

5-2019

# "We Are Strangers in this Life": Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Nathan John Haydon  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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## Recommended Citation

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“We Are Strangers in this Life”: Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Nathan Haydon  
Austin College  
Bachelor of Arts in English and Classical Studies, 2011  
Nashotah House Theological Seminary  
Master of Arts in Ministry, 2013

May 2019  
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Joshua Smith, Ph.D.  
Dissertation Director

---

William Quinn, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Mary Beth Long, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Lora Walsh, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

## Abstract

In “‘We Are Strangers in this Life’: Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature,” I analyze the theme of exile in the theological literature of the Anglo-Saxon era as a way of conveying the spiritual condition of eschatological separation. The anthropological theory of liminality will be applied in this dissertation as a way of contextualizing the existence of the exiled, and the multiple ways in which exile is enacted. The intervention of the theory of liminality in this dissertation offers a methodology and vocabulary for assessing what exile means in terms of a spiritual identity, how it operates in ideas of spiritual conflict, and how that conflict is interpreted in theological constructs. The theory of liminality provides a way to interpret the symbols that are constructed within social acts that arise from rituals of transition, of crossing the *limen*, or thresholds of social and spiritual boundaries, as in the case of exile and banishment. As a theme, exile emerges as a remarkably consistent presence, looming and lurking in the landscapes and characters of Old English poems, many of which are religious in nature.

However, there is a lack of scholarship that attempts to understand how exile became such a prevalent theme in Anglo-Saxon literature, which leads to a lack of considering its rhetorical and spiritual function in light of Anglo-Saxon religious literary culture. It is interesting, and perhaps unfortunate, that more attention to this idea has not been afforded, given the clear theological impetus of eschatology and judgment that undergirds much of Anglo-Saxon religious literature. This dissertation will examine patristic literature, biblical commentaries, hagiography, homilies, and monastic *regula* in Anglo-Saxon England as a way to contextualize the theological concept of being in exile, and its meaning for Anglo-Saxon Christians and the spiritual identity they constructed as liminal people.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to friends and family who, through their ceaseless encouragement, walked with me in this time. I also thank my colleagues with whom the shared experiences of trading advice, anxieties, complaints, and hopes provided a network of support for what is undeniably a challenging path. My dissertation committee deserves praise for their patience, advice, support, challenges, and mentorship. Specifically, I extend gratitude to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Joshua Byron Smith, for helping me discern this project; for pushing and challenging me when I needed to be pushed and challenged; for giving me space and advice to practice and grow as an academic and an Anglo-Saxonist; and for being a *gebēor* during our semester of reading the Old English homilies of Ælfric, in which the idea for this dissertation was conceived. Finally, I reserve highest laud to my wife, Kathryn. Her unrelenting strength, love, and support held me up when I felt like I could not do this.

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## I. Introduction: Exile, Liminality, and the Anglo-Saxon Context

In “‘We Are Strangers in this Life’: Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature,” I analyze the theme of exile in the theological literature of the Anglo-Saxon era as a way of conveying the spiritual condition of eschatological separation. The anthropological theory of liminality will be applied in this dissertation as a way of contextualizing the existence of the exiled, and the multiple ways in which exile is enacted. The intervention of the theory of liminality in this dissertation offers a methodology and vocabulary for assessing what exile means in terms of a spiritual identity, how it operates in ideas of spiritual conflict, and how that conflict is interpreted in theological constructs. The theory of liminality provides a way to interpret the symbols that are constructed within social acts that arise from rituals of transition, of crossing the *limen*, or thresholds of social and spiritual boundaries, and in the case of exile and banishment, what Victor Turner calls “social drama.”<sup>1</sup> Given the pervasive nature of exile as a theme in Old English poetry, historians and literary scholars of Anglo-Saxon literature have studied the concept of exile in depth as a literary motif and a legal punishment in social contexts. Exile emerges as a remarkably consistent presence, looming and lurking in the landscapes and characters of Old English poems, many of which are religious in nature.

It has been said that exile is “one of the most durable Anglo-Saxon traditions.”<sup>2</sup> Because of that, there have been significant scholarly contributions to understanding exile as a literary and social construct. Some sources consider the historical and social practices of exile, and some take into account the theological implications and meaning that exile has when it is featured in

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<sup>1</sup> More on this and the theory of liminality will be discussed below in this introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Frantzen, *Anglo-Saxon Keywords* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 92.

clear representations of Christian theological poetry, or poetic adaptations of scripture.<sup>3</sup>

However, calling exile one of the most durable traditions of the Anglo-Saxons potentially does a disservice to the way we approach it, thinking of it as a *de facto* concept that has always existed in the Anglo-Saxon mindset, without consideration of influence. There is a lack of scholarship that attempts to understand how exile became such a prevalent theme in Anglo-Saxon literature, which leads to a lack of considering its rhetorical and spiritual function in light of Anglo-Saxon religious literary culture. It is interesting, and perhaps unfortunate, that more attention to this idea has not been afforded, given the clear theological impetus of eschatology and judgment that undergirds much of Anglo-Saxon religious literature.

Barbara Newman, in writing about the intersection between sacred and secular readings of medieval literature, theorizes about what she calls “crossover” of secular and spiritual frameworks in the same text, and brings to mind the overarching theological culture in which many of these works were written.<sup>4</sup> Newman notes that in determining the relationship of piety and the secular in works that demonstrate both, that it is not necessary that “every allusion to the sacred needs to be assessed at its full theological weight.”<sup>5</sup> In saying this, she goes on to advocate a way of reading that is “both/and: when sacred and secular meanings both present themselves in a text, yet cannot be harmoniously reconciled, it is not always necessary to choose between them.”<sup>6</sup> I do not disagree with this statement, and fully agree that in many cases, that

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<sup>3</sup> A survey of scholarship regarding exile will follow below in this introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Sacred Against the Secular* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Newman, *Medieval Crossover*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Newman, *Medieval Crossover*, 7-8.

sense of sophistication is necessary in interpreting medieval literature. However, this dissertation will not follow the advice of a both/and reading of Anglo-Saxon works. The goal of this dissertation will be to show that for Anglo-Saxons, exile is a theological condition before it is a secular one, and that the theological reading must be privileged to understand what the secular means in this case.

Anglo-Saxon Christians considered themselves to be a people that were on a journey to a heavenly kingdom, and that exigency demanded a way to contextualize that with their lived experience of being in-between heaven and earth, as exiles from God's presence. Anthony Low writes that "poets and audiences alike must have regarded the experience of exile as an intensely painful breaking of human bonds, even as an assault on the natural order of things in this world; yet they must also have regarded those who bore exile as heroic and admirable."<sup>7</sup> This painful, heroic experience may be the result of being driven out or denied entry somewhere, or through becoming self-exiled and inhabiting dangerous landscapes. For example, both the *Guthlac* poems of the Exeter Book and the life of Saint Mary of Egypt feature ascetic figures that reside in marginal, spatially liminal locations that feature the wildness and danger of extreme geographic settings, such as fens and deserts. The prominence of monasticism in Anglo-Saxon England, especially exemplified by the integration and practice of the Rule of Benedict and the Benedictine Reform of the tenth century, sees a literary and theological culture that undoubtedly influenced the way people saw themselves in relation to God and each other. During Rogationtide, Anglo-Saxons would process together along the boundaries of fields to pray and

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<sup>7</sup> Anthony Low, *Aspects of Subjectivity: Society and Individuality from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare and Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 2003), 11-12.



perform a journey that looks toward entering heaven.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in this overtly religious and theologically driven textual culture, the texts of Bodleian Library MS Junius 11, containing Old English poetic versions of Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and the narrative *Christ and Satan* all feature examples of exile, wandering, and being a stranger as a way of describing a mindset that is both particularly Anglo-Saxon and concomitant with scriptural narrative. The poems of Junius 11 comprise a sense of how scripture was used for their theological aims, and a central figure, Abraham, typifies wandering, promise, and the search for the *epel*, of home and a place of rest.<sup>9</sup> This dissertation analyzes these works, and is the first to place these texts in conversation with each other to delineate a theology of exile that will be contextualized through the anthropological theory of liminality.

In terms of practice, the Anglo-Saxon church maintained a comfortable relationship with exile as both a tool for punishment or penance, and as a theological condition. In terms of penance, Helen Foxhall Forbes notes that death or exile was appropriate for some offenses in the

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<sup>8</sup> Regarding Rogationtide and its processions, Helen Foxhall Forbes writes that “it was assumed that a particularly large number of people would be present, perhaps including those who were less than well catechised: many of the Rogationtide homilies are quite simple and focus on quite basic information. But these processions are also important in that they are one example of religion and religious ritual happening beyond the confines of churches, blurring the boundaries between lay and ecclesiastical space.” *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England: Theology and Society in an Age of Faith* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 53.

<sup>9</sup> *Bosworth-Toller* defines *epel* as: “I. one’s own residence or property, inheritance, country, realm, land, dwelling, home;” and “a person’s native country, fatherland.” *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. “Eþel.” Accessed April 9, 2019. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/009765>. The multiple meanings of this word present numerous possibilities for interpretation. In this dissertation, the idea behind *epel* will center on ideas of fatherland and country, but in reference to theological ideas such as paradise, heaven, and the kingdom of God.

laws that Archbishop Wulfstan of York (d. 1023) wrote.<sup>10</sup> And as the church proffered exile as a tool for penance, the very condition of exile, at its roots, can be considered chiefly theological.

*The Old English Martyrology* contains an entry for the twenty-third of March regarding the sixth day of creation. The entry briefly summarizes the scriptural account for the sixth day, focusing on the creation of Adam and Eve. However, the entry offers detail that occurs after the days of creation, focusing on the rebellion of Adam and Eve. The text mentions that when they were created,

ne hi ne mihtan næfre forealdian, ne deade beon, gif hi Godes bebod geheoldan.  
Ac þa hi þæt ne geheoldan, ða underðeoddon hi selfe one eall ðæt mænnisce cynn  
to sare ond eldo ond to deaðe. Adam lifde her on wræcsiðe nigan hund geara on  
ðritig geara, ond his ban syndon bebyrged noht feorr be eastan ðære byrig ðe is  
nemned Cebron, on him is ðæt heafod suð gewend ond þa fet norð, one seo  
byrgen is bewrigen mid dimmum stanum ond yfellicum.<sup>11</sup>

The inclusion by the martyrologist of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the same context of the creation of humanity demonstrates how extraordinary the circumstances are that humanity finds itself in after expulsion. It rhetorically signifies how the creation of humanity has become undone as a consequence of disobedience. After the rebellion of Adam and Eve, they are then

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<sup>10</sup> Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, 176. For example, Wulfstan's *Laws of Edward and Guthrum* decree that if someone "causes anyone's death, then he will become an outlaw and be hunted with enmity by all those who wish for justice." Andrew Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 59. The subtext of this is that death and exile contain analogs of how they punish; death is considered a principally grave option that substantiates finality, and exile is a sort of social death that results in the death of identity and relationships.

<sup>11</sup> Christine Rauer, *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 72. Rauer's translation: "Nor could they ever grow old, or die, if they were to obey God's commandment. But when they did not obey it, they then subjected themselves and all of humankind to pain and old age and to death. Adam lived here in exile for nine hundred and thirty years, and his bones are buried not far east of the city called Hebron, and his head is pointing south and his feet north, and the grave is covered with horrible dark stones," 73.

subject to the limits of mortality. Their condition, or state changes, from immortal to mortal, and they become entirely susceptible to pain and danger, once they cross the threshold of Eden.

The foundation for this change of state is not limited so much to the disobedience of following God's commandments, but in the new condition imposed on them of the "*wræcsiðe*," of being in a state of exile. As this condition is theological, it is also clearly physical and universal. Adam and Eve are the first to exercise disobedience, and they are the ones to usher in the same condition for all of us as exiles from God's presence. Being in God's presence is life; outside of that is death. Adam and Eve undergo a significant transition, from one condition that is stable, to another that is marked by conditional instability. This separation is at the root of eschatological theology: the *eschaton*, the end day, is the moment in which the totality of humankind is subjected to a final passage, of either being received from exile back into God's presence, or to undergo even further separation into hell. For example, the poem *Advent* mentions how in contrast to Christ who could enter heaven, "we heanlice hweorfan sceoldan / on þis enge lond, eðle bescyrede."<sup>12</sup> The condition of exile imposes loss of a previous social identity and status, and results in the loss of where the identity is grounded, in the loss of home, community, and social structures. Regarding crimes that could lead to exile, Melissa Sartore notes that

According to the tenth-century laws of King Edmund (936-946 AD), "if any one shed a Christian man's blood, let him not come into the king's presence... ere he go to penance." Failure of the *manslaga* (or "man-slayer") to atone and make amends could result in not only exclusion from the presence of the king, but perhaps even in exile or outlawry, or pilgrimage and excommunication, thus

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<sup>12</sup> Mary Clayton, ed. and trans., *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 4. Clayton's translation: "[when] we had had to turn away downcast into this narrow land, deprived of our homeland," 5.

making the act of homicide an event that resulted in exclusion from one's relationship with King and God alike.<sup>13</sup>

This means that the theological reality of exile bears the same result, and it affects both spiritual and physical conditions in terms of both the soul and body. Therefore, the anonymous Blickling homilist preaches in Blickling II that

forþon we habbaþ nedþearfe þæt we ongyton þa blindnesse ure ælþeodignesse; we send on þisse worlde ælþeodignesse; we synd on þisse worlde ælþeodige, 7 swa wæron siþþon se æresta ealdor þisses menniscan cynnes Godes bebodu abræc; 7 forþon gylte we wæron on þysne wræc-siþ sende, 7 nu eft sceolon oþerne eþel secan, swa wite, swa wuldor.”<sup>14</sup>

Because of this, the Judgment Day and the theological reality of eschatological separation from God is of the utmost concern for many Anglo-Saxon homilists, where preaching coupled with liturgical processions attempt to offer a recognition and mitigation of the spirituality reality of being an exile from heaven.<sup>15</sup> To better understand what exile means, and how liminality can inform our interpretation of banishment, I will now discuss ideas of exile and liminality in separate sections to offer a survey of scholarship in books, articles, and chapters that inform this

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<sup>13</sup> Melissa Sartore, *Outlawry, Governance, and Law in Medieval England* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Morris, ed. and trans., *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century* EETS Original Series 58, 63, 73 (London: Trubner and Co., 1880), 23. Morris's translation: “it is needful to perceive the blindness of our pilgrimage; we are in a foreign land of this world — we are exiles in this world, and so have been since the progenitor of the human race brake God's behests, and for that sin we have been sent into this banishment, and now we must seek here-after another kingdom, either in misery or in glory,” 22.

<sup>15</sup> For work on eschatology in Anglo-Saxon sermons and liturgy, see Milton McC. Gatch, “Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies,” *Traditio* 21 (1965): 117-65, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, and *Eschatology and Christian Nature: Themes in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Religious Life* (London: Routledge, 2000); M. Bradford Bedingfield, “Anglo-Saxons on Fire,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 52.2 (2001): 658-77, and *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002); and Chapter 3, “Wulfstan's Eschatology” in Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 43-74.

dissertation. It would be impossible to effectively cover all the various works published regarding medieval and Anglo-Saxon exile and the scholarship regarding liminality, so this introduction will feature a selection of texts that will help bring clarity to what exile and liminality mean for this project.

### **Exile**

The act of forced or voluntary exclusion is known by a range of terms, depending on the context, such as banishment, outlawry, *peregrinatio* or pilgrimage, wandering, excommunication, and finally, exile.<sup>16</sup> Some of these are legal definitions, and some are used within spiritual ideas of separation. The social practice of exile precedes Anglo-Saxon England, and was used in early and late antiquity. Jan Felix Gaertner notes in an essay entitled “The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity”<sup>17</sup> that while there has been a surge of scholarly interest of exile in antiquity, work has often been limited to the “exulum trias” of Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca, and that more modern ideas of exilic literature have been imposed on classical texts, and not without problems.<sup>18</sup> According to Gaertner, a present issue with the study of exile is the term itself. In terms of classical ideas of exile, she writes that “the English word ‘exile’ is far more precise than

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<sup>16</sup> These terms carry analogous ideas of exile and separation, but are also dependent on context. For work on some of these ideas, see: Sartore, *Outlawry*, 2013 (see n. 13 above); and Graham Holderness, “From Exile to Pilgrim: Christian and Pagan Values in Anglo-Saxon Elegiac Verse” in *English Literature, Theology, and the Curriculum*, edited by Liam Gearon, 63-84 (London: Cassell, 1999). Interestingly, in writing about the later Middle Ages, Jamie K. Taylor mentions a sermon preached in Norfolk in 1365 by the Augustinian friar John Waldeby where he chastises a community for failing to testify about a murder. Taylor notes that “the congregation’s refusal to provide witnesses to this crime, [Waldeby] suggests, profoundly misunderstands the neighborly loyalty it seeks to protect, and he pushes the point further by asserting that their silence has ‘outlawed’ God from their community.” *Fictions of Evidence: Witnessing, Literature, and Community in the Late Middle Ages* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), 87.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Felix Gaertner, “The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity” in *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond*, edited by Jan Felix Gaertner, 1-20 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Gaertner, “The Discourse of Displacement,” 1.

the corresponding Greek and Latin terms. Whereas the modern derivatives of the Latin word *exilium* imply an involuntary departure, sanctioned by political or judicial authorities, the ancient usage of the corresponding terms φυγή, *fuga*, *exilium*, and their derivatives is less strict. φυγή and φεύγειν cover both the expulsion of groups or individuals and their voluntary departure.”<sup>19</sup> This lexical and semantic issue corresponds to the language used by Anglo-Saxons to discuss the nature of displacement, whether it was banishment, journey, or pilgrimage, and demonstrates that there has been a consistent flexibility of what comprises the social practices of voluntary or involuntary departure.

As there is flexibility with terminology, exile also becomes used metaphorically in later representations. Gaertner writes in antiquity, “social identity was traditionally connected with man’s place in society and exile was seen as proximate to social death,” but “the Cynics begin to employ exile positively. They fuse it with the concept of cosmopolitanism and integrate it into their appeal to the norms of the universe and the rejection of the norms and conventions of society. Thus, exile becomes a metaphor for social, political, and even metaphysical dissociation.”<sup>20</sup> Following this, Gaertner develops the extension of the metaphysical aspect of exile in mentioning the fifth-century BCE philosopher Empedocles, saying that he

seems to have been the first to develop the notion of a metaphysical *patria* by calling life on earth exile from heaven. Empedocles’ thought has been influential in the realm of metaphysical thinking — partly, but not exclusively, because the same idea later prominently features in one of the most important texts for the Middle Ages, the letters of the apostles Paul and Peter in the New Testament.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gaertner, “The Discourse of Displacement,” 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Gaertner, “The Discourse of Displacement,” 11-2.

<sup>21</sup> Gaertner, “The Discourse of Displacement,” 12.

This sense of *patria*, of fatherland, is crucial for the exilic identity of later patristic authors, some of them being exiles themselves.<sup>22</sup> Gaertner's work ultimately argues that eventually, as the use of Greek and reading of classical authors declined in the West, the discourse of exile as treated in the canons of the Old and New Testament became the more influential reference in the Middle Ages, suggesting that the

treatment of exile depends not so much on personal experience as on the literary, and more generally cultural, canons. The experience of the (real or metaphorical) exile of writers and fictitious or historical characters is interpreted and presented within an inherited, but continuously modified, framework of concepts of displacement and wandering, which depends heavily on educational and intellectual traditions.<sup>23</sup>

This means that ideas of exile are inherently predicated on cultural norms that are developed, received, and adapted according to their own context. This is important to remember when considering works, such as hagiographic texts, that were translated from Latin to Old English, and therefore edited to reflect the exigencies and theological concerns of the hagiographer and their audience.

In an article entitled "Hospitality, Protection, and Refuge in Early English Law,"<sup>24</sup> Tom Lambert provides an exploration of how legal practices of protection were performed, and what those practices reveal about Anglo-Saxon values regarding the vulnerable and the stranger, and

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the phenomenon and practice of exile in late antiquity and the medieval era, including exile pertaining to the clergy, see Robert F. Gorman, "Persecution and Exile in the Patristic Period: Athanasian and Augustinian Perspectives," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6, no. 1 (1993): 40-55; Laura Napran and Elisabeth van Houts, eds., *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Conference Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 8-11 July 2002* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); and Julia Hillner, Jörg Ulrich, and Jakob Engberg, eds., *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Gaertner, "The Discourse of Displacement," 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Lambert, "Hospitality, Protection and Refuge in Early English Law," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 2 (2016): 243-60. From Lambert, see also *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

the distinction between an exile and a refugee. Part of this discussion occurs in looking at the role of churches functioning as places of refuge, and the way one was considered in the context of being part of a community, or outside of it. In this article, Lambert notes that forced exile seems to have been common in the Anglo-Saxon period as a result of war and as a way of resolving internal conflict, but despite the different contexts in which displacement occurs, it was unlikely there was a distinction between a refugee of war and an exile as a legal consequence.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding ecclesiastical sanctuary, Lambert writes that the practice drew from a range of sources stemming from the Roman Empire, combining secular aristocratic concerns with pastoral ideas of penance.<sup>26</sup> Lambert, noting other scholarship, writes that the concept of the “city of refuge” that is featured in the Old Testament does not seem to have been a formative idea for the practice of sanctuary, at least early in practice.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the practice of ecclesiastical sanctuary in the Anglo-Saxon period had secular analogues for its practice as a space for dispute resolution, although the space itself of the sanctuary gives the appearance of the purpose of peace making.<sup>28</sup> Lambert continues his article by discussing the distinction of communities and outsiders, and focuses on a law from King Wihtried of Kent (690-725). Section 28 of this legal code states that “if a stranger or man from afar quits the road and neither shouts nor blows a horn, he shall be assumed to be a thief and as such may be either slain or put to ransom.”<sup>29</sup> Lambert writes that this law occurs in codes from Kent and Wessex in the late seventh century,

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<sup>25</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 244.

<sup>26</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 244.

<sup>27</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 244.

<sup>28</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 245.

<sup>29</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 247.



and “is often used to illustrate the hostile attitude of Anglo-Saxons to outsiders, who are clearly regarded as problematic and potentially threatening figures... If a stranger caused harm in a locality and then fled the area, there was little that anyone could do about it — no obvious avenue through which an aggrieved party might seek redress. Strangers posed a threat.”<sup>30</sup>

Lambert goes on to say an outsider is defined by those who lacked local connections, and had no local ties; the lack of locality within a community raises the concern that a stranger’s intentions can not be known, and the lack of announcement means that they had no reason to be within a community. This meant that killing a stranger could serve the common good.<sup>31</sup>

Lambert then brings to focus the performance of hospitality for strangers, suggesting that invitation to a stranger creates security for the vulnerable, and creates a bond with the host’s household that provides protection.<sup>32</sup> Lambert quotes a law from King Hlothhere and Eadric of Kent from the late seventh century, which states that “if a man entertains a stranger (a trader or any other man who has come across the frontier) for three nights in his own home, and then continues to provide him with food, and if he [i.e. the stranger] does harm to anyone, the man [i.e. the host] shall bring the other to justice or make amends on his behalf.”<sup>33</sup> The article notes that hosts protected guests, but eventually, a decision needed to be made regarding the stranger’s status, either through leaving the host’s residence or becoming a member of it.<sup>34</sup> Lambert’s article provides a framework in which ideas of being an exile or stranger can be understood

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<sup>30</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 247.

<sup>31</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 249-50.

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 252.

<sup>33</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 253.

<sup>34</sup> Lambert, “Hospitality,” 253.

according to legal practice. The concept of fear of the stranger and the lack of communal bonds creates a significant intertextual connection when the treatment of a stranger is mentioned in other sources, such as theological and biblical commentaries and homilies. This dissertation will show that in other Old English texts, the term “stranger” can mean someone who is feared and worthy of death, but is also an identity shared by all in being estranged from heaven and God’s presence.

