he tells us in the passage cited above, Cynewulf feels compelled to share his spiritual wisdom with the world because of the impending terrors of Judgment (Forþon, meaning ‘therefore’ or ‘because’). The medium of poetry, as the ultimate expression of humanity’s verbal gifts, compellingly and convincingly portrays the need for Cynewulf’s audience to “think earnestly about [their] past days” (on his geardagum georne bipencan, line 382), and to change their ways of living for the better before it is too late.

The last two sections of the poem are elaborate set pieces: one vividly illustrates the horrors of Judgment Day, and the other likens the life of man to a sea-journey. These poetic flourishes, particularly the concluding metaphor of the sea-journey, may be read as final examples of Cynewulf’s exercise of poetic gifts in order to gain salvation for himself and others.

Is us þearf micel
þæt we gæstes wîte ðæm gryrebrogan
on þas gæsnan tîd georne bipencen.
Nu is þon gelicost swa we on laguflode
ofer cald wæter ceolum liðan
geond sidne sæ, sundhengestum,
flodwudu fergen. Is þæt frecne stream
yða ofermæta þe we her on lacað
geond þas wacan woruld, windge holmas
ofer deop gelad. Wæs se drohtað strong
ærþon we to londe geliden hæfðon
ofer hreone hrycg. þa us help bicwom,
þæt we to hælo hyðe gelædde,
godes gæstsunu, ond us giefe sealde
þæt we oncnawan magun ofer ceoles bord
hwær we sælan sceolon sundhengestas,
ealde yðmearas, ancrum fæste.
Utan us to þære hyðe hyht staþelian,
ða us gerynde rodera waldend,
halge on heahþu, þa he heofonum astag. (Ascension, lines 408a-427)

[It is very needful for us in this barren time that we earnestly ponder the beauty of the spirit before that horror. Now it is like as if we were on the sea, faring in ships over the cold water, throughout the wide sea in wave-horses, faring on the flood-]
woods. That flood is perilous, the waves exceedingly great on which we are tossed throughout this changeful world, the windy waves over the deep road. Hard was the way of life we had before we won the land over the stormy back of the ocean that led us to our salvation, the spiritual Son of God, and gave us grace so that we may learn where we ought to moor the sea-horses, the old wave-mares, over the side of the ship, establish our anchors. Let us fix our hope in that haven which the ruler of the skies has prepared for us, holy on high, when he ascended to heaven.]

Cynewulf takes Gregory’s short injunction to “fasten the anchor of your hope in the eternal homeland” (iam tamen spei uestrae ancoram in aeternam patriam figite), and elaborates it into an epic simile that brings together Anglo-Saxon nautical imagery and poetic language familiar from Old English elegies such as The Seafarer with the biblical and patristic commonplace of the tempestuous sea voyage, itself modeled on the classical poetic topos of the storm at sea. Cynewulf combines the vigorous rhetoric of this topos with the patristic theme of “the voyage of this life,” a theme that Thomas Hill

721 Calder, Cynewulf, 73. In fact, as Thomas Hill points out in his article, “The Anchor of Hope and the Sea of this World: Christ II, 850-66,” English Studies 4 (1994): 290, Cynewulf develops the metaphorical potential of Gregory’s passage on the basis of just a single word: “the only explicit nautical term in the Latin homily is the word ‘anchora,’ although it might be argued that the verb ‘fluctuere’ suggests ‘fluctus,’ or wave. But the Latin verb ‘fluctuere’ like the modern English cognate ‘fluctuate’ bore a wide range of meanings and was not necessarily specifically nautical in its associations.”

722 In these two poems, the exiled speakers lament their fates while traveling aimlessly and alone on frosty seas. See especially lines 1-26 of The Seafarer, which Bradley calls “the finest sea-poetry in the language,” and the description of the sea journey in Cynewulf’s poem Elene, lines 225-245, and the violent storm at sea in the anonymous Old English poem Andreas, lines 369-381, and Andrew’s discussion of seamanship with Christ in disguise as a sailor in lines 471-536.

723 The locus classicus for the epic description of a perilous sea journey is, of course, the storm at sea in Vergil’s Aeneid. In his discussion of Arator’s deployment of the classical ‘storm at sea’ description in his De Actibus Apostolorum, Roger Green, Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2006), 335-338, lists several other authors, including Lucan, Catullus, Statius, and in the Christian Latin tradition, Arator’s predecessors Juvencus and Sedulius as possible models or sources for Arator’s own description of Paul’s shipwreck on the way to Rome narrated in Acts 27. In her study Old English Poetry in Medieval Christian Perspective: A Doctrinal Approach (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), 156-158, Judith Garde discusses several patristic sources for Cynewulf’s figure of the storm at sea, including Hippolytus of Rome’s Treatise on Antichrist, Tertullian’s De baptismo XII. 7, Caesarius of Arles’s Admonitio 1.19 and Gregory the Great’s Letter to Leander I, and cites Jean Daniélou’s observation that “the ship as a figure of the Church” can be traced “to the earliest Christian catechetical documents...as the ark of Noah became the instrument of eschatological deliverance, [and] primitive Christians adopted the symbolism of the ship as a sign of hope for eternity.” And, as we have discussed above, the motif of the perilous sea journey also features largely in the Bonifatian correspondence and in the lives of the missionary saints who voyaged across the sea for the sake of converting their heathen brethren on the Continent, and they frequently draw upon Paul’s discussion of his own experiences suffering shipwreck in II Corinthians 11:25-26.
tells us also finds expression as a nautical metaphor in the commentary on I John by Augustine of Hippo. Drawing on the biblical image of the “anchor of hope” presented in Hebrews 6:19, Augustine writes:

So in this mortal state we were held fast by our guiltiness, He in mercy came down: He entered in unto the captive, a Redeemer and not an oppressor. The Lord for us shed his blood, redeemed us, changed our hope. As yet we bear the mortality of the flesh, and take future immortality upon trust; and on the sea we are tossed about by the waves, but we have the anchor of hope already fixed upon the land.  

Augustine, like Cynewulf, adapts the nautical metaphors of antiquity to the conceptual theme of life as a journey by drawing on the biblical figure of the ‘anchor of hope.’ In doing so he creates a stirring image to express what he sees as a central paradox of Christian existence: the believing, baptized Christian is at once both on the dangerous sea journey that is life, being battered by the winds of temptation and despair, and safely moored in the harbor of heaven, held fast by the anchor of his faith and the hope which he gained when Christ ascended.  

When examined from a theological point of view, Cynewulf’s choice to end his poem with this particular type of nautical metaphor is, therefore, no accident. The full significance of his adoption of this epic simile becomes clearer, however, when we consider it from a literary historical standpoint. As E. R. Curtius writes in his classic study *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, “Nautical metaphors originally belong to poetry.” Not only are nautical images commonly used in Latin poetry from the earliest times (see note 104 above), but they are also commonly used as metaphors for

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poetry, and particularly for describing the experiences of authors and audiences at the beginnings and endings of poetic works. Curtius cites an example from Vergil’s *Georgics* as his *locus classicus* for this figure – but he also lists numerous medieval Latin examples, including works by Cynewulf’s Anglo-Saxon compatriots Aldhelm and Alcuin. All of these authors depict the poet or scribe as a sailor, who, battling the ‘elements’ (his own ignorance, the difficulties of composing verse, long hours working in the *scriptorium*, etc.) and deftly steering his ‘ship’ of poetry, concludes his work by “entering port, with or without casting anchor.” By adopting the widely used metaphor of the perilous sea journey to conclude his poem, Cynewulf develops the potential of the ‘anchor of hope’ figure to further underscore the connections between his practice of writing poetry and his prospects for salvation. Within the logic of Cynewulf’s nautical metaphor itself, the goal of the sea journey of Christian life is “salvation” (*hælo*, line 420a). But within the logic of the larger tradition of using nautical metaphors to describe poetic composition, the goal of the sea journey of writing is the completion of this poem, which Cynewulf strives to achieve with special deftness and care.

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727 Indeed, Alcuin’s colophonic poem, preserved in MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 326, shares many similarities with Cynewulf’s nautical passage: “Just as the sailor, snatched from the wild waves of the rough sea, coming into harbor, has a happy heart, so may a certain scribe, putting down his pen, weary under the mountain of labor, have a happy heart. May he say thanks to God for his comfortable life, and may he give thanks for the rest from his labor,” in Richard Gameson “The Scribe Speaks? Colophons in early English manuscripts,” Chadwick Memorial Lectures 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

728 Curtius, *European Literature*, 128-129. Curtius explains that “this class of metaphor is extraordinarily widespread throughout the Middle Ages and long survives into later times.”

729 This metaphor was also adopted by other Anglo-Saxon scribes in colophons to express their relief at the completion of a writing task or text; at the end of a catena on the Psalms in the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 68, the scribe has written “Here finishes the book of Psalms. In Christ Jesus our Lord; read in peace. Just as the port is welcome to sailors, so is the final verse to scribes. Edilberict son of Berictric wrote this gloss. May whosoever should read it, pray for the scribe…..” in Gameson 35. The adoption of this originally poetic motif for use in colophons further highlights its association with conclusions and endings of written works overall, and for endings in the larger sense of man’s life and salvation. Note the scribe’s plea for prayers that follows the nautical metaphor for his work, and the giving of his name to the readers, which is very similar in structure and content to Cynewulf’s runic epilogues in other poems.
These final nineteen lines are Cynewulf’s grand finale: here he exhibits his considerable expertise in classical poetics in a Christian context, and assimilates these Latin literary traditions to the special formal and stylistic conventions of Anglo-Saxon verse. The language of the passage is pure Old English poetry, replete with nautical kennings such as *sundhengestum* (literally, ‘wave-horses,’ line 413b), *flodwudu* (literally, ‘flood-woods,’ line 414a), and *yðmearas* (literally, ‘wave-mares,’ line 424a) for ships, and figures for the sea such as *deop gelad* (deep way or street, lines 416b-417a) and *ofer hreone hrycg* (over the back of the ocean, line 419a). Cynewulf’s description of the sea’s treacherous, stormy, ice-cold waves instantly recalls several passages from Old English elegiac and heroic poetry set in hostile seascapes signifying man’s life in this ever-changing, fleeting world.

His poetic comparison of man’s state to “faring in ships over the cold water” reminds his readers that their hopes for salvation are imperiled and ever-weakening (*frecne* and *wacan*, lines 414b and 416a) as long as they are in this mortal life. The sea, which is their “way of life” (*drohtað*, line 417), continues to be dangerous, but Christ’s Ascension enables them to find the shores of salvation at last. Through Christ’s exaltation of humanity upon his Ascension into heaven, and his bestowal of grace through the descent of the Holy Spirit, Cynewulf’s final lines tell us, man has finally gained the ability to realize the true purpose of his ‘ships’ and what direction one must sail them in to reach the harbor of heaven (*þære hyðe…heofonum*, lines 425a and 427b). These “sea-horses” and “old wave-mares,” as Cynewulf calls them, signify the individual gifts and abilities which mankind must direct towards God and the service of the Church, as well as the human bodies that serve as vessels for souls as they travel to the hereafter.
The ending of *Ascension* presents us with a complex, powerful example of Cynewulf’s poetic artistry. The last three lines bring the major themes of the poem into focus and deliberately end with the phrase *pa he heofonum astag* (when He ascended to heaven, line 427b), reminding the audience one final time that Christ’s Ascension was the turning point in human salvation. This display of learning and verbal eloquence concretizes Cynewulf’s claim that it is through right use of spiritual gifts that man can overcome his human frailty and weakness. Finally, by concluding with a nautical metaphor, Cynewulf strengthens the parallels between these gifts and abilities and the gifts that the apostles received. The sea journeys of the apostles, and Peter and Paul in particular, led to their martyrdoms and thus to their salvation. This implicit comparison suggests that the faithful Christian’s use of his God-given gifts allegorically assimilates his voyage through life to the missionary voyages of the apostles.

**Conclusion**

That Cynewulf believes in the transformational power of divinely inspired art may also be seen in the conclusion of his other poem, *Elene*. Here, Cynewulf contrasts his life before he recognized the gifts which God has given him with his current status as a religious poet:

> Ic wæs weorcum fah, synnum asæled, sorgum gewæled, bitrum gebunden, bisgm geþrungen, ær me lære onlag þurh leohrne had, gamelum to geoce, gife unscynde mægencyning amæt ond on gemynd beget, toht ontynde, tidum gerynnde, bancofan onband, breostlocan onwand leoðucreft onleac þæs ic lustum breac, willum in worulde. (*Elene*, lines 1236b-1250a)
[I was soiled by my deeds, shackled by my sins, harassed by my cares, and bound and oppressed by bitter worries before the mighty King granted me knowledge in lucid form as solace to an old man, meted out his flawless grace and instilled it in my mind, revealed its radiance, at times augmented it, unshackled my body, laid open my heart – and unlocked the art of poetry, which I have used joyously and with a will in the world.]

The relationship between poetry and wisdom is made explicit here once again; it is by “pondering for long periods and winnowing his thoughts painstakingly by night” (pragum breodude ond geþanc reodode, / nihtes nearwe, lines 1238-1239a), as he tells us, that Cynewulf gains the wisdom which leads him to “ampler understanding” (rumran geþeaht, line 1240b). The “mighty King” (mægencyning, line 1246a), Christ gives Cynewulf this fuller understanding of the meaning of the Cross, the subject of Cynewulf’s poem Elene, and enables him to convey it to the world through the “craft of poetry” (leoðucraeft, line 1250a). In Elene as well as in Ascension, religious poetry, and the spiritual understanding which accompanies it and makes it possible, helps Cynewulf overcome his fears about his own salvation and consider how he might join the company of the saved in heaven.

Cynewulf’s poetic self-consciousness and his choices in subject matter are intimately linked; like Bede and Ælfric, he sees himself as an inheritor of the gifts of language and eloquence which were originally bestowed upon the apostles at Pentecost after Christ’s Ascension. Yet, as a Christian living in a post-apostolic age, inching (in his view) ever closer to the Day of Judgement, he struggles to accept and make good use of the divine gifts he was given and to model himself on the apostles. The contrasting qualities of the Apostles’ humanity and heroism emphasized in Ascension and Fates of the Apostles, respectively, reflect Cynewulf’s conflicting attitudes – one hopeful, the
other fearful in the extreme – toward himself and toward salvation. I would argue that this vascillation of the Christian psyche between hope and terror (*amor Dei* vs. *timor Dei*) is, however, a productive one. It reflects the apostles’ own conflicted understanding of Jesus as man and Christ as God, but it also incites Cynewulf to produce works of poetry in the service of God and for the salvation of his soul.

Cynewulf interprets the apostolic injunction of Christ as a call to retell the history of the Church in a moving Old English idiom – to translate the story of Christ’s continuing presence in the world into a medium his fellow Anglo-Saxons would find relevant, compelling and meaningful to them as a nation conscious of their religious history. In exposing the human weaknesses of the apostles as well as their strength and sanctity, Cynewulf provides his Anglo-Saxon audience with a powerful model for Christian living and belief. The apostles, he could say, successfully made the transition from ‘doubting Thomases’ and lovers of the flesh to believers, whose love for Christ spurred them to accept the monumental missionary task He laid before them, and before all Christians.

Cynewulf’s purpose in writing poetry, and *Ascension* and *Fates of the Apostles* in particular, goes beyond the concept of a “poetic ministry.” Pastoral concerns certainly motivate his writing, and spreading the truth about God, Christ and the history of the Church are important aspects of his literary project. However, I would argue that what Cynewulf ultimately seeks, both for himself and for his audience, is a way to identify with the historical figures of Christ’s first apostles. It is in this respect that Cynewulf’s project may be linked to the work, both literary and evangelical, of Boniface and his fellow Anglo-Saxon missionaries and correspondents. Some might argue that the Anglo-

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730 Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 27.
Saxon missionaries sought to achieve their identification with the apostles in far more literal and impactful ways. They did, after all, actually leave England and undertake dangerous missionary journeys to convert the heathen that sometimes ended in martyrdom. Yet, as we have discussed at length above (in Chapters Two and Three), the Anglo-Saxon missions were motivated and shaped by literary discourse about the apostles and what it means to follow them. These traditions had tremendous influence on the ways that Anglo-Saxon missionaries such as Boniface conceived of and wrote about their identities as Christians.

Cynewulf’s engagement with the sources of apostolic discourse informed his understanding of his religious self, and encouraged him to explore comparisons between this self and the apostles. In doing so, Cynewulf reimagines the history of the apostolic church in explicitly Anglo-Saxon terms, thus facilitating the identification that he so desperately sought. In seeking to become like the apostles, he imagines the apostles to be more like him. By choosing to write these histories and saints’ lives in the vernacular, Cynewulf alters his source texts to give the apostles specifically Anglo-Saxon characteristics, attitudes, expressions, and epithets, seeking (intentionally or unintentionally) to fit the apostles into his particular cultural context as a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon churchman. That other Anglo-Saxon poets found his vision compelling may be seen in the influence of Cynewulf’s work on the anonymous Old English reinterpretation of the *Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* known as *Andreas*. 
CHAPTER 5

THE RELUCTANT APOSTLE:
CONFLICTING MODELS OF APOSTLESHIP IN ANDREAS

Introduction

The Vercelli Book poem known as Andreas\textsuperscript{731} recounts the adventures of St. Matthew and St. Andrew in the land of the heathen, man-eating Mermedonians. The popularity of various versions of this legend\textsuperscript{732} attests to the interest it held in the medieval Christian imagination. The story of Andrew’s mission to Mermedonia resonates on many levels that go beyond its seeming reenactment of Christ’s own mission in the world. In its representation of Andrew’s inward and outward struggles to fulfill Christ’s apostolic injunction, the poem explores and questions what it means to be an apostle.

The cult of St. Andrew figures prominently among medieval apostolic cults, especially in Anglo-Saxon England. As was the case with the widespread culting of Peter and Paul and the Twelve Apostles in general, veneration of St. Andrew provided a means of reaffirming the continuities between the Anglo-Saxon church and the early churches of the apostles, signaling England’s participation in the apostolic succession. Andrew in particular gained added cachet from his status as the brother of St. Peter and the fact that


he was the favorite saint of England’s own beloved apostle, Gregory the Great. As Els Rose explains,

from the moment that relics of St. Andrew were translated to Constantine’s Church of the Apostles in Constantinople (357), the cult of this apostle spread throughout the entire Christian world, from the Bosphorus to Jerusalem and from Carthage to the north-eastern regions of France, i.e. Burgundy. As early as the second half of the fourth century, traces of a liturgical feast day in honour of Andrew on the last day of November can be found in liturgical books and calendars. In early Christian Rome, the apostle Andrew was one of the most important persons in the apostles’ cult. Andrew, for whose commemoration a church was built in the last decade of the fourth century, was the special patron of Pope Gregory I (590-604), who dedicated his monastery on Mount Caelius to this apostle. The cult of the apostle Andrew in early medieval Gaul was strongly stimulated by the arrival of relics of the apostle to this area in the year 357. Rouen was an important centre in which the apostle’s cult was promoted by Victricius, bishop of the city around 400.

The cult of Andrew most likely reached Anglo-Saxon England through the influence of the missionaries from Rome sent to the English by Gregory the Great, but also through Anglo-Saxon contacts with Gallic churchmen and religious customs and interests following the conversion. The popularity of Andrew’s cult within Anglo-Saxon England is illustrated by the fact that St. Andrew’s feast day (Nov. 30), vigil, and octave are recorded in all 19 of the English calendars from before 1100. Moreover, a large number of Anglo-Saxon churches were dedicated to Andrew. Marie Walsh notes that in a list of pre-Reform English church dedications, “Andrew ranks fifth with 637 churches bearing his name; he is preceeded by the Blessed Virgin Mary, All Saints, St. Peter, and St. Michael.” In Wilhelm Levison’s study of eighty-six churches of the seventh and

736 Walsh 103.
eighth centuries Andrew is tied with Peter and Paul for third in number of dedications behind Peter and the Virgin Mary.  

Andrew also features prominently in the Latin writings of early Anglo-Saxon churchmen, including Bede, who wrote one homily and two hymns in honor of Andrew, and Aldhelm, who features Andrew in his altar dedications to the twelve apostles in his *Carmina Ecclesiastica.* A close relationship between the cult of St. Andrew and the missionaries to and from Anglo-Saxon England has been noticed by John P. Hermann:

Andrew was the favorite saint of Gregory the Great, who chose Augustine and his fellow missionaries from the monastery of St. Andrew, which he both named and endowed. Soon, English churches dedicated to Andrew were built at Rochester (604) and Peterborough (656). At Hexham, Wilfrid of York built the most spectacular of seventh-century English churches in order to commemorate Andrew. Shortly after Willibrord was born, his father Wilgils abandoned his family to found a monastery dedicated to Andrew at the mouth of the Humber; he left his son to the care of the monks who lived under Wilfrid’s rule. When fully grown, Willibrord would follow the example of Wilfrid of York, who had himself consciously followed the example of Andrew by attempting to evangelize Frisia. And Boniface himself, as a result of his successes on the border of Saxony and Hesse, would be consecrated as bishop of Germany on the feast of St. Andrew, 723.

For several of the most prominent Anglo-Saxon churchmen who participated in the missions to the continent, their devotion to St. Andrew was second only to their devotion to Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. Alcuin, a member

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737 Levison, *England and the Continent*, 262. These churches include Wilfrid’s monastery of Hexham, the ‘oratorium’ and cell of Wilgils, father of Willibrord near the mouth of the Humber, the cathedral at Rochester, monasteries at Ferring, Oundle, and Wells, and a church near Pagham. Other than Peter, Paul and Andrew, the only other apostles whom we know had churches dedicated to them in Anglo-Saxon England in the 7th and 8th centuries are Bartholomew (at Crowland monastery) and Matthias (at a church to which Aldhelm dedicated some verses).


of the second generation of Anglo-Saxon expatriots to the continent and the relative and hagiographer of the Anglo-Saxon missionary Willibrord mentioned above, also wrote of Andrew in four of his poems for the dedication of oratories and altars in churches.

In addition to the Old English verse treatments of Andrew in Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles* and the *Andreas* currently under discussion, interest in Andrew is further attested in later Anglo-Saxon England by several vernacular versions of the apostle’s two apocryphal *acta*, the passion narrative which recounts his crucifixion in Achaia (known as the *Acts of Andrew or passio*), and the account of his mission to rescue Matthias/Matthew from the cannibal people of Mermedonia (known as the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the Country of the Cannibals*). An Old English prose life of St. Andrew based on the story of his passion in Achaia was written by Ælfric between 990 and 995 in his *Catholic Homilies* I.38. Another Old English prose treatment of St. Andrew, this one based on the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, can be found in the anonymous Blickling Homily 19, dated to about the end of the tenth century. Andrew is also commemorated in the texts of the Old English Martyrology as well as the Latin and Old English Metrical Calendars.

Andrew also appears to have been significant at least to some members of the Benedictine Reform movement of the last half of the tenth century, as the devotion of St. Dunstan (c. 910-988) to the apostle is mentioned prominently in his four *vitae*. The latest evidence for the culting of Andrew is an illustration of the apostle sitting enthroned

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743 DeGregorio 249.
that appears in the Anglo-Saxon *Missal of Robert Jumièges*, dated to around the year 1000.\(^{744}\)

The poetic treatment of St. Andrew in *Andreas* thus fits into a long cultural and literary tradition within Anglo-Saxon England. The most recent critical estimates place the composition of *Andreas* in mid- to late ninth-century Mercia, which suggests that the poem predates the other examples of the Andrew tradition in Old English literature. It also situates the composition of the poem in a time and place where the stability and integrity of a powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom were being severely compromised by Viking incursions, as the mid- to late ninth century saw an increase in Viking attacks on Anglo-Saxon England.\(^{745}\) The translation of the legend of St. Andrew in the country of the cannibals into Old English poetry during this turbulent century of Anglo-Saxon history may give voice to the religious and cultural anxieties that arose from the prolonged, violent and invasive contact with Scandinavian pagans who occupied the ambivalent status of Others in relation to Anglo-Saxon Christians.\(^{746}\) The *Andreas*-poet’s interpretation of the legend of St. Andrew, with its twin themes of cannibalism and conversion, may speak to Anglo-Saxon fears that their land was being enveloped by the

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\(^{745}\) Brooks notes that “the date of the manuscript gives the terminus ante quem as the latter half of the 10\(^{th}\) c., and the linguistic evidence suggests the middle of the 9\(^{th}\) c. as the terminus post quem” (xxii). Boenig, *Saint*, 23, however, dates the poem’s composition to “sometime in the mid – to late 9\(^{th}\) century” based on a further examination of linguistic, historical and doctrinal evidence. Robert Fulk’s *History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 61, 315, 390, likewise places the work in the 9\(^{th}\) c., and conjectures a Mercian origin on the basis of linguistic evidence. Even if we take Brooks’ more cautious dating scheme, the span of 150 years between 850 and 1000 still falls within the time frame of the first (c. 786-954) and second (c. 954-1100) waves of Viking incursion and settlement in England.

\(^{746}\) In “The Contrasted ‘Other’ in the Old English Apocryphal Acts of Matthew, Simon and Jude,” *Neophilologus* 87 (2003): 140, Jasmine Kilburn makes a similar claim about the representations of cannibalistic Ethiopian magicians in “Ælfric’s translations of the apocryphal acts of Matthew, Simon and Jude,” suggesting that since “the Anglo-Saxons were themselves periodically attacked from the eighth century onwards by heathen Vikings… a sense of pagan threat to their country could have resulted in figures such as Zaroes and Arfaxath [the Ethiopian magicians] holding a resonance in their minds.”
Danes. The substantial presence of these pagans in Christian England compromised the unity and universality of the Church, even as it reaffirmed the necessity of faith, perseverance, and even martyrdom in the face of foreign opposition and religious indifference.\textsuperscript{747} While there is no direct evidence that the \textit{Andreas}-poet was aware of the significance of St. Andrew for the Anglo-Saxon missionaries of an earlier age, the parallels in historical situation are suggestive. In both contexts, the story of Andrew’s apostleship and martyrdom held relevance for Christian Anglo-Saxons encountering, whether violently or peacefully, groups of Germanic pagans who came to be seen as emblematic of their people’s own pre-Christian past. For the \textit{Andreas}-poet and his ninth-century Anglo-Saxon audience, recalling their ancestors’ influence in converting another group of continental Germanic pagans to belief in Christ may have held out the promise that here too the Anglo-Saxons could prevail in converting the heathen, and, like Andrew, succeed in incorporating them into their Christian community.

\textit{Miles Christi or Imitator Christi: Two Models of Apostleship in Andreas}

As several critics have pointed out, the apparent disjuncture in \textit{Andreas} between the reticence of St. Andrew’s actions and speech in the poem and the exuberant tone of the poem’s narratorial voice seems strange, even for an Old English poem.\textsuperscript{748} The doubting, faltering, and reluctant protagonist whom the anonymous author of \textit{Andreas} inherited from his immediate source text, a lost Latin version of the Greek apocryphal

\textsuperscript{747} Several Anglo-Saxon saints, such as St. Edmund of East Anglia and St. Ælfheah of Canterbury, were martyred at the hands of the Vikings.

\textsuperscript{748} See Ivan Herbison’s essay “Generic Adaptations in Andreas,” in \textit{Essays on Anglo-Saxon and related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy}, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), 181, 1, for a history of this critical opinion, including a citation of E. G. Stanley’s indictment of the author of \textit{Andreas} as a “poetical dunderhead.”
legend the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Anthropophagi, clashes with the poet’s use of vigorous Anglo-Saxon martial rhetoric and insistent application of heroic epithets, resulting in a disconnect between the poem’s style and its substance.

Scholars have attempted to explain this disconnect in various ways. Daniel Calder’s (not entirely sympathetic) essay, “Figurative Language and its Contexts in Andreas: A Study in Medieval Expressionism,” argues that the poet’s “extravagant figurative language is an important vehicle for expressing [the theme of] conversion” by violently “converting those old epic formulas [of Germanic heroic diction] into new Christian metaphors.” Roberta Frank traces the “oddly dressed and worded” strangeness of the Andreas-poet’s metaphors to the puzzling language of the Old Norse skalds, whereas Jonathan Wilcox explains it as an example of the poet’s deliberate sense of “playfulness,” “humor,” and “irony.”

Other critics, such as Ivan Herbison, have argued that the “incongruities of style” presented in Andreas “point to a poet encountering difficulties which arise from a developing tension between the nature of the chosen narrative [the Acts of Andrew and Matthias] and the mode of representation [heroic poetry].” In a similar vein, Peter Dendle sees the strangeness of Andreas as the result of a conflict between two differing ways of envisioning saints, one exemplified by the Greek-based source text of the poem

754 Herbison 188.
and another popularized by the Roman lives of the martyrs which the poet is likely trying to emulate.\footnote{Dendle 44.} As Dendle explains, two contrasting attitudes toward the role of pain and suffering in the lives of the saints were in circulation during the late antique and early medieval periods: the \textit{agonistic} view and the \textit{anesthetic} view. The Greek \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias} and its Latin translations represent the \textit{agonistic} view, which sees an “individual’s experience of pain and suffering as an integral component of spiritual development” as a means of acquiring “eligibility for salvation.”\footnote{Dendle 46-48.} On the other hand, the \textit{anesthetic} view – arising from a distinctly Roman attitude that pain and suffering were the province of victims, not victors – largely presents saints and martyrs as invulnerable to pain and suffering, resolutely stoic in the face of unthinkable tortures.\footnote{Walsh 110.}

If, as Dendle convincingly argues, we can see the \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias} as indicative of an \textit{agonistic} tradition of \textit{hagiogenesis} (saint-making), then I think we can extend Dendle’s point to the so-called ‘primary’ \textit{Acts of Andrew}.\footnote{Walsh 110.} This alternative, and indeed, more widespread and popular, apocryphal legend of St. Andrew corresponds closely to the \textit{anesthetic} mode of sanctity. The \textit{Acts of Andrew} recounts his mission to Achaia, and his famous martyrdom on the \textit{crux decussata}, wherein he cheerfully embraces the instrument of his torture, and smiling, laughing and seemingly unaffected by pain, continually preaches from the cross for days until death takes him.\footnote{See J.-M. Prieur, \textit{Acta Andreae}, CCSA 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989) and \textit{Acts of Andrew}, in \textit{New Testament Apocrypha}, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 390-424.}
I bring up the contrast between these two views and the alternative apocryphal account of the *Acts of Andrew* because it is clear that the *Andreas*-poet was familiar with both the story of Andrew’s passion and the anesthetic view of sainthood. Near the end of *Andreas*, the poet departs from the narrative of his source text to allude to Andrew’s return to Achaia and his martyrdom as it is depicted in the *Acts of Andrew*:

> Ongan hine þa fysan ond to flote gyrwan, blissum hremig, wolde on brimþisan
> Achaie oðre siðe
> sylfa gesecan, þær he sawulgedal, beaducwealm gebad. þæt þam banan ne wearð
> hleahtre behworfen, ah in helle ceafl
> sið asette, ond syððan no,
> fah, freonda leas, frofre benohte. (*Andreas*, ll. 1699-1705)

[Then he began to prepare and make himself ready for the sea; triumphant in happiness, he himself wished to seek out another journey to Achaia by ship, where he anticipated the separation of his soul from his body, death in battle. It did not turn out to be a laughing matter for his slayer, who rather made a journey into the jaws of hell and thereafter, guilty, without friends, he enjoyed no consolation.]

As Antonina Harbus points out, here the poet actually contradicts one of his previous comments where he claims he is scaling back the material on Andrew by adding a reference to additional content from another well-known legend.\(^{760}\) Here we have evidence that the poet was familiar with the legend of Andrew’s passion, and also appears to condone the fact that the hero is willfully and deliberately seeking his own martyrdom, that he is “triumphant in happiness” (*blissum hremig*, l. 1700a) about the “parting of the soul and death in battle” (*sawulgedal / beaducwealm* ll. 1702b-03a). I would suggest that the poet’s familiarity with and overall preference for what Dendle

calls the *anesthetic* ideal of sanctity motivates his often awkward and conflicting but nonetheless sustained efforts to portray his protagonist as a *miles Christi*\textsuperscript{761} throughout the poem, despite his source text’s overwhelmingly *agonistic* outlook.