Regarding the theme of exile in Anglo-Saxon texts, the work of Stanley Greenfield is a cornerstone in the study of exile in Old English poetry. What will follow is a brief survey and summary of his dissertation and select articles, all concerned with exile in its various respects. Greenfield’s dissertation, entitled “The Exile-Wanderer in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,”<sup>35</sup> examines the trope of exile through historical, semantic, and critical analysis to uncover the varied ways in which the condition of being banished is expressed. Greenfield defines exile in his Introduction as “a state of existence in which one has been obliged to forego a normal and desirable relationship with others, and hence has been deprived of the social and spiritual comforts which are inherent in such community.”<sup>36</sup> Chapter One of his project considers the differences between physical exiles and spiritual exiles, and the various figures that show up in Old English poetry that reinforce the images of outlaws and those banished from communion with God. Here, Greenfield considers seven aspects of exile: “(1) the status of the exile, which includes the simple designation ‘an exile’; (2) movement; (3) the state of mind (or general attitude); (4) deprivation; (5) general suffering and tribulations; (6) lamentation; (7) the need for

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<sup>35</sup> Stanley Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer in Anglo-Saxon Poetry” (PhD diss., University of California, 1950).

<sup>36</sup> Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer,” i.

consolation.”<sup>37</sup> For Greenfield, these seven aspects are the “referential range” in which images of the exiled one appears in Anglo-Saxon literature, in terms of “exiles of a social bond” and “exiles from a natural bond.”<sup>38</sup> Chapter Two examines the semantic expressions related to exile and wandering, and connects the terms used to describe exile in Old English poetry with the emotional and intellectual aspects of what it means to be an outsider. In short, Greenfield concludes that Christian and Teutonic traditions merge together in the similarities of word and phrase patterns. Additionally, these patterns create an interpretive stability while offering variation of usage for the poet.<sup>39</sup> Last, Chapter Three considers the historical performance of the exile-wanderer, and the images that the Anglo-Saxon poet would have been able to use in their compositions. In this final chapter, Greenfield focuses on the function of symbolic meaning of figures of exile in Old English poems, including *The Wife’s Lament*, *Widsith*, *Christ I*, and *The Seafarer*. In his critical analysis of these poems, Greenfield works to discern the meanings of the image of exile and their function. To conclude, Greenfield writes that it “has become apparent that the center of the traditional range of both physical and spiritual exile-wanderer figures was the sad-minded, ceaselessly moving figure who had been deprived of the things which gave him most joy” as the emergent idea of his analysis, reiterating the ways in which a semantic range provides poetic references to convey this image.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer,” 1.

<sup>38</sup> Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer,” 1. The exile from the social bond is representative of expulsion from social groups, such as the relationship predicated in Anglo-Saxon *comitatus*, but may not constitute banishment or outlawry from willful rebellion. Exile from the natural bond is due to rebellion, and is seen in spiritual settings, such as the fall and banishment of Satan in Anglo-Saxon poetry. See pp. 3-39 and 40-71 respectively for more on these categories.

<sup>39</sup> Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer,” 125.

<sup>40</sup> Greenfield, “The Exile-Wanderer,” 194.

An article of Greenfield, “The Theme of Spiritual Exile in *Christ I*,”<sup>41</sup> carries a theological focus of exile in Old English religious poetry. Here, Greenfield asserts that this poem, which is focused on the nativity of Christ, and an Old English poetic version of the “O Antiphons” recited in the season of Advent, that a “minor theme runs through the poem, a theme reflecting the Christian tradition of man’s life as a spiritual exile from Heaven, Eden, and the natural bond with his Creator.”<sup>42</sup> Greenfield argues that the portions of the O Antiphons contained in the poem serve to make clear the idea of spiritual exile, and that the poet follows a logical order of images that develop the poem and its exilic theme: 1) the expulsion of man from Paradise — man’s initial exile from his heavenly and earthly home; 2) mankind in a state of despair after the Fall, crying for salvation; 3) the exiles in Limbo awaiting the Harrowing of Hell; 4) the scattering of the flock after the Crucifixion; 5) man’s present state of spiritual exile.<sup>43</sup> In short, Greenfield’s critical analysis of these images leads to the idea of being reintegrated into heaven after praying for the forgiveness of sins, suggesting that the word *eðel*, “homeland,” as it appears in the poem refers to the Garden of Eden and Heaven.<sup>44</sup> Greenfield’s suggestion will be followed in this dissertation, and the idea of *eðel* will be seen as an important spiritual location and the goal of the stranger.

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<sup>41</sup> Stanley Greenfield, “The Theme of Spiritual Exile in *Christ I*,” *Philological Quarterly* 32 (1953): 321-8.

<sup>42</sup> Greenfield, “The Theme of Spiritual Exile,” 321.

<sup>43</sup> Greenfield, “The Theme of Spiritual Exile,” 322. Greenfield makes it clear that in image five, “man’s present state of exile” is the present state of the poet in the eighth century.

<sup>44</sup> Greenfield, “The Theme of Spiritual Exile,” 328. For more on the idea of what “home” means in Anglo-Saxon poetry, see Anita R. Riedinger, “‘Home’ in Old English Poetry,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 96, no. 1 (1995): 51-59.

The next work from Greenfield is his article entitled “The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of ‘Exile’ in Anglo-Saxon Poetry.”<sup>45</sup> Here, he examines a cross-section of Old English poetry, arguing for a lexical and semantic agreement of literature through analyzing textual characteristics and imagery. Greenfield readily asserts that “despite the fact that the exile figures are so different in kind and character... a woman, Cain, an historical king, Satan, a seafarer, a devil, a lordless thane, a *peregrinus*, a traveller to the unknown bourne — the expressions of their plights are clearly cast in similar molds.”<sup>46</sup> This similarity is discussed in terms of his four-fold set of characteristics of exile: 1) status; 2) deprivation; 3) state of mind; and 4) movement in or into exile.<sup>47</sup> Greenfield notes particular phrases that occur poems, such as *The Wife’s Lament* (*wineléas wrecca*) and *The Wanderer* (*earm ánhaga*), that connote the “status” of excommunication. These terms are used in specific verse constructs to make clear the status of one who has experienced expulsion.<sup>48</sup> In terms of “deprivation,” Greenfield lists a set of verbs that are used to demonstrate the sense of loss that one feels in being exiled: *bedæled*, *bescierian*, *beréaftian*, *bedréosan*, and *benæman*. In the way these verbs are employed, they often show the loss of properties, like gold and land, are abstract concepts like comfort and joy.<sup>49</sup> The third characteristic, “state of mind,” rarely occurs as a line itself according to Greenfield. He notes that there are various formulas in which the state of mind of an exilic is poetically demonstrated, but

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<sup>45</sup> Stanley Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of ‘Exile’ in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” *Speculum* 30, no. 2 (April 1955): 200-6. Another more recent article examines a different formulaic expression that occurs in texts connected to exile. See Erick Kelemen, “*Clyppan* and *Cyssan*: The Formulaic Expressions of Return from Exile in Old English Literature,” *English Language Notes* 38, no. 3 (March 2001): 1-19. Kelemen focuses on *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*.

<sup>46</sup> Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 201.

<sup>47</sup> Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 201.

<sup>48</sup> Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 201-2.

<sup>49</sup> Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression, 202.

despite that, there are textual signals listed by Greenfield which mark state of mind: *héan*, *earm*, *geómor*, compounds that words, then compounds using *-cearig*.<sup>50</sup> The final characteristic, “movement in or into exile,” contain sub-categories of 1) a sense of direction away from the “homeland” or “beloved;” 2) departure (initiative movement); 3) turning (initiative-continuative movement); 4) endurance of hardships (continuative movement in exile); and 5) seeking. Greenfield then lists numerous formulaic constructs that depict senses of movement according to these categories.<sup>51</sup>

Leonard H. Frey builds off of Greenfield’s framework for the formulaic expressions of exile in his article entitled “Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Christian Epic Poetry,”<sup>52</sup> but Frey gives pronounced and explicit focus to Anglo-Saxon Christian poetic texts. Frey’s article suggests that the poets of Anglo-Saxon Christian epics that the idea and situation of hardship revealed what was culturally the more significant result of exile: “destitution, and enforced separation from one’s kindred and clan.”<sup>53</sup> Frey then writes that the poet focuses the condition of

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<sup>50</sup> Greenfield, “Formulaic Expressions,” 203.

<sup>51</sup> Greenfield, “Formulaic Expressions,” 203-4. It should be noted that some of Greenfield’s works have been collected in an edited volume, *Hero and Exile: The Art of Old English Poetry* (London: Hambledon Press, 1989). Part I, “Beowulfian Studies,” contains various chapters on *Beowulf*, investigating ideas such as *Beowulf* as an epic and its relationship to tragedy monstrosity in *Beowulf*, and heroism and righteousness in the poem. Part II, “The Old English Elegies,” features analysis of numerous poems, including *The Wanderer*, *The Wife’s Lament*, *The Seafarer*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Chapter Ten, “The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of ‘Exile’ in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” is a reprint of his earlier *Speculum* article focused on his schema of a fourfold set of characteristics that demonstrate exile in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The third and final section, “The Theme of Exile,” focuses on the concept of spiritual exile and analysis of Old English poems that contain it, including *Christ I* and the *Advent* lyrics. This particular text, while notable, contains a wide range of topics that are not related to the focus of this dissertation, but do feature previously published resources that offer a dynamic way to consider the ways in which the exilic condition is constructed in Old English poetry to create the image and identity of what the exile and the wanderer looked like, lost, and where they were heading.

<sup>52</sup> Leonard H. Frey, “Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Christian Epic Poetry,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 62, no. 2 (April 1963): 293-302.

<sup>53</sup> Frey, “Exile and Elegy,” 294.

exile in terms of the one exiled lamenting their situation, which leads to general moral reflection, which might then be followed by the *ubi sunt* motif, with the rhetorical purpose of movement towards understanding the nature of the world.<sup>54</sup> Frey concludes that Anglo-Saxon Christian poetic texts featuring exile use movement through space and natural phenomenon to underscore the nature of destitution and hardship in exile.<sup>55</sup>

The final work for this section is not so much about exile in of itself. While it is mentioned periodically, this book is more about the ways in which Anglo-Saxons operated within space and location, which is crucial to understanding how exiles and wanderers move through space and how they interact with it. Nicole Discenza's book, entitled *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place*,<sup>56</sup> is concerned with helping to "recognize our own constructions of space and Anglo-Saxon constructions, particularly where they differ from ours."<sup>57</sup> To make this clear, Discenza writes that "Anglo-Saxons, like any people, very much *made* place. The field of human geography emphasizes the constructed nature of space and place... Space does not simply exist but is created by people."<sup>58</sup> In the first chapter, "Earth's Place in the Cosmos," Discenza elaborates on the idea of space created by people by discussing the way Anglo-Saxons conceived of cosmology, saying that "influenced by Latin and Christian sources, educated Anglo-Saxons constructed the universe around them in ways that reflected and reinforced their sense of the capaciousness of God's creative power and the marvellous order and symmetry of

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<sup>54</sup> Frey, "Exile and Elegy," 294.

<sup>55</sup> Frey, "Exile and Elegy," 302.

<sup>56</sup> Nicole Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 6-7. Emphasis hers.

his plan.”<sup>59</sup> Her second chapter, “England, the Mediterranean, and Beyond,” focuses on the idea of “imaginative geographies,” taking her meaning of that from Derek Gregory, where he defines it as “representations of other places—of peoples and landscapes, cultures and ‘natures’—that articulate the desires, fantasies and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their ‘Others.’”<sup>60</sup> This chapter represents the way Anglo-Saxons considered, and even controlled, places that were effectively beyond their scope, and the way they dealt with their own marginalization in light of these other places. Her third chapter, “Recentring: The North and England’s Place,” explores how Anglo-Saxon texts, such as charters, chronicles, and poetry make “England itself as the starting point” in a way to reorient their own position and status.<sup>61</sup> In the fourth chapter, “Fruitful Wastes in *Beowulf*, *Guthlac A*, and *Andreas*,” Discenza points out that for Anglo-Saxons, “waste and water offered perilous, disorderly fullnesses that could threaten more proper places; at the same time, these spaces were not distant or rare but close and common.”<sup>62</sup> She notes that this complexity is present in poems where wastelands, inhabited by evil spirits, are close to more social and cultivated settings, and they demonstrate the various possibilities when they are potentially tamed.<sup>63</sup> The final chapter, “Halls and Cities as Locuses of Civilization and Sin” considers the constructed places of the hall, representative of a spatially central location that hosted the elite, and offered a view of something more transcendent, and

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<sup>59</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 141.

<sup>63</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 141.



also the city, which are seemingly associated with the ephemeral, and are sites connected to sin.<sup>64</sup> This text, in its consideration of the marginal status that Anglo-Saxons might have felt of themselves in relation to the rest of the world, is helpful for this project in showing how space and location create identity and power. It also serves as a bridge to thinking about spatio-temporal considerations linked to liminality, and boundary/border crossings that occur within space, and how these marginal sites enact movement, transition, and transformation.

### **The Theory of Liminality**

*Limen* is a Latin word with various meanings. From the dictionary of *Lewis and Short*, a range of meanings are presented, such as “door,” “entrance,” “beginning,” “commencement,” “end,” and “termination.”<sup>65</sup> The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* offers definitions that are more physically situated with space, such as “transverse beam of a doorway,” or an entrance that is particular to churches, “(–*en ecclesiae*) threshold of a church, also by synecdoche the church... shrine of a saint,” and a “boundary, border,” “territory enclosed within a boundary place.”<sup>66</sup> The *limen* can be a metaphoric way to represent transitions, of beginnings and ends, and also describe the physicality of space, such as the architecture of a door, and the symbolic meaning of crossing a threshold into sacred spaces of churches and shrines. The *limen* is a metaphoric way to place the significant moments that individuals within groups experience as the individual transitions from one mode of existence to another, such as childhood to adulthood, or from life to death. In some cases, the *limen* is a symbolically derived physical act

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<sup>64</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 180.

<sup>65</sup> *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “limen,” accessed March 7, 2019, <http://logeion.uchicago.edu/limen>.

<sup>66</sup> *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. “limen,” accessed March 7, 2019, <http://logeion.uchicago.edu/limen>.

of change, and in other cases, it is a symbolic gesture contained within a performative speech-act, where the sign and the signified convey a reality that is beyond experience, but still allows a sense of passage to occur. It is this concept that the theory of liminality is derived.

Introduced by the ethnographer Arnold van Gennep in his text *The Rites of Passage*,<sup>67</sup> first published in 1909, the theory of liminality is a methodological structure to contextualize the liminal, or threshold moments that embody significant change for an individual within a larger systemic or group context. Particularly germane to van Gennep's field work, which was focused on small tribal societies, and the theory of liminality, is the understanding of social division; in chapter one of *The Rites of Passage*, "The Classification of Rites," he asserts that "the only clearly marked social division remaining in modern society is that which distinguishes between the secular and sacred worlds — between the profane and the sacred."<sup>68</sup> According to van Gennep, then, the presupposed implication of this is that the pre-modern world experienced other clearly delineated aspects of social separation, such as hierarchical class structures. This means that as those structures fade, the negotiation between sacred and profane, or the church and the world, becomes more pronounced and imbued with important meaning. That meaning is applied to the moments of passage that are often commemorated with physical rituals that are performed, or acts of intentional separation and then subsequent reintegration after the threshold moment has been crossed. To that end, van Gennep writes that the "life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Wherever there

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<sup>67</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>68</sup> Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 1. It should be understood that terms such as "sacred" and "profane" will have a wide reach outside of a western Christian worldview, and van Gennep spends much of his time and fieldwork showing what is sacred and profane according to a variety of cultural contexts.

are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make up apprenticeship in our trades.”<sup>69</sup> The distinctions that van Gennep outlines stem from his fieldwork, and are composed of case studies that analyze important moments such as child birth, sexual or social puberty, and funerals within a liminal paradigm, and those moments are often placed within the tension of the sacred and the profane.

The most important aspect to understand about van Gennep’s theory is the structure he proposes in which these transitions happen. Van Gennep’s methodology has the unified taxonomy of “rites of passage,” but within that singular unit he devises a systematic process of “rites of separation,” “transition rites,” and “rites of incorporation,” which correspond to the theoretical terms “preliminal,” “liminal,” and “postliminal.”<sup>70</sup> Van Gennep elaborates that

rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically include preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.<sup>71</sup>

What needs to be emphasized about van Gennep’s theory is that while any of the rites might be minimal in relation to the others, depending on the context, the liminal rites itself—the rites of transition—are absolutely necessary. Because of this, the rites of passage as a liminal schema, as theorized by van Gennep, are not intended to produce a sense static instability, but to suggest a

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<sup>69</sup> Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 10-1.

<sup>71</sup> Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

coherent transition from one way of being into another through a progressive ritualistic acknowledgment of change. The liminal rites, the ability to cross through the intended threshold at the right time, are crucial for developing an individual identity within the larger social context of a small community.

The next significant contribution to the theory of liminality arrives with the anthropologist Victor Turner and his text *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, published in 1967,<sup>72</sup> and he continues that work in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, published in 1969.<sup>73</sup> Whereas van Gennep laid a paradigmatic framework that understood small-scale communities and identities through transitional ritual processes, Turner expanded the theory into anthropological cultural studies, and broadened the theory of liminality from small-scale tribal communities to also include larger non-tribal communities. Turner notes in an essay, entitled “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*,” published in *The Forest of Symbols*, that concerning rites of passage, “such rites indicate and constitute transitions between states. By ‘state’ I mean here ‘a relatively fixed or stable condition’ and would include in its meaning such social constancies as legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree.”<sup>74</sup> Here, Turner opens the applicability of liminality into diverse implications of social status and structure. In this expansion, Turner also added to the lexicon of liminal theory, with a reformulation of van Gennep’s original tripartite terminology and process of preliminal, liminal, and postliminal—or rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation—

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<sup>72</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

<sup>73</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 93.

into three phases of separation, margin, and aggregation.<sup>75</sup> Within these three phases, the subject experiences a sense of detachment, possibly symbolic, to signify their removal from their previous fixed state; in the margin phase, the subject becomes ambiguous, lacking the conditions of their previous state and not yet possessing the new; in the aggregation phase, the subject enters into a stable state again, but new.<sup>76</sup> This reformulation semantically expands the capabilities of the theory of liminality to contextualize processes of transition found in other social groups, or the *communitas*, as Turner prefers to term it.<sup>77</sup> *Communitas* is the collective that arises when other social structures are diminished. This means that the social division that van Gennep outlined of the sacred and the profane becomes slightly less distinctive and recognizes that transitions occur, and are marked in a variety of ways, sacred or not.

Turner's focus on the liminal/margin period also utilizes the phrase "betwixt and between," used in the essay mentioned above.<sup>78</sup> The subject in transition is "neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognized cultural topography), and are at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the

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<sup>75</sup> Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 94.

<sup>76</sup> Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 94.

<sup>77</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 97. Turner writes that he "prefer[s] the Latin term 'communitas' to 'community,' to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living,'" p. 97. Again, this broadens van Gennep's work to now include large scale societies that are fragmented, but still share similar experiences of transition.

<sup>78</sup> In more current discourse, "entre-deux" seems to carry similar connotations of residing within an in-between state, so it has been used alongside "betwixt and between," but it's chiefly used to refer to more geographic or spatial aspects of being in-between. See Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012), 1.

recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification.”<sup>79</sup> This phrase is again taken up by Turner in *The Ritual Process* to show how the individual within the *communitas* is betwixt and between, occupying a marginal, transitional space, so that the individual not only participates in a transitional process, but becomes inherently liminal, a “threshold person.” Turner writes that

the attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.<sup>80</sup>

Van Gennep’s focus was narrower; the threshold was a metaphorical, and/or physical crossing of the limen into into a new mode of existence. Van Gennep wrote that “in order to understand rites pertaining to the threshold, one should always remember that the threshold is only a part of the door and that most of these rites should be understood as a direct and physical rites of entrance, of waiting, and of departure — that is, as rites of passage.”<sup>81</sup> With Turner’s expansion and reformulation, the individual becomes a threshold themselves as they cross the threshold, meaning that ideas of transition and and change become encoded on the body, and the body becomes something to be read in regards to processes of transition, so that the liminal is embodied within the subject. Additionally, with the recognition that the individual in transition exists within the “betwixt and between,” the ability to read liminality becomes more than a

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<sup>79</sup> Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 97. In this essay, Turner turns to the Swazi as a case study for demonstrating someone who is “betwixt and between,” which is the Swazi king in a particular ceremony involving seclusion and darkness. Turner says that “in this betwixt and between period, in this fruitful darkness, king and people are closely identified. There is a mystical solidarity between them, which contrasts sharply with the hierarchical rank-dominated structure of ordinary Swazi life,” p 110.

<sup>80</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

<sup>81</sup> Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 25.

process, but a spatio-temporal phenomenon, that includes physical and metaphorical movement in the context of crossing borders, or of what borders themselves signify to the individual in relation to a group, and the crossing of time. In Turner's thought, the threshold person, in their ambiguity, is removed from any sort of structure, and is suspended within an attribute of anti-structure, because they have not received the attributes of their new social status. The threshold person is ambiguous, because the liminal phase removes anything considered socially normative in terms of structure, such as behavior, hierarchy, and aspects of space and time.

Turner continues to develop the social aspect of process and transition in his text *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action and Human Society*.<sup>82</sup> In this book, he introduces multiple concepts, such as social drama, processual view of society, and multi-vocality.<sup>83</sup> For Turner, the concept of "social drama" is situated in conflict when there is opposition between groups, suggesting that "when the interests and attitudes of groups and individuals stood in obvious opposition, social dramas did seem to me to constitute isolable and minutely describable units of social process."<sup>84</sup> What Turner describes is intended to place the social context of reality within moments that signify transition, either spatial, and/or temporal. Presumably, then, social drama is related to aspects of process and in terms of resolving conflict between groups, and the steps taken to achieve that. Turner says that "not every social drama reached a clear resolution, but enough did so to make it possible to state when I then called the 'processional form of the

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<sup>82</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action and Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

<sup>83</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 23.

<sup>84</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 33.

drama.”<sup>85</sup> This means that there are aspects of process and order that are cultivated within social groups that help interpret, engage, and resolve social drama. For Turner, this occurs in the social act of cultivating metaphors and archetypes to interpret social drama and process. This happens in what he terms to be “multivocal symbols and metaphors—each susceptible of many meanings, but with the core meanings linked analogically to the basic human problems of the epoch which may be pictured in biological, or mechanistic, or some other terms—these multivocals will yield to the action of the thought technicians who clear intellectual jungles, and organized systems of univocal concepts and signs will replace them.”<sup>86</sup> Turner is saying that the structures set to convey order in the midst of social drama invoke a multiplicity of meaning, dependent on the particular temporal and spatial aspects of a group to understand how to interpret its significance. Later, Turner develops the idea of social drama further in his essay “Social Dramas and Stories about Them.”<sup>87</sup> In this essay, Turner lists four phases that comprise social drama: breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or recognition of schism.<sup>88</sup> To explain how this concerns social dramas, Turner says that these dramas

occur within groups of persons who share values and interests and who have a real or alleged common history. The main actors are persons for whom the group has a high value priority. Most of us have what I call our “star” group or groups to which we owe our deepest loyalty and whose fate is for us of the greatest personal concern. It is the one with which a person identifies most deeply and in which he finds fulfillment of his major social and personal desires. We are all members of many groups, formal and informal, from the family to the nation or some international religious or political institution. Each person makes his/her own

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<sup>85</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 33.

<sup>86</sup> Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> Victor Turner, “Social Dramas and Stories about Them.” *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 141-68.