If the *Andreas*-poet knew of, and was interested in, this other, more popular legend of St. Andrew’s passion, why did he choose to write about Matthew and Andrew in the country of the cannibals instead? The *Acts of Andrew* thoroughly conforms to the *anesthetic* view of sanctity the *Andreas*-poet appears to prefer (if we should agree with the assessment of the majority of critics). It more readily lends itself to the martial metaphors and attitude of stoic heroism that form the basis of the Anglo-Saxon poetic repertoire. Both legends appear to have been circulating in Anglo-Saxon England. However, the apocryphal story of Andrew’s passion was clearly more widespread, at least in the seventh through ninth centuries, with accounts of it recorded in versions of the Gallican liturgy,\textsuperscript{762} in hymns by Bede,\textsuperscript{763} in verses by Aldhelm and Alcuin,\textsuperscript{764} and in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*.\textsuperscript{765} The *Andreas*-poet was not alone in having to choose between these two different Andrews: both Ælfric and the Blickling homilist wrote hagiographic accounts of the apostle,\textsuperscript{766} with Ælfric focusing on the triumphal passion narrative of the *Acts of Andrew* and the anonymous homilist focusing on the tale

\textsuperscript{761} Herbison 211.

\textsuperscript{762} Rose, “Apocryphal Traditions,” 122-132, discusses the influence of the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew* in two early manuscripts of the Gallican liturgy, the *Missale Gothicum* and the *Irish Palimpsest Sacramentary*.

\textsuperscript{763} Bede has two hymns on Andrew; see *Opera Rhythmica*, ed. Johannes Fraipont, CCSL 122, 435-438.


\textsuperscript{765} MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 196 in *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. Geogre Herzfeld, EETS No. 116 (London: Kegan, 1900), 214-16.

of a suffering Andrew in Mermedonia. Ælfric, it seems, deliberately chose to avoid the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* account because of its dubious content. While we cannot be completely sure whether the Blickling homilist was aware of or had both versions of the legend of St Andrew available to him, he nonetheless chose to translate a Latin version of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* into Old English.

For all his heroic diction and battle imagery, the *Andreas*-poet chose to tell – and in some cases, to heighten – this story in spite of its depiction of Andrew’s weakness, self-doubt, fallibility, pain and despair. *Andreas* presents readers with an image of a reluctant apostle, one who constantly has to be goaded and rebuked by God or Christ into performing and maintaining the office bestowed upon him in the Great Commission. In this poem, we see the apostle Andrew struggling with the issues of mission, conversion, martyrdom and what it really means to follow Christ’s injunction to be his witness “to the ends of the earth.”

When viewed on its own, *Andreas* seems like a curiosity – a strange juxtaposition of the heroic and the human, an “incongruous” attempt to meld two literary traditions,

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767 According to Scott DeGregorio, “Prose Legends,” 451, Ælfric does this deliberately to avoid the *gedwyld*, or ‘error’ of the fabulous story of Andrew and Matthew among the cannibals. It is unclear whether the Blickling homilist knew the story of Andrew’s passion in Achaia.

768 While both the Blickling homily version and *Andreas* are translated from Latin versions of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, this does not mean that these vernacular translations have no specific ideological importance for their new audiences. In “Figural Narrative in *Andreas*: The Conversion of the Mermedonians,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969): 270, Thomas D. Hill states that while *Andreas* is ultimately derived from a Latin source text, “the richness and complexity of figural allusion…suggest[s] that the poet was deliberately revising his source – a possibility which is supported by a number of discrepancies between the Old English poem and other versions of the legend.” Moreover, in “Historicist Approaches to Old English Literature,” in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 94, Nicholas Howe points out that such works “are translations of the culturally alien or distant ‘other’ to be placed within the setting of the familiar world, that is, within the confines of our native vernacular. That they are, for us, inventions or fictions does not deprive them of historical value as texts for reading the ethnography of cultural and geographical belief in Anglo-Saxon England.”

769 As in Calder’s “Figurative Language and its Contexts in *Andreas*” and Roberta Frank’s “North-Sea Soundings in *Andreas*,” or, less charitably, in Brooks’ edition of the text on page xxvi, and in Michael
two contrasting ideals of sanctity. However, viewing Andreas from within the context of Old English poetry about the apostles specifically, and Anglo-Saxon writing about apostles and missionaries in general, elicits a different sense of the poem as literary and cultural object. When we situate Andreas within the discourses of apostleship articulated by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries to the continent and in the poetry of Cynewulf, the “incongruities” of the poet’s style begin to look more familiar.

Alongside its martial rhetoric of superhuman valor, Andreas, like Cynewulf’s Ascension, foregrounds the humanity of the apostles, balancing anxiety and certitude about the evangelical project of extending Christian influence around the world. In the discussion which follows, I will focus on a few of the episodes in Andreas which throw these conflicts into sharpest relief: Andrew’s argument with God about his journey to Mermedonia, his failure to recognize Christ on the ship, his suffering and lamentation throughout his near-martyrdom, and his attempt to prematurely abandon his own recent converts against God’s will. In my readings of these passages, I relate the Andreas-poet’s depictions of Andrew’s spiritual and human dilemmas to Cynewulf’s similarly conflicted representations of the apostles in his poems, and also show how Andreas engages with the Pauline concept of suffering as legitimation that underpinned the apostolic identity of Boniface and his fellow missionaries. Finally, my reading of the poet’s own metacritical interruption of the text will look at how it reflects the poet’s self-consciousness about his own, more literary mission. The Andreas-poet’s attempts to justify his literary composition as haliges lare...wordum wemde...ofen min gemet (“the teaching of the saint...proclaimed in words...beyond my ability,” ll. 1478b, 1480a, 1481a) links him not


770 As in Dendle’s “Pain and Saint-Making in Andreas” and DeGregorio’s “Prose Legends.”
only to the apostles, but also to his Anglo-Saxon predecessors, whose missions, real and rhetorical, were founded in an apostolic discourse.

**Twelfe under tunglum: Questioning the Unity of the Apostles**

*Andreas* begins with the poet’s elaborate homage to the heroism of the twelve apostles, phrased in highly formulaic language familiar from *Beowulf* and, most strikingly, Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles.* In the first ten lines of the poem, the narrator introduces the reader to the metaphorics of spiritual warfare that he repeatedly employs to characterize the thoughts, words and deeds of his two apostolic protagonists, Matthew and Andrew.

![Translation](https://example.com/translation)

[Listen! We have heard tell in days of old of twelve under the stars, glorious heroes, thanes of the Lord. In no way did their valor fail in warfare when the battle standards clashed together, when they parted from each other, just as the Lord himself, the high King of the heavens, showed [them] by lot. They were famous men on earth, brave leaders of the people and bold in battle, valiant warriors, when shield and hand defended the helmet on the battlefield, the plain of doom.]

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771 Andy Orchard, “Style and Substance: The Case for Cynewulf,” in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine Karkov and George Hardín Brown (New York: SUNY University Press, 2003), 293. Orchard’s analysis of parallel use of formulas in these three poems convincingly proves their interrelationship. He writes, “the likely direction of borrowing seems secure: the language of secular heroic society (*æthelingas* and especially, *ellen*) that is the staple of *Beowulf* has been appropriated and set in a new Christian context in *Fates of the Apostles*…this implies that the author of *Fates* knew and concisely echoed *Beowulf*, while the *Andreas*-poet knew and consciously echoed both *Beowulf* and *Fates.*”

In this opening passage, as in its poetic model, *Fates of the Apostles*, the emphasis falls on the apostles’ shared bravery and fame, as well as their status as Christ’s special band of chosen *pegnas*, his *comitatus*.\textsuperscript{773} To these elements the *Andreas*-poet adds a claim that questions the idea of the twelve as a cohesive troop of disciplined Christian soldiers by subtly implying the opposite potentiality. He writes, “In no way did their valor fail in warfare when the battle standards clashed together, when they parted from each other, just as the Lord himself, the high King of the heavens, showed [them] by lot” (*No hira brym alæg / camprædenne þonne cumbol hneotan, / syððan hie gedældon, swa him dryhten sylf, / heofona heahcyning. hlyt getæhte*, lines 3b-6). This statement claims that the apostles are notable for maintaining their shared commitment to the glory of their Lord following their separation from one another at the *divisio apostolorum*. Here the *Andreas*-poet points out a distinction between the apostles as spiritual soldiers and the Germanic ideal of the warrior band that supplies his descriptive vocabulary. In a secular

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{773} Here is the opening passage of *Fates* for comparison. Formulaic diction shared by *Fates* and *Andreas* is underlined; similar content and ideas shared by both poems are in boldface type:

*Hwæt!* Ic pysne sang siðgeomor fand
on seocum sefan, samnode wide
hu þa æðelings ellen cyðdon,
*torhte ond tireadige.* Twelwe wæron,
dædum domfæste, *dryhtne gecorene,*
leofe on life. *Lof wide sprang,*
*miht ond mæròo,* ofer middangeard,
*beodnes begna,* *brym unlytel.*

Halgan heape hlyt wisode
þær hie dryhtnes æ deman sceoldon,
reccan fore rincum. *Sume on Romebyrig,*
*frame, fyrdhwate.* feorh ofgefon
þurg Nerones nearwe scarwe,
Petrus ond Paulus. Is se apostolhad
*wide geweorðod ofer werþeoda!* (*Fates*, lines 1-15)

[Lo, I, sad with journeying, devised this song troubled in spirit, gathered widely concerning how the heroes made their courage known, bright and glorious. They were twelve, illustrious in deeds, chosen by the Lord. Their praise sprang forth, their might and fame, widely across the earth; servants of the Lord, not lacking in majesty. *Lot guided the holy group*, as to where they should preach the Gospel of the Lord, recount it before men. *Some, brave and bold in battle*, gave up life in the city of Rome through the cruel cunning of Nero, Peter and Paul. The apostleship is *widely honored among the nations of men!*]}
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context, the dispersion of a band of þegnas, with each man going his own separate way, would certainly compromise the warriors reputations and glory (their mære and þrym) and would most likely be interpreted as a betrayal of one’s lord and comrades-in-arms.\textsuperscript{774} But, the poet reminds us, these twelve heroes were bound by loyalty of the spirit, by their love for Christ and by their commitment to the apostolic injunction, yet compelled by their lord to part from one another to “go forth and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19). These lines, then, play with the Anglo-Saxon ideal of the cohesion and unity of the aristocratic warrior band to explore the biblical paradox of the apostles’ ability to persevere “with one mind” (Acts 1:14) and “in the doctrine of the apostles” (Acts 2:42), despite their parting and dispersion across many lands.

While the poem’s likely audience of educated monastic or clerical Anglo-Saxon Christians, schooled as they would have been in the rhetoric of the miles Christi topos, would probably have understood that the poet is speaking of the apostles as metaphorical soldiers. However, the martial imagery of these opening lines is alarmingly concrete, for all its formulas. The apostles’ perseverance in the faith and continuation of Christ’s mission is articulated as a battle in the most material of terms, with descriptions of “battle-standards [coming] into collision” (cumbol hneotan, line 4b) and hands holding shields and “defend[ing] helmets on field of conflict” (rond ond hand / on herefelda helm ealgodon, / on meotudwange, lines 8b-10a). To many critics lines such as these exemplify the poet’s rather unthinking application of heroic diction to his religious

\textsuperscript{774} Compare, for instance, the poet’s harsh treatment of the deserters in The Battle of Maldon with his idealized portrait of the noble members of Byrhtnoth’s heorthwerod who stay behind and fight together to the death; on this topic see Donald G. Scragg, ed., The Battle of Maldon, AD 991 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Roberta Frank, “The Ideal of Men Dying with Their Lord in The Battle of Maldon: Anachronism or Nouvelle Vague,” Festschrift for Peter Sawyer, ed. N. Lund and I. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 95-106.
subject matter, and that may be. However, the poet’s choice to call attention to the idea of the perseverance of the apostles through an ironic contrast with the traditional warrior ethos points up incompatibilities between the two overlapping cultural ideals, and perhaps suggests a degree of discomfort. What is exceptional about these “thanes of the Lord” is that their glory did not cease at all (No hira þrym alæg, line 3b) when they parted. Yet the poet’s phrasing of this line, with its emphatic initial word no, meaning, ‘not at all, by no means, never,’ suggests that his statement runs counter to his audience’s expectation for a band of retainers engaging in battle. That the poet has to stress the apostles’ cohesion and adherence to their coherence as a group and their dedication to the apostolic life raises the specter of departure from that ideal, a departure predicated on their dissolution of the comitatus-like unity of the twelve as they traveled individually (or in pairs) to their respective fields of mission.

The implication that the glory of the apostles may have been compromised after the divisio apostolorum is further underscored by the poet’s insistence that the apostles did not choose their own fields of mission, but that they were determined by him dryhten sylf (the Lord himself, line 5b). The version of the Acts of Andrew and Matthias closest to the source text of Andreas, the Greek Praxeis, specifies that the apostles decided which nations to preach to by casting lots. However, it does not elaborate at all on God’s role in

guiding the outcomes of their lot casting, nor does it stress the apostles’ continuation in

glory after their separation from one another. These two points appear to be the

Andreas-poet’s own additions. In its definitive statements concerning the unity and ceaseless bravery of the twelve apostles, the introduction to Andreas ironically alludes to the main source of conflict explored throughout the poem: the tension between the apostle’s necessity to obey the commandments of Christ and trust in God’s foreordained plans, and Andrew’s own willful human desire to avoid or escape the physical dangers and uncertainties of mission. Considering that the Praxeis depicts Andrew as an individualized, impetuous, reluctant apostle, I raise the question: in these opening lines of Andreas, does the poet protest too much?

Following this introduction, the poet begins to recount Matthew’s mission to the Mermedonians. Ivan Herbison points out that in the Praxeis version of the Acts of Andrew and Matthias, the idealized, saintly character of Matthias (who later becomes the more famous Matthew in the Latin versions of this story) is set up as the foil to Andrew, who is depicted as a kind of saint-in-training. The contrast in terms used to describe each apostle in the Praxeis clearly shows Mathias as a perfected servant of God, and Andrew as one who aspires to, but struggles to master, the patience, submission and holiness required for his spiritual development as a saint. However, as Herbison shows, the Andreas-poet’s adherence to an heroic, or what Dendle would call an anesthetic, view of sanctity and his indiscriminate application of heroic epithets from the

776 Compare the beginning of Andreas with the translation of the Praxeis given in Boenig, Acts of Andrew, 1: “In that time, all the apostles were gathered in the same place and were dividing the nations among themselves by throwing lots so each would travel into his allotted portion. According to lot, therefore, it was appointed that Mathias should go to the country of the cannibals.”

777 Herbison 188.

778 Herbison 188-189.
Anglo-Saxon poetic repertoire to both saints blurs the source’s distinctions between them. The Andreas-poet describes both Matthew and Andrew as holy, victorious warriors from the beginning of the poem.