<sup>88</sup> Turner, “Social Dramas,” 149.



subjective evaluation of the group's respective worth: some are "dear" to one, others it is one's "duty to defend," and so on. Some tragic situations arise from conflicts of loyalty to different star groups.<sup>89</sup>

At this point, Turner is contextualizing the reality of lived experience in which we participate in numerous bodies and institutions in which we must adhere to their embedded structures, or face consequences. This can arise when a group we privilege might conflict with another group, or to take it further, when we turn away from what that group considers normative in behavior. Moreover, to integrate Turner's earlier ideas, the liminal figure participating in these social dramas is removed from their own social roles and behavioral structures; they are suspended in between modes of being, and as they transition, have an ambiguous identity.

In light of all this, Caroline Walker Bynum wrote an important critique of liminality and its ability to contextualize and interpret symbols and processes of transition as developed by Turner. Her essay, entitled "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality,"<sup>90</sup> approaches Turner's anthropological context, and considers the relationship of its methodology and theorizing to the study of medieval history and religion. The purpose of her essay is to interrogate Turner's presumptions in how he codifies ritual process into generalizations. In this essay, Bynum is particularly responding to Turner's texts *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, and "Social Dramas and the Stories about Them." Bynum asserts that Turner's "generalizations violate the subtlety of his own methodological commitments and that Turner's theory of religion is inadequate because it is based implicitly on the Christianity of a

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<sup>89</sup> Turner, "Social Dramas," 149.

<sup>90</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality" in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*, Robert L. Moore and Frank E. Reynolds, eds., 105-25 (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1984).

particular class, gender, and historical period.”<sup>91</sup> To center these critiques on social drama and symbols, Bynum focuses on the narrative of hagiographic vita and the symbol of the eucharist. She asserts that, when attempting to apply Turner’s models of drama and symbol to saints’ lives and the eucharist, that they describe better the stories of men, rather than women.<sup>92</sup> Bynum notes that vita focused on the experience of a women and sainthood “are less processual than men’s; they don’t have turning points. And when women recount their own lives, the themes are less climax, conversion, reintegration and triumph, the liminality of reversal or elevation, than continuity.”<sup>93</sup> Essentially, as Bynum notes, the women of saints’ lives remain in their state or typical experience, such as being a bride, and that state becomes enhanced, and then “one either has to see the women’s religious stance as permanently liminal or as never quite becoming so.”<sup>94</sup> Bynum effectively demonstrates how hagiography, typically composed by men, often reifies masculine experience, and in turn, Turner’s model confirms that as well. Regarding dominant symbols and the eucharist, Bynum succinctly demonstrates the interaction between social behavior and symbolism with the eucharist, and interrogates the multivocality of the eucharist as symbol according to Turner’s model by noting that women have been excluded from celebrating the rite of the eucharist. The way women participate in the eucharist, and its symbolism, ultimately does not afford overt agency to women and elevation of status, but rather ushers women further into a male dominated structure.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Bynum, “Women’s Stories,” 105.

<sup>92</sup> Bynum, “Women’s Stories,” 108.

<sup>93</sup> Bynum, “Women’s Stories,” 108.

<sup>94</sup> Bynum, “Women’s Stories,” 108.

<sup>95</sup> See Bynum, “Women’s Stories, 116 for more detail on the eucharist and how women are integrated into this symbol and ritual.

Bynum's critique, as crucial as it is, can also be read alongside the way liminality has continued to develop by Turner, and how others have adapted or pushed the boundaries of what this theory means. Other implications of Turner's work are outlined by Dara Downey, Ian Kinane, and Elizabeth Parker. In their edited anthology of essays, entitled *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place*,<sup>96</sup> they assert that

in effect, Turner contends that in (post)modern societies, in which rules of law and traditional customs have undergone major upheaval or change, individuals and communities are left in a continually unfixed, de-structured, and liminal state of existence, caught between the conventions of customary social practices and the burgeoning social practices of new and radically different social formations.<sup>97</sup>

This means that the social divisions van Gennep envisioned as the foundation for rites of passages to occur still exist, but seem to produce more and more societal fragmentation. All of this advances the anxiety potentially inherent in the threshold person, because the person crossing the threshold must adapt and adopt to a new existence post-transition, but in a social structure that may lack the cohesiveness that is contained within other systems.

While this development from Turner inculcated a popularizing of liminality as a theoretical approach for a multitude of disciplines and analysis of social structures, other scholars note the way in which liminality has become a sort of catch-all lens for viewing any sort of ambiguity or transition, detaching it from its initial praxis. The result is that the theory of liminality has helped developed a discourse where political, geographic, temporal, and traumatic aspects are viewed within a range of academic disciplines; this means that the anxiety felt by

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<sup>96</sup> Dara Downey, Ian Kinane, and Elizabeth Parker, eds., *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

<sup>97</sup> Downey, Kinane, Parker, *Landscapes of Liminality*, 8.

scholars in the apparent weakening of the theory of liminality shows that it has become unmoored from its original bearings and structures. However,

Bjørn Thomassen has noted that liminality ‘involves a potentially *unlimited freedom* from any kind of structure.’ This ‘unlimited freedom’ accounts in large part for the appropriation of liminality (as term and as concept) within academic parlance, precisely because the term ‘liminal’ has come to stand for the indefinable and the interstitial, the as-of-yet inexpressible complexities of certain in-between concepts and ideas.<sup>98</sup>

The theory of liminality is itself a liminal subject, and as such, becomes applicable to the various instances in which individuals or groups find themselves within a sense of an objective in-between state. As before, where the rites of passage dictated senses of social progression, from childbirth to death, the threshold person is now a political subject, such as an immigrant who has left their country, an exile who has been banished from their home, or a religious figure who has been excommunicated from their spiritual center. The liminal person is a lived experience, which leads to the important idea that liminality is not used as an abstraction, but instead observed within groups and individuals.<sup>99</sup>

This work certainly fits the above stated directive concerning liminality—that it is something observed, not used—but how does this work with literary studies? Numerous texts apply liminality as a theoretical lens for contextualizing narratives.<sup>100</sup> An article of Joyce Tally

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<sup>98</sup> Downey, Kinane, Parker, *Landscapes of Liminality*, 9.

<sup>99</sup> “[L]iminality explains nothing’; liminality *is*; it happens, and it takes place. It is in itself something to be observed, rather than something to be utilised.” Downey, Kinane, Parker, *Landscapes of Liminality*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> For examples not related to Anglo-Saxon or medieval literature, see Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Literature and Liminality: Festive Readings in the Hispanic Tradition* (1986), which uses liminality as a critical and interpretive lens to conceptualize how specific marginal aspects appear in Hispanic literature. *Liminality in Fantastic Fiction: A Poststructuralist Approach* (2012), written by Sandor Klapcsik, approaches the postmodern expansion of liminality as a theoretical approach to examine how the liminal functions in contemporary literature.

Lionarons, entitled “Bodies, Building, and Boundaries: Metaphors of Liminality in Old English and Old Norse Literature,”<sup>101</sup> begins by considering metaphors related to the body in Old English literature, *banhus* (“bone-house”), *bansale* (“bone-hall”), and *banhusweard* (“the guardian of the bone-house”).<sup>102</sup> Lionarons writes that these metaphors suggest the human body as a building, or place of its own, and therefore the body constitutes its own liminal boundary, where border crossings can occur in often violent ways.<sup>103</sup> This article is focused on the relationship between body and location in *Beowulf* and the Old Norse *Grettis saga*, and the idea of violent penetration as a border crossing is the focus of this paper. While not wholly applicable for this project, her conclusion is important:

Medieval stories about monster- and giant-quellings, when they may be said to have thematic content at all, are for the most part concerned with threats to and problems of social order. As such, they tend to emphasize the setting and maintenance of limits and borders; the hero is one who—often by virtue of his own marginal status—can define and enforce those societal boundaries.<sup>104</sup>

The literature of this dissertation is not necessarily focused on conflict between hero and monster, but other forms of conflict that result in theological disobedience. The idea of location and body is of ultimate concern for these texts that are focused on seeking salvation, because all are marginalized bodies wandering back to God’s presence.

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<sup>101</sup> Joyce Tally Lionarons, “Bodies, Buildings, and Boundaries: Metaphors of Liminality in Old English and Old Norse Literature,” *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association* 11 (1994): 43-50.

<sup>102</sup> Lionarons, “Bodies, Buildings, and Boundaries,” 43.

<sup>103</sup> “When figured corporeally, the crossing of a liminal boundary can take the metaphorical form of a body ingesting foreign objects, receiving wounds, or undergoing what is usually presented as violent sexual penetration.” Lionarons, “Bodies, Buildings, and Boundaries,” 43.

<sup>104</sup> Lionarons, “Bodies, Buildings, and Boundaries,” 49.

Finally, one work relevant to this dissertation deserves mention. *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature*,<sup>105</sup> written by Johanna Kramer, embraces the theory of liminality to exegete medieval Anglo-Saxon depictions of the Ascension of Christ in Old English sermons and art to discern what that moment signified and how it operated for Christian Anglo-Saxon communities. Regarding the moment of the Ascension, Kramer notes that it is

liminal in a concretely spatial sense: the ascending Christ crosses the boundary between earth and heaven, and his actions thus straddle two spaces. This is important for Ascension texts for two reasons. First, this means that the Ascension is not an instantaneous event but a process—an extended journey—and this journey from earth to heaven can be narrated and dramatized. Second, the crossing of the threshold, the *limen*, to heaven is a moment that becomes a narrative focal point because it can encapsulate the significance of the Ascension from a theological perspective.<sup>106</sup>

Kramer's text is indelibly formative for this dissertation in demonstrating how liminality can be employed to consider a careful theorizing of exile from a centuries later anthropological context. It is also analogous in that it may not treat the concept of exile, but it does center its discussion in what it means to journey to heaven in following Christ within their own Anglo-Saxon context, and the patristic heritage that formed them and their expressions of social and religious symbols.

### **Chapter Outlines**

Chapter One will consider patristic and other literary sources that mention exile to examine how those texts informed and affected theology in Anglo-Saxon England. A significant link to patristic theology and teaching comes through Theodore of Tarsus (602-690), a monastic

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<sup>105</sup> Johanna Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven*, 7.

who was elevated to Archbishop of Canterbury in the seventh century. The school he established in Anglo-Saxon England, with the African monk Hadrian, provided the possibility for works in Greek to be presented and circulated in England, as well as for those works to be translated from Greek into Latin for a wider and more Latinate literate audience. The exegetical training that was provided by their school will be discussed, along with other works made accessible in Anglo-Saxon England. Some of these works are from the Eastern monastic John Cassian (ca. 360-435), and the Greek archbishop John Chrysostom (ca. 349-407). Cassian's text, *The Institutes of the Cenobia and the Renunciation of the Eight Principle Vices*, was used in Anglo-Saxon England in developing monastic rules, and portions of it were even used as a rule itself before the Rule of Benedict became the standard for monastic governance. Bede (672-735), in his *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, mentions a specific treatise from Chrysostom that was introduced to Anglo-Saxon England through Theodore and Hadrian's school. The treatise, entitled *No One Can Be Harmed Except By Himself*, was written by Chrysostom in his final exile before his death, and in it he argues that the condition of exile is of no concern, in that it mimics the exile we experience from heaven, but that more importantly, it is possible to find your way back to your heavenly fatherland. This treatise demonstrates not only the influence that Theodore and Hadrian had in providing accessibility to Greek patristic thought, but in how that patristic thought becomes foundational for Anglo-Saxon Christians.

Chapter Two will consider two anonymous hagiographic accounts of the tenth century, the *Guthlac* poems of the Exeter Book and the Old English vita of Saint Mary of Egypt. The *Guthlac* poems, translated from Felix's Latin version into Old English, feature the historical saint Guthlac (674-715) as he becomes a hermit and takes residence in the fens, engaging in spiritual

battle with the demonic that inhabit the Anglo-Saxon wasteland. His ascetic struggle eventually becomes translated into an illness, and with his health failing, he becomes an icon of what it means to suffer with patience, and then to receive your reward for your struggles. The Old English life of Mary of Egypt features the encounter that an Eastern monk, Zosimus, has with with desert hermit, Mary, deep within the Egyptian desert during the season of Lent. In this text, typical hagiographic roles are subverted, and Mary displays a spiritual authority over Zosimus that brings fear, and conveys the sacred reality she participates in while living in the physicality of the desert. These texts will show how this theologically driven genre demonstrate an Anglo-Saxon literary culture that privileged exile as a means of signifying our place in the world, and what it means to embrace hardship on the journey back to heaven. This texts show how the practice of exile is inherently liminal, but also show how monastic practice made a theology of exile uniquely Anglo-Saxon in literary culture by overtly coupling ideas of wrath with banishment, and again, furthered a heavenly citizenship over any other identity.

Chapter Three focuses on the interaction between the Rule of Benedict, liturgics, and Anglo-Saxon homiletics. The spiritual climate of Anglo-Saxon England, from early on, can be characterized as monastic. This monastic influence becomes consistent later in its expression, specifically due to the Benedictine Reform of the tenth century. The Rule of Benedict, written by Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480-547) in the sixth century, became the text that exemplified monastic practice, worship, and thought in Anglo-Saxon England, and one of the more significant figures of the Benedictine Reform, Ælfric of Eynsham (ca. 955-1010), wrote numerous homilies for the cycles of the church year and saints' lives to be read for other audiences at that time. The Rule of Benedict's chapters on the practice of excommunication, and one of Ælfric's homilies, written



for the first day of Rogationtide, will be placed in dialogue with each other to examine what being an exile and stranger meant in this particular religious context. Additionally, context will be provided for the liturgical procession of Rogationtide that was performed on the boundaries of landscapes while petitions were expressed. The foundation of the Rogationtide procession is one of acknowledging our place of wandering, and that our we are searching for our true home.

Chapter Four will consider the way liminality is constructed and observed through the use of Jewish identity and the Old Testament by Anglo-Saxons. This occurs through adaptation of Old Testament scripture through medieval authors such as Gildas (d. 500), Bede, and Wulfstan of York. These authors approach Old Testament scripture as a means of achieving their own rhetorical and theological aims. This occurs through constructing a narrative that appropriates and imposes Jewish salvific history as a means of explaining their own circumstances. This chapter will end with a result of this adaptation of narratively Jewish figures to achieve their own theological aims — a discussion focused on Abraham, who was used by medieval authors as a monastic exemplum to reify ideas of asceticism, space, and promise. Monastic authors encoded the liminal upon Abraham as a signifier of various threshold crossings, and in that manner, Abraham becomes a multivalent textual and theological symbol of what it means to be an Anglo-Saxon monastic and Christian, wandering and looking for the heavenly country.

The various terms that are used to describe the condition of social and spiritual exclusion, such as banishment, outlawry, *peregrinatio* or pilgrimage, wandering, excommunication, and exile, are all physical and psychological processes that are intended to resolve conflict and induce physical and spiritual separation, and/or reintegration, and these methods are employed in the context in which particular social dramas are being enacted. Klaus Neumann, in writing

about modern ideas of exile and refugees, says that “exile denotes a place of banishment. Exile, as a place, presupposes its opposite, home. Refugees, once they have reached a, however temporary, endpoint on the flight that has taken them away from home, frequently become exiles: living in a place of banishment and identifying or being regarded as people who have lost their homes.”<sup>107</sup> In this manner, all Anglo-Saxon Christians might have considered themselves as spiritual refugees, trying to find their way home to reverse the first banishment of Adam and Eve.

There is no one way to discuss exile — only a multiplicity that uncovers the various ways in which exclusion happens, and the various purposes for that exclusion. Some exclude themselves, such as hermits, who take flight from society to engage in battle with the demonic. They remove themselves from their home, and wander, embodying banishment itself. Some are forced into exclusion, like those who experience excommunication in monastic contexts, with the hope that the offending monastic will repent, and save themselves from both spiritual death and spiritual exile. The focus of this dissertation then is to discuss the theological underpinnings in which exile develops in Anglo-Saxon England, and to consider what it means for those individually and in groups to transition into different forms of exile. The exile, then, is inherently liminal, a threshold person, moving across physical and spiritual thresholds, yet always remaining betwixt and between place and experience. The exile in this manner then reveals what theological implications arise from these transitions, as they cross their respective thresholds, looking for God, salvation, and home.

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<sup>107</sup> Klaus Neumann, “‘Thinking the Forbidden Concept’: Refugees as Immigrants and Exiles,” *Antipodes* 19, no. 1 (June 2005): 6.

## Chapter 1: Patristics, Early Monastic Literature, and *Patria* in Anglo-Saxon England

Patristic commentaries, exegesis, and other theological literature provided the facility to read the scriptures in different ways, and to be formed by other spiritual ideas.<sup>108</sup> Michael Lapidge’s *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, especially the section entitled “Catalogue of Classical and Patristic Authors and Works Composed before AD 700 and Known in Anglo-Saxon England,”<sup>109</sup> reveals the breadth and scope of theologically-focused content available to early Anglo-Saxon Christians. This breadth is especially witnessed through the importation of texts into Anglo-Saxon England, demonstrating cross-cultural exchange of theological ideas that could be adapted by Anglo-Saxons. The potential reconstruction of these early medieval libraries implies that clerics and monastics—theological authorities responsible for the craft of homiletics and theological culture—might have been reading Latin texts of Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo alongside the Greek theological culture of Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea, albeit translated into Latin.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, monastic literature deserves attention for its contribution in cultivating a framework that portrayed the ascetic life as “betwixt and between” earth and heaven. Hagiographic texts that feature desert fathers, hermits, and anchorites were part of the

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<sup>108</sup> Here, patristics and the patristic era is defined as the various theological and spiritual literature, written in Latin, Greek, Syriac, or other languages, from the end of the Apostolic Age, being approximately the year 100, to the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 787.

<sup>109</sup> See Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 275-342.

<sup>110</sup> For example, thirty-three different entries, of either actual manuscripts or citations from other sources, many of which have multiple copies, are listed of Ambrose’s works that were circulated prior to 700. Seventy-four different entries of manuscripts and citations are listed for Augustine. See Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 276-80 (Ambrose), and 282-91 (Augustine). In contrast to Ambrose and Augustine, Athanasius has two entries listed, and Basil has three. See Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 281 (Athanasius), and 292 (Basil). However, these numbers should not be considered negligible. What these entries represent are the transmission of ideas. Case in point, Athanasius’ *Vita S. Antonii*, translated by Evagrius, contains citations from Theodore and Hadrian, presumably related to their school, but that also creates connections with Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin, who are then beneficiaries of Theodore and Hadrian providing accessibility for that work.

textual and theological culture of that time. Moreover, formal monastic literature, including *regula*, were significant additions in shaping Anglo-Saxon Christianity.<sup>111</sup> The patristic and monastic heritage that became incorporated into the spiritual landscape of Anglo-Saxon England helped define the mindset of being a spiritual exile, wandering, standing in the margins of a spiritual world, while firmly engaged in an earthly one.

This chapter will consider a selection of patristic and monastic-centered literature in Anglo-Saxon England, for the purpose of surveying the theological work of this time, and how it potentially shaped an spiritually exilic worldview that became embedded in their culture.<sup>112</sup> The argument of this chapter is that a developed sense of Anglo-Saxon spiritual exile was informed at least in part by Greek patristic influence, and that this Greek theological influence can be sourced to Theodore of Tarsus and his influence as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Discussing the textual culture developed through the eighth-century Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, is necessary for understanding the theological environment that was eventually advanced in Anglo-Saxon England. Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek-speaking monk from Asia Minor, and his associate Greek speaking monastic Hadrian from Africa, established a school in Anglo-Saxon England which provided the opportunity for transmission of theological ideas from Latin and Greek sources. Both Theodore and Hadrian had facility with the Greek language and texts, which lent itself to an expressive accessibility of literature that otherwise

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<sup>111</sup> The Rule of Benedict survives in eleven manuscripts from Anglo-Saxon England. Evidence to suggest the Rule's eventual importance for Anglo-Saxons, other than attestations of surviving manuscripts: Theodore and Hadrian cite the Rule three times, but Bede cites it eighty-two times, and Ælfric cites it forty-one times. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 293.

<sup>112</sup> The literature focused on for this chapter is chiefly prior to the English Benedictine Reform of the tenth century, for the sake of establishing a particular discourse that had been continued throughout late Anglo-Saxon England.

may not have been integrated in later theological work. Due to Theodore's influence, the monastic literature of John Cassian, a fifth century monk whose writings, particularly *The Institutes of the Cenobia and the Renunciation of the Eight Principle Vices*, were adapted in Theodore and Hadrian's school, and circulated in Anglo-Saxon England, and influential in developing monastic practice in Anglo-Saxon England.

Theodore's provision of Greek patristic literature remained influential on another significant figure of Anglo-Saxon literary culture, a Benedictine monk of the eighth century, Bede the Venerable. While the introduction of manuscripts of John Chrysostom, the exiled fifth-century Archbishop of Constantinople, is attributed to Theodore of Tarsus, a particular work of Chrysostom's, *Quod nemo laeditur nisi a semetipso*, or *No One Can Be Harmed Except by Himself*,<sup>113</sup> is referenced and echoed by Bede in his commentary on the Catholic epistles. This text, written during Chrysostom's final exile before his death, is notable in its argument that privileged a heavenly citizenship in contrast to an earthly one, and advocated for interpreting the experience of a physical exile in light of exile from heaven.

### **Archbishop Theodore in Anglo-Saxon England**

Michael Lapidge notes that until more recent times, what was known about Theodore of Tarsus came from Bede in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, such as his date of death of September 19, 690, his education in secular works, as well as Latin and Greek Christian texts, his appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury in Rome on March 26, 668, and a description of the happy state the English found themselves in since their arrival in England,

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<sup>113</sup> The edition is Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Volume IX: Saint Chrysostom: On the Priesthood; Ascetic Treatises; Select Homilies and Letters; Homilies on the Statues (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889). The treatise is hereafter referred to as *No One Can Be Harmed*.

mentioned in IV.1 of the *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>114</sup> In the *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.1, Bede recounts that Hadrian, an African monk near Naples, was responsible for Theodore's appointment to the archiepiscopacy in Canterbury:

At apostolicus papa habito de his consilio quaesivit sedulus, quem ecclesiis Anglorum archiepiscopum mitteret. Erat autem in monasterio Hiridano, quod est non longe a Neapoli Campaniae, abbas Hadrianus, uir Afir sacris litteris diligenter inbutus, monasterialibus simul et ecclesiasticis disciplinis institutus, Graecae pariter et Latinae linguae peritissimus.<sup>115</sup>

Hadrian proposed Theodore to the pope, and the pope acceded, but on the condition that Hadrian prevent Theodore from introducing potentially problematic Greek customs into worship: “et ut ei doctrinae cooperator existens diligenter adtenderet, ne quid ille contrarium ueritati fidei Graecorum more in ecclesiam cui praeesset introduceret.”<sup>116</sup> Lapidge argues that, in addition to the theological and academic work of the Canterbury school, he was also involved in shaping aspects of liturgical worship, such as the inclusion of a Persian saint, Miles, in the *Old English Martyrology*; the occurrence of a Greek vita for another Persian saint, the martyr Anastasius, and

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Lapidge, “The career of Archbishop Theodore,” in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1. For other treatment of Theodore, and other surrounding context of the episcopacy in Canterbury, see Alan Thacker, “Gallic or Greek? Archbishops in England from Theodore to Ecgberht” in *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson*, eds. Paul Fouracre and David Gantz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

<sup>115</sup> Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, eds., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 328. “The pope took advice about the matter and tried very hard to find someone to send out as archbishop of the English Church. Now there was in the monastery of Hiridanum, not far from Naples in Campania, a certain Abbot Hadrian, a man of African race and well versed in the holy Scriptures, trained both in monastic and ecclesiastical ways and equally skilled in the Greek and Latin tongues,” 329.