In the Praxeis and in Andreas, both Christian apostles are differentiated from their heathen, sublinguistic counterparts by their ability to use eloquent language in prayer and preaching. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of the possession of exceptional verbal abilities traces back to the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the apostles in the Pentecost miracle as a tool for their missions and a fitting outgrowth of their participation in the religion of the Word. The Andreas-poet’s introduction of Matthew as se mid Iudeum ongan godspell ærest / wordum writan wundorcraeft (“the one who first among the Jews undertook with miraculous skill to write the gospel in words” lines 12-13) expresses this connection between apostolic dignity and linguistic ability by referring to a piece of patristic lore (not in his source texts) concerning Matthew’s supposed writing of a Gospel in Hebrew. Charles Wright has shown that the Andreas-poet includes this apocryphal but widely accepted Greco-Latin tradition to characterize Matthew as an ideal apostle, one who wrote a special Gospel in Hebrew specifically for his Jewish converts before departing to preach to the

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779 Herbison 194-195.
780 According to Merral Price, Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe (New York: Routledge, 2003), 16, “an intrinsic property of late medieval concepts of humanity appears to be verbal language itself. Again and again, those who eat human flesh are or become sublinguistic.” In light of this, the Mermedonians initially seem exceptional in that they possess both speech and writing, but as Dabney Bankert, “The Poetics of Religious Conversion in Medieval English Literature” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1996), 67, demonstrates, the Mermedonians in the Old English Andreas are largely “denied intelligent speech” until the beginning of their conversion to Christianity.
781 Bankert 67.
Gentiles. Matthew’s “Hebrew Gospel” signifies his pastoral care for both peoples, and his dedication to the apostolic injunction to “teach all nations.”

However, the poet’s description of the next “nation” which Matthew must teach is anything but encouraging:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{þam halig god} \quad \text{hlyt geteode} \\
& \text{ut on þæt igland} \quad \text{þær ænig þa git} \\
& \text{ellþeodigra} \quad \text{eðles ne mihte} \\
& \text{blædes brucan.} \quad \text{Oft him bonena hand} \\
& \text{on herefelda} \quad \text{hearde gesceode.} \ (\textit{Andreas}, \text{lines 11-18})
\end{align*}
\]

[Holy God appointed his lot to be out on that island where still at that time no foreigner might enjoy the comfort of a homeland. Often the hand of slayers did a man grievous injury on the battlefield.]

By calling Mermedonia a place where “still at that time no foreigner was able to enjoy the happiness of his homeland” the poet looks ahead to Matthew’s (and ultimately Andrew’s) efforts to alter Mermedonia into a place where the Christian might enjoy the comforts of his homeland, that is, of Christian culture and belief, upon entering the country. What is significant to note here, however, is the sudden shift implied in the use of the word \textit{ellþeodig} to describe the apostles. The word is a compound formed from \textit{þeod}, meaning in this case ‘people,’ and the prefix \textit{el-} which means ‘strange’ or ‘foreign.’ This word is used throughout the poem to designate whichever group is considered outside or foreign to another: it is used by the Mermedonians in line 1073 to refer to their

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783 Wright 104. Wright notes that this theme is stressed again in the poet’s description of God’s mercy on Matthew (lines 161-167): \textit{þa wæs gemyndig, se de middangeard / gestælode strangum mihtum,} / \textit{hu he in ellþeodigum yrmðum wunode, / belocen leoðubendum,} \textit{þe oft his lufan adreg / for Ebreum ond Israhelum; / swylice he lüdea galdorcræftum / wiðstod stranglice.} [Then he who established the world by his mighty powers was mindful of how Matthew remained in misery among alien people, locked in shackles, who had often exercised his love for the Hebrews and for the Israelites; also, he had sternly opposed the necromantic practices of the Jews (Bradley 115)]. For a discussion of this interesting breakdown of Judaic peoples into three categories, see Thomas D. Hill’s essay, “Hebrews, Israelites and Wicked Jews: an Onomastic Crux in \textit{Andreas},” \textit{Traditio} 32 (1976): 361-367.
foreign prisoners, including Matthew, who they wished to turn into food (hie on elpeodigum æt geworhton) and it is synonymous with feorcunda, / ellreordigra (strange-speaking foreigners) in lines 1089b-1090a. Moreover, it is used on several occasions by Matthew, Andrew and Christ himself to designate the Mermedonians and their lands, and even by the Jewish priest to describe Jesus and his teachings during Andrew’s account of Jewish unbelief. With the repeated use of this word, the poet registers the relativity of what is strange and what is familiar: the land of the Mermedonians is set up as the antithesis of the eðle, or homeland, of the apostles, yet the poet acknowledges that the apostles and other Christians are ellþeodig, foreign and strange to the Mermedonians. In entering the territory of the Mermedonians, the Christian outsiders cross a geographic and conceptual boundary and permit themselves to be incorporated into a heathen space. As Charles Wright explains, the description of the land of the Mermedonians as þæt igland (that island, line 12a) highlights their religious difference as well as geographic and metaphorical isolation from Christian lands. By crossing into Mermedonia, Matthew and Andrew enter a liminal zone that is

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784 A few examples of the many available will suffice to demonstrate this. Matthew laments that he is subjected to the “foreign spiteful bonds” or “elpeodige inwitwrasne” of the Mermedonians in line 63, and we learn in lines 163-5 that Christ “was mindful” of how Matthew “remained in misery among alien people” (“ellþeodigum yrmðum wunode”), since he himself had “sternly opposed the necromantic practices of the Jews” (“swylce he Iudea galdorcræftum / wiðstod stranglice”). Interestingly, Andrew refers to himself as a “ellþeodig” in line 1454a, in relation to the Mermedonians. See Constance B. Hieatt, “The Harrowing of Mermedonia: Typological Patterns in the Old English Andreas,” Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 77 (1976), 54-55 for further discussion of the “implicit ambiguity” inherent in the Andreas-poet’s frequent use of the words ēlþeod and elpeodig.

785 Andreas lines 676-682a, the Jewish priest claims that the believing Jews “ellþeodiges nu / butan leodrihte larum hyrað,” or “now you obey the teachings of an alien outside of the law.”

786 As Charles Wright has shown, the poet uses the words “igland” and “ealand” in Andreas to associate the Mermedonians with the gentes of Old Testament prophecy, thus emphasizing Mermedonia as a “distant heathen land” and an “unbelieving nation that will eventually be subjugated and converted.” See his “Insulae Gentium: Biblical Influence on Old English Poetic Vocabulary,” in Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske, ed. Arthur Groos, et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 19.
uninhabitable from both the Christian and Mermedonian perspectives. The desert landscape that compels the Mermedonians to cannibalism is merely an index of their spiritual barrenness and perverse obsession with the flesh. The pagan Mermedonians and the Christian apostles are fundamentally alien to each other.

**Siðfætes sæne: Andrew as Reluctant Apostle**

Both apostles are compelled to enter Mermedonia because it is God’s will, but Andrew is initially reluctant to heed God’s command to rescue Matthew from the cannibals. The poet-narrator tells us that Andrew is “instructing the people in the way of life” (*leode lærde on lifes weg*, line 170) in Achaia, when he hears the voice of God telling him to make a journey to the land of the *sylfætan* (cannibals, eaters of their own kind, line 175b). The audience’s first encounter with Andrew in the poem thus shows him dutifully fulfilling his role as an apostle, preaching and teaching his converts to the faith in the land that God assigned to him. It is all the more striking and troublesome, then, that Andrew expresses an unwillingness to perform the next task that God directs him to undertake:

```plaintext
ædre him Andreas agef andswire: "Hu mæg ic, dryhten min, ofer deop gelad
fore gefremman on feorne weg
swa hrædlace, heofona scyppend,
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787 Judith Butler speaks of the uncanny as a “zone of uninhabitability,” which she describes as “that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, ‘inside’ the subject as its own founding repudiation” in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (NY: Routledge, 1993), 3. In the moment of contact between Christians and Mermedonians, each group recognizes in the Other an uncanny relation to itself, a relation which proves intolerable and becomes manifested in the attempts of both groups to simultaneously assimilate and reject each other by various corporeal means and metaphors. On this topic see also Fabienne Michelet, *Creation, Migration and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 163-197.
[At once Andrew gave him an answer: ‘My Lord, how shall I be able to accomplish a journey over the deep sea on a far-off path as quickly, Creator of the heavens, Ruler of glory, as you command me to by your speech? Your angel can accomplish that more easily. Holy from the heavens, the circuit of the oceans is known to him, the salt streams and the path of the swan, the tumult of the eddying surf and the terrible waters, the paths over the broad earth. They are not known to me as friends, those foreign men, nor do I know anything about the thoughts of the people there. The highways over the cold water are unknown to me.’]

Anglo-Saxon accounts extending from the letters and lives of Boniface to *The Fates of the Apostles* represent the triad of journeying, teaching, and martyrdom as fundamental to one’s status as an apostle or an apostolic man. Yet, Andrew’s objection defies this close interrelation. It calls into question his commitment to Christ and to the apostolic life.

The Andrew of the *Praxeis* tradition justifies his unwillingness to go to Mermedonia in seemingly practical terms as a function of his fleshly weakness – he claims that he is physically unable to make the journey quickly enough, and presumptuously suggests to God that perhaps an angel would be a better choice.788

Interestingly, the other Old English version of the *Praxeis* legend, the anonymous Blickling homily on Andrew, amplifies the source’s emphasis on Andrew’s humanity in ways very reminiscent of Cynewulf’s treatment of the apostles in *Ascension*. Concerning the Blickling homilist’s interpretation of the passage under discussion, Scott DeGregorio writes,

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what is remarkable about [Andrew’s] response is less its disregard for God’s omnipotence than its invocation of the apostle’s own weakness. Indeed, Andrew’s admission that he cannot undertake the journey because he is a *flæsclic man* [in the homily] is critical. In this version…Andrew stands before us as a man who is all too aware of his frailty and who must struggle to perform God’s will. He makes mistakes, doubts, begs for forgiveness, and expresses emotions.\footnote{DeGregorio, “Prose Legends,” 455.}

It is thus significant to note that the *Andreas*-poet chooses not to retain this explicit rationale of human weakness as an explanation for Andrew’s reticence. True, the poem’s Andrew does suggest to God that he send an angel in his stead, and states that he doesn’t think he can make it to Mermedonia in time to save Matthew, but he does not overtly appeal to his *flæsclic* nature as an excuse. The poet’s subtle omission is telling. It indicates his own discomfort with the notion of a *flæsclic* saint, a *flæsclic* hero.\footnote{This is a discomfort that, as DeGregorio has shown (457), was also shared by Ælfric in his version of the Andrew-legend. DeGregorio demonstrates convincingly that Ælfric heavily modified his source to portray Andrew as a *pegenlic* man, that is a brave and ‘manful’ one. He argues that “the ideal of being *pegenlic*…amply foregrounds the expectations of discipleship in terms that contemporary Anglo-Saxon audiences would have found congruous – that is, the bravery, obedience and fortitude required of a Christian *pegn*.”}

This aspect of Andrew’s character in the *Praxeis* is clearly a source of anxiety for the poet. He goes to considerable lengths to mitigate the reader’s negative impression of his hero’s less-than-heroic shirking of duties and reticence to help his fellow soldier in Christ. First, the poet’s previous emphasis on the extremely alien nature of the Mermedonians allows him to develop a rationale for Andrew’s hesitation to travel: his fear of what Dabney Bankert explains as “contact with a foreign culture and mentality.” This fear of a foreign mentality, Bankert notes, is “not expressed in either the Latin or Greek versions, both of which include only his practical objection that God’s angel can get there much more quickly than he can.”\footnote{Bankert 75.}

While this fear is certainly an unorthodox one for an apostle to have (it is, after
all, his job to encounter foreign mentalities), it is nonetheless one which would likely appeal to the poet’s Anglo-Saxon audience in a culturally significant way through its evocation of the conventions of poetic elegy. Andrew’s protestation that the Mermedonians are “no familiar friends to me” (ne synt me winas cuðe, line 198b) plays upon the elegiac topos of the exile’s deprivation of the familiar and the familial. In Old English poems such as The Wanderer and The Seafarer, the speaker’s separation from friends and kinsmen occasions his lament. These poems profoundly express the Anglo-Saxon cultural anxiety of separation from one’s people; the exile is repeatedly characterized as wineleas guma (man bereft of friends, Wanderer, line 45b), winemægum bedroren (deprived of friends and kinsmen, Seafarer, line 115b) and freondleasne (friendless, Wanderer, line 28b). By employing this particularly Anglo-Saxon literary register and vocabulary, the Andreas-poet associates Andrew’s journey to Mermedonia with the exile’s tragic departure from or loss of his family and kinsmen, and attempts to justify his reluctance to obey God’s command as reluctance to endure the sorrowful fate of the wineleas man, compelled to wander alone among unknown people in a strange country. The Andreas-poet’s appeal to the elegiac topos of the wineleas man is effective because it elicits the Anglo-Saxon audience’s sympathies for Andrew without compromising the poet’s image of the protagonist as a warrior and þegn in the heroic mode. The language of elegy is the only appropriate expression of the idealized Germanic hero under duress. For this reason, he frames Andrew’s protest in the language of Old English elegiac poetry to direct his readers toward a more sympathetic view of the saint’s initial disobedience to God.792

792 Herbison (198) develops a similar point with respect to the poet’s use of explicitly heroic diction, arguing that “the poet develops a martial theme through the Lord’s speech and through an accumulation of
The *Andreas*-poet’s heightening of the dangers of the sea-journey in Andrew’s aversion to travel extends this association between the apostle and the lamenting *þegn* of the heroic-elegiac tradition much further. In the *Praxeis* version, the sea journey is presented as a matter of course; God simply tells Andrew to go to the sea, where he will find a boat.\(^{793}\) Andrew himself says nothing at all about the sea in his response to God’s request for travel. In the Old English poem, however, the poet takes every available opportunity to elaborate on the perils of the sea-journey. Utilizing the nautical language familiar from several other Old English poems, including *Beowulf*, *Exodus*, *The Battle of Maldon*, the elegies, and especially the nautical passages in Cynewulf’s poetry, the *Andreas*-poet has Andrew complain that he is unable to journey across *deop gelad* (deep waterways, line 190b),\(^{794}\) and that God should send an angel who is better versed than he in the *holma begang* (ambit of the oceans, line 195b),\(^{795}\) *sealte sæstreamas* (the salt sea-streams, line 196a), and *swanrade* (the swan-roads, i.e. the sea, line 196b).\(^{796}\) Just as in *The Seafarer*, the *wæter* (line 197b) is always *cald* (line 202a).\(^{797}\) Frederick Holton’s research into the significance of the sea in Anglo-Saxon poetry shows the concept of the sea-voyage is nearly always depicted as “daring, horrific, and vaguely supernatural [in]

\[\text{epithets directs attention away from Andrew’s initial resistance.}^ {793}\]\[\text{Praxeis, trans. Boenig, 3.}\]

\[\text{The most notable parallel to this phrase is in the conclusion of Cynewulf’s Christ II: Ascension, lines 853b-856a: Is þæt frecne stream / yða ofermæta  þe we her on lacað / geond þas wacan woruld, windge holmas / ofer deop gelad.}\]

\[\text{While the exact phrase} \text{holma begang} \text{is rare in the Old English poetic corpus, the word} \text{holm, meaning ‘sea’ or ‘ocean’ is ubiquitous in Anglo-Saxon heroic and elegiac poetry. A search of the Dictionary of Old English corpus uncovers 14 usages of this word in Beowulf alone, 7 in Genesis and 5 in Andreas, with several others scattered throughout the corpus, but concentrated primarily in the elegies and the works of Cynewulf.}\]

\[\text{The Andreas-poet shares this striking kenning with the Beowulf-poet only; see Beowulf, line 198.}\]

\[\text{Compare lines 8-10, 18, and 31 of The Seafarer, and the generally frigid aspect of the exile’s sea-journey in The Wanderer.}\]
nature." Furthermore, as we have seen in our discussions of representations of sea-journeys in the works of Boniface and his circle and *The Fates of the Apostles*, the theme of the perilous voyage at sea is closely tied to conceptions of suffering and martyrdom, and occupies a special place in the discourse of apostleship originating with the writings of Paul. The *Andreas*-poet’s decision to embellish Andrew’s reluctance to obey God’s command to rescue Matthew into an evasion of a perilous sea-journey activates the negative connotations of ocean travel held in the minds of his Anglo-Saxon audience.

While this elicits the sympathy and understanding of his audience, it does so problematically. A stoic willingness to endure a sea-voyage despite its attendant perils and suffering, its associations with death and darkness, is precisely what makes the speakers and heroes of Old English poetry worthy of admiration. As we have seen in the case of the apostle Paul, his experiences of shipwreck and near drowning are listed prominently in his argument that personal suffering legitimates his apostleship. Ultimately, the *Andreas*-poet’s attempts to direct attention away from Andrew’s unwillingness to obey God’s commands through a sympathetic evocation of elegiac and heroic themes fail, because Andrew’s fear of a sea-journey nonetheless undermines his status as both hero and apostle.

God, at any rate, does not accept Andrew’s excuses:

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Him ða ondswarude ece dryhten:
"Eala, Andreas, þæt ðu a woldest
þæs siðfætes sæne weorþan!
Nis þæt uneaðe eallwealdan gode
to gefremmanne on foldwege,
ðæt sio ceaster hider on þas cneorisse
under svegges gang aseted wyrðe,
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798 Holton 213.
799 See my footnote in chapter 3 above, and my discussion of the amplification of Boniface’s final sea-voyage to Frisia in Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii* in chapter 2 above.
Then the eternal Lord answered him: “Alas, Andrew! that you would ever be reluctant about the journey! It is not difficult for all-powerful God to bring it about on earth, that the city in that country under the expanse of the sky should be set down, the renowned, noble principality, along with its city-dwellers, if the glorious Lord commands it to by his word. You cannot be reluctant to undertake the journey, nor too weak in mind, if you honestly think to hold your covenant, a true token, with your Ruler. Be ready at the proper time: there can be no delaying of this errand. You must go on this journey and give your life into the grasp of more hostile people, where strife, the battle-prowess of warriors, will be offered to you in the war-like tumult of the heathens.”

In response to Andrew’s protests, God is unrelenting in his insistence that Andrew trust in his ability to make all things possible, and be eager to face martyrdom as well as the trials of a journey as a treowe tacen (true token, or sign, 214a) of his apostleship. Here again the Andreas-poet greatly elaborates on his source text. In the Praxeis, God simply tells Andrew to obey him and seek the boat in the morning. In Andreas, the voice of God repeatedly laments Andrew’s lack of enthusiasm for his proposal, exclaiming, Eala, Andreas, þæt ðu a woldest / þæs siðfætes sæne weorþan! (Alas, Andrew, that you would ever be reluctant about the journey, lines 203-204) and Ne meaht ðu þæs siðfætes sæne weorðan, / ne on gewitte to wac (You cannot be reluctant about the journey, nor too weak in mind, lines 211-212a). The Andreas-poet’s choice of phrasing here is significant, because he appears to be borrowing directly from Cynewulf’s The

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Fates of the Apostles and Elene.

As we noted in our treatment of Cynewulf’s use of the expression *Næs...siðes sæne* to describe the eagerness of the apostles James, John, Simon and Thaddeus to seek martyrdom through a journey in *Fates, sæne* (meaning ‘sluggish, slow, reluctant,’ glossing Latin *tardus*) has uniformly negative connotations in Old English. If an Anglo-Saxon writer wanted to say something positive about someone’s character, he would say that he was *not sæne*. 801 Reluctance, hesitancy, slowness to react or obey, all of these connotations of the word *sæne* stand in sharp opposition to the typical, idealized conception of a hero, and in Cynewulf’s works, an apostle. Cynewulf uses the collocation of *sæne* and *sið* in the negative in both *Fates* and *Elene* as a litotes expressing his subjects’ admirable eagerness to depart on difficult journeys.

God’s characterization of Andrew as *siðfætes sæne* appears, therefore, to be a very strong indictment of his behavior. The apostle should be eager to face martyrdom and obey God’s commands, and must not be afraid to *ceol gestigan ond on cald wæter / brecan ofer baðwæg...æt meres ende* (board a ship at the seashore and scud over the ocean path upon the cold water, lines 221b-223a). While the implication of God’s anger is present in the *Praxeis* account, it is never vocalized as disappointment as it is in *Andreas*. 802 To put it colloquially, there is a shift in tone from the source text’s rebuke of “Andrew, don’t do that,” to the poem’s attitude of “What on earth is wrong with you, Andrew?” Considering that most of this speech in *Andreas* is not paralleled in the source

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801 As in *Widsith*, line 67: *Næs þæt sæne cyning* (That was not a reluctant king!). Similarly, the Old English version of the Rule of St. Benedict, 31.61.4 explicitly mentions being *sæne* as an undesirable quality in a cellarer (*cellarius*). The *hordere* (cellarer) should be *na...sæne* (in no way slow or *tardus*).

802 Compare *Andreas* with *Praxeis*, trans. Boenig, 3: “But he [God] said to Andrew: ‘Obey the one who made you, the one able to say the word and that city would be taken away from there with all the people in it; for I command the horns of the winds, and they could blow it away. But after you arise at dawn, go down to the sea with your disciples, and you will find a boat on the beach, and you will enter it with your disciples.’”
text, one wonders whether we hear the exasperated reaction of the poet to his protagonist’s sæne behavior reflected in the repeated exclamations of disappointment voiced by God.

The poet’s narratorial comments on Andrew’s ultimate acceptance of God’s command to rescue Matthew substantiate this interpretation further in their apparent detachment from context. The poet uses martial language to pronounce the apostle’s total determination to follow God’s will, seemingly as if Andrew had never indicated anything to the contrary:

> þa wæs ærende æðelum cempan
> aboden in burgum, ne wæs him bleað hyge,
> ah he wæs anræd ellenweorces,
> heard ond higerof, nalas hildlata,
> gearo, guðe fram, to godes campe. (*Andreas*, lines 230-235)

[the errand, then, was announced to the noble soldier in the city. His heart was not timid, but rather he was resolved upon the courageous deed, bold and valiant, not at all slow in battle, but ready, eager for the fight, for God’s warfare.]

These lines could almost be mistaken for one of Cynewulf’s laudatory epitomes in *The Fates of the Apostles*, so typical is their formulation of the miles Christi motif and their emphasis on the eagerness (*fram*) and readiness (*gearo*) of the apostle to venture abroad. The *Andreas*-poet accumulates heroic diction as a means of countering the unflattering picture of Andrew as a sæne apostle as if through sheer volume.

Especially interesting is his depiction of Andrew as *nalas hildlata* (one not at all slow to fight, line 234b), as this expression inverts God’s repeated statements that Andrew is slow or sluggish in his willingness to undertake his apostolic duties, here conceptualized as *godes campe* (God’s warfare, line 235b). *Hildlata*, like sæne, appears to be a loaded term, though it is recorded only in *Andreas* and *Beowulf*. In *Beowulf*,

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803 Herbison 198-199.
*hildlata* is used to characterize the cowardly retainers who disgracefully abandon their king in his fight with the dragon:

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Næs ða lang to ðon
Þæt ða hildlatan holt ofgefan
Tydre treowlogan tyne ætsomne.
Ða ne dorston ær dareðum laca
On hyra mandryhtnes miclan þearfe,
Ac hy scamiende scyldas bæran… (*Beowulf*, lines 2845b-2850)
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[then it was not too long before the ones reluctant in battle left the woods, ten feeble troth-breakers together. They dared not contend with spears in their lord’s great need, but they bore their shields, ashamed…]

The *Beowulf*-poet’s disturbance at and distaste for the actions of these *hildlatan* could hardly be more apparent. To be *hildlata* is, evidently, to betray one’s lord and one’s self, and such betrayal has dire consequences for a warrior’s reputation.

A similar formulation of this view of sluggishness as betrayal and self-defamation appears in oldest preserved Old English verse proverb, known as “A Proverb from Winfrid’s Time.”804 The proverb appears in an anonymous letter from the eighth century included together with a manuscript collection of Boniface’s correspondence.805 The anonymous letter-writer, a monk, addresses a higher-ranking cleric, encouraging the cleric to persist in carrying out his plans to undertake a journey, most likely a missionary journey.806

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Momento saxonicum uerbum:
Oft dædlata    dome foreldit,
Sigistha gahuem,    suuyltit thi ana.
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806 The letter begins “Audio de te, quod iter vis incipere; ortor, ut non deficeris. Eia fac, quod incipisti” [I hear from you that you wish to start a journey; I admonish that you should not fail. Indeed carry through what you have begun].
[Remember the Saxon proverb: Often a sluggard (daedlata, literally, one slow in performing deeds) delays in his pursuit of glory, in each of [his] victorious undertakings; therefore, he dies alone.]\(^{807}\)

The Saxon proverb, a stern warning to avoid inaction phrased in militaristic terms, uses an ‘x-lata’ (in this case, daedlata)\(^{808}\) construction similar to the hildlata construction used by both the Beowulf- and Andreas-poets. In Bonifatian circles, it would seem, a hesitant attitude toward performing the glorious deeds for the Lord – particularly deeds of the apostolic variety – was likewise looked upon severely.\(^{809}\) As E. G. Stanley puts it, “the proverb provides a terse summary of the Germanic ideal: the coward may live longer, but he will die alone….there is good fellowship in action; we may die but we shall die together.”\(^{810}\) The application of this fundamentally Germanic and martial ideal to situation of an Anglo-Saxon missionary provides a contextual parallel for the Andreas-poet’s interpretation of Andrew’s apostolic work through the rhetoric of the warrior ethos.