<sup>116</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 330. “Also, being a fellow labourer in his teaching work, he would take great care to prevent Theodore from introducing into the church over which he presided any Greek customs which might be contrary to the true faith,” 331. Colgrave and Mynors note that “the pope was perhaps thinking of the Monothelite heresy and also, it may be, of the Monophysite heresy. Theodore, like all the Greeks, accepted the Roman Easter but apparently not the Roman form of tonsure,” 330, ff. 3.

a Greek litany located in BL Cotton Galba A. xviii.<sup>117</sup> In terms of ecclesiastical discipline, Lapidge writes that the penitential texts associated with Theodore reflect a prominent presence of Greek sources as authority for canonical issues.<sup>118</sup> Despite the pope's injunction to Hadrian that Theodore be prevented from interjecting certain liturgical and theological customs into the English Church, the inclusion of Greek spirituality flourished in the background as he stood between two theological cultures.

In terms of education, Lapidge posits that Theodore traveled to Antioch in his pursuit for scholarship, given the proximity of Antioch to Tarsus.<sup>119</sup> This connection to Antioch creates a critical sense of early patristic influence for Theodore to enter into. Because of Antioch's location, it was a part of a network of trade routes that included access to Syria, Persia, and China.<sup>120</sup> In addition to economic advantages, this provided a sense of multiculturalism in terms of exchange of ideas, which was significant due to the number of schools in Antioch at this time.<sup>121</sup> His placement in Antioch would have afforded him the opportunity to read a wide-range of texts translated from other source languages, such as the works of Ephrem the Syrian translated into Greek.<sup>122</sup> The proximity of Antioch to Syria also allowed Theodore to travel Edessa, and this influence is noted in the Canterbury biblical commentaries in terms of Syriac

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<sup>117</sup> Michael Lapidge, "The school of Theodore and Hadrian," *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986), 49.

<sup>118</sup> Bernard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151-2. For an edition of the canons of Theodore, see R.D. Fulk and Stefan Jurasinski, eds., *The Old English Canons of Theodore* EETS SS 25 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> Lapidge, "The career of Archbishop Theodore," 3.

<sup>120</sup> Lapidge, "The career of Archbishop Theodore," 4.

<sup>121</sup> Lapidge, "The career of Archbishop Theodore," 4.

<sup>122</sup> Lapidge, "The career of Archbishop Theodore," 6.

etymology and patristic sources.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, there is a possibility that Theodore traveled to Rome and lived in a monastic community in the mid-seventh century. If true, he would have encountered the bitter Monothelite controversy, a theological debate centered on whether Christ has one discernible will or two wills.<sup>124</sup> This would have warranted a monumental exposure to a theological debate that shaped christocentric thought in the Church, and according to Lapidge, evidence might suggest he was influential in Rome during this debate, given his Greek patristic background from his time in Antioch.<sup>125</sup> If Theodore was a student in Antioch studying biblical exegesis, then he would have been introduced and trained in the very specific style of Antiochene exegesis, associated with Diodore of Tarsus, which is in contrast to the system of Alexandrian exegesis, associated with Origen. Antiochene exegesis was a critical method that focused on the “literal” sense of the text, or the meaning of scripture through etymology and other aspects rooted in more natural explanations. Bischoff and Lapidge explain Antiochene exegesis as a “philological” technique, where

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<sup>123</sup> Lapidge notes that there is a mention of Edessa in a commentary on Numbers 11:5 that mentions cucumbers and melons, saying that “*cucumbers and melons* are the same thing, but cucumbers are called *pepones* when they grow large, and often one *pepon* will weigh thirty pounds. In the city of Edessa they grow so large that a camel can scarcely carry two of them.” Lapidge, “The career of Archbishop Theodore,” 7. For more on the connection between Theodore and Syriac sources, see Sebastian P. Brock, “The Syriac background,” in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30-53, and his article “St Theodore of Canterbury, the Canterbury School and the Christian East,” *Heythrop Journal* 36 (1995): 431-38; and Dale A. Johnson, “Oriental Christian Contributions to Britain in the Seventh Century,” *Coptic Church Review* 23 (2002): 111-7.

<sup>124</sup> Regarding monothelitism, it was “a second attempt on the part of the Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (died 638) to make the doctrine of the ‘two natures’ in Christ more palatable to moderate monophysites. After proposing monergism and then withdrawing it, Sergius proposed that, although there are in Christ two natures, there is only one will—*thelema*—hence the name ‘monothelitism.’ Exactly what this meant is not altogether clear. At any rate, Sergius’s proposal was never accepted by most monophysites, and was soundly rejected by the more traditional defenders of the Definition of Chalcedon — led by Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662). Finally, the Sixth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 681) rejected monothelitism.” Justo L. González, *Essential Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 116.

<sup>125</sup> Lapidge, “The career of Archbishop Theodore,” 19-26.



they concerned themselves with establishing the reading of the original biblical text (whether in Hebrew or Greek) and with the difficulties posed by resulting translations; parallel passages in various versions were compared in order to elucidate the meaning of a particular word. Antiochene exegetes habitually had recourse to ancient lexica in the course of their linguistic analysis of the sacred text. Similarly, other ‘scientific’ disciplines, such as medicine, philosophy and rhetoric, were pressed into service.<sup>126</sup>

Conversely, the Alexandrian methodology for exegesis was focused on revealing the allegorical meaning of the text, and deriving meaning through a supposed inherent symbolism.<sup>127</sup> This early training in Antiochene exegesis is thoroughly evident in one of Theodore’s more significant contributions to the scriptural and theological presence of Anglo-Saxon England, which is the Canterbury biblical commentaries on the Pentateuch and the gospels.

### **The Canterbury Biblical Commentaries**

In terms of manuscripts, there are no extant texts of the Canterbury biblical commentaries that survive, but instead varying levels of fragments that piece together what the original looked like.<sup>128</sup> The commentaries are thought to have been composed between the mid-seventh and mid-eighth century, due to the other source texts known to be used in their composition. The commentaries are not necessarily the work of Theodore and Hadrian themselves, but their

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<sup>126</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, eds., *Biblical Commentaries*, 245. For a discussion on the the Canterbury commentaries and other Anglo-Saxon biblical glosses, see the earlier J. D. Pfeifer, “Early Anglo-Saxon Glossaries and the School of Canterbury,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 16 (1987): 17-44, and also a more recent text, John J. Contreni, “Glossing the Bible in the Early Middle Ages: Theodore and Hadrian of Canterbury and John Scottus (Eriugena)” in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards, eds., 19-38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

<sup>127</sup> For an introduction to the Antiochene and Alexandrian methods, see Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1998). This is a more popular source, but gives examples of a selection of patristic era figures and their respective methodologies for the exegesis of scripture.

<sup>128</sup> See Bischoff and Bernard, *Biblical Commentaries*, 275-95 for their extensive survey of the surviving manuscripts.

thought written down by their students.<sup>129</sup> The use of certain sources not only provides dating for its composition, but demonstrates the breadth of Latin and Greek patristic sources that informed this exegetical project, with the inclusion of Greek sources as an especially important sense of accessibility to other theological ideas. Bernard Bischoff and Lapidge note that while the text was composed in Latin, there was not a significant number of Latin patristic sources used or mentioned in the compilation of this text,<sup>130</sup> presumably because Latin patristic texts were overwhelmingly allegorical in nature.<sup>131</sup> Augustine and Jerome are explicitly cited, and Isidore is quoted, but not mentioned by name. The particular use of Jerome's commentaries with his philological methodology for interpretive movements demonstrates the appeal to Antiochene exegetical sensibilities.<sup>132</sup> The commentary on Genesis provides an exceptional reference for demonstrating these exegetical markers; for example, regarding Genesis 3:7 from the Vulgate, "et aperti sunt oculi amborum cumque cognovissent esse se nudos consuerunt folia ficus et fecerunt sibi perizomata,"<sup>133</sup> the commentary for that passage focuses on the term *perizomata*, a Greek loanword (περίζωμα) that means girdle, loincloth, or breeches.<sup>134</sup> The Canterbury biblical commentary here refrains from providing any theological or spiritual interpretation for the text. Instead, the annotation for this verse only says "Aprons: that is, wrap around overalls, like a sort

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<sup>129</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 1.

<sup>130</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 201.

<sup>131</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 247.

<sup>132</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 203.

<sup>133</sup> Douay-Rheims translation: "And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons."

<sup>134</sup> *Dictionary of Medieval Latin in British Sources*, "Perizoma," <http://logeion.uchicago.edu/perizoma>. Accessed 29 January 2019.

of sheepskin garment, that is, breeches.”<sup>135</sup> The concern of Theodore and Hadrian is not centered on providing an allegorical interpretation for what the apron is, but instead to situate it within discernible usage and understand the practicality of the situation of Adam and Eve, rooted in the lexical explanation of a potentially foreign term. This is in contrast to Augustine’s exegesis of the same verse in *On Genesis*, wherein he states that after Adam and Eve ate the fruit,

that is when they saw that they were naked, but with eyes asquint, to which the simplicity signified by nakedness seemed something to be ashamed of. And so, as they were simple, they made themselves aprons from fig leaves, to cover their private parts, that is to conceal their simplicity, of which cunning pride was now ashamed. Fig leaves, though, signify a kind of itch (if the word can properly be applied in the incorporeal sphere), which the spirit in astonishing ways can be afflicted with, out of greed and a delight in telling lies. This is also why people who love playing the fool are said to be salty, *salsi* in Latin. Pretense, after all, is the principal element in tomfoolery.<sup>136</sup>

Bischoff and Lapidge note that this particular text was not referenced in the Canterbury commentary, because “in general, it would seem that the Commentator found Augustine’s characteristic prolixity uncongenial to the task of of interpreting scripture.”<sup>137</sup> Prolixity aside, this exegesis also wanders into epistemological concerns while attempting to discern the meaning of the text due to its insistence of how “fig” should be understood, then connected with creating an allegorical meaning from a physical characteristic, then delving into an exegesis of behavior through etymology. Thus, Theodore and Hadrian’s commentary is a witness to careful

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<sup>135</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 311.

<sup>136</sup> Edmund Hill, trans., *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis by Augustine of Hippo* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2002), 87.

<sup>137</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 202.

selection and precision of previous sources to create a particular patristic and textual discourse.<sup>138</sup>

The use of Greek patristic authors that are used in the Canterbury biblical commentaries also situates the school of Theodore and Hadrian within a specific exegetical methodology and theological sense. Bischoff and Lapidge point out that six Greek authors are cited by name: Basil of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria, Cosmas Indicopleustes, Ephrem Graecus, Epiphanius of Salamis, John Chrysostom, and Flavius Josephus. Moreover, Ephrem the Syrian is quoted as well.<sup>139</sup> Other Greek sources that are not mentioned by name include Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Severian of Gabala, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Maximus the Confessor, John Moschus, and Procopius of Gaza.<sup>140</sup> The overwhelming presence of Greek authors should not be surprising. For example, it is attested that even though biblical learning at the Canterbury school occurred with the Latin Vulgate translation, Theodore and Hadrian were both Greek speakers, who possibly routinely referenced either the Greek Old Testament from the Septuagint, or a Greek New Testament, to reconcile difficult passages.<sup>141</sup> One of the more important names in this list is John Chrysostom, a significant proponent of the Antiochene method of exegesis. Chrysostom is mentioned by name as an authority seven times in the commentaries, more than anyone else.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> For more on the Canterbury commentaries and their use, see Tristan Major, “The Early Anglo-Saxon School at Canterbury” in *Undoing Babel*, 78-95 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

<sup>139</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 206.

<sup>140</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 219-29. These pages provide outlines of who these authors were and what might have been used in the commentaries.

<sup>141</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 197.

<sup>142</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 214. Despite this presence of citations, it is noted that discerning what is really considered authentically a Chrysostom manuscript in the Middle Ages is difficult to determine.

One pertinent reference from Chrysostom in reading exile in the scriptures is seen at the moment of Adam and Eve's banishment from Eden, where the commentary contextualizes temporal and spatial markers and the hours of the day in Genesis 3:8, where God is walking in the Garden, and Adam and Eve hide themselves.<sup>143</sup> The time of day, the afternoon, was important to exegete here, because this was "at the beginning of the seventh hour, since John Chrysostom says that Adam was created at the third hour, sinned at the sixth hour and was cast out of Paradise at the ninth hour. And he says this *à propos* the future occurrences at the Crucifixion of Christ."<sup>144</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge's commentary on this portion notes that it seems unlikely Chrysostom says this, but there are several instances of other patristic sources, such as Severian of Gabala, Procopius of Gaza, and Cosmas Indicopleustes, that suggest Adam's banishment, or at least his visitation from God, occurs at the hour of Christ's crucifixion, or that Adam sinned at the sixth hour, at the same hour in which Christ was crucified.<sup>145</sup> For an Anglo-Saxon audience, this can offer a complicated reading of that moment, where the penalty of transgression is linked to Christ's suffering. Admittedly, it is difficult to adduce how this might have impacted the theological and textual culture of Anglo-Saxon England, given the relative scarcity of sources that bear direct relation to Theodore and Hadrian's influence. However, this offers an important

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<sup>143</sup> "Et cum audissent vocem Domini Dei deambulantis in paradiso ad auram post meridiem abscondit se Adam et uxor eius a facie Domini Dei in medio ligni paradisi." Douay-Rheims: "And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise."

<sup>144</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 311.

<sup>145</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 444-5. Bischoff and Lapidge note that there is no indication that Chrysostom says this, p. 444. While there is no known reference that Chrysostom made which specifically places Adam and Eve's creation, transgression, and expulsion at those hours, Brock writes this seems to be an analog with a Syriac commentary, the *Caves of Treasures*, which is still a testament to Theodore's influence and accessibility of Eastern theological sources and ideas. See Brock, "St Theodore of Canterbury," 435.

glimpse in the Eastern exegetical practices that Anglo-Saxons would have been exposed to in their studies at that point. The connection between transgression, banishment, and suffering is clear, and offers an eschatological point of view that possibly suggests exile and its relationship to wrath, and how exile fits into the history of salvation.

Archbishop Theodore left an indelible mark on the Anglo-Saxon religious landscape. Theodore and Hadrian, as medieval academics and monastics, demonstrated multiculturalism and theological thought from both Latin and Greek sources through their school. It is difficult to ascertain just how much of impact there was, because undeniably, Theodore and Hadrian seem to have been the only impetus for the presence of Greek patristic thought in Anglo-Saxon England. Their impact, though, can be seen in the textual transmission of other sources that were interjected into the theological life of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>146</sup> The Canterbury commentaries are a textual site for these interactions, and contain the exegetical mindset in which many Anglo-Saxons were influenced by — if not specifically Antiochene exegesis, then the thematic and theological approaches of Eastern patristic thought that helped develop a theology of exile in the West. Another of these sources that will be treated next is the monastic literature of John Cassian, which shows the impact Theodore and Hadrian had in making available other sources, but also the potential that Cassian had in shaping monastic practice, and the adoption of monastic ideas in Anglo-Saxon England prior to the Benedictine Reform of the tenth century.

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<sup>146</sup> For more on the influence that Theodore had in Anglo-Saxon England, and more broadly speaking the attested interaction between England and Rome during 670 and 1030, see Michael Lapidge, “Byzantium, Rome, and England in the Early Middle Ages,” *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo* 49 (2002): 363-400.

### John Cassian and Monasticism in Early Anglo-Saxon England

John Cassian, whose monastic texts, *The Institutes of the Cenobia and the Renunciation of the Eight Principle Vices* and *Conferences of the Desert Fathers* were circulated in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>147</sup> More than likely, this stems from Theodore and Hadrian's school,<sup>148</sup> with Cassian's *Institutes* showing up in the *Leiden Glossary*.<sup>149</sup> The Abbot of Malmesbury, Aldhelm, also made use of Cassian's *Institutes* in the work *De virginitate*,<sup>150</sup> in addition to echoes of Cassian showing up in a *vita* of St. Cuthbert, a response from Pope Gregory to Augustine of Canterbury, and finally Bede in his biblical exegesis.<sup>151</sup>

Cassian was born approximately in 360, and around 380-390 left his home Dacia in what would be modern day Romania to become a monk in Bethlehem.<sup>152</sup> Cassian spoke both Latin and Greek, and at some point he traveled to Egypt, where he was introduced to Egyptian forms of anchoritic and cenobitic monasticism that was practiced in the desert.<sup>153</sup> He was ordained by John Chrysostom to the diaconate soon after the year 400, and eventually ordained a priest by Pope Innocent I. Following that, he traveled to Marseilles, and established two monasteries and wrote the aforementioned *Institutes*, *Conferences*, and a treatise entitled *On the Incarnation of*

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<sup>147</sup> See Stephen Lake, "Knowledge of the writings of John Cassian in early Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2003): 27-41 for more information on the circulation of Cassian's manuscripts

<sup>148</sup> See Lapidge, "The school of Theodore and Hadrian," 45-72, for more in-depth study of this theological environment in Anglo-Saxon England.

<sup>149</sup> For an edition and more information on the *Leiden Glossary*, see Jan Hendrik Hessels, *A Late Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary Preserved in the Library of the Leiden University* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>150</sup> Lake, "Knowledge of the writings of John Cassian," 32.

<sup>151</sup> Lake, "Knowledge of the writings of John Cassian," 34, 36, and 39.

<sup>152</sup> Boniface Ramsey, trans., *John Cassian: The Institutes* (New York: The Newman Press, 2000), 3

<sup>153</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 3.

*Christ against the Nestorians*.<sup>154</sup> He wrote his texts in Latin, but they were eventually translated into Greek.<sup>155</sup> Later, Benedict of Nursia, writing his rule in the sixth century, mentions the works of Cassian as tools for helping attain virtue, along with the monastic rule of Basil of Caesarea.<sup>156</sup>

While manuscripts of both the *Institutes* and the *Conferences* were circulated in Anglo-Saxon England, it seems that Books I-IV out of a complete twelve of the *Institutes* were the most influential for composition of early monastic rules, even being adapted and used as a monastic regula itself, and the text as a whole was circulated, as opposed to the *Conferences*, which might have been circulated in three different manuscripts.<sup>157</sup> The *Institutes* was the first text of Cassian, and was particularly influential for Western monastic spirituality, but coming from a framework that Cassian would say is of the East—“the institutes of the Eastern and especially Egyptian

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<sup>154</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> “Yet another epitome of three of the Conferences (I., II., VII.) was made at some time before the tenth century. It was translated into Greek, and known to Photius, who speaks of three works of Cassian as translated into Greek: viz., (1) and Epitome of the Institutes, Books I.-IV.; (2) Epitome of the Institutes, Books V.-XII.; and (3) one of the Conferences, I., II., VII.” Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*, Volume XI: Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 194.

<sup>156</sup> “Then, besides the *Conferences* of the Fathers, their *Institutes* and their *Lives*, there is also the rule of our holy father Basil. For observant and obedient monks, all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues; but as for us, they make us blush for shame at being so slothful, so unobservant, so negligent.” Timothy Fry, ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English, with Notes* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981), 297.

<sup>157</sup> Lake, “Knowledge of the writings of John Cassian,” 28, 29.



cenobia”<sup>158</sup>—in his preface to Pope Castor.<sup>159</sup> The acknowledgment that this is Eastern and Egyptian monastic practices is a realization of the importation of other theological and cultural practices into the West, and this resulted in the unique formation of an Anglo-Latin monastic practice informed by Eastern principles and ideology. Moreover, I assert that the ensuing use of Cassian in the formation of monastic practice in Anglo-Saxon England resulted in the development of a mindset that embraced the concept of liminality, the state of being betwixt and between, in terms of asceticism.

Book I of the *Institutes* is wholly concerned with the clothing of a monastic, with chapters that cover various items, including monastic belts, hoods, and shoes. Many of the chapters in Book I are a mix of spiritual application and practical advice for the wearing of garments that symbolize a turning away from the world, and embracing principles that take their foundation from scripture. Cassian begins chapter one by providing a spiritual rationale, appropriate for those who are entering into this life in the desert:

As we start to speak of the institutes and rules of monasteries, where could we better begin, with God’s help, than with the very garb of the monks? After having exposed their outward appearance to view we shall then be able to discuss, in logical sequence, their inner worship. And so, it is proper for a monk to always dress like a soldier of Christ, ever ready for battle, his loins girded.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 12. “Since your wish is to establish in your own province, which lacks such things, the institutes of the Eastern and especially Egyptian cenobia, inasmuch as you yourself are accomplished in every virtue and in knowledge are so laden with all spiritual riches that not only your speech but your very life is a sufficient and abundant example to those who seek perfection, you request and demand that I too, rude and wanting in word and knowledge, contribute something from my poor intelligence to the accomplishment of your desire and lay out in order, however inexpertly, the institutes of the monasteries that we have seen and observed throughout Egypt and Palestine, such as they were handed down to us there by our fathers.”

<sup>159</sup> Ramsey notes that “pope” was a common title for other bishops at the time of Cassian. Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 16.

<sup>160</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 21.

Here, Cassian echoes Paul's closing of his epistle to the Ephesians, containing the exhortation to put on the armor of God so that evil can be resisted and fought against:

De cetero fratres confortamini in Domino et in potentia virtutis eius. Induite vos arma Dei ut possitis stare adversus insidias diaboli. Quia non est nobis conluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem sed adversus principes et potestates adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum contra spiritalia nequitiæ in caelistibus. Propterea accipite aramuram Dei ut possitis resistere in die malo et omnibus perfectis stare. State ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate et induti lorica iustitiæ. Et calciati pedes in praeparatione evangelii pacis. In omnibus sumentes scutum fidei in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere. Et galeam salutis adsumite et gladium Spiritus quod est verbum Dei.<sup>161</sup>

With this scriptural precedent, Cassian shows how the practicality of monastic clothing is not discussed in terms of modesty or the usefulness of attire, but in the purpose of something seen outwardly that reflects an inner disposition. This is reflected in how monastic garb is interpreted for a spiritual purpose, which is to operate as a signal for spiritual combat in the desert. The clothing of the monk signifies their vocation of being set apart, and engaging in battle with their own wills and the influence of the demonic. Rebecca Krawiec notes how the desert monk Evagrius of Pontus (345-399) considered monastic clothing as combat dress, and as the monk gets dressed, it helps them recall their own purpose and vocation:

[Evagrius's] explanation of the symbolism of monastic dress transforms each item of clothing into a monastic teaching. When the monk gets dressed, he remembers the rules for monastic living, and the biblical passages that, along with the monastic teachings more generally, serve as weapons in his combat with demons. In other words, the social

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<sup>161</sup> Ephesians 6:10-7, Vulgate. Douay-Rheims: "Finally, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice: And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit (which is the word of God)."

memory of the monastic habit equips the monk for what Evagrius saw as his daily existence: demon fighting.<sup>162</sup>

Coming from the practice of the monastic communities in the East and the desert, the liminality of the monastic is embedded in the very fabric of what they wear, where outward appearance and interior life intersect to demonstrate their vocation of inhabiting the margins to create sacred spaces. Their clothing makes them analogous to the liminal monsters they fight in the tenuous space they occupy.

This sense of clothing, spirituality, and the liminal are taken up in a unique manner with one particular article of clothing, discussed in chapter seven of Book I, a piece called the *melotis*:

The last piece of their outfit are a goatskin, which is called a *melotis* or a *pera*, and a staff. These they carry in imitation of those who already in the Old Testament prefigured the thrust of this profession. Of them the Apostle says: “They went about in *melotis* and goatskin, needy, in distress, afflicted, the world unworthy of them, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and caverns of the earth. This garment of goatskin signifies that, once all the turbulence of their carnal passions has been put to death, they must abide in the most elevated virtue and no willfulness or wantonness of their youth and of former fickleness must remain in their bodies.<sup>163</sup>

Cassian quotes Hebrews 11:37-8 to place the monastic custom of the *melotis* in context of the biblical and spiritual tradition, which was seen as prefiguring what monks invoke now when they wear it. Placing the goatskin on themselves, the pelt of an animal that died for them, acknowledges the sacrifice of creatures to cover their sin through the recognition of the harm and trauma they cause to creation, and also the recognition that they are marginal people. The

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<sup>162</sup> Rebecca Krawiec, “Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity,” in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, eds. Kristi Upson-Saia, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and Alicia J. Batten (London: Routledge, 2014), 58.