The Andreas-poet’s insistence that Andrew is “in no way slow to fight” fits into this Anglo-Saxon perception of the hildlata or daedlata individual as shameful and

\(^{807}\) As Dobbie explains (lxviii), “the orthography of this proverb is continental,” hence its strange appearance and the difficulty of translation. This suggests strongly that the author of this letter, or at least the scribe, was an Anglo-Saxon living on the continent, or someone from the continent who lived in an Anglo-Saxon milieu, but perhaps learned to write in his own native tongue, and is reasoning back to approximate Old English and rendering it in continental orthography. This translation is that offered by Dobbie (177) in his textual notes. On the language of this proverb, see especially E. G. Stanley, “The Oldest English Poetry Now Extant,” in *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), 121-123, and most recently, Alfred Bammesberger, “The Oldest English Proverb in Verse,” *Notes and Queries* 56 (2009): 4-7.

\(^{808}\) Bammesberger (6-7) suggests that ‘daedlata’ be emended to two separate words, ‘dead’ and ‘lata,’ so as to resolve grammatical difficulties in the text. His emendation, however, does not effect the meaning of the proverb, nor does it alter the general pattern of ‘x-lata.’ Bammesberger (7, note 27) cites the use of ‘hildlata’ in Andreas as a parallel construction.

\(^{809}\) In his analysis of the letter in *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 130, note 2, Wilhelm Levison argues that the journey in question is a mission to the continent, both because of the missionary milieu in which the letter was preserved (along with other Bonifatian correspondence), and because of the letter-writer’s later allusion to the parable of the harvest (Matt. 9:37), which, as we have seen, is conventionally used to refer to and describe missionary work among Boniface and his contemporaries.

unworthy.\textsuperscript{811} By claiming that Andrew is not \textit{hildlata or bleað} (timid, line 231b), the poet attempts once again to counter his audience’s (and his own?) negative perceptions of Andrew’s initial unwillingness to undertake the journey and seek martyrdom in Mermedonia.

\textit{Gif ge syndon þegnas: Questioning the Apostleship of Andrew and his Disciples}

Andrew expresses the newfound resolve described by the poet in a rather forthright encounter with a ship’s captain who, the poet tells us, is really Christ disguised as a sailor. Even in the source text, Christ’s clever little trick occasions the reader’s discomfort – a cringing feeling that with every word he speaks to the captain, Andrew digs himself ever deeper into the hole of presumption that he opened with his initial refusal to follow God’s plans. The \textit{Andreas}-poet portrays the situational irony inherent in his source text but in complex and often contradictory ways.\textsuperscript{812} He repeatedly reminds the reader that the ship’s captain is Christ, as if to underscore Andrew’s failure to recognize his own lord. However, he also calls Andrew \textit{wis on gewitte} (wise in mind, line 316a) in the same passage where the apostle most blatantly reveals his presumption by insulting the captain and giving him a lecture on Christ and the nature of his commission to the apostles.\textsuperscript{813} When the ship’s captain asks him how he intends to travel to Mermedonia without money or provisions, Andrew snaps at him indignantly, telling him that he should know that he and his companions are “thanes that have been chosen as warriors” by Christ (\textit{we his þegnas synd / gecoren to cempum}, lines 323b-324a), and as such, are not

\textsuperscript{811} For a discussion of the meaning and use of the term \textit{hildlata} in \textit{Beowulf} and \textit{Andreas}, see Andy Orchard, \textit{A Critical Companion to Beowulf} (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2005), 172ff.
\textsuperscript{812} Wilcox 202.
\textsuperscript{813} Herbison 203.
worthy of the captain’s “presumptuousness” (*oferhygdum*, line 319b) and “sarcastic remark” (*sarcwide*, line 320a).

At this point in Andrew’s speech the poet inserts a lengthy discourse on Christ’s instructions on the apostolic life based on Matthew 10:6-10:

He ðæt sylfa cwæð, 
fäder folca gehwæs, ond us ðeran het 
geond ginne grund gasta streonan: 
'Farað nu geond ealle eorðan sceatas 
emne swa wide swa væter bebugeð, 
oððe stedewangas stræte gelícgað. 
Bodiðæ æfter burgum beorhtne geleafan 
ofe ðerfand ðæt fæðm. Ic eow freóðo healde. 
Ne ðurfan ge on þa fore frætwe lædan, 
gold ne seolfor. Ic eow goda gehwæs 
on eowerne agenne dom est ahwette.' (*Andreas*, lines 329b-339)

[He declared it himself, the Father of every nation, and he commanded us to go throughout all the wide earth to gain souls: ‘Go not throughout all the wide surfaces of the earth, even as far as the water encircles, or the road extends on the plains. Preach the bright belief throughout the cities, across the bosom of the earth. I will keep you in peace. You will not need to bring treasures on the journey, neither gold nor silver. I will provide you a liberal supply of every good thing according to your own judgement.]

What does the inclusion of this passage in Andrew’s conversation with Christ in disguise add to the *Andreas*-poet’s account? In part, Andrew appears to use this speech to verify his apostolic credentials to the ship captain, since he concludes by saying, “Now you can prudently consider what you have heard about our journey yourself” (*Nu ðu seolfa miht sið unserne / gehyran hyge hancol*, lines 340b-341). However, if this is the main purpose, Christ himself does not seem to be too convinced, since he responds to Andrew’s apparently definitive statement of apostolicity with a strongly conditional statement that leaves open the possibility that Andrew may be misrepresenting his status as a *pëgn* of Christ and his commitment to evangelism:
Then the eternal Lord answered him: ‘If you are thanes of him who raised up his majesty above the earth, as you tell me, and if you have observed what the Holy One commanded you, then I will ferry you over the ocean currents with pleasure as you request.’

The use of the conditional conjunction *gif* (if) raises questions as to whether the captain/Christ believes Andrew’s rationale. The poet’s insertion of the half-line *swa ge me secgap* (as you tell me, line 345b) further strengthens the implication of uncertainty. Of course, the poet’s audience knows that when the captain invites Andrew and his disciples to board the ship, it is really Christ affirming the truth of Andrew’s statement that he is a *þegn* of the Lord, since he says he will only ferry him and his men if they are what they claim to be: true apostles. But the question is left open for the character of Andrew himself, and forms the basis of Christ’s testing of Andrew on the boat to Mermedonia.

While in some ways Andrew’s ironic parroting back of Christ’s instructions to the apostles may be seen as an example of his presumption – the student unwittingly attempting to teach his teacher – it can also be viewed as a justification of his status as an apostle, a demonstration that he remembers Christ’s instructions concerning travel, preaching, and poverty. In rebuking the materialism feigned by the ship’s captain, he enacts Christ’s precepts, thereby demonstrating his obedience and justifying his worthiness to claim the title of *þegn*. 
A similar account of Christ’s instructions to the apostles occurs in the *Praxeis* version of the Andrew legend. In the *Praxeis*, the phrasing of this passage follows the biblical version fairly closely. However, the *Andreas*-poet’s paraphrase leaves out several details explicitly mentioned in both the *Praxeis* version and the biblical passage, such as the carrying of a wallet, staff, shoes and two coats. Indeed, the *Andreas*-poet appears to be paraphrasing neither the *Praxeis* nor the biblical text, but rather Cynewulf’s version of a similar speech given by Christ to his apostles in *Ascension*. While we cannot be sure that the *Andreas*-poet had Cynewulf’s poem before him as he composed his work, Orchard’s research into the overlaps and borrowings clearly show that the *Andreas*-poet was familiar with all the works of Cynewulf, and made a conscious stylistic decision to mimic the phrasing of *Ascension* in this particular passage. Significantly, the context of Christ’s speech to the apostles in *Ascension* differs from that of the *Praxeis*, in that whereas the *Praxeis* quotes a passage of general instruction to the apostles from Matthew 10, the *Ascension* version is, logically, an elaboration of Christ’s final words in Matthew

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814 *Praxeis*, trans. Boenig, 4: “Listen, brother; do not think it is out of dishonesty that we do not give you our passage in money, but that we are disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, the good God. He chose us twelve and gave us a certain promise, saying that when we go to preach, we should carry on the road neither a piece of silver nor bread nor a wallet nor sandals nor a staff nor two coats.” Compare with Matthew 10:9-10: “Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses: nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff.”

815 Orchard, “Style and Substance,” 290-291. Compare these lines from *Andreas* with the relevant passage from *Ascension*, given here with Orchard’s bold highlighting of parallel words and phrases, and my highlighting of shared subject matter/similar meanings underlined:

‘Farað nu geond ealne  yrmenne grund.
geond widwegas,  weoreðum cyðað.
bodiað ond bremað  beorhtne geleafan,
ond fulwiað  folc under rodærum.
Hweorfiað to haþnum,  hergas breotað,
fyllað ond feogad,  feondscype dwæscað,
sibbe sawað  on sefan manna
þurh mealha sped.  Ic eow  mid wunige,
forð on frofre,  ond eow fríðe healde
strengðu staþolfæstre  on stowa gehwere.’ (*Ascension*, lines 481-490)

Orchard (291) claims that there is “no such reference” to Christ’s injunction “in any of the putative sources, Latin or Greek,” however, Orchard is incorrect here, since, as I mention above and clarify in the previous footnote, the *Praxeis* version contains a similar passage.
28, known as the Great Commission. It would appear that the Andreas-poet recognized the similarities in subject matter between the account of Christ’s instructions in his Latin source text based on the Praxeis and Cynewulf’s version of Matthew 28 in Ascension, and decided to base his version of the passage on Cynewulf rather than follow the Latin. Here we can see the Anglo-Saxon poet choosing to follow an Old English precedent rather than a Latin one, even though the Latin version better suits the context of the passage. Why does he do this?

By deliberately echoing the diction and phrasing used by Cynewulf to recount Christ’s parting words in Ascension, the Andreas-poet alludes to another Old English poetic account of the apostles struggling with their human weakness and incomprehension of Christ’s true form. As I have discussed in great detail in the previous chapter, Ascension departs from the biblical accounts of the event in order to dramatize the apostles’ humanity. Cynewulf’s account shows this in their confused and sorrowful reaction to Christ’s heavenly ascent, and their failure to understand and obey his final exhortation to rejoice in his physical departure because it will enable him to “abide” with them “henceforth as a comfort” (eow mid wunige, / forð on frofre, Ascension, lines 49b-50a).

Perhaps the similarly confused and disobedient nature of the protagonist in the Andreas-poet’s source text suggested Ascension to him as a model for his own poem. But more likely, the Andreas-poet found in the works of Cynewulf a precedent for expressing apostolic themes and ideas in a traditional Old English poetic idiom. As we have seen, Cynewulf also struggles, as the Andreas-poet does, to resolve the tensions between the biblical view of the apostles as exceptionally devout and admirable, but also necessarily
flawed representatives of humanity, and the later, more Roman view of the apostles as infallible heroes stoically embracing martyrdom. But what Cynewulf more or less resolves, at least in his depictions of the apostles themselves (his depictions of his own apostolic activities are more ambiguous), the Andreas-poet simply leaves in a state of contradiction. In his efforts to transform the reluctant Andrew into a classic example of a brave, confident, heroic apostle, dedicated to his mission and willing to endure torture and death for the faith, he fails to bring these inconsistent, opposing discourses into harmony with one another. The multiplicity of apostolic discourses overwhelms the poet, and leads him to portray Andrew as a soldier of Christ at war with himself.

**Imitatio Christi and Agonistic Sainthood in the (near) Martyrdom of Andrew**

On the journey, the ship’s captain continues to test Andrew’s understanding of his apostolic mission by commanding him to prove his discipleship by comforting his seasick men with stories about Christ’s miracles. However, the sea-captain’s insistent questioning appears to aggravate Andrew at first, and he has to be reminded that, as a preacher of the Word, it is his duty to speak of Christ to anyone who will listen, including his fellow Christians (lines 629-642). Though Andrew eventually fulfils his duty by “praising the teaching of the Holy One in clear-sounding speech the whole day through” (ondlangne dag / herede hleodorcwidum haliges lare, lines 818b-819), the ship captain’s true identity is not revealed to him until he reaches land after falling into a long slumber. Upon awakening, Andrew reveals to his disciples that he believes the ship captain to have been Christ, whereupon Christ appears before them. When the apostle inquires why he was denied knowledge of his presence, Christ answers:

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816 Andreas, lines 629-642.
‘Noðu swa swiðe synne gefremedest swaðu in Achaia ondsæc dydest, ðæt ðu on feorwegas feran ne cuðe ne in þa ceastre becuman mehte, þing gehegan þreora nihta fyristgemearces, swa ic þe feran het ofer wega gewinn. Wast nu þe gearwor þæt ic eðe mæg anra gehwylcne fremman ond fyŗran freonda minra on landa gehwylc, þær me leofost bið.’ (Andreas, lines 926-935)

[‘You never committed a sin as great as when you refused in Achaia – when you [said] that you did not know about traveling the distant paths, nor could you get to that city and accomplish the tasks within the space of three nights, as I commanded you to go amid the tumult of the waves. Now it is more readily known to you that I can easily assist and advance any one of my friends in any land, wherever it should please me.’]

The issue of Andrew’s reticence to face his journey and martyrdom resurfaces in Christ’s rebuke of the apostle’s self-doubt, which, as he explains, is a form of doubting the powers of God himself. The Andreas-poet translates the Praxeis version’s statement that Andrew “did not sin” when he doubted his ability to travel to Mermedonia in three days as “you did not at all sin so much” (Noðu swa swiðe synne gefremedest, line 926).817

Because of this “sin of reluctance,” as Antonina Harbus calls it, Andrew was denied both the knowledge of Christ’s presence in the boat and a heavenly vision shared by his disciples as they slept on the journey.818 His disciples report their vision to their leader as follows:

‘Swylce we gesegon for suna meotudes, æðelum ecne, eowic standan, twelfe getealde, tireadige hælō. Eow þegnodon þrymsittende, halige heahenglas. (Andreas, lines 881b-885a)

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818 Harbus 133.
Likewise we saw you standing before the Son of the Lord, preeminent in noble virtues, twelve of you in number, glorious men. The ones dwelling in majesty served you, the holy archangels.’

Although Andrew himself did not see it, he interprets his followers’ vision of the apostles enthroned in heaven as a sign of his continued status as a servant of Christ. Harbus explains that “the disciples’ revelatory dream is interpreted by Andrew as a sign of their own worthiness, which in turn becomes a sign of Christ’s forgiveness of Andrew’s former unwillingness to undertake the journey.”

It is significant that the vision presents the apostles as a *collegium*. As such, it reminds both Andrew and the poem’s audience of the ultimate destiny of the apostles exalted in heaven. Their closeness to Christ, dedication to preaching his message, and willingness to follow his example even to the point of martyrdom allows them to share in the majesty of the angels and Christ. In this passage as in Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles*, the poet emphasizes the eternal enthronement of the twelve as a reward for the apostles, but suspends his characteristically militaristic diction and imagery in his description of the apostles in heaven, focusing instead on their heightened status.

Although the disciples identify Andrew among the holy group in this vision, here as in *Fates*, the individual figures of the apostles become indistinguishable within the *collegium* of the twelve. They hold their glory equally and in common. The vision thus serves as a powerful statement of the expectations for mankind revealed in Christ’s ministry, Passion, and commission to the apostles. It is a reminder to Andrew of the necessity of subordinating his will to that of God, and conforming his life to the apostolic
injunction as a form of *imitatio Christi*. Only in this way, the vision suggests, will he achieve his place among the twelve in the presence of his Lord.

Andrew is repeatedly told throughout his journey and torture that it is his destiny to reenact among the Mermedonians Christ’s suffering at the hands of the Jews (lines 950-976). However, the purpose of Andrew’s mission changes from rescue to conversion once he reaches the shores of Mermedonia. Whereas previously God only asked him to save Matthew from the cannibals, once he reaches Mermedonia Christ explicitly tells Andrew that his suffering will engender belief in the heathens, saying, *manige syndon in þysse mæran byrig / þara þe ðu gehweorfest to heofonleohte / þurh minne naman* (‘there are many in this notorious city whom you will turn towards the light of heaven by my name,’ lines 974-975a). Christ encourages Andrew to remember his own suffering, and likewise endure torments for his sake and as a means of spreading Christ’s message to this foreign nation.

The description of Andrew’s torture and dismemberment dramatically recalls Christ’s Passion, and his stepping in at the moment just before a Mermedonian sacrifices his own son as food for the people reinforces both the sacrifice of the Son of God and Andrew’s *imitatio Christi*. Strengthened by Christ’s instructions to reveal the power of God to his persecutors through his steadfastness and willingness to endure torments, Andrew supplants the Mermedonian boy as their sacrificial victim, effectively restaging the trauma of the Crucifixion in true, mimetic form. The graphic descriptions of Andrew’s torture create a spectacle of the body and enact the same kinds of dismemberment we see in the earlier references to Mermedonian cannibalism. In a lament to God, Andrew cries out:
‘Sint me leoðu toloden, lic sare gebrocn, banhus blodfag; benne weallæð, seonodæg swatige. Þwæt, ðu sigora weard, dryhten hælend, on dæges tide mid ludeum geomor wurde, ða ðu of gealgan, God lifigendæ, fyrneoreca frea, to fæder cleopodest, cininga wulder, ond cwæde ðus: ‘Ic ðe, fæder engla, frignan wille, lifes leohfruma, hwæt forlætest ðu me?’ Ond ic nu þry dagas þolian sceolde wælgrim witu! Bidde ic, weoroda God, þæt ic gast minne agifan mote, sawla symelgifa, on þines sylfes hand.’ (Andreas, lines 1404-1417)

[‘My limbs are pulled apart, my body painfully broken, my frame stained with blood; my wounds are oozing, the bloody, sinew-deep cuts. Lo, how mournful you became, Victorious One, Lord Savior, when, in the space of a day among the Jews, you, the living God, the Lord of ancient creations, called out to the Father from the cross, the Glory of kings, and said thus: ‘I wish to ask you, Father of angels, Creator of the light and life, why have you forsaken me?’ And for three days now I have had to endure murderously cruel torments! I pray, God of hosts, that I be permitted to give up my spirit into the hand of your own Self, the Provider of the souls’ feast.’]

Andrew explicitly quotes Christ’s own words here, expressing his recognition that he is reenacting Christ’s passion through his own torture, just as Christ bade him when he came ashore in Mermedonia. As Frederick Biggs has noticed, the Andreas-poet actually amplifies his source to make Andrew’s speech even more like that of Christ by adding a second quotation from the crucifixion episode in Luke 23:46: ‘Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum’ (Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit).821

Andrew not only identifies with the Passion by adapting Christ’s final plea to God as his own, but he also claims that his suffering surpasses that of Christ because while he only had to suffer for one day, Andrew has had 3 days of wælgrim witu (murderously cruel torments, line 1415a). This comparison once again revives the tensions in the poem.

between “the vulnerability of the body and the resoluteness of the hero,” or as Dendle would say, an agonistic view of “pain as part of spiritual development” and the anesthetic view of pain as an inappropriate expression of the saint’s humanity. Here, the agonistic view of sanctity appears to prevail.

After questioning whether God has forsaken him, Andrew reminds him of his promise to protect the apostles from just this kind of physical violation:

‘Du ðæt gehete þurh þin halig word,
þa ðu us twelwe trumman ongunne,
þæt us heterofra hild ne gesceode,
ne lices dæl lungre oððeoded
ne synu ne ban on swaðe lagon,
ne loc of heafde to forlore wurde,
gif we þine lare laestan woldon;
nu sint sionwe toslopen, is min swat adropen,
líegað æfter lande loccas todrifene,
fex on foldan.’ (1418-1427a)

[‘You promised through your holy word, when you undertook to strengthen us twelve, that battle of fierce enemies would not scathe us, nor would any part of the body be entirely separated, nor sinew, nor bone be left lying in the track, nor lock of hair from the head be lost, if we should follow your teaching. Now my sinews are torn apart, my blood has been shed, my locks lie scattered all across the land, hair on the ground.’]

He is on the brink of death when he utters his plea, his body rent like Christ’s on the Cross. The dislocation of Andrew’s body parts seems to be the most horrific part of this torture, because it implies the vulnerability of the body, and by analogy, the vulnerability of the Christian body of the Church to invasion, dispersion, and destruction. The fact that

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822 Herbison 211.
823 Dendle 44.
824 Here Andrew is referring to Christ’s promise to the apostles in Matt. 10:28-31; however, in the poem itself Christ does inform Andrew that he would be tortured and dismembered but not permitted to die when he tells Andrew in lines 952b-959a, ‘Is þe guð weotod, / hearðum heorouswengum sceal þin hra ðæled / wundum weordan, wættre geliccost / faran flode blod. Hie þin feorh ne magon / deaðe gedælan, þeh ðu drype dölie, / synnigra slege. ðu þet sar aber.’ [‘A struggle is ordained for you; your body is to be dealt hard sword-strokes and wounds, and your blood is to course in a stream just like water. They will not be able to deal your life the death-blow, even though you will suffer a buffeting and a beating from those sinners. Bear with the pain.’ (Bradley 135)]
Andrew refers to the dismemberment of a singular ‘body’ (‘lices dæl’ = dismemberment of a body), not multiple ‘bodies,’ when he refers to Christ’s promise to all twelve of the apostles shows that he is speaking both literally about the body parts of each individual, as well as figuratively about each apostle as part of a larger ‘body’ which is unified by their shared faith and mission. The Christian audience’s sympathetic identification with Andrew’s (and therefore Christ’s) torture and dismemberment creates a crisis which must be resolved to give meaning to the mutilation, either through martyrdom or through bodily reconstitution.

The poet’s extremely graphic depiction of Andrew’s martyrdom and its emphasis on his weakness and vulnerability surpassing that of Christ’s human body is made even more remarkable by the fact that, while the language of martyrdom is used throughout this scene, Andrew does not die in the midst of these drawn-out torments. In fact, in the Andrew legend, we seem to have a saint who undergoes a *double* martyrdom: a near-death experience in Mermedonia, followed by his crucifixion and true martyrdom in Achaia. In Mermedonia, God subsequently heals Andrew’s wounds. The description of the healing reconstitutes the dismembered parts of Andrew’s body in a way that recalls both Christ’s resurrection and the image of Christ’s body as universal, unifying Church:

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Aras þa mægene rof;  sægde meotude þanc,
hal of hæfte  heardra wita.
Næs him gewemmed wlite,  ne wloh of hrægle
lungre alysed,  ne loc of heafde,
ne ban gebrocen,  ne blodig wund
lice gelenge,  ne laðes dæl
þurh dolgslege  dreore bestemde,
ac wæs eft swa ær  þurh þa æðelan miht
lof lædende,  ond on his lice trum. (1469-1477)
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825 As we have mentioned above, the *Andreas*-poet does allude to the story of Andrew’s martyrdom in Achaia; we will treat these allusions in the sections which follow below.
[He arose valiant in strength; he said thanks to the Creator, healed from the captivity of hard torments. He was not blemished in appearance, nor was the hem of his garment rashly torn. Neither a lock from his head, nor a bone, was broken; nor was there a bloody wound to be seen on his body, nor any part of the injury, gore-stained, that he suffered through a jagged wound, but he was afterwards just as before through that noble power, giving praise and whole in his body.]

Each part of his mangled body is replaced, and we are told that not only is his body restored to its prior glory, but his spirit as well. Andrew’s risen and healed body undoes the work of the Mermedonians. His healing resolves the crisis of faith he gives voice to in his plea to God. But it also implies that by allowing the dismemberment and torture to go as far as it had, Christ had revealed the human weakness of his servant. Andrew’s physical reconstitution asserts the separateness of the body of the Christian from the bodies of the heathen cannibals or their victims. Andrew’s body refuses assimilation into the physical or communal body of the Mermedonians. This resistance enables Andrew to enact his mission: he converts the Mermedonians to Christianity through a forced baptism, leading them to redemption through a symbolic death and rebirth.

The success of the apostle’s mission is foreshadowed in the midst of Andrew’s torture, when God symbolically demonstrates the productive potential of Andrew’s suffering by transforming his bloody tracks into flowery groves of fruit-bearing trees. Through his suffering, Andrew produces the sustenance lacking in the barren wasteland that previously supported, or rather, failed to support, the Mermedonians. Instead of literally feeding on the bodies of foreign men, the Mermedonians will be sustained by the

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826 Andreas 1441-1449: ‘Geseoh nu seolfes swæðe, swa þin swat aget / purh bangebrec blodige stige, / lices kelan; no þe ladæs ma / purh daroða gedrep gedon motan, / þa þe heardra maest hearma gefremedan.’ / Þa on last beseah leoflic cempa / æfter wordcwidum wuldercyninges; / geseh he geblowene bearwas standan / bledum gehrodene, swa he ær his blod aget. [‘Now, look upon your track, where your blood was shed in a bloody path through the breaking of bones and the bruising of your body; they may no do you further harm in any way through the stroke of spears, those who have done you most grievous harm.’ Then the dear soldier looked back at the track according to the words of the King of glory; he saw flowering groves standing covered with blossoms, where he had earlier shed his blood.]
spiritual food of Christ’s sacrifice as it is reenacted in the body of his martyr, Andrew. The transformation of Andrew’s blood and torment into fruitful plants also recalls the ubiquitous apostolic metaphor of mission as harvest, and points toward the fulfillment of Christ’s promise to Andrew that the flood-like coursing of his blood on the ground would engender a new crop of Christians in the barren soils of Mermedonia.  

The Transformation of Andrew’s Blood and the Conversion of the Mermedonians

Once God heals Andrew’s body and spirit, the apostle begins to enact his mission of conversion by force, calling upon a marble edifice to issue a baptismal flood as a demonstration of God’s power to the unbelieving Mermedonians. The image of the flood is emblematic of the Christian church’s incorporation of all peoples on two levels. First, it literally engulfs them, swallowing their bodies. Second, the flood is described in terms of drinking, which suggests that as the flood swallows the Mermedonians, the Mermedonians swallow the flood:

Stream ut aweoll,

fleow ofer foldan;  famige walcan
mid ærðæge eorðan þehton,
myclade mereflod. Meoduscercwen wearð
Æfter symbeldæge;  slæpe tobrugdon
searuhæbbende.  Sund grunde onfeng,
deope gedrefed;  duguð wearð aftarhted
þurh þæs flodes fær.  Fæge swultan,
geonge on geofone guðræs fornæm
þurh sealtes swelg;  þæt wæs sorgþyrþen,
biter beorpæu.  Byrlas ne gældon,
onbehtþegnas;  þær wæs ælcum genog

Andreas, lines 952b-954a, 973-974: scel þin hra dæled / wundum weordan,  wættre geliccost / faran flode blod…. Manige syndon  in þysse mæran byrig / þara þe ðu gehweorfest  to heofonleohete.


In Blickling Homily 19 as well as the Latin and Greek versions of the legend, the acidic flood waters are actually flesh-eating. See Walsh 152.
[A stream welled out, flowing over the ground; at dawn, foamy waves engulfed the earth, the sea-flood increased. After the day of feasting there came the sharing of mead; the armed men shook off sleep. A sea, disturbed in its depths, swallowed up the land; the people were terrified at the sudden onrush of the flood. Doomed, they died. The young men were taken in the violent attack of the sea through the swallowing of the salt-water; that was a brewing of sorrow, a bitter beer-drinking: the cup-bearers and serving men did not delay, and from the very beginning of dawn there was plenty of drink ready for everyone.]

This passage picks up on an important motif throughout the poem that compares the flowing of blood from the wounds of both Andrew and Christ to a flood or the flowing of water. In this way the flood water Andrew unleashes on the Mermedonians becomes synonymous with the blood of both Andrew’s and especially Christ’s suffering. The swallowing of this water by the Mermedonians therefore takes on explicitly Eucharistic implications, recalling what Price refers to as “the elegant symmetry of the incorporation of Christ’s body into a human and that of the human into the body of Christ.” Thus the flood that converts the Mermedonians functions simultaneously as a baptism and a kind of Eucharistic experience – they take in water and are taken in by it. The cleansing waters swallow them, and as their old selves die, their new selves, reborn and purged of

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830 One need only read through the passages cited above for evidence of this repeated motif; however, it is noteworthy that when Christ tells Andrew that he will suffer torments among the Mermedonians he explicitly states that for Andrew “the blood will flow in a stream, most like water” just as “one of the warriors let out blood from my side, gore to the ground” in lines 953b-954a and 967b-969a.

831 Price 18.

832 The association of imbibing of water in the baptismal flood with the drinking the blood of Christ in the Eucharist is evident in two Irish analogues to the Andreas legend discussed by Earl, which associate the cannibals with the Jews: “In both [analogues], the victims are a city full of Jews who scoff at the Eucharist and stab the Host, unwittingly re-enacting the crucifixion: ‘Never was body without blood in it’ say the Jews; to test it, the pure Body is wounded in the city where He received a poor welcome. From God’s Body when wounded came torrents of bright blood, like the strong waters of the Deluge; this is what all the pious tales relate. Jesus’ Body gradually filled the city with His blood; the Jews are drowned in their dwellings by the Blood of the Just One…God rises up to save the good Christian – wondrous deliverance!,” “Corpus Christi” quoted in Earl 78.
paganism and unbelief, are immersed in the blood and body of Christ.\textsuperscript{833} The Mermedonians emerge spiritually refreshed by the ready “drink” of His sacrifice.

This miraculous act of incorporation metaphorically represents Andrew’s apostolic work baptizing the \textit{gentes} in the Christian faith and administering the sacrament of the Eucharist to the newly converted. However, as Hermann makes clear, the violence in this episode compromises any attempts to rationalize it as benignly emblematic of pastoral care.\textsuperscript{834} In the logic of the poem, the apostle’s production of Christian believers necessitates the absolute destruction of the culture and substance of the Mermedonian society. The poem concludes with scenes of resurrection, baptism, church building and consecration - acts that provide the basis of Christian community and communion.

Andrew effects the conversion of the Mermedonians through this flood, resulting in the consecration of their land through the symbolic act of erecting a church on the site where the flood sprang up. Andrew recalls many (but, significantly, not all) of the Mermedonians who had perished in the flood from the depths of the earth, healing their bodies and restoring them to life as men reborn in Christ. The flood purges the land of all structures and traces of the pagan culture of the Mermedonians, wiping out those individuals who most strongly opposed Andrew’s mission of conversion. In the aftermath of this destruction, Andrew’s erection of a church, a concrete manifestation of Christ in the world, serves as a final metaphor for the incorporation of the Church’s new members into the body of Christian believers.\textsuperscript{835}

\textsuperscript{833} Walsh, “Baptism,” 153, reminds us that while baptism constitutes “a spiritual rather than a physical regeneration, the image of physical birth is sometimes used to describe it…the Gregorian sacramentary, for example, expresses the idea under the image of the font as a womb.”

\textsuperscript{834} Hermann, “Boniface and Dokkum,” 20-21.

\textsuperscript{835} \textit{Andreas}, lines 1643-1646: \textit{þa wæs mid þy folce fulwiht hæfen, æðele mid eorlum, ond æ godes / riht aræred, rad on lande / mid pam ceasterwarum, cirice gehalgod.} [So among that nation, among those men, the glorious sacrament of baptism was instituted, and God’s just law and his
Andrew’s establishment of the Church in Mermedonia initiates the participation of these peoples in the apostolic succession. The Andreas-poet emphasizes this relation when he discusses how Andrew chooses his own episcopal successor:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{þær se ar godes} & \quad \text{anne gesette}, \\
\text{wisfæstne wer,} & \quad \text{wordes gleawne}, \\
\text{in þære beorhtan byrig} & \quad \text{biscœp þam leodum,} \\
\text{ond gehalgode} & \quad \text{fore þam heremægene} \\
\text{þurh apostolhad,} & \quad \text{Platan nemned,} \\
\text{þeodum on þearfe,} & \quad \text{ond þriste bebead} \\
\text{þæt hie his lare} & \quad \text{læston georne,} \\
\text{feorhraed fremedon.} & \quad (\text{Andreas, lines 1647-1654})
\end{align*}
\]

[There the messenger of God ordained a certain one, a man established in wisdom and wise in words, to serve as a bishop to the people in that bright city, and he consecrated the man, called Plato, through his apostleship before the congregation for the people’s need, and earnestly bade them to follow his teaching eagerly for the benefit of their souls.]

The Andreas-poet’s use of apostolhad, meaning ‘apostleship’ (as opposed to Bradley’s translation of ‘in an apostolic manner’), demonstrates Andrew’s transference of his status as an apostle to the newly consecrated Plato. The word apostolhad is only attested twice: in Andreas and in Cynewulf’s Fates of the Apostles. Here again the Andreas-poet appears to be drawing on the vocabulary used by Cynewulf to construct and convey the idea of apostleship to his Anglo-Saxon audience.

It would seem that by this point in the poem, Andrew is no longer an unwilling servant of God and is thoroughly fulfilling his apostolic duties. Indeed, some critics of the poem have interpreted these concluding sections as representing Andrew as a “perfected vehicle for the Lord’s will, confident and able to perform miracles,” and showing “no doubts.” However, the poem’s account of Andrew’s attempted abandonment of his

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836 Dendle 41.
837 Harbus 139.
newly christened congregation strongly counters these readings. As the poem makes clear, Andrew’s purposes in consecrating Plato as *bisceop þam leodum* (bishop to the people, line 1649b) were not entirely disinterested. The poet reports that immediately after appointing his successor, Andrew

> Sægde his fusne hige,
> þæt he þa goldburg ofgifan wolde,
> secga seledream ond sincgestreon,
> beorht beagselu, ond him brimþisan
> æt sæs farðe secan wolde. (*Andreas*, 1654b-1658)

[He said that his mind was eager to go, that he wanted to quit the gold-city, the hall-joy of the people and the giving of treasures, the bright ring-giving, and that he would seek out a ship on the currents of the sea.]

In his discussion of the same passage in the Blickling homily version of the Andrew and Mathias legend, Scott DeGregorio comments that this is a “striking scene, one that hardly presents an example of edifying apostolic behavior, as Andrew appears entirely willing to forsake the flock that has been put under his charge.” But the Andrew of the poem is not only willing to abandon his flock, he is eager (*fus*, line 1654b) to do so. The poet’s elaboration on the source passage’s discussion of Andrew’s plan to leave the Mermedonians also oddly claims that Andrew wishes to leave behind the trappings and rituals of noble and heroic society (*seledreamas, beagselu, sincgestreon*, et cetera).

However, this seems unlikely, since everything but the new church has been demolished by the flood, and all the focus in the poem has been on activities associated with conversion and the institution of Christian culture and society in Mermedonia. The poet is more likely playing with the type scenes of departure common in Old English heroic poetry rather than literally claiming that Andrew is fleeing actual festivities and exchanges of treasure taking place in Christianized Mermedonia.

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The true rationale for Andrew’s decision to depart from his converts is alluded to later in the poem, when we learn that Andrew

\[ \text{wolde on brimplisan} \]
\[ \text{Achaie \quad odræ siðe} \]
\[ \text{sylfa gesecan, \quad þær he sawulgedal,} \]
\[ \text{beaducwealm gebad. } (\text{Andreas, lines 1699b-1702a}) \]

[wanted to visit Achaia one more time by ship, where he expected the parting of his soul and death in the hostility of battle.]

Now it would seem that Andrew is taking Christ’s insistence on his martyrdom a little too seriously. His sudden eagerness to seek *beaducwealm* in Achaia nearly leads him to neglect his pastoral duties and compromise the belief and religious and spiritual instruction of his converts in Mermedonia. Their weeping and lamentation at the loss of their apostle prompts God to rebuke Andrew for his failure to observe his duties yet again. He says,

\[ \text{‘Is him fus hyge} \]
\[ \text{gað geomriende, \quad geohdo mænað} \]
\[ \text{weras wif samod. \quad Hira wop becom,} \]
\[ \text{murnende mod} \]
\[ \text{fore [me] sneowan.} \]
\[ \text{Ne scealt ðu þæt eowde \quad anforlætan} \]
\[ \text{on swa niowan gefean, \quad ah him naman minne} \]
\[ \text{on ferðlocan \quad fæste getimbre.} \]
\[ \text{Wuna in þære winbyrig, \quad wigendra hleo,} \]
\[ \text{salu sinchroden, \quad seofon nihta fyrst.} \]
\[ \text{Syððan ðu mid mildse \quad minre ferest.’ } (\text{Andreas, lines 1664b-1674})^{839} \]

[‘Their heart is mournful; they go about grieving, lamenting their sorrow, men and women together. Their weeping, their mourning mood, has come hastening before me. You must not abandon that flock in such a new state of happiness, but rather build my name securely in their hearts. Remain in that joyful city, protector of warriors, in the halls bedecked with treasures, for the space of seven nights. After that you will travel with my grace.’]

Previously, God had to command Andrew to leave behind his converts in Achaia and

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839 Brooks (117) notes that some words and about two half-lines are missing here, but that the omissions appear to be fairly minor.
seek martyrdom in Mermedonia. Now, the objectives are reversed. Andrew’s zeal for martyrdom abroad must be tempered by the necessity of strengthening and educating his new converts in Mermedonia. God’s intercession with Andrew on behalf of the mourning folk reminds his hero that the apostle must fulfil the roles of both pastor and martyr to be worthy of sharing his reward with the twelve in heaven.