<sup>163</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 24, 25.

goatskin is a signal for being outside of creation as one who has participated in destroying it through sin, and living in the condition of being an outsider of an edenic paradise, where there was a natural harmony. While this is true of the goatskin, Cassian notes that the belt that a monastic wears traditionally carries this meaning also, in that the monk “should also be aware that in this very piece of clothing—his belt—there is no small mystery impinging upon him. For girding his loins and encircling himself with dead skin means that he is bearing about the mortification of his members, which contain the seeds of wantonness and lasciviousness.”<sup>164</sup> The *melotis* and the belt are an imposition of death on the monk to indicate their own death in terms of subduing concupiscence, and in a more full form of their death to the world. Later, Bede would write in his commentary on the book of Genesis about God making clothing for Adam and Eve. Bede sees a clear representation of mortal death and judgment in the clothing God makes: “by a garment of this kind the Lord teaches that they had now been made mortal. Skins, of course, which are not removed except from dead animals, contain the allegorical figure of death.”<sup>165</sup> By placing those garments on them, they become as dead themselves, wandering in life, expelled from society, looking for their place of rest while enduring their labors. The nature of the desert, between the extremes of temperature and the rugged terrain, provides a coherent discourse with what the monk wears to suggest that spiritual rebellion coexists with spiritual

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<sup>164</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 26.

<sup>165</sup> Calvin B. Kendall, trans., *On Genesis* by Bede (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 136.

conversion in the same place. The monk then becomes a matrix, where life and death are encoded onto them, and they stand in between the worlds of spirit and earth.<sup>166</sup>

Monastic worship and behavior continue this idea of standing betwixt and between life and death, and community and expulsion. Book II of the *Institutes* focuses on the performance of night time prayers and psalms. Section XV advises that after the recitation of the psalms that monastics refrain from idle talking with one another, and from leaving their cell and abandoning their work. Instead, they are urged to remain in their cell, tending to their labor, while reciting psalms or other scriptural texts by memory. Such advice is intended to mitigate any surge of toxic or evil behavior, and to keep one busy through manual labor and constant meditation of scripture. Cassian then notes the severity of the situation of a brother who has acted in a way contrary to what the rule stipulates: “they are declared to be insolent, breakers of the law, and guilty of no small fault, and they may even be under suspicion of wickedly scheming and plotting. Unless they have absolved this fault by a public repentance in the presence of all the brothers, none of them is allowed to take part in the brothers’ prayer.”<sup>167</sup> As this is a monastic rule, it is also performing as a commentary on the gravity of how important it is to be subject to the authority of the rule, and to be conformed into an image that privileges community in conjunction with personal responsibility, in lieu of according to one’s own will and interests. The sins of one monk can cause another to fall. Because of this, the monk is to keep themselves busy,

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<sup>166</sup> Not all monastic sources were concerned with giving spiritual interpretations for articles of monastic clothing. By contrast, chapter 55 of the Rule of Benedict, “The Clothing and Footwear of the Brothers,” is overtly practical in nature, and does not seem to apply any spiritual symbolism on the garb of monastics, except in relation to personal property and ownership: “The abbot, however, must always bear in mind what is said in the Acts of the Apostles: *Distribution was made to each one as he had need* (Acts 4:35). In this way the abbot will take into account the weaknesses of the needy, not the evil will of the envious; yet in all his judgments he must bear in mind God’s retribution.” Fry, *RB 1980*, 55.20-2, 265.

<sup>167</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 47.

in terms of internal and external ascetic praxis, with the overarching presence of and engagement of the soul and mind in constant worship, prayer, and meditation. Falling from this, and engaging in illicit and unethical behavior, leads to a severe penalty — the inability to worship with other brothers in the *cenobia*. The monastic vocation is rooted in prayer, and in terms of cenobitic monasticism, best practiced in community. Removal from the community to practice the foundational act of the monastic life is tantamount to a form of exile. The practice of banishing someone from the central purpose of the *cenobia* is a penalty that signifies the removal of a harmful presence in the community, and for Cassian, as well as others, this can only be rectified with appropriate manners of atonement and penance.

Section XVI of Book II makes this sense of exile and penance explicit, and notes the exilic nature of the offending monk. Cassian says that “if anyone has been suspended from prayer for some misdeed that he has committed, no one at all has permission to pray with him until he has done penance on the ground and his reconciliation and pardon for the thing committed have been granted publicly by the abba, in the presence of all the brothers.”<sup>168</sup> It is important to note that the monk is not completely removed from the *cenobia*. Because of this, we see the monk as a liminal figure within the community. The monastic still receives a modicum of privilege in being in the community, but is still treated as an outcast in their banishment from communal prayer. The nature of this moment demonstrates aspects of reconciling conflict due to social drama, and the monastic undergoes a series of transitions of being an outcast within a community until they have made satisfaction. Their penalty, in the monastic having to lower

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<sup>168</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 47. This form of penance is repeated in III.vii.1 in the context of arriving late for liturgical offices, but with a clearer injunction that the offender must stand outside the oratory if they are late, and when the other monks are dismissed, the monk will throw themselves on to the ground, begging for forgiveness, pp. 64, 65.

themselves to the ground as banished ones, and awaiting the moment when the abba will let them rise as full members of the community again, shows how expulsion and reintegration demonstrate the in-between construct of the offending monk. Laying on the ground, the ritual of penance performs both their place socially in the cenobia, and the act in which they can become reintegrated. Cassian continues in this section that these monastics

separate themselves and cut themselves off from fellowship in prayer with him in this way because they believe that he who is suspended from prayer has been, according to the Apostle, delivered over to Satan. And whoever is moved by ill-considered kindness and presumes to communicate with him before he has been received back by the elder makes himself an accomplice in his damnation, for he willingly delivers himself over to Satan, to whom the other had been consigned for the correction of his fault.<sup>169</sup>

The theological implications of this form of cenobitic exile become revealed here, in that the offending monastic has spiritually been removed from the fellowship of the *cenobia* into something resembling a satanic brotherhood. Cassian references Paul in I Corinthians 5:5, which states that an individual member of the church of Corinth was “handed over to Satan”: “tradere huiusmodi Satanæ in interitum carnis ut spiritus salvus sit in die Domini Iesu.”<sup>170</sup> The patristic author Origen (184-253) wrote that

he is handed over not for the destruction of the soul or of the spirit, but **for the destruction of the flesh**. He is handed over so **that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord**. Paul expelled such a person without knowing if he would *turn and repent* (Joel 2:14) but wishing to discipline him. It is one thing to cut off someone on the grounds that he is incapable of repentance and correction, another to reject him for the present and expel him from the flock, as a shepherd casts out sheep that has a skin disease to prevent its spreading to the whole flock.

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<sup>169</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 47.

<sup>170</sup> Douay-Rheims: “To deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Therefore, let those with evil lives be treated by being put outside of the flock, let them confess and lament their own sins and show evidence of repentance by fasting, mourning, weeping, and the like.<sup>171</sup>

The scriptures admonish with Paul's example the possibility of liminal rites of transition, where an individual passes through various states before arriving at reintegration. One is not "handed over," or excommunicated from their sacred community, for the purpose of enacting the fulness of eschatological judgment. However, this act is intended to induce dread and repentance by prefiguring eternal separation within a delimited, spatio-temporal plane. This sense of handing someone over to Satan is exilic in tone of someone who has been removed from their previous community, because in that sense, they have been handed over to the spiritual arch-exile, who seeks opportunities to enact further fragmentation and theological diaspora. But in this context, banishment is designed to effect penance in the same way that Cassian exhorts monastics to lower themselves to the ground to be reinstated. The ground or the floor becomes a liminal space where the individual is placed within the tension of separation and reintegration, effectively branded as satanic, to lead them to repentance. In this scriptural and theological subtext, Cassian is creating a dialogue between Eastern and Egyptian practices, and placing them into a Western context as a framework for conceptualizing the spiritually encompassing nature of the monastic life. The monastic is already a liminal figure, participating in a self-exile from the world, but that sense of exile is further concentrated in the movements and practices that monastics embody in the *cenobia*.

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<sup>171</sup> Judith L. Kovacs, trans. and ed., *The Church's Bible: 1 Corinthians, Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 84-5. Bolding and italics theirs.



The liminal nature of monastic life and prayer is also reified not just through exilic penance, but also in the interpreting the theological significance of the cycle of daily prayer. Monasticism is, at its foundation, liturgical and theological. The third book of Cassian's *Institutes* is concerned with the manner of praying daytime prayers and psalms. From the various explications of monastic observance, his explanation of the theology of the ninth hour of prayer is most pertinent. In section III, Cassian notes that in terms of that hour of prayer, Christ "penetrated hell and extinguished the inextricable darkness of Tartarus by his shimmering brilliance. He broke open its gates of bronze, smashed its iron bars, and having savingly captured the captivity of the holy ones who had been shut up in the cruel darkness of hell, bore it off with him to heaven, thrusting aside the fiery sword and by a devout confession restoring to paradise its erstwhile inhabitants."<sup>172</sup> It has been noted that in this explication of the liturgical hours, Cassian is the first to associate the office of nones with Christ's descent into hell after his crucifixion.<sup>173</sup> In this patristic era text, Christ is represented as a heroic warrior, victorious over death, and therefore victorious over hell and Satan. In this passage, Christ is the embodiment of a liminal figure, crossing borders of life, death, and structures of gates and bars that signify the limiting of space and freedom. In breaking through the gates of hell, Christ expands the limits of his presence, and performs another crossing of borders by leading those enclosed in Tartarus back through the protected entrance of paradise. Echoes of this moment in liturgical and theological time are possibly seen in the *Old English Martyrology*. The entry for March 26 marks the historically perceived moment in time in which Christ performed this descent and ascension.

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<sup>172</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 61.

<sup>173</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassiani*, 71.

The martyrologist writes that “on ðone syx on twentegðan dæs monðes, on þone dæg Crist reste dead on byrgenne for us, ond his sawl somod on his godcundnes somod hergode geond hellegrund ond sloh þara feonda weorod mid his godcunde sweorde ond draf on hellegrund ond hi þær geband.”<sup>174</sup> The similarities are bound in terms of portrayal, rather than clear allusions.

The heroism of Christ as depicted in Cassian’s note regarding the liturgical office of *nones* is consistent with the warrior-like representation of Christ’s harrowing of hell from the martyrologist. In terms of Cassian’s *Institutes*, it is noted that the description of Christ’s work is conventional in other sources,<sup>175</sup> however, Rauer notes that while this is the earliest surviving vernacular source for Christ’s descent into hell, a specific source for it has not been identified.<sup>176</sup>

The trope of the warrior Christ, depicted in Old English poetry, possibly finds its analog in Cassian’s *Institutes*, given their circulation and influence in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>177</sup>

Additionally, the warrior nature of Christ is situated within his portrayal as a liminal figure, who embodies humanity and divinity, and in triumph over death, crosses boundaries as he wills. And

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<sup>174</sup> Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, 74. “On the twenty-sixth day of the month, on that day Christ was resting dead in his tomb for us, and together with his soul and together with his divinity harrowed the entire depths of hell, and killed a host of devils there with his divine sword and drove them into lowest hell and bound them up there,” 75.

<sup>175</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 71.

<sup>176</sup> Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, 249. Although a specific source has not been identified, analogs can be found in other sources, such as homiletic collections, that might suggest possible influence.

<sup>177</sup> For example, the Old English poem *Dream of the Rood* portrays Christ as a heroic warrior hastening to death as he ascends the cross: “Geseah ic þa Frean man-cynnes / efstan elne mycle þæt he me wold on gesitgan. / Þær ic þa ne dorste ofer Dryhtnes word / bugan oððe berstan, þa ic bifian geseah / eorðan sceatas. Ealle ic mihte / feondas geyflan, hwæðre ic fæste stod. / ‘Ongyrede hine þa geong hæleð—þæt wæs God ælmihtig— / strang ond stiðmod. Gestah he on gealgan heanne, / modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wolde man-cyn lysan,” Clayton, *Old English Poems*, lns. 34-41, 162. Clayton’s translation: “Then I saw the Lord of mankind hastening with great courage when he was intent on climbing on to me. Then I dared not bend down or break apart there, against the Lord’s word, when I saw all of the earth’s surfaces shaking. I could have felled all the enemies, yet I stood fast. Then the young hero—who was God almighty—stripped himself, strong and resolute. He climbed onto the high gallows, brave in the sight of many, when he was intent on setting mankind free,” 163.

since the life of a monastic is liturgical and theological, their participation of praying the office of nones means that they become enclosed in the meaning of the office as well. As Christ descends into hell to save those who are captive, the monastic enacts that descent to through a liturgically driven mimesis, bound in prayer.

Perhaps the most telling moment of Cassian's *Institutes* in terms of the exilic status of the monastic occurs in Book IV, in another section concerned with rules for various kinds of corrections. Section XVI covers a wide range of issues, from accidentally breaking a *baucalis*, which is an earthenware vessel,<sup>178</sup> to being loud, to having "familiarity with women,"<sup>179</sup> one innocuous moment stands out. Cassian advises that correction is needed if a monk "sees one of his relatives or one of his friends from the world and speaks to him without his elder; if he tries to receive someone's letter or to reply to one without his abba."<sup>180</sup> The overt reading of this is that the abba, being a spiritual father to their fellow monks, acts in protection for their souls. Hence, the abba becomes an intermediary to aid guarding the spiritual health of whom he has oversight. Another reading can be applied to this as well, though, centered on how the monk is intended to relate to those outside of the *cenobia*. There is a clear, and distinct separation that operates as the subtext for this correction, in that whether it is friends or family, those people are "from the world," existing in a different way from the monastic. The monastic may correspond with those outside of the community, but only through the interpretive lens of the abba. The monastic is separated from the world he once knew, and now either relates to those he once knew in a different way, or not at all.

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<sup>178</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 85.

<sup>179</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 86.

<sup>180</sup> Ramsey, *John Cassian*, 86.

From the clothing that a monastic wears, to a cenobitic concept of penance, to the remembrance that they do not participate in the ways of the world without mediation, Cassian employs ways of creating a spiritual discourse of exile that interprets the vocation of the monastic. Covered in death from their clothing, and performing their own descent into hell in worship, monks of the *cenobia* are a community of themselves as they are also outsiders in the world they once knew. Cassian's *Institutes*, being a text that reinforces early ideas of Eastern and desert methodologies of practicing a life of prayer, situates the monastic as an archetype of what it means to belong to God while removing yourself from the world. This self-exile drives the monk's journey to heaven, following the boundary crossing of Christ, who voluntarily and heroically dies to the world in order to transgress the borders that limit our entrance into paradise again. Cassian's *Institutes*, therefore, situate the Anglo-Saxon monastic and Christian within this Eastern and patristic sense through its inclusion and circulation in Anglo-Saxon England. Through this monastic literature, the Anglo-Saxon gains the hope that they can cross those borders too, and perform exile in its various ways, socially and liturgically, to create a textual and practical pattern that realizes their spiritual condition, journeying back to paradise. This is echoed in John Chrysostom, in that renouncing the world means you take on the citizenship of a different country.

### **John Chrysostom and the Heavenly *Patria***

Through the result of Theodore and Hadrian's school and manuscript transmission, and the translation of Syriac and Greek works into Latin, Bede was aware of various patristic sources that did not have Latinate origins.<sup>181</sup> William Petersen notes that the evidence of contact between

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<sup>181</sup> A formative discussion on Bede's patristic sources can be found in M. L. W. Laistner, "Bede as a Classical and Patristic Scholar," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (1933), 69-94.

East and West in terms of theological sources can be argued by the possible inclusion of Syriac theological tropes that would have been possibly sourced from the Canterbury commentaries.<sup>182</sup> Because of Theodore and Hadrian's school, Bede would have also been able to read works from John Chrysostom.<sup>183</sup> This is evidenced in Bede clearly alluding to and referencing Chrysostom at various points in his own literary work, using him as an authoritative resource. One of these instances occurs in his exegetical text *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, the first of his exegetical works.<sup>184</sup>

In Bede's annotation for 1 Peter 3:13,<sup>185</sup> a moment in the epistle that is centered on persecution, the suggestion is made to read a particular treatise from Chrysostom, *No One Can Be Harmed*. This treatise was written during Chrysostom's second, and final exile, before his death on September 14, 407.<sup>186</sup> This inclusion of Chrysostom's text in Bede's commentary is significant, because out of five times in which the the name of the Greek archbishop is

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<sup>182</sup> See William L. Petersen, "Ephrem Syrus and the Venerable Bede: Do East and West Meet?", *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001): 443-52.

<sup>183</sup> Rosalind Love addresses what Bede would have been familiar with of Chrysostom's works in her article "Bede and Chrysostom" in the *Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007): 72-86. Love briefly discusses a few existing fragments of Chrysostom's treatises, translated from Greek into Latin, that were circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. She then considers how Bede used Chrysostom in his own writing. For more information on Chrysostom in Anglo-Saxon England, see Thomas N. Hall and Michael Norris, "The Chrysostom Texts in Bodley 516," *The Journal of Theological Studies New Series* 62.1 (2011): 161-75. For a comprehensive treatment of Chrysostom's textual presence in Anglo-Saxon England, see "John Chrysostom" in the forthcoming *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture, Volume 5: Julius Caesar to Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria*, editor Thomas N. Hall (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications); this sample entry is available as a PDF at [www.bede.net/saslc/entries.html](http://www.bede.net/saslc/entries.html).

<sup>184</sup> Dom David Hurst, trans., *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985), xv.

<sup>185</sup> Douay-Rheims: "And who is there who may harm you if you zealous for good?"

<sup>186</sup> Chrysostom was first exiled in September or October of 403, but he was shortly asked to return from banishment. His second exile was in June of 404, of which after months of travel, he would die en route to his final destination. For more information, see Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 269-71 for more information, and J. N. D. Kelly, *The Story of John Chrysostom — Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 268-71 for context of this and his other final treatise, *On God's Providence*.

mentioned in the entirety of Bede's work, this is the only one with a clear title of something written by Chrysostom.<sup>187</sup>

Chrysostom's banishment, stemming from a bitter anti-Johannite campaign, found him exiled to the city of Cucusus, a small and remote area that was commonly used for significant exiles, isolated in the mountains.<sup>188</sup> Despite his removed location, he still had contact with friends, physical and epistolary. This contact meant that he was intended to be further removed, away from Cucusus, into Pityus, the most easterly Roman outpost on the shores of the Black Sea, a place that was continually attacked despite other fortifications.<sup>189</sup> It was on this journey to Pityus that he died from various health complications, influenced by the hardship of climate and travel. The epistolary connections he had, particularly with Olympias, a deaconess, gave him the material to write his final treatises which were delivered as letters, although they were composed in the form of spoken addresses.<sup>190</sup>

In this final exile, removed from shepherding the church in Constantinople and banished from his home, betrayed by those with power, disconnected the relationships that he cared for, and with failing health, he composed the treatise *No One Can Be Harmed*. The exigency of this treatise is the ensuing injustice that surrounded the pro-Johannite camp, himself included, and Chrysostom's effort to pastorally contextualize their suffering within a framework that looks for the divine to create meaning. With the subtext of a hellenistic foundation of Socrates and the Stoics, Chrysostom begins his treatise by saying, "I know well that to coarse-minded persons,

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<sup>187</sup> Love, "Bede and Chrysostom," 75.

<sup>188</sup> Kelly, *The Story of John Chrysostom*, 254.

<sup>189</sup> Kelly, *The Story of John Chrysostom*, 282.

<sup>190</sup> Kelly, *The Story of John Chrysostom*, 268.

who are greedy in the pursuit of present things, and are nailed to the earth, and enslaved to physical pleasure, and have no strong hold upon spiritual ideas, this treatise will be of a strange and paradoxical kind.”<sup>191</sup> Chrysostom frames the people who will not understand his work, and find the paradox too much to be overcome, as those who are “in the pursuit of present things, and are nailed to the earth.” This situates his theological treatise within an eschatological impetus, and constructs his argument with an scope that looks for the end, rather than the present situation someone find themselves in. Chrysostom’s description of one being nailed to the earth creates an interesting possibility for the Christian not in pursuit of present things, in that one can not be nailed to the earth, meaning they actively participate in both spheres. Chrysostom’s treatise echoes earlier sentiments of his that are consistent with the idea of heaven and earth imposed within each other.

In this treatise, Chrysostom’s argument is driven conceptually through ideas of attitude; this idea is also seen in an earlier homily of his focused on the gospel of John, where he writes that “we are entering heaven when we enter here. I do not mean the place, but our dispositions, for it is possible for one who is actually on earth to stand in heaven, and so see the things there, and to hear words from there. Let no one, therefore, bring the things of earth into heaven.”<sup>192</sup> Therefore, Chrysostom’s eschatology could be characterized as trans-borders. The border between heaven and earth is present, but the individual is a liminal figure. It is entirely possible to cross into the heavens while remaining firmly embedded in life. Chrysostom creates a hermeneutic of reading the Christian life where the lens of a future hope is applied to the present,

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<sup>191</sup> Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 271.

<sup>192</sup> Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, *The Fathers of the Church: Saint John Chrysostom, Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, Homilies 1-47* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2000), 24.

and individuals themselves become delimited spaces that embody banishment and community where the terms of exile and pilgrimage are a coherent discourse and experience of spiritual progression.

While the individual Christian is a delimited, embodied space where these experiences are lived out, the space they occupy is not, and coexists in the midst of a transcendent geography that is somehow present, but not already, within the boundaries and margins of life and earth. This is evocatively conveyed by the manner in which Chrysostom speaks about exile in this treatise. The term exile appears relatively few times, but rhetorically, the concept pervades the text, given the circumstances of its composition. The first instance occurs in section 2 within a discussion of virtue, and what it takes to ruin the nature of a virtue. Chrysostom names multiple examples of natural phenomenon corrupting created things, like the nature of wine being ruined when it turns sour, or ears of corn being ruined when affected by mildew.<sup>193</sup> Chrysostom's examples demonstrate objects that become altered negatively through external influences. This is applied to observing the human condition, and the travails a person may find themselves in, but with the expressed purpose of demonstrating that "no one could inflict this injury or bring this ruin upon us unless we have betrayed ourselves."<sup>194</sup> Humanity is exposed to harmful forces such as sickness, poverty, and

some bewail and lament the inmates of prison, some those who have been expelled from their country and transported to the land of exile, others those who have been seized and made captives by enemies, others those who have been drowned, or burnt, or buried by the fall of a house, but no one mourns those who

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<sup>193</sup> Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 272.

<sup>194</sup> Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 272.



are living in wickedness: on the contrary, which is worse than all, they often congratulate them, a practice which is the cause of all manner of evils.<sup>195</sup>

Chrysostom's implication is abundantly clear in these examples, that not even the loss of home, health, or banishment is comparable to the insidiousness nature of living in wickedness, and the perversion it is that wickedness is celebrated. The ephemeral nature of wickedness is an external influence that corrupts virtue and causes real harm, while having evil befall you as an innocent and just person situates you in a position to respond with a disposition that looks heavenward. Included in this list is being expelled from your country and placed within an exilic space, a spatial and temporal plane that acts as a boundary and hinders life. However, Chrysostom, in his argument that nothing can harm you unless you let it, and that your disposition leads you to heaven, signifies that the delimited nature of exile can lead to unlimited crossing of margins into other spaces infused with transcendence.

The paradox of exile leading to spiritual liberation is reinforced in section 4 of his treatise. Chrysostom does this through incorporating stories of scripture that invoke severe hardship, trauma, and banishment. As Chrysostom does this, he calls to mind a tradition that taught to hold differing possibilities in tension with each, in that concern for life is worldly, but bold acceptance of hardship is holy, and places you in context of the martyrs and others who have suffered. Robert Gorman, in writing about the exile in the early patristic period, suggests that

the Christian faith, then, was alive to the possibilities of persecution and banishment in the early centuries of its existence. Christian theology, practice, and example clearly showed a stoical indifference to the matters which seem so important to the worldly. This

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<sup>195</sup> Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 272.

inner source of otherworldly strength, resolve, and calm was perhaps that which impressed so many to embrace Christian teachings.<sup>196</sup>

The bodies of early Christians, in their various sufferings as martyrs, experiencing banishment, persecution, and violence that was imperially sanctioned or inculcated from theological dissension were read as ways of resisting the world and taking on the heroism of Christ, who experienced all of this, and embraced it, defeating his enemies. Because Christ is the exemplum of this, and enacted the crossing of spatial and spiritual borders in his salvific work, so other Christians, saints, and members of scriptural narrative take on suffering for the sake of another world. In Chrysostom's life, he enters this patristic heritage, and in his theological discourse, he enters into other scriptural encounters of suffering, placing his life in conversation with other people that were banished, tortured, or killed for the faith.

In section 4, Chrysostom mentions the Adam, Job, Cain and Abel, Joseph, and John the Baptist, as archetypes of virtuous people that demonstrate the relationship between violence and faith while living in the world. People such as this were exposed to inclement behavior, but demonstrated resolve in their suffering. Chrysostom, in his exposition of these moments of salvation history, applies a practical tenor to his theological discourse that reifies the his stoic resolves and weaves his eschatological identity: "Hast thou been transported into the land of exile? Consider that thou hast not here a fatherland, but that if thou wilt be wise thou art bidden to regard the whole world as a strange country."<sup>197</sup> While this is practical, stoic, and demonstrates resolve in the face of suffering at the hands of political and spiritual machinations,

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<sup>196</sup> Robert F. Gorman, "Persecution and Exile in the Patristic Period: Athanasian and Augustinian Perspectives," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6, no. 1 (1993): 43.

<sup>197</sup> Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 274.

this also places a central idea of Chrysostom within the development of his argument, that our disposition is what cultivates our sense of place. The more we regard the world as strange, we become alienated to it. As mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, Empedocles might have been the first to suggest that being on earth is exile from heaven, and that heaven is the true *patria*, or fatherland. This idea is carried in Paul the apostle's epistle to the Philippians, 3:19-20, where he writes of the enemies of Christ: "quorum finis interitus quorum deus venter et gloria in confusione ipsorum qui terrena sapiunt. Nostra autem conversatio in caelis est unde etiam salvatorem expectamus Dominum Iesum Christum."<sup>198</sup> The patristic author Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215) wrote in his *Stromata* regarding this verse that we ought to live as those who are strangers (*hospites*) and as those on a journey (*peregrinates*).<sup>199</sup> Basil of Caesarea (329/330-379) wrote in his treatise *On Baptism* that "we drag our body like a shadow along the ground, but we guard our soul as one that shares in the citizenship of heaven."<sup>200</sup> Basil also wrote in his second discourse of *On the Origin of Humanity* that our essential anthropology is rooted in looking towards this heavenly citizenship, because we walk upright, in contrast to animals. The head of a human being is

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<sup>198</sup> Douay-Rheims: "Whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly: and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven: from whence we also look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ." The Latin word *conversatio* can mean "intercourse, conversation," but it also carries meanings of where religious and hermits live, or a "habitation, dwelling, sojourn."

<sup>199</sup> "Recte ergo nos hæc quoque dicta esse scimus, quoniam ut hospites et advenæ peregrinantes debemus vitam instituere." Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 2, Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 399.

<sup>200</sup> Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament Volume VIII: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 264. Originally sourced from Basil of Caesarea, *Basile de Césarée: Sur le baptême, Sources chrétiennes 357* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 170-2.

lifted high toward things above, that he may look up to what is akin to him. His eyes do not incline toward the ground. Therefore do not make yourself go against nature; do not focus on earthly things, where Christ is. “For if you are resurrected together with Christ,” says Scripture, “seek the things above, where Christ is” [Col. 3.1]. Thus you were molded. That which has been molded is a lesson about the purpose for which you were born. You were born that you might see God, not that your life might be dragged down on the earth, not that you might have the pleasure of beasts, but that you might achieve heavenly citizenship.<sup>201</sup>

Between these examples of patristic sources, our divine anthropology is inherently positioned within the eschatology of a sacred citizenship. With that, Chrysostom represents the inheritance of what it means to live a life predicated on treating creation as an unstable theological space that reinforces the insubstantial nature of an earthly identity and location. And as Chrysostom was the inheritor of that tradition, it is passed to Anglo-Saxons, who formed similar theological constructs.

The more we are alienated to the world, the more we inhabit the heavens. This is ultimately an eschatological act that hastens us to experience heaven sooner. In Bede’s commentary on the Catholic epistles, this sentiment is echoed when he explicates I Peter 2:11, “carissimi obsecro tamquam advenas et peregrinos absinere vos a carnalibus desideriis quae militant adversus animam,”<sup>202</sup> that Peter “suitably calls them newcomers and strangers that they may less subject their mind to earthly affairs the more they remember that they have a fatherland in heaven.”<sup>203</sup> In signifying that a Christian has no earthly fatherland, that means a Christian in every sense has no place in the world, and in that recognition, the world should be refused. In

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<sup>201</sup> Nonna Verna Harrison, *On the Human Condition* by St Basil the Great (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 61.

<sup>202</sup> Douay-Rheims: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.”

<sup>203</sup> Hurst, *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, 89.

this discourse, suffering is the means by which this is realized, and how spiritual refinement is performed, because it places an abstract concept within a lived experience, and then is interpreted within a meaning imbued with the divine. In this manner, suffering has meaning, and that meaning is ultimately realized not because of bravery or stoicism, but in taking on the identity as one who has been banished not from the world, but from heaven, and every act is a way to perform a pilgrimage back to a home in the heavens, in paradise, and to convert the expulsion of Adam and Eve.

This sense of pilgrimage back to the heavenly fatherland is continued in Bede's commentary for the Old Testament text Genesis. Bede's *Commentary on the Beginning of Genesis*,<sup>204</sup> signifies a shift in his methodology for exegesis. It has been noted that Bede's early commentaries, such as for the Catholic epistles, followed a more literal sense of interpretation, and that later, his commentaries became much more allegorical in tenor.<sup>205</sup> This shift could perhaps be adduced to early exposure to the school of Theodore and Hadrian's Antiochene methodology of exegesis through Chrysostom's writings, and then as Bede later developed as a biblical and theological thinker, he began to represent a unique synthesis of patristic scholarship that became adapted for Anglo-Saxon audiences. This is not to say that all of *On Genesis* is allegorical in nature; Calvin Kendall discusses the methodology of a literal interpretation for exegesis of Noah's flood.<sup>206</sup> Bede's sense of allegorical exegesis follows what Lapidge termed as

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<sup>204</sup> Hereafter referred to as *On Genesis*.

<sup>205</sup> Hurst, *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, xv.

<sup>206</sup> See Kendall, *On Genesis*, 4-8 for an explanation on Bede's literal sense of interpretation. Kendall writes that in Bede's understanding and sophistication in interpretation that "biblical language was often metaphorical, and Bede understood that the 'literal' sense was to be found in the tenor, not the vehicle, of the metaphor," 5.

“philological,” as noted earlier. Kendall writes that Bede’s allegorical interpretation was focused on three aspects: figural, numerical, and etymological. For example, figural allegory suggested that events and people in the Old Testament were truthful, but also had symbolism that extended into people or events of the New Testament, so that they represented a “figure” or “type” in relating a deeper meaning.<sup>207</sup> The allegorical methodology he employs in this commentary may counterintuitively sustain his earlier readings and Johannite influence in interpreting scripture, given that, as Kendall notes, that the thematic structure of *On Genesis* is centered on the idea of exile.<sup>208</sup> This might be reflected in that in the preface, composed for Acca, bishop of Hexham, Bede writes that he “carried the work up to the point where Adam, having been ejected from the *paradise of pleasure*, entered into the exile of this temporal life.”<sup>209</sup> This would mean that his Bede’s commentary would have only gone up through a portion of Genesis 3, but in returning to this work, he actually goes up through Genesis 21:10 with Sarah demanding to Abraham that Hagar and Ishmael go out into the desert, ending the text on a firm and sorrowful note of exile.

One particular excerpt of Bede’s commentary demonstrates a synthesis of Chrysostom’s ideas from *No One Can Be Harmed*, and its application in explicating Genesis. Bede offers commentary on Genesis 3:24, “eiecitque Adam et conlocavit ante paradisum voluptatis cherubin et flammeum gladium atque versatilem ad custodiendam viam ligni vitae.”<sup>210</sup> Much of Bede’s commentary for this verse is focused on the allegorical meaning of the cherubim and the flaming

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<sup>207</sup> See Kendall, *On Genesis*, 8-14 for more explanation of Bede’s allegorical method.

<sup>208</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 14. “For Bede, as for his medieval contemporaries, exile was the fundamental metaphor for the condition of human life on earth.”

<sup>209</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 66.

<sup>210</sup> Douay-Rheims: “And he cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

sword, and he refers frequently to Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram* to parse the meaning of them. For example, Bede writes that "God is said to have placed Cherubim with a flaming sword before the paradise of pleasure, *this we must believe was indeed done by heavenly powers in the visible paradise, so that by angelic assistance there would be a kind of fiery sentinel at that place; but it is certain that it was not done without reason, since it signifies something also of the spiritual paradise.*"<sup>211</sup> For Bede, the Cherubim signify the spiritual paradise in their function as guardians of its entrance; Bede cites Augustine in that the Cherubim turn as sentinels, but then he builds on that to suggest the Cherubim turn so that they can move aside to let people through, such as Enoch and Elijah.<sup>212</sup> The significance of the Cherubim is intrinsically connected to the return to paradise. Bede writes that "because *Cherubim* means 'multitude of knowledge' or 'knowledge multiplied,' *Cherubim, and a flaming sword* is properly asserted to have been placed to keep the way of the tree of life, because truly the return to the heavenly fatherland, from which we departed through the foolishness of transgression and the appetite for carnal pleasures, lies open to us through the discipline of heavenly knowledge and the labour of temporal afflictions."<sup>213</sup> This exegesis involves an allegorical methodology to interpret the role of the Cherubim; as Bede does this, he demonstrates a thoughtful use of patristic texts, and part of that is a patristic intertextuality with Chrysostom. While Bede is clearly invoking allegorical readings of Genesis, there seems to be a clear, textual echo to Chrysostom's treatise on suffering and exile. Again, Bede participates in the patristic discourse of considering paradise as our heavenly

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<sup>211</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 138. Emphasis his to indicate that Bede is quoting Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram*, 11.40.

<sup>212</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 138.

<sup>213</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 138. Emphasis his to indicate Bede's reference to Jerome regarding the meaning of the name Cherubim, and citation of the the Genesis text.

fatherland, and like Chrysostom, his exegesis says that we return to the heavenly fatherland through bearing affliction well.

As seen in Bede's commentary on the Catholic epistles, Christians are to see themselves as strangers in this world for the sake of renouncing the world, and to begin a spiritual journey to the fatherland. If the whole of the Bede's *On Genesis* is thematically centered on exile, then here the reader sees him providing the means in which the faithful are able to have that status revoked, and enter the spiritual country that the godly were meant for. Bede's exegesis of Genesis ultimately argues that we are strangers, betwixt and between earth and heaven. And in that strangeness and liminal suspension, we suffer and long for something beyond us, so that we might be welcomed into paradise through the willful movement aside of the Cherubim again, and cross the threshold to God's *patria*.

### **Conclusion**

Given the witness of theological sources available in Anglo-Saxon England, it is possible to see how patristic and monastic thought significantly informed the practice of Christianity, and how that influence intersects with the spiritual and intellectual culture of Anglo-Saxon Christians. Theodore and Hadrian were the impetus for the presence of Greek patristic thought, and this gave way to a flourishing of those sources and the development of Christian identity for Anglo-Saxons. Theodore and Hadrian are representative of intellectual and cultural accessibility for other theological sources. For Chrysostom, and those who came before him, Christian identity is wrapped in various readings of what constitutes suffering, and how that informs one's way of interpreting those moments within a larger context. Bede, in his exegetical texts, carries this patristic influence and places it in dialogue within his own western context. This theological



conversation, involving Cassian, Chrysostom, and many others, in tandem with the influence of early British insular monastic practice, demonstrates a practice of faith that embraces the liminal. Adherents of the Christian faith, in the rejection of transient and fleeting experiences of suffering, journey into and occupy social and spatial margins in an effort to perform the trans-border nature of Christ, the apostles, and others who suffered, but found victory in eternal life over death. The identity of the Christian is embedded within pilgrimage, being a stranger, and the crossing of borders, physical and spiritual. The abstract nature of the Christian experience becomes actualized in the embodiment of suffering and the mental rejection of one's former identity. Acting as one who is already dead and a stranger to the world, this theological identity then demands the relinquishing of the life one had before, renouncing race, family, and the world, and taking on the unstable nature of the Christian. The tradition of Anglo-Saxon exile is refined and interpreted through the lens of the patristic sources that crossed their own borders into the insular landscape.

## Chapter 2: Anglo-Saxon Hagiography — Guthlac and St Mary of Egypt

In the narrative of the hagiographic poem *Guthlac B*,<sup>214</sup> the narrator discusses the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, and how they became estranged to their paradisiacal land and were thrust into a world of struggle. Rhetorically, Guthlac is presented as one who has inherited this struggle of estrangement and toil by going out beyond the boundaries of the fens, but is also an agent of God's blessing and presence through the miracles he performs through his hands. In the vita of Mary of Egypt,<sup>215</sup> the monk Zosimas encounters Mary within the deepness of the Egyptian desert land, a shadowy figure that embodies the wilderness of the land, but also her removal from it, as a someone who lives as an angel in the flesh. This chapter will consider Guthlac and Mary of Egypt as monastic figures who participate in the patristic and ascetic mindset of renouncing the world to achieve the identity of a citizen of heaven as they occupy liminal spaces, and embody what it means to be liminal themselves as theologically exiled. These narratives will also demonstrate how earlier Latin versions were adapted by Anglo-Saxons who saw these narratives as opportunities to incorporate their own theological nuance about the meaning of exile in a spiritual landscape.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> The edition used here for Old English quotations of the *Guthlac* poems is from Jane Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Translations of *Guthlac A* will be taken from Mary Clayton, ed. and trans., *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). Translations of *Guthlac B* will be taken from Robert E. Bjork, ed. and trans., *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>215</sup> The edition used here for Latin and Old English quotations and translation is Hugh Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002). For another translation of Mary's vita with notes, see also Maria Kouli, "Life of St. Mary of Egypt" in *Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation I: Holy Women of Byzantium*, 65-93, Alice Mary Talbot, ed. (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996).

<sup>216</sup> For more on vernacular saints' lives and their use, see J. E. Cross, "English Vernacular Saints' Lives Before 1000 A. D." in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550* Corpus Christianorum 2, 413-27, Guy Philippart, ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), for a survey of Old English saints' lives and their context before the beginning of the eleventh century.

Egyptian and Byzantine *apothegmata* and hagiographic narratives often demonstrate the ironic flight of the saint from the spiritually miasmatic locus of the city, into the wild and sparsely populated locations of the deserts, mountains, and caves. These wild areas were not known to be safe, but were infested with the presence of demons in various forms, or if not overt demonic attack, then the spatial solitude meant that the hermit or anchorite became alone with their thoughts, and tormented by their own sinful struggles.

The geographic space of the desert lends itself to the liminality of the wasteland, an area that encompasses boundaries, as it also exists as boundary itself. The desert land, and other similarly described places of boundaries, inherently refuse attempts to create order and stability, and because of that the landscape firmly situates the inhabitant within physical and spiritual disorder. Essentially, flight from the city and taking residence in the desert, or another location that is spatially marginal, is indicative of enacting self-exile. In renouncing the world, the monastic embraces the concept of losing a physical community to do spiritual battle. Early accounts of monastic flight give rise to the idea of the desert becoming transformed into a city of prayer and spirituality that is proleptic of the angelic life. The apotropaic function of monastic presence, physical labor, and liturgical prayer becomes a way of signifying the flight of the demonic from these unstable regions, transforming them into areas of stability.

This does not mean, however, that the liminal status of the desert, wilderness, or wasteland becomes disregarded. Instead, its in-between nature is heightened, being transfigured into a space that reflects a journey heavenward while spatially grounded by physicality. John Howe writes that medieval writers were concerned with the meaning of space, using the classical trope of the *locus amoenus*, the idea of the *locus horribilis*, and the concept of the “sacred

center” to demarcate constructed ideas of space and presence to reflect transcendent spaces.<sup>217</sup>

This means that especially for hagiographic texts, the physical space that one occupies is revealing of more than just location; it constructs spiritual condition and identities of inclusion and exclusion as the result of artifice. Therefore, the desert or wilderness is a liminal space that lends itself to centering narratives of exclusion from communities, inclusion into new ones, and the development of a new identity within ascetic practice. Regarding geography and spatiality in terms of identity, Liz Herbert McAvoy writes that

the geographies of wilderness and desert were thus overlaid like a palimpsest to form one of the most sustained physical and metaphorical topoi within the Christian discourse. This, however, was not the entirely a result of the harshness of the desert landscape within which Christianity originated, as several critics have argued, but, as the geographer Irit Rogoff suggests, because location is one of those ‘epistemological categories [which] determine what we know, how we know it and why we know it.’<sup>218</sup>

McAvoy’s metaphor of geography as a palimpsest is consonant with the way monastic exile writes over the identity of the individual as they move through temporal and spatial markers that progressively alter how they see themselves. The exilic status of the monastic that is earned by renunciation might presumably be mitigated through the development of large desert communities, which was not unusual. However, monastic-centered literature still reveals the teleological reason for becoming a cenobitic monk, desert hermit, or anchorite, which is to find a way back to our original home in the heavens, and to do so by living as if one is already an angel

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<sup>217</sup> John Howe, “Creating Symbolic Landscapes: Medieval Development of Sacred Space” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, John Howe and Michael Wolfe, eds. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 210-16.

<sup>218</sup> Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space and the Solitary Life* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 11.

through renunciation of a previous identity or way of life, and taking up constant prayer and other ascetic practices.

This way of life became exceptionally popular in late antiquity.<sup>219</sup> Regarding the growth of those moving to the desert, James Goehring writes that “sources suggest that the initial trickle of ascetics into the desert rapidly turned into a flood. By 357 C.E., their numbers had become so extensive that Athanasius could claim in his *Life of Antony* that ‘the desert has been made a city by monks who left their own people (in the towns and cities) and registered themselves for citizenship in the heavens.’”<sup>220</sup> This mindset of rejecting an earthly citizenship for a heavenly one, evinced in earlier patristic sources, is deeply reflected in the religious literature of Anglo-Saxon England, and shows the theological influence of both the Latin west and the Byzantine east.

While this theological influence is clear, another idea is coupled to this concept of exile, estrangement, wandering, and heavenly citizenship — the wrath of God. In these Old English texts of saintly figures, wrath is indicative of the source of exclusion from social and spiritual communities, and this is unique to the Anglo-Saxon recensions of hagiographic texts.

Wrath and conversion are closely linked together, and both of these aspects are held in tension through observing how the liminal operates in Anglo-Saxon hagiography. These Old English versions of earlier saints’ lives, the *Guthlac* poems of the Exeter Book, and the vita of Saint Mary of Egypt, demonstrate how divine wrath coincides with liminal landscapes and

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<sup>219</sup> For a scholarly study of desert monasticism, see Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism Under the Christian Empire* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977).

<sup>220</sup> James E. Goehring, “The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 3 (1993): 282.

places, which allows us to interpret these saintly figures as being liminal themselves. Their liminal nature is not rooted just in their location, or the exigencies of their ascetic labor, but also in that they participate in a discourse of what it means to be an exile. The vitae of *Guthlac* and Mary of Egypt offer a lens to consider how Anglo-Saxon exile is both informed by an earlier monastic heritage, but also in how that heritage became a critical representation of Anglo-Saxon theology with the use of wrath as a construct to indicate aspects of the spiritual life, a connection that has previously not received attention in scholarship. In the following sections, the nature of Old English hagiography will be considered, then *Guthlac* poems will be discussed first, followed by the Old English vita of Saint Mary of Egypt.

### **Wrath and Old English Hagiography**

Lynda Coon writes that “hagiography is an exalted discourse that has formed the literary representation of saints in popular and elite imagination during the two millennia of Christian history.”<sup>221</sup> Mechthild Gretsch argues how there were clear, intentional choices on the part of Ælfric in his vitae that allude to political and ethical implications of English identity.<sup>222</sup> The stories of saints retain a collective material witness to bodies that experienced persecution and the violence imprinted on them. If the bodies became corrupt after their death, then the text can point to the miracles attested at the site of their martyrdom, or the shrine in which their relics are housed. Hagiography acts as a locus for placing the lives of people within the realm of imitating Christ, and the suffering he endured. The homiletic nature of hagiography indelibly shaped and informed spirituality and practice for its own receptive audiences. Saints are often presented as

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<sup>221</sup> Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>222</sup> See Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

transitioning to a socially marginal state, such as conversion from paganism to Christianity, or fleeing one's home to avoid social institutions.

The trope of flight, wandering, or homelessness as an ascetic practice in hagiography also echoes Christ in the gospels, according to Hans van Campenhausen, who writes that “homelessness as an ascetic ideal was considered exemplified by Christ, ‘who became a stranger for our sakes’, and, next to him, by the Apostles in particular.”<sup>223</sup> Flight, journey, pilgrimage, and exile all share similarities within a monastic and hagiographic environment as the result of transitions into new identities, or the loss of previous ones. Alison Elliott writes regarding saints who fled to the desert and the wilderness that they

represent a direct antithesis to the cultural ideas of classical antiquity. The ideal society has become rural not urban, the ‘good life’ is to be sought in the desert, not in the *oikoumenē*, the inhabited world that for classical man was all that mattered. The goals of the ascetic life were alienation and separation — total estrangement from the values of the classical and urban past, and the animal-like hermit attained it to a superlative degree.<sup>224</sup>

Moreover, this sort of flight, or the taking of a new identity in contrast to other present cultural norms, often leads to a motif of anger on the part of those representing systemic practices of subordination, represented by torture, murder, or banishment. In another way, this anger is also predicated on God's anthropomorphic emotional register regarding human sin and rebellion. In this sense, everyone has inherited God's wrath from the transgression of Adam and Eve, which resulted in their being banished from paradise. This discourse of wrath and banishment

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<sup>223</sup> Hans van Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church: Essays and Lectures in Church History*, trans. A.V. Littledale (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 232.

<sup>224</sup> Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover: Brown University Press, 1987), 170.

participates within the hagiographic context, and if hagiography has had as significant of an impact as previously noted in forming a literary and spiritual heritage, then the weaving of wrath and banishment is embedded within this discourse. Arguably, this is at its most prevalent in instances of Anglo-Saxon hagiography in creating a dialectic that suggests wrath and exile are the principle means by which we find our way back to paradise.

The Old English word *wræc* demonstrates a multiplicity of meanings that can inform ideas of exile. The lexical definition of *wræc* is simply “wreck, misery, suffering.”<sup>225</sup> The *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* provides forty-eight instances in which the term *wræc* appears by itself, and the examples are predominantly texts that are religious in nature, such as homilies and poetic adaptations of scripture.<sup>226</sup> As it appears on its own, *wræc* seems to be consistently used in religious texts to describe wrath and suffering, either physical or spiritual, for humans and demons. The term *wræc* is also used to form kennings. The use of these kennings demonstrates a versatility of meaning that describes a range of possibilities of interpretation. An example of this is the word *wræc-siþ*, which according to *Bosworth-Toller*, can have a primary definition of “travel in a foreign land, peregrination, pilgrimage,” a secondary definition of “exile, banishment,” and a tertiary definition of “misery, wretchedness.”<sup>227</sup> This multivalence in lexical definitions is not indicative of simply suggesting that the word can be used differently in different contexts, but rather that there is a common link that these definitions share. This means

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<sup>225</sup> Joseph Bosworth. “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online,” *Wræc*. 26 December 2010. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/036535>.