Andrew does return to the Mermedonians, to their great joy, and once again exercises the duties of an apostle, not only confirming belief among the people, but also eradicating any further vestiges of heathendom in their land. The poem concludes with an emotional account of the departure of Andrew from the Mermedonians after the appointed term of seven days to seek his martyrdom in Achaia. The apostle’s new converts follow him to the seashore, weeping and mourning the loss of their beloved teacher, line 1707). In his description of the mourning Mermedonians, the Andreas-poet again draws on conventional poetic vocabulary for describing the grief of þegnas losing their lord, familiar from Cynewulf’s Ascension: þær manegum wæs / hat æt heortan hyge weallende (in many there emotion was surging hot about their heart, Andreas, lines 1708b-1709). In using this expression, the Andreas-poet signals the success of Andrew’s imitatio Christi, and his rendering of the Mermedonians into new servants of Christ through their devotion to his messenger, the apostle. The final lines of the poem, a chorus declared by the Mermedonians as they see Andrew off, punctuate this transformation of the hero and his people. They have completely conformed their will to

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840 Andreas, lines 1680-1688: Lærde þa þa leode on geleafan weg, / trymede torhtlice, tireadigra wenede to wuldre weorod unmate, / to þam halgan ham heofona rices, / þær fæder ond sunu ond frofre gast / in þrinnesse þrymme wealdeð / in woruld worulda wuldorgestealda. / Swylce se halga herigeas preade, / deofulgild todraf ond gedwolan fyld. [Then he instructed the people in the way of belief, and splendidly confirmed them; he guided a countless host of renowned ones toward glory, to the holy home of the heavenly kingdom, where the Father and the Son and the comforting Spirit reign in the majesty of the Trinity over the celestial dwellings forever and ever. Likewise the saint attacked heathen temples, drove away devilish idols, and overthrew heresy.]
that of God and now their desire to perpetuate his commission and expand the faith to all nations \textit{ofer middangeard} (throughout the world):

\begin{quote}
   ‘An is ece god eallra gesceafta!
   Is his miht ond his æht ofer middangeard
   breme gebledsd, ond his.blæd ofer eall
   in heofonþrymme halgum scineð,
   wlitige on wuldrre to widan ealdre,
   ece mid englum. þæt is æðele cyning!’ (\textit{Andreas}, lines 1717-1722)
\end{quote}

[‘He is one, the everlasting God of all creation. His might and power are famously blessed throughout the world, and his glory shines over all in heavenly majesty, raidiantly in glory, forever and ever eternally among the angels. That is a noble King!’]

With these words, the poet vindicates the saint from the charge of neglecting his neophytes by demonstrating the fullness of the Mermedonians’ conversion as the fruits of his pastoral labors. Their ability to praise God on their own allows Andrew to seek his martyrdom among the pagans in Achaia.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Between his accounts of Andrew’s near-martyrdom and the final episodes leading to the conversion of the Mermedonians, the \textit{Andreas}-poet interrupts his narration of the poem’s content to muse on his function as a poet and his struggle to recount the life of Andrew. This “self-imposed intermezzo,” as John Miles Foley calls it, comes as something of a surprise at this point in the poem.\footnote{John Miles Foley, “The Poet’s Self- Interruption in \textit{Andreas},” in \textit{Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages}, ed. M. J. Toswell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 42.} With the exception of the poet’s occasional usage of traditional formulas such as \textit{Hwæt, we gefrunon on fyrdagum} (Listen! We have learned by asking about what happened in days gone by, line 1), or \textit{mine gefrege} (as I have learned by asking, line 1626b), the poet has not really called
attention to his role as the shaper of the narrative prior to this passage. The Andreas-poet’s extended discussion of the difficulty of rendering Andrew’s story in verse is something completely different from these types of brief, conventional statements of the poet’s role as mediator of traditional knowledge.

The Andreas-poet’s metapoetic interruption, like Cynewulf’s epilogues, serves as a meditation on the nature of the poet’s task and skill, a consideration of the relationship between poetry and preaching.

Hwæt, ic hwile nu haliges lare,
leóðgiddinga, lof ðæs ðe worhte,
wordum wemde, wyrd undyrme
ofær min gemet. Mycel is to secganne,
langsum leornung, ʒæt he in life adreag,
eall æfter orde. ʒæt scell æglæwra
mann on moldan ʒonne ic me tælige
findan on ferðe, ʒæt fram fruman cunne
eall þa earfeðo þe he mid elne adreah,
grimra guða. Hwæðre git sceolon
lytlum sticcum leóðworda dæl
furður reccan. ʒæt is fyrnsægen,
hu he weorna feala wita gedolode,
heardra hilda, in þære hæðenan byrig. (Andreas, lines 1478-1492)

[Listen! For a while now I have been recounting in poetic songs the teaching of the saint, the praise of what he accomplished, a well-known event, beyond my ability. It is a great task, a long-lasting study, to tell all that he performed in his life, everything from the beginning. It would take a man on earth wiser in the scriptures than I reckon myself to be to find it in his intellect all the hardship he endured with courage from the start, the grim battles. But nevertheless we must recount a further portion of poetry in short episodes. It is an ancient tale, how he suffered very many torments and difficult battles in that heathen city.]

This passage is remarkable for the way in which it makes plain the difficulties the Andreas-poet faces in translating the story of Andrew into the new medium of Old English verse, and his own anxieties about his performance of the task. The poet speaks frankly about the intellectual and practical challenges he encounters as he seeks to do
justice to Andrew’s adventures and the conversion of the Mermedonians in poetry. Not only is it time-consuming (langsum leornung, line 1482a) and difficult in general (ofer min gemet, line 1481a), but he feels that he lacks the knowledge of the story itself and the ancient traditions of which it is a part (fyrnsægen, line 1489b), as well as the skill to adequately “proclaim it in words of poetry” (leoðgiddinga.../...wordum wemde, lines 1479a, 1480a). Foley has argued that although the Andreas-poet expresses this discussion of his poetic undertaking in a “very traditional idiom,” his “exiting of the story-line for a moment to detail his own shortcomings as an interpreter of the tale in Old English” constitutes a “unique genre.”

Insofar as it is rare to see an Anglo-Saxon writer exercise this kind of humility topos with respect to the actual process of composing Old English poetry, Foley is correct. However, we have seen this kind of metapoetic interruption before in our discussions of Cynewulf’s apostolic poetics. In Cynewulf’s epilogues, the emphasis was rather on the poet’s personal and spiritual shortcomings rather than his human flaws. In these passages, he expresses his hope that his poetic excellence and commitment to spreading the word of God would help compensate for these shortcomings. Although Cynewulf’s epilogues differ in this way from the Andreas-poet’s statement of poetic and intellectual insecurity, they nonetheless provide a strong precedent for this kind of self-conscious interruption of a poem’s narrative, this kind of reflection on a Christian poet’s reason for writing. If we accept, as I do, Orchard’s arguments about the influence of Cynewulf’s writing style and verbal technique on the Andreas-poet, and the Andreas-poet’s intimate familiarity with the themes and interests of Cynewulf’s works, might we

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842 Foley 55: “of the twenty-eight half-lines that the passage comprises, only 1 (1479b) is unparalleled in the rest of the poetic corpus.”
not extend this further? Is the *Andreas*-poet’s metapoetic interruption *responding* to the precedent set by Cynewulf?

As I have discussed in chapters 3 and 4 above, Cynewulf’s epilogues present an image of a man who seeks salvation through the exercise of his poetic gifts, which he interprets (following patristic traditions) as being a form of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles and their followers at the Pentecost miracle. In his penitential confessions and his pleas for the prayers and aid of his readers and saintly protagonists in heaven, Cynewulf seems to be extremely uncertain and self-deprecating about everything—everything, that is, except his poetic abilities. Cynewulf’s dual identity as a sinner and poet/preacher, with the second element working to compensate for the first, is remarkably consistent across the corpus of his four surviving poems. This authorial identity, this means of representation, could not have failed to make an impression on the *Andreas*-poet, whom Orchard has shown to be a devoted student of Cynewulf’s poetry. But what if the *Andreas*-poet did not share Cynewulf’s sense of confidence in his own poetic skill? What if he struggled?

As our reading of *Andreas* so far confirms, the poet certainly did struggle. The work’s inconsistencies and contradictions, not only between the poet’s style and his subject matter, but also as figured within the character of Andrew himself,\(^\text{843}\) are difficult to ignore. On several occasions it is plain that the poet gets so caught up in his grand heroic rhetoric and endless multiplication of epithets and martial descriptions that he loses track of the narrative, or the point of a particular episode.\(^\text{844}\) It is fascinating that it is in precisely this rather fraught work that we hear the voice of the poet exclaiming his

\(^{843}\) Dendle 39-51; Harbus 125-140.

\(^{844}\) Herbison 181-211.
own artistic inadequacies. Someone else (Cynewulf?), he tells us, could do this much better: 

\[ \text{þæt scell æglæwra} \quad \text{mann on moldan} \quad \text{þonne ic me tælige} \quad \text{findan on ferðe}, \quad \text{þæt fram fruman cunne} \quad \text{eall þa earfeðo} \quad \text{pe he mid elne adreah,} \quad \text{grimra guða} \]

(It would take a man earth wiser in the Law (i.e., the Scriptures) than I reckon myself to be to find it in his intellect all the hardship he endured with courage from the start, the grim battles; lines 1483b-1487a). Foley has interpreted the Andreas-poet’s use of the word æglæwra (meaning, ‘a man more learned in the Scriptures,’ lit. ‘a man wiser in the law’) as indicating the poet’s frustration with the difficulty of coordinating the content of his source (the agonistic account of Andrew’s trials) to the conventions of traditional Old English poetics. According to Foley, the poet believes that “a person ‘wiser in the law’...could more easily adapt his fluency to this particular compositional task...could match register and source text with more success or authority.”

Is it possible that what we are seeing here in the Andreas-poet’s metacritical interruption is an Anglo-Saxon version of Harold Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence?

How does the Andreas-poet resolve this tension, this sense of anxiety?

Importantly, he doesn’t. He carries on in spite of it, because he must: 

\[ \text{Hwædre git sceolon} \quad \text{lytlum sticcum} \quad \text{leoðworda dæl} \quad \text{furður reccan} \]

(nevertheless, we must narrate a certain amount of poetry further in short episodes, lines 1487b-1489a). Throughout this study we have seen Christian writers, from Paul to Boniface to Cynewulf, express this same attitude of compulsion to preach the power of Christ and the reflection of that power through stories of the lives and deaths of his saints, in spite of the author’s own sense of personal unworthiness. Indeed, the Andreas-poet’s phrasing of these lines beginning with the adverb hwædre (meaning ‘however, yet, still, nevertheless’) is similar.

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845 Foley 56-57.
in tone to Cynewulf’s explanation of the apostle’s reception of the gifts of the holy spirit
despite their struggles with their own inherently human weakness after the Ascension of
Christ. The impetus to preach to the glory of God becomes an inescapable necessity for
each Christian who wishes to fulfill the obligation laid upon him by Christ’s apostolic
injunction. As I have shown, within Anglo-Saxon circles, this obligation extends beyond
the immediate circle of the twelve apostles to every man, and especially to those who
possess the gifts of poetry or eloquent speech. In this respect, the poet’s own sense of
inadequacy for the task becomes irrelevant. His gift – demonstrated over the course of the
previous 1477 lines of the Andreas poem he has already composed – is a sign that he
must (sculon, line 1487b) continue to recount the deeds of the apostle Andrew for the
sake of God and the edification of others.

In this respect, the Andreas-poet begins to identify with the protagonist of his
work. Both he and Andrew have been called to preach, and both demonstrate a lack of
faith in their own abilities to carry out the task laid upon them by God. Where Andrew
tells God to send an angel to Mermedonia instead, the Andreas-poet protests that his
audience should really get someone smarter to tell the story of Andrew for them in verse.
And yet, both are compelled to fulfill their missions despite their own sense, and their
repeated demonstrations, of their human inadequacies and weaknesses, their failure to
understand their roles in the missionary tasks at hand. This is why it is so important to
recognize that Andrew continues to make mistakes in his mission right up until the end of
the poem, when he tries to abandon his converts in Mermedonia.846

846 My interpretation counters that expressed by Antonina Harbus in her essay “A Mind for Hagiography:
The Psychology of Resolution in Andreas.” Harbus (138, 140) argues that “Andrew’s later activities tend to
demonstrate his newfound resolution and single-minded obedience to God. His intention to travel to Achaia
provides a contrast to his nervous preparations for his previous sea-journey to Mermedonia….The poem’s
Andrew is not the “perfected vessel for the Lord’s will,” as Dendle claims, at the end of the poem, simply because he, and the other apostles, are only human. The triumph of the Christian God is expressed in his ability to work through his human apostles, in spite of their weaknesses: the healing of Andrew (just prior to the poet’s interruption) which Dendle points to as the moment when Andrew becomes “perfected” is manifestly an act of God, not Andrew himself. The vessel does not need to be perfect – he simply needs to be, to do what he must. This is the contradiction which the Andreas-poet and his protagonist, the apostle Andrew, grapple with throughout the poem. This tension reveals itself in the conflicted visions of sainthood and the complex of discrepancies between the work’s heroic rhetoric and less-than-heroic narrative content. That the poet realizes the problematic nature of this contradiction and implicates himself in it through his metacritical interruption shows his identification with Andrew, and his personal negotiation of the apostolic poetics and identity voiced in the poems of his fellow Anglo-Saxon, Cynewulf.
CONCLUSION

Apostolic discourse served as an influential model of divinely inspired authorship and poetics for Anglo-Saxon religious writers, both in the Latin and Old English traditions. Anglo-Saxons authors interpreted the relationship between the creation of religious literature and the apostolic work of preaching in varying ways. Yet, writers from the earliest periods, beginning with Aldhelm, Bede, and Boniface and his circle in Anglo-Latin, and extending to Cynewulf and the Andreas-poet in the vernacular, all understood their literary abilities as gifts from God that aligned them with the apostles of Christ and necessitated their use of eloquence in the service of the Church.

The continuous fascination of Anglo-Saxon authors of the early and later periods with the apostles as sources of personal and poetic inspiration comprises a distinctive feature of the Anglo-Saxon church and the textual cultures and communities it fostered. The works of Boniface and his circle reveal a discourse of apostleship that originates with and revolves around the apostle Paul in particular. It is clear that Boniface, his followers, and his correspondents saw him as a new Paul, and interpreted his life and actions in a Pauline context that they communicated through allusions, quotations and references to Paul’s writings. This form of apostolic discourse grows out of the exceptional Anglo-Saxon devotion to Peter and Paul that functioned as part of their strong identification with all things Roman, and their anxiousness to prove their inclusion in the apostolic succession and the community of the saints. In the relative absence of native English saints, the apostles became the focus of cultic devotion and emulation among the Anglo-Saxons in the sixth through eighth centuries. Furthermore, Boniface’s desire to emulate Paul enabled him to observe a special and powerful relationship with respect to the
representative of St. Peter on earth. In adopting Pauline rhetoric in his letters to the pope and other religious in Anglo-Saxon England and abroad, Boniface implicitly establishes himself as an authoritative, apostolic figure.

Finally, the apostles had as much meaning for Boniface and other Anglo-Saxon missionaries in practical terms as they did in symbolic terms. Paul’s letters form the most explicit and authoritative guides to apostolic practice and experience, and as such were invaluable sources of information and inspiration for Anglo-Saxon missionaries as they endeavored to convert pagan and imperfectly Christianized peoples in England and on the continent. For them, the apostolic life was a reality. While Luke’s accounts of the apostles in Acts provided a compelling narrative of apostolic history, the letters of Paul offered Boniface and his followers access to the voice of an apostle as he struggled to spread the faith and to cultivate his churches.

In the vernacular poetry of the later Anglo-Saxon period, a different dynamic is at work. The focus shifts away from Paul and toward the twelve apostles as a group, or toward each individual apostle as part of the Twelve – this is especially true for Cynewulf’s works. Importantly, this correlates with two significant differences between the historical context of the Bonifatian material and the vernacular poems: First, the later period saw the veneration of a greater and more varied number of local as well as universal saints in the Anglo-Saxon church. Second, with the more or less complete Christianization of England and most of western Europe (with the exception of the areas inhabited by Viking peoples), the attention of the Anglo-Saxon church shifts from the work of converting the heathen to the ongoing work of instructing Christians in their faith and the perpetual process of ‘reconverting’ wayward Christians within England.
For individual Christians such as Cynewulf, this meant that conversion was the experience of bringing one's self in line with the beliefs and practices of the church and observing the commandments of God with humility. It meant preparing for death and judgment through penitential practices, and preaching to and castigating fellow Christians for their souls' need. It also meant using one's God given talents for the benefit of the faithful and those in need of pastoral care. Another aspect of this shift from focusing on Paul to focusing on the Twelve or individual apostles as part of the Twelve was a broadened awareness of the apostles as imperfect Christians, as human beings, in the ways indicated by accounts of their misunderstanding or doubting of Christ in the Gospels and Acts in addition to Paul's rhetoric of suffering. This recognition of the apostles' fundamental humanity comes into conflict with notions of saints as infallible heroes inherited from the Roman martyr traditions (themselves influenced by Roman ideals of stoicism and valor). This conflict between viewing the apostles as human and heroic brings about a productive tension that prompts writers such as Cynewulf and the Andreas-poet to grapple with their own spiritual and apostolic aspirations in creative ways. Finally, and most importantly, in the later vernacular literature we see the development of a direct correspondence between poetic work and apostolic work. These two religious poets understand their work as translators of Christian tradition into the conventions of Anglo-Saxon poetic and literary culture as an act of apostolic significance, in spite of their own personal or poetic inadequacies. They share a self-consciously apostolic poetics.
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