<sup>226</sup> *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, *Wræc*. Accessed January 15, 2019. <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/doecorpus/oec-idx?type=wwsimple&lang=oe&size=First+100&q1=wr%23c+>

<sup>227</sup> Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,” *Wræc-siþ*. 21 March 2010. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/036555>



that when *wræc-siþ* appears in one text, the other meanings of that term are inferred with it, even in senses where textually the reading is not concerned with suffering or exile.

One seemingly benign example of *wræc-siþ* appears in Ælfric's sermon for the feast of Pope Gregory the Great.<sup>228</sup> In retelling the highlights of Gregory's life, Ælfric notes that Gregory traveled and encountered the people of the Angles, and he resolves to evangelize them. Going to Pope Pelagius, he asks for permission to send teachers as missionaries to the English and evangelize them, such as himself, but the pope refuses: "Þa ne mihte se papa þæt geðafian. þeah ðe hé eall wolde. for ðan ðe ða romaniscan ceastergewaran noldon geðafian þæt swa getogen mann and swa geðungen lareow þa burh eallunge forlete. and swa fyrten wræcsið gename."<sup>229</sup> The tenor of this example is more closely aligned with *Bosworth-Toller's* primary definition of *wræc-siþ* that concerns travel in a foreign land, and the pope's refusal to let him leave is not out of a low regard of Gregory, but rather of a high esteem for his presence in Rome. In this reading, there is not an overt textual connection to the idea of wrath or exile as seen in other definitions of this term.

Arguably, though, divine wrath is still fundamentally present and connected to the idea of journeying, border crossing, place, and God's agency in creation. Presumably, this connection is present not because of Gregory desiring to travel, but because God's will is being subverted by the pope. God's wrath and *wræc-siþ* as travel or a journey can be linked together in this passage

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<sup>228</sup> See Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, S. S. EETS 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 403-12 for commentary on this sermon.

<sup>229</sup> Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, S. S. EETS 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 75. "But the pope could not consent to it, though he all desired it; for the Roman citizens would not consent to that so learned and venerable a teacher should wholly leave the city, and undertake so far a journey." Translation from Benjamin Thorpe, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church Volume II* (London: Ælfric Society, 1844), 123.

because of the physical effects of curse and plague that are manifested when Gregory is denied this missionary trip. As Pope Pelagius refuses this missionary pilgrimage to the English, a “micel manncwealm,”<sup>230</sup> a “great plague” or more literally “people-slaughter” from illness first kills the pope, then ravages Rome. In contrast with other Anglo-Saxon hagiographic accounts, here divine wrath is not connected to banishment, but because God’s will for converting the English people would not occur from journeying to another place and leaving home. With Gregory’s subsequent accession to the papacy, and his exhortations to the people of Rome to pray litanies for God’s mercy until he stills the destruction, the plague is then abated. And once Gregory has assumed the papacy, the will of God is actualized in his sending missionaries to convert the English. Whatever rhetorical connection that can or cannot be made with interpreting the proximity between *wræc-siþ* and the plague, it still stands that in terms of Gregory’s context, this was not a journey predicated on banishment as the result of wrath, but one of bringing conversion. The transgressive nature of the pope’s act reveals that wrath, in this instance, was intended for the purpose of spiritual inclusion that situates the Angles within a privileged and sacred history. However, the connection between wrath and exile is often more overt in hagiographic literature, as seen in other saintly situations.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Godden, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 75.

<sup>231</sup> The article Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., “Looking Back at Anger: Wrath in Anglo-Saxon England,” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 66, no. 275 (2015): 423-48, offers an interesting survey of the connection between emotion, wrath, and Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards wrath. He seems to argue that members of the church in particular did not see much of a good side to wrath, and notes that in hagiography, wrath is “employed to create a polarity between evil persecutor and holy victim,” 448. While this may be true in some respects, this study seems to overlook the presence of wrath as an attribute of God that has a divine purpose, which is discussed in this dissertation.

### The *Guthlac* Poems of the Exeter Book

The *Guthlac* poems, *A* and *B*, are considered to be from the second half of the tenth century,<sup>232</sup> and are contained in folios 32v-52v of the Exeter Book, Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501.<sup>233</sup> The Old English poems that act as a vita for Guthlac are based on an earlier Latin life of Guthlac written by a monk named Felix,<sup>234</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, written for King Ælfwald of East-Anglia in the eighth century.<sup>235</sup> Bertram Colgrave notes that the Exeter Book poems of Guthlac demonstrate an awareness of Felix's vita with additional invention of material by the poet, and that part of *Guthlac B* would have been read during the octave of his feast.<sup>236</sup> Guthlac himself was born in 674, born into a royal family, and lived in the borderland of Mercia, and lived as a soldier, possibly since the age of fifteen.<sup>237</sup>

The *Guthlac* poems are not narratively related, and written by two poets, but are connected in their focus on the subject of Guthlac's asceticism and spiritual struggles.<sup>238</sup> *Guthlac*

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<sup>232</sup> For a study on the dating of *Guthlac A* within the Benedictine Reform of the tenth century, see Patrick Conner, "Source Studies, The Old English *Guthlac A* and the Benedictine Reform," *Revue Bénédictine* 103, no. 3-4 (1993): 380-413.

<sup>233</sup> See Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 12-14, for more detail on the Exeter Book and the *Guthlac* poems' place within it. A recent article looks at the reasons why the *Guthlac* poems were placed together, concluding that "the compiler was not concerned with a 'rough attempt at biographical unity' but with staging a debate over the proper goals of monastic living that would have resonated with his contemporary audience." See Benjamin D. Weber, "A Harmony of Contrasts: The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 114, no. 2 (2015): 201-18, specifically p. 218.

<sup>234</sup> See Bertram Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac: Texts, Translation and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) for an edition of the Latin text.

<sup>235</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 1.

<sup>236</sup> Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 20. For more on the poet's

<sup>237</sup> Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 1-15, offers an account of the historical Guthlac and Felix's treatment of Guthlac's life.

<sup>238</sup> An interesting article focuses on the role of fasting and its portrayal between the Latin and Old English versions. See Sarah Downey, "Too Much of Too Little: Guthlac and the Temptation of Excessive Fasting," *Traditio* 63 (2008): 89-127.

*A* begins philosophically, and situates the end of life, the eschatological meeting of the angel and the soul, within the view of the audience to reveal the goal of ascetic struggle: “Nu þu most feran þider þu fundadest / longe 7 gelome: ic þec læden sceal. / Wegas þe sindon weþe 7 wuldres leoht torht ontyned. Eart nu tidfara / to þam halgan hám.”<sup>239</sup> *Guthlac A* imposes the pleasant path toward a holy home over the path of ascetic struggle to offer a way of interpreting eremitic renunciation and flight from society. The holy home is presented conceptually as a *locus amœnus* for those who have endured this spiritual battle: “Þær næfre hreow cymeð / edergong fore yrmþum, ac þær biþ engla dream, / sib 7 gesælignes 7 sawla ræst, / 7 þær á to feore gefeon motum, / dryman mid dryhten, þa þe his domas her / æfnað on eorþan.”<sup>240</sup> This sense of a pleasant place, in the presence of the Lord, can superficially be regarded as a reward for holy struggles, but the subtext is more significant — there will be no more departures forced by miseries, and it will be a resting-place for holy souls. The ascetic battle is predicated on renunciation of the world and self-exile, and the willing endurance of misery. *Guthlac A* provides the purpose, which is to go to your true home. Following that, the narrative of Guthlac’s

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<sup>239</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 83, ll. 6-10. Clayton’s translation: “Now you may go to that place toward which you have been striving constantly for a long time; I shall lead you. The paths will be pleasant for you and the bright light of heavenly glory will be revealed. You are now a timely traveler to that holy home,” 91. Diacritic marks featured in this and following quotes are representative of this edition.

<sup>240</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 83, ll. 10-15. Clayton’s translation: “Sorrow, departure forced by miseries, will never occur there, but the joy of angels will be there, peace and happiness and a resting-place for souls, and those who fulfill his laws here on earth may be happy there for evermore, rejoicing with the Lord,” 91.

struggles occurs while he occupies the top of a hill—in Old English a *beorg*<sup>241</sup>—and is presented with visions of sin in the world by demons, and eventually dragged to the mouth of hell, but is saved by Bartholomew the apostle, and translated to heaven by angels.

*Guthlac B* operates similarly in philosophical outlook and theological discourse, but while the *A* text is centered on the experience of that struggle, the *B* text is focused on discourse between Guthlac and his tormenting demons, and the point of his death. As in *Guthlac A*, the concern of the ascetic is viewed in terms of theological banishment signifying our current condition: “Siþþan se eþel uðgenge wearð / Adame 7 Euan, eardwica cyst, / beohrt, oðbroden, 7 hyra bearnum swa, / eaferum æfter, þa hy ón úncyððu, / scomum scudende, scofene wurdon / on gewinworuld.”<sup>242</sup> With this, the beginning of *Guthlac B* mimics text *A* in its discourse on our spiritual home, but presents the obverse in placing Adam and Eve’s exile from paradise in view. The exile of Adam and Eve, and becoming an alien to their homeland, rhetorically transposes the ascetic path to get back to that homeland, and in that manner, shows how Adam and Eve’s exile and sin is also our own, universalizing the condition of banishment for all of humanity, and making all of us exiles within creation. This is made explicit in the nature of the discourse that

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<sup>241</sup> While the *beorg* does raise interesting concepts of space and sanctity, an extended discussion of Guthlac’s *beorg* is not necessarily pertinent to this chapter. However, a succinct description of issues regarding how *beorg* is translated and its importance for Guthlac and the eremitical tradition can be found in Manish Sharma, “Reconsideration of ‘Guthlac A’: The Extremes of Saintliness,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101, no. 2 (April 2002): 185-200, specifically p. 195. Another recent article presents an in-depth look at the significance of the *beorg* for Guthlac and other Anglo-Saxons. See Maj-Britt Frenze, “Holy Heights in the Anglo-Saxon Imagine: Guthlac’s *beorg* and Sacred Death,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117, no. 3 (July 2018): 315-42, where Frenze argues that the *beorg* is a “holy hill on which a figurative hill-death *in imitatio Christi* took place and depicts [the poet’s] saintly hero as a *martyre* (l. 514a.)” 316.

<sup>242</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 109, ll. 852-7. Bjork’s translation: “Afterward the homeland became alien / to Adam and Eve, the choicest of dwellings, / radiant, snatched away, and likewise their children, / for their offspring after them, when they, / scurrying in shame, were thrust into an unknown land, / into a world of care,” 37.

Guthlac shares with his servant in regards to his time in the wilderness, and the illness he is afflicted with that leads to his passing. As other scholars will have noted before, the *Guthlac* poems uncover how Anglo-Saxons thought of space, asceticism, and even the liminal. This section will work with those concepts too, but to consider more closely the role in which wrath and exile intersect in these poems, suggesting a different spiritual reading that would show a unique text for Anglo-Saxons.

The Latin *vita* of Guthlac shows a monastic figure that textually and narratively participates in a hagiographic heritage, and presents a self-awareness of his exilic condition in both spiritual and practical senses.<sup>243</sup> For example, chapter twenty-four the Latin *vita* say that he was inspired to take up the practice of being a desert hermit after reading the stories of those who followed that path:

Decursis itaque bis denis bis binisque alternantium mensium circulis, quibus sub clericali habitu vitam immensae moderantiae peregit heremum cum curioso eximiae sollicitudinis animo petere meditabatur. Cum enim priscorum monachorum solitariam vitam legebat, tum inluminato cordis gremio avida cupidine heremum quarere fervebat.<sup>244</sup>

Reading the lives and monastic practices of the desert fathers, possibly texts that were transmitted from Greek origin due to Theodore and Hadrian's school, influenced him to follow

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<sup>243</sup> A recent article has presented the *Guthlac* poems as liminal objects themselves, besides the character Guthlac himself. This liminal characteristic seems to be predicated on the intertextuality of the Latin and Old English versions. See Lisa M. C. Weston, "Guthlac Betwixt and Between: Literacy, Cross-Temporal Affiliation, and an Anglo-Saxon Anchorite," *Journal of Medieval and Religious Cultures* 42, no. 1 (2016): 1-27. Additional ideas regarding intertextuality of the *Guthlac* poems and other Anglo-Saxon poetry can be found in an earlier article, Ágnes Réffy Horváth, "Saint Guthlac, the Warrior God in the Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book," *The AnaChronisT* (2000): 1-28.

<sup>244</sup> Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 86. "And so when four and twenty months had run their course during which he lived a life of the greatest self-restraint in the habit of a cleric, he planned to seek the desert with the greatest diligence and the utmost earnestness of mind. For when he read about the solitary life of monks in former days, then his heart was enlightened and burned with an eager desire to make his way to the desert," 87.

the same. Guthlac, in this insistence, is representative of the enculturation of foreign eremitic praxis by finding the closest approximate to the desert within the insular landscape:

Est in meditullaneis Britanniae partibus immensae magnitudinis aterrima palus, quae, a Grontae fluminis ripis incipiens, haud procul a castello quem dicunt nomine Gronte nunc stagnis, nunc flactris, interdum nigris fusi vaporis laticibus, necnon et crebis insularum nemorumque intervenientibus flexuosis rivigarum anfractibus, ab austro in aquilonem mare tenus longissimo tractu protenditur. Igitur cum supradictus vir beatae memoriae Guthlac illius vastissimi heremi inculta loca conperisset, caelistibus auxiliis adiutus, rectissimo callis tramite tenus usque perrexit.<sup>245</sup>

The spiritual and physical are coupled together, in that it is incumbent upon the hermit to embrace the wildness of an uncultivated landscape as a means of mirroring our own spiritual condition. Megan Cavell writes that “Anglo-Saxon conceptions of the natural world were to a great extent characterized by all that was alien to humanity, and, because of this, depictions of nature commonly demonstrate fear and defensiveness.”<sup>246</sup> This is an apt description that bears witness to Guthlac’s inhabiting of the fens of Mercia, where the landscape creates fear, conjuring up mists and marsh that demarcate where civilization ends, and where the demonic resides. Related to this idea, Cavell goes on to say that Anglo-Saxons have a “tendency to value things only in relation to what they can do for humanity, resulting in an approach to the natural world that is for the most part concerned with how that world affects humanity.”<sup>247</sup> In the case of

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<sup>245</sup> Colgrave, *Felix’s Life*, 86. “There is in the midland district of Britain a most dismal fen of immense size, which begins at the banks of the river Granta not far from the camp which is called Cambridge, and stretches from the south as far north as the sea. It is a very long tract, now consisting of marshes, now of bogs, sometimes studded with wooded islands and traversed by the windings of tortuous streams. So when this same man of blessed memory, Guthlac, had learned about the wild places of this vast desert, he made his way thither with divine assistance by the most direct route,” 87.

<sup>246</sup> Megan Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies: The Poetics of Human Experiences in Old English Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 95.

<sup>247</sup> Cavell, *Weaving Words*, 95.

Guthlac, the place he inhabits is central to his own experience in doing battle against evil spirits. As a saint, he needs to occupy what appears to be place in the natural world to reveal where the unnatural and unholy make their presence known, and in doing so, the location demonstrates an important usage for him in giving Guthlac the space to be an ascetic. Therefore, a connection can be drawn to Guthlac's self-exile in the vastness and wildness of the fens, a place of marsh and misery, to assert and sustain a theology of exile that suggests the landscape is a spatially ascetic plane where salvation can be achieved by subordinating the demonic through a solitary existence, following the exemplum of Christ in the desert.<sup>248</sup> It is clear that the tenor of the *Guthlac* poems is also dictated by the condition of exile, which is the result of the misery of sin. The heavenly *epel*, the homeland, is positioned as where the Christian's spiritual sight should be oriented in relation to their miserable state, which is the result of God's anger at Adam and Eve's transgression.<sup>249</sup>

This theological condition permeates the poems with the help of the language that the poet uses, specifically the term *wræc*. In the 1,379 lines that comprise *Guthlac A* and *B*, the word *wræc* appears as a kenning with various other nouns nine times throughout the poem, the majority of them seen in the *A* text. At first glance, the ratio between the number of lines of the poem and occurrences of *wræc* may seem insignificant. However, such a surface level treatment

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<sup>248</sup> A more practical example of self-recognition of exile occurs in chapter thirty-four of Felix's vita. It is noted that he has a dream of British hosts approaching his dwelling, presumably to harm him. Felix says that Guthlac can understand the speech of the British because he "inter illos exulabat," Colgrave, *Felix's Life*, 110. "He had been an exile among them," 111.

<sup>249</sup> Regarding concepts of space and identity, Jeffery Jerome Cohen argues that the "sacred form of Guthlac shimmers with the radiance of a sublime object, of a suturing point where some disparate peoples are called upon to recognize their community while others are rejected as utterly different in language, in body, in race. Through Guthlac's body courses a specifically eighth-century formulation of Anglo-Saxon unity constructed against a British inferiority, a fantasy of corporate integrity with a vast colonialist utility for contemporary Mercia." Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 117.



fails to understand that the sense of *wræc* being conveyed pervades the entirety of the poem. As mentioned previously, the noun *wræc* on its own denotes wrath, vengeance, misery, and the act of being cast out, and the kennings in which *wræc* appears are *wræc-mæg*, meaning outcast, banished, or specifically “wretch” as defined by *Bosworth-Toller*;<sup>250</sup> *wræc-setl*, meaning “exile-abode;”<sup>251</sup> and *wræc-siþ*, with a range of meanings from journey, pilgrimage, and exile.<sup>252</sup>

The instances in which these words show up vary, and semantically the contexts will differ in other textual sources. Even with this variance, though, embedded within this sense of exile and banishment is the concept of wrath, suggesting that the ensuing result of one’s wrath leads to banishment and being cast out. Exile is the physical and spatial embodiment of someone else’s anger. Therefore, the space that Guthlac and the demons tormenting him occupy within the text should not be overlooked.

Guthlac’s renunciation is entirely founded on the rejection of his previous identity, title, and home, exchanging the profane for the sacred. The poet of *Guthlac A* alludes to this, saying that “sume þa wuniað on westennum / secað 7 gesittað sylfra willum / hamas on heolstrum, hy ðæs heofoncundan / boldes bidað,”<sup>253</sup> and later, that “hu Guthlac his in Godes willan / mod

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<sup>250</sup> Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,” *Wræc-mæg*. 21 March 2010. Accessed 8 June 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/036550>. A variant of *wræc-mæg*, *wræc-mægga*, is seen in one instance to describe the devil. See Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,” *Wræc-mægga*. March 21, 2010. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/036551>. This word shows up in lines 129, 231, 263, and 558 of the *Guthlac* poems.

<sup>251</sup> Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,” *Wræc-setl*. 21 March 2010. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/036554>. This word shows up in line 296 of the *Guthlac* poems.

<sup>252</sup> See n. 227 for reference. This word shows up in lines 508, 623, 688, and 1074 of the *Guthlac* poems.

<sup>253</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 85, ll. 81-4. Clayton’s translation: “Some who dwell in the wilderness seek out and occupy homes in hidden places of their own accord; they await the heavenly abode,” 95.

gerehte, mán eall forseah, / eorðlic æþelu, úpp gemunde / ham in heofonum.”<sup>254</sup> This waiting for a heavenly abode while living in the physicality of deserts and wastelands is not about the a holy reward for suffering, but about space and location interpreting the interior nature of spiritual struggle and the psychology of being a solitary. In the context of an ascetic dwelling in a wasteland, the rejection of earthly nobility is the acceptance of heavenly citizenship, seen in earlier patristic and monastic traditions. Guthlac follows monastic and eremitical tradition, and exiles himself to the borderlands for spiritual combat.

The demons he engages with are exiles themselves, first in terms of heaven, and second in eventually being driven away from where Guthlac dwells, perpetually doomed to wander, as seen when the saint occupies the *beorg*:

wæron teonsmiðas      tornes fulle,  
 cwædon þæt him Guðlac      eac Gode sylfum  
 earfeþa mæst      ana gefremede  
 siþþan he for wlence      on westenne  
 beorgas bræce;      þær hy bidinge  
 earme ondsacan,      æror mostum  
 æfter tintergum      tidum brucan  
 ðonne hy of waþum      werge cwoman  
 restan ryneþragum;      rowe gefeon:  
 wæs him seo gelyfed      þurh lytel fæc.<sup>255</sup>

Guthlac is presented as an embodiment of the spiritual goal of asceticism, in that renunciation leads to a state of being betwixt and between the spaces that one inhabits, until the ascetic arrives

<sup>254</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 86, ll. 95-8. Clayton’s translation: “How Guthlac directed his spirit according to the will of God, rejected all evil and earthly nobility, was mindful of his home up in heaven,” 97.

<sup>255</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 89, ll. 205-14. Clayton’s translation: “the evildoers were full of fury, siad that Guthlac alone, besides God himself, had inflicted the greatest hardship upon them, after he, out of arrogance, had taken by storm the hills in the wilderness, where formerly the wretched enemies had sometimes been allowed to possess an abode after their torments, when, weary from their wandering, they came to rest for a while and were glad of the quiet; it was permitted to them for a short period,” 105.

at their true home. Regarding space and possession, Lindy Brady writes that the “demon’s claim to the land is established by the revelation of a legitimate cause for their anger toward the saint: his presence denies their access to the land that was previously granted to them as a place of sanctuary, even if intermittently and temporarily.”<sup>256</sup> Brady’s focus in this analysis is the sense of contestation that occurs with the demons and their anger in being driven out through the ordained seizure of land, which affords a multivalent reading of what land and possession mean in not just spiritual senses, but physical.<sup>257</sup> However, Brady concludes in her essay that *Guthlac A* “cannot be read as a latent allegory for Anglo-Saxon imperialism, an argument supported by the poem’s apparent distaste for the violence of Guthlac’s past career as a warrior.”<sup>258</sup> I agree with this, and would like build off it, in that if *Guthlac* is not an allegory for imperialism, then it is still an allegorical reading of a spiritual condition, and what place means in that context. In this manner, space is placed within competing hierarchies of habitation that imposes a sense of ambiguity on the location itself. Here, place becomes identified by who dwells there, and in that, the purpose of space becomes interrogated and reformed.

This ironically occurs through intentional inhabitation of a landscape that is inimical to life. Justin Noetzel, in writing about the cultural and metaphoric resonance of the fens in Anglo-Saxon England, says that “Anglo-Saxon culture understood fens and swamps as unholy and an

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<sup>256</sup> Lindy Brady, “Colonial Desire of Political Engagement?: The Contested Landscape of *Guthlac A*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 115, no. 1 (January 2016): 65.

<sup>257</sup> For example, a spiritual reading of the landscape in the poem has argued that Guthlac’s conquering of the *beorg* from the demons is “the equivalent of the lifting of a curse on the landscape, which seems to become more fertile as a result.” Alfred K. Siewers, “Landscapes of Conversion: Guthlac’s Mound and Grendel’s Mere as Expressions of Anglo-Saxon Nation Building,” *Vitator* 34 (2003): 25.

<sup>258</sup> Brady, “Colonial Desire,” 78.

uncanny reflection of solid land.”<sup>259</sup> This uncanny reflection coincides with the aspect of self-exile in occupying what are the *westes*, or wastelands of the insular landscape. Of the particular space that Guthlac dwells in, the *weste*, which is also used to describe the Grendel-kin’s mere in *Beowulf*, Nicole Discenza writes that “ordinary people do not live there, yet each has its own residents, and heroes (religious or secular) enter these realms and may even stay. They are liminal spaces, ones on or across a border that will not remain separate from safer, human spaces.”<sup>260</sup> The heroic nature of Guthlac compels him to follow the path of desert fathers into desolate lands, into a place that is analogous with the desert according to the Mercian landscape, and the physical structure of a cell.<sup>261</sup> The saintly nature of Guthlac upholds him as a liminal figure inhabiting liminal landscapes that border the cultivated and the wild.

The poet narrates Guthlac inhabiting the *mearclond*, or the borderlands,<sup>262</sup> and the effect his presence has on the landscape regarding demonic presence. Regarding Felix’s text, Katherine O’Brien O’Keffe notes that

Guthlac’s retreat iterates the spiritual gestures of his eremitic predecessors — and that is precisely the point. Like Cuthbert he has an island (although inland), like Antony and others, he inhabits a grave, covering a presumably dry cistern, like Athanasius in the desert. By producing Crowland as a desert, Felix can reproduce the spiritual battles of his saint as battles for territory populated by demons... Guthlac’s habitation requires a displacing and conquest of its demonic possessors.

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<sup>259</sup> Justin T. Noetzel, “Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens,” *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* vol. 45 (2014): 110.

<sup>260</sup> Nicole Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces: Anglo-Saxon Constructions of Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 144.

<sup>261</sup> It has been suggested that *Guthlac A* is a “sustained effort to dissolve the tension between two very different understandings of sanctity, and to claim the glory of the desert for a more conventional, accessible form of the monastic life: the *vita communis*, or *cenobium*.” Christopher A. Jones, “Envisioning the *Cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*,” *Medieval Studies* 57 (1995): 260.

<sup>262</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 88, ln. 174.

And so, his first act arriving on the island is, in fact, a formal act of possession: he moves around the island, searching out every part.<sup>263</sup>

The position of Guthlac's Crowland, already geographically a borderland, is rhetorically placed as an analog of the desert, and Guthlac intentionally observes and delimits the territory as a way of noting the physical boundaries in which this spiritual work will be contained. The harshness of the climate presents how nature might mimic spiritual conditions of being inhabitable by humans, yet overrun by demons. This presents Crowland within the reception of patristic ideology of dispossession and then possession of space to signify the heroic nature of the saint, and the sanctity of the hero in reclaiming lost spaces to make them holy, revealing God's presence.

This sense of possession and dispossession is reflected in the *Guthlac* poems. Guthlac's presence dictates a hierarchy of possession, where he drives away the demonic infestation plaguing that space. The poet notes that this space is far from where he belongs, his "rightful homeland," a reference not to an earthly space, but a heavenly one. The poet writes that

Stod seo dygle stow    dryhtne in gemyndum  
 idel 7 æmen,    eþelrichte feor,  
 bád bisæce    betran hyrdes.  
 To þon ealdfeondas    ondan noman  
 swa hi singales    sorge dreogað;  
 ne motun hi on eorþan    eardes brucan  
 ne hy lyft swefeð    in leoma ræstum  
 ac hy hleolease    hama þoliað,  
 in cearam cwipiað,    cwealmes wiscað,  
 willen þæt him dryhten    þurh deaðes cwealm  
 to hyra earfeða    ende geryme;  
 ne mostun hy Guðlaces    gæste sceþþan  
 ne þurh sarslege    sawle gedælan

<sup>263</sup> Katherine O'Brien O'Keffe, "Guthlac's Crossings," *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic* 2 (2001): 12-13.

wið lichoman            ac hy ligesearwum  
 ahofun hearmstafas,    hleahtor alegdon,  
 sorge seofedon        þa hi swiðra oferstag  
 weard on wonge;        sceoldon wræcmæcgas  
 ofgiefan gnornende    grene beorgas.<sup>264</sup>

The space that this location occupies is inherently marginal, and spatially peripheral. The connotations of *mearc lond* convey an expression of a land that is ambiguous, liminal, and occupied with people who occupy and embody wrath. The fact that the poet recalled how the Lord is mindful of this spot enhances how remote it is from any home or familiar site, and suggests the liminal significance of the wasteland. The wrath of God towards evil is evinced in how his saints conquer the wilderness and further banish the already banished ones, but it also raises a paradox that the saints must be marginalized and liminal themselves to embody the wrath of being cast out from heaven in order to controvert wrath into peace.

To consider a semantic and textual analog, Discenza discusses the quality that Grendel possess of being a *mearcstapa*, one who wanders in wastes and borderlands: “A ‘mearc’ or boundary sets off what is human or alive from what is not... As ‘mearcstapan’ (1348), Grendel and his mother straddle the boundary between human and not-human, and they take men across the boundary from life to death.”<sup>265</sup> This quality of the human and not-human binary can also be expanded to contain and qualify Guthlac as he mingles with demons and those of the spiritual

<sup>264</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 89-90, ll. 215-32. Clayton’s translation: “That remote spot was in the Lord’s thoughts; empty and desolate, far from his rightful homeland, it awaited the claim of a better guardian. The old enemies became envious at that since they continually endure sorrow. They are not permitted to possess a home on earth nor does the air lull them into resting their limbs, but, shelterless, the lack homes, lament amid their sorrows, wish for death, desire that the Lord, by means of the penalty of death, should clear the way to an end to their sufferings. They were not permitted to harm Guthlac’s spirit nor to part his soul from his body with a painful blow but they stirred up troubles with their lying tricks, put an end to laughter, sighed in sorrow when the more powerful guardian defeated them in that place. Lamenting, the outcasts had to leave the green hills,” 105.

<sup>265</sup> Discenza, *Inhabited Spaces*, 146.

realm, and contextualizes the in-between state of the ascetic and the hellish fiends they engage in battle with. This is evinced in that even the demons are driven from there because of Guthlac's presence and his spiritual strength to engage the demons in conflict. Moreover, this place is called a place of exile by Guthlac himself in the poem: “Wid is þes westen, wræcsetla fela, / eardas onhæle earmra gæste; / sindon wærlogan þe þa wic bugað.”<sup>266</sup> The wilderness is not only dangerous because of its lack of domestication, but also within the wideness of this wilderness exists spaces where outcasts are driven to occupy.

Guthlac, while in conflict with demons, engages in discourse with them, and says this to them: “gefeoð in firenum, frofre ne wenað / þæt ge wræcsiða wyrpe gebiden.”<sup>267</sup> The word of note is *wræc-siþ*, and here it clearly shows that sense of embodied wrath of banishment, and that the demons embody that wrath because of their delight in wickedness. Here, it becomes important to note something critical in terms of the rhetorical and narrative space that Guthlac occupies within the text. The various instances of exile and wrath that are threaded through the text have yet to pertain to Guthlac himself. He is even brought to the door of hell by his tormentor demons, where he is taunted and cruelly subjected to the wrath that embodies hell:

Hwæðre hine gebrohton      bolgemode  
 wraðe wræcmæcgas,      wuldres cempan,  
 halig husulbearn,      æt helodre  
 þær firenfulra      fæge gæstas  
 æfter swyltcwale      scean onginnað  
 ingong ærest      in þæt atule hús,  
 niþer under næssas      neole grundas.  
 Hy hine bregdon,      budon orlege,

<sup>266</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poem*, 92, ll. 296-8. Clayton's translation: “Vast is this wilderness, its many places of exile, the secret homes of wretched spirits; those who inhabit these dwellings are traitors,” 111.

<sup>267</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poem*, 98, ll. 507-8. Clayton's translation: “You rejoice in wicked deeds and have no hope of relief, that you might experience a change for the better in your exile,” 125.

egsan 7 ondan            arleaslice,  
 frecne fore:    swa bið feonda þeaw  
 þonne hy            soðfæstra sawle willað  
 synnum beswican    7 searocraftum.<sup>268</sup>

His voluntary exile works to absolve him of the theological guilt retained and imposed on humanity from Adam and Eve’s transgression. The nature of wrath is particular to those who have demonstrably earned it through rebellion, and this is rhetorically linked with Guthlac’s terse dialogue with the demons, and the presence of the apostle Bartholomew in rescuing Guthlac from the threshold of hell. Manish Sharma has argued that in *Guthlac A*, the “theme of ‘movement’ is of paramount importance,” and shows how these movements are structured to reveal a tripartite structure based on threshold crossings.<sup>269</sup> Sharma’s observation is important — Guthlac becomes a threshold person, but controverts the spatial ambiguity of transitioning because the threshold was not his to cross, and in that sense, his identity remains intact, stable within fixed points of experience and expression. Wrath brought him to the gates of hell, through the *wræcmæcgas*, but not because God was wrathful against Guthlac. Instead, the wrath of the demons in losing their place compelled them to drag Guthlac with them into a tormented, wandering existence. The exile of the demons is rooted in their delight and joy in continuing to perform wickedness. Asceticism and repentance provide a holy path that untangles a sinner from spiritual marginalization. The condition in which humanity finds itself is linked to that initial

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<sup>268</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 100, ll. 557-68. Clayton’s translation: “Yet the enraged, hostile outcasts brought the glorious champion, the holy communicant, to hell’s door, where, after their death pangs, the doomed spirits of sinners first seek entry into that horrible house, into the deep abyss, down under the ground. They terrified him, mercilessly threatened him with battle, horror, and hostility, a dangerous journey, as is the way with fiends when they wish to deceive the souls of the righteous with sins and treacherous cunning.” 128-9.

<sup>269</sup> Manish Sharma, “A Reconsideration of the Structure of ‘Guthlac A’: The Extremes of Saintliness,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101, no. 2 (April 2002): 186.



transgression of Adam and Eve, but the hermit and desert monk are capable of controverting that through renunciation and repentance, which is evinced in how Guthlac's *beorg* becomes the *locus amœnus* after Bartholomew elevates him from the gates of hell, and before his *transitus* to heaven. Guthlac's converted *beorg* is an intermediary space that reveals the eschatological hope of heaven and home. The poet lexically signifies this by referring to it as an "eardes," not an *epel*.<sup>270</sup>

The tension of this theological binary is dictated lexically by the poet of *Guthlac B*. Guthlac, being consumed by illness and fever, close to the end of his, engages a spiritual dialogue with his servant on the nature of life and death. The most dramatic section of the poem, near the end, narrating Guthlac's death, involves a discourse about the passage from life to death. Guthlac, with saintly heroism, embraces the illness that is killing him, and positions himself as not fearing death, in contrast to the demons and their torment: "ne ic me herehloðe helleþegna / swiðe onsitte, ne mæg synne on me / facnes frumbearn fyrene gestælen, / lices leahfor; ac in lige sceolon / sorgwylmum soden sár wanian, / wræcsið wepan, wilna biscirede / in þam deaðsele, duguða gehwylcre, / lufena 7 lissa."<sup>271</sup> The saintly nature in which Guthlac embodies his illness

<sup>270</sup> "Guthlac moste; / eadig and onmod, eardes brucan. / Stod se grena wong in Godes wære, / hæfde se heorde se þe of heofonum cwom / feondas afyrde." Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 105 ll. 744-8. Clayton's translation: "Guthlac, blessed and resolute, was able to enjoy his new home. The green place remained under God's protection; the guardian who had come from heaven had expelled the fiends," 141. Another article, unrelated to the *Guthlac* poems, discusses approaches to purification of sacred spaces in Anglo-Saxon England. See Nathan J. Ristuccia, "Fælsian and the Purification of Sacred Space in the *Advent Lyrics*," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 41 (2010): 1-22. This serves as an interesting analog to Guthlac and the *beorg*, although the focus of Ristuccia's article, the term *fælsian*, a word meaning ritual cleansing, does not appear in the *Guthlac* poems. He notes that "*fælsian* appears barely a dozen times in the entire Old English corpus, and is limited in its usage to Anglo-Saxon poetry and a few Latin glosses... over half the uses of *fælsian* are in only two works: *Beowulf* and the *Advent Lyrics*," 6.

<sup>271</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 115, ll. 1069-75. Bjork's translation: "Nor do I greatly fear the hostile troop of attendants / from hell, nor may the firstborn of / evil accuse me me of sin, of wickedness, crime / of the body, but in the flame, afflicted with / waves of sorrow, they must bewail their pain, / lament the exile-journey, stripped in the death-hall / of desires, of each glory, / of hopes and mercies," 51, 53.

is substantive of his holy nature in the relinquishing of comforts; the demonic, on the other hand, are the icon of what it means to be an exile, in the loss of comfort, protection, and joy, lamenting their own exile-track due to their own self-centered nature. The demons become deprived of what they have not just because they are overtly evil, but that they signify the fullness of what it means to bewail your own theological condition without holy acceptance. The suffering of Guthlac situates him on a holy path that mediates blessing and a passage home, while the demons experience God's wrath through exile and deprivation because they cannot accept their state, and simultaneously revel in the evil they commit. This is confirmed in the distinction used to discuss Guthlac's passage from life to death, and the passage that the demons tread. In his discourse with his servant, Guthlac says "min þæt leofe bearn, / ne beo þu on sefan to seoc. Ic eom siþes fus / upeard niman, edleana georn / in þam ecan gefean ærgewyrhtum, / geseon sigor frean."<sup>272</sup> Lexically, Guthlac's ascetic journey, while rooted in self-exile, is not comparable to the experience of demons. Guthlac refers to his looming passage to heaven as simply "siþe," a journey. The condition of the demons' experience is interpreted semantically through "wræc" being applied as an external influence which textually situates them within theological hardship, wrath, and banishment. This is further confirmed when Guthlac says "nis na wracu ne gewin þæt ic wuldres God / sece, swegelcyning. Þær is sib 7 blis, / domfæstra dream, dryhten ondweard / þam ic georne gæstgerynum / in þas dreorgan tid, dædum cwemde, /mode 7 mægne."<sup>273</sup> The

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<sup>272</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 115, ll. 1076-80. Bjork's translation: "My dear child, / don't be sick at heart. I am ready for the journey, / eager to take up the abode in the dwellings of rewards on high / in that eternal joy, to see the Lord of victories / for deeds of old," 53. Bjork's translation: "It is not hardship or strife for me that I seek the God of / glory, the heavenly king, where peace and bliss / are, the joy of the faithful, the present Lord, / whom with spiritual mysteries / in this sad time I eagerly pleased with deeds / in heart and in strenght," 53.

<sup>273</sup> Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems*, 115, ll. 1081-6.

“*wracu*,” the hardship that is placed on the demons is not on Guthlac, although they may share similar experiences of discomfort. The difference is in the theological binary of suffering, where it either signifies salvation or damnation, depending on the one undergoing it. For Guthlac, the existential moments of suffering are subordinate to and inform his journey to heaven. For the demonic, their suffering and hardship defines them and their journey, so that embedded within their journey is perpetual exile, and that any place they come to to dwell, they will be driven from — possibly from another carrying the same tradition of cultivating the wild desolate places into spatial markers of the holy.

The hagiographic nature of the *Guthlac* poems presents a way of understanding the nature of self-exile and heroic suffering within an Anglo-Saxon theological context, and embracing renunciation so that you will not be renounced by God. Informed by desert monastic and patristic tradition, the liminality embedded within Guthlac’s experience shows a new way to understand the function of Anglo-Saxon hagiography and their theological purposes, and uncovers how the eremitic heritage was adapted according to insular exigencies and constraints. The result is that an Anglo-Saxon saint is textually reified as even more Anglo-Saxon through the poets’ lexical and semantic revelations to the audience that exile and wrath are not mutually exclusive, but operate within the same sacred reality that forms the life we live. Guthlac is a theological symbol for Anglo-Saxons that demonstrate how they related to the divine in relation to their space. The *Guthlac* poems show that we are all exiles, but more importantly, repentance and renunciation are formative moments that shift the Anglo-Saxon’s Christian perspective. Through self-exile, seeking God in the wilderness, and embracing suffering, the Christian will eventually find their place of rest.

### The Old English Vita of St Mary of Egypt

Andrew Scheil notes that medieval versions of this saint's life exist in Latin, Old English, Middle English, Old Norse, Anglo-Norman, Welsh, and Irish editions,<sup>274</sup> and sees that as a testament to the enduring appeal of the nature of this hagiographic narrative.<sup>275</sup> The Old English vita of Mary of Egypt survives in a manuscript in the British Library, Cotton Julius E. vii, ff. 122v-36r. While compiled with a collection of Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, and is thought to be from the tenth century, the Old English vita is considered to be one of four non-Ælfrician hagiographic texts included in that collection.<sup>276</sup> The Old English vita is a translation of Paul the Deacon's Latin version of the text composed in the eighth century,<sup>277</sup> which in turn was a translation of a Greek vita attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem, a seventh-century patriarch of Jerusalem,<sup>278</sup> who revised the narrative and expanded on it from the sixth-century Cyril of

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<sup>274</sup> Scholarship on the insular nature of this vita can be found in Eric Poppe and Bianca Ross, eds., *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996). See Simon Lavery, "The Story of Mary the Egyptian in Medieval England," 113-48, and "Gilte Legende Version of the Legend of Mary of Egypt," 149-60; Judith Weiss, "The Metaphor of Madness in the Anglo-Norman Lives of St Mary the Egyptian," 161-73; Andy Orchard, "Hot Lust in a Cold Climate: Comparison and Contrast in the Old Norse Versions of the Life of Mary of Egypt," 175-204; Ingo Mittendorf, "The Middle Welsh Mary of Egypt and the Latin Source of the Miracles of the Virgin Mary," 205-36; James Fife, "The Syntax of the Middle Welsh *Mair o'r Aifft*," 237-54; Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire, "Mary of Egypt in Irish: A Survey of Sources," 255-7; Bianca Ross, "Uilliam Mac an Leagha's Versions of the Story of Mary of Egypt," 259-78; and Eric Poppe, "Favourite Expressions, Repetition, and Variation: Observations on *Beatha Mhuire Egiptacdha* in Add. 30512," 279-99.

<sup>275</sup> Andrew Scheil, "Bodies and Boundaries in the Old English *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*," *Neophilologus* 84 (2000): 138.

<sup>276</sup> See Magennis, *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt*, 14-29 for more extensive treatment of the primary manuscript and other fragments that exist.

<sup>277</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 58, 59. "Ðas herigendlicestan gehwyrfednysse ægþer ge dæda ge þeawa and þa micclan hreowsunga and swa ellenlic gewinn þære arwurðan | Egyptiscan Marian, hu heo hyre lifes tida on þam westene gefylde, of Grecisc geþeode on læden gewende Paulus se arwurða diacon sancte Neapolis þære cyrcan." Translation: "Paul the worthy deacon of the church at holy Naples translated from the Greek language into Latin the most praiseworthy conversion, both in deeds and in morals, and the great repentance and very brave struggle of the worthy Mary of Egypt, how she completed the days of her life in the desert."

<sup>278</sup> See Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 30-5 for a discussion on sources.

Scythopolis, with a Mary being mentioned in the vita of Kyriakos.<sup>279</sup> Benedicta Ward notes that there may have been confusion in late antiquity about this story; given its popularity and circulation, some may have thought it was a later revision of the story of Mary Magdalene.<sup>280</sup>

The narrative of Mary of Egypt is centered on the experience the monk Zosimus has in meeting Mary, deep within the Egyptian desert. Zosimus, initially a monk from Palestine, has been a monastic since early in his youth, and progressed to significant heights of spirituality. Later in life, Zosimus feels that he cannot progress any further in the spiritual life at the monastery where he currently resides, fearing that he might have already reached perfection. Zosimus is then prompted to leave his monastery, and find placement in another one in the Egyptian desert. Once he is accepted at this new monastery, he renews with fervency his ascetic practices. He then learns that this monastery has a custom that at the beginning of Lent, all the monks disperse further into the desert, and remain alone in the wilderness, until they return for the feast of Easter. It is in this pilgrimage into the desert that Zosimus first encounters the shadowy figure of the desert hermit Mary. In this meeting, Mary reveals glimpses of herself, such as her gift of clairvoyance in knowing the name of Zosimus, his status as a priest, and the monastery he is a resident of, while she reluctantly relates her story of abject sin, profound

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<sup>279</sup> “The episode in the Life of Kyriakos appears to represent the original germ of the story. In the context of Cyril’s story, it is a digression, an ‘edifying tale’ of some five or six hundred words, in which abba John, a disciple of Kyriakos, accidentally comes across a solitary living in a cave. This individual explains that her name is Mary, and that she had been a *psaltria* ‘harpist’ in the church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem. She had fled to the desert, repenting of having become an object of scandal, taking with her a single jar of water and basket of food which lasted her for eighteen years. Having thus explained her past, she then dismisses John, and invites him to call again. John goes away, and when he returns, he finds her dead, and buries her in her cave.” Jane Stevenson, “The Holy Sinner: The Life of Mary of Egypt” in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, Erica Poppe and Bianca Ross, eds. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 21-2.

<sup>280</sup> Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987).

conversion, then subsequent flight into the desert, where she has remained for decades. After this encounter, he returns to the monastery with everyone else, and is changed at the sight of the spiritual heights this desert hermit has achieved. Zosimus would go to meet Mary in the desert during those sacred cycles again, with the exception that the last time he would find her, she would be deceased, in his last moment was to return her to the earth.

In late antiquity, the medieval era, and even now, the story of Mary of Egypt has been considered as an evocative narrative of profound sin that leads to profound repentance and conversion of life. Paul Szarmach concludes in an essay about this vita that “it is a simplification to label the Life of Mary of Egypt as a ‘repentant harlot’ and leave it at that.”<sup>281</sup> Ward, in talking about other hagiographic narratives of conversion, says that in these stories “there is a real conviction of need and a correspondingly strong desire for mercy.”<sup>282</sup> This assertion indicates the pastoral and spiritual character that this and other saints’ lives operate in. The vita of Mary of Egypt allows one to see repentance and conversion embodied, and the textual witness of this narrative creates an authoritative function that serves to exegete a life of sin and repentance for its respective audience.<sup>283</sup> This is made all the more clear at the end of Ward’s text where there is authorial commentary that “the monks preserved this story without writing it down, and offered it to anyone who wanted to hear it as a pattern for edification, but no one had heard of anyone writing it down to this day. But I have told in writing what I have heard orally.”<sup>284</sup> The homiletic

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<sup>281</sup> Paul Szarmach, “More Genre Trouble: The Life of Mary of Egypt” in *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England*, Paul Szarmach, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 164.

<sup>282</sup> Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 6.

<sup>283</sup> For more on female saints in Anglo-Saxon hagiography, and what women embody in these texts for their respective audiences, see Phillip Pulsiano, “Blessed Bodies: The Vitae of Anglo-Saxon Female Saints,” *Parergon* 16, no. 2 (1999): 1-42.

<sup>284</sup> Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 56. This does not occur in Magennis’s edition of the Latin or Old English.

nature of this text, designed to be edifying for its auditors, both in oracular and textual presentations, shows repentance, as Ward would say, as “not a theory to be worked out, but a way of life.”<sup>285</sup> This means that the monastic or hermit living a life of repentance is inherently a liminal figure. Repentance can be a social and ecclesiastical ritual of change, but it is also predicated on the nature of a life that is always furthering its conversion. In that manner, repentance highlights that liminality is observed, not used, and that the lived experience of perpetual repentance places a monastic or hermit within an ongoing liminal status. This is observed in both Zosimus and Mary, and is established in the contrasting archetypal nature of them — Zosimus and Mary are on a pilgrimage to heaven, but Mary’s is a fuller expression of it. As with the Guthlac poems, this section will consider the ways in which Mary is a liminal expression of sanctity, and to consider the role that wrath plays in spiritual exclusion, to show that Anglo-Saxons saw the two as concomitant and necessary for conversion, and developing a particular theological expression that is unique for Anglo-Saxons.

In chapter two of Mary’s vita, Zosimus, having been a monastic since childhood in a monastery in Palestine, despairs of his progress as monk, and begins, in his pride, to consider himself more spiritually advanced than anyone else, and wonders if anyone in the desert can teach him anything.<sup>286</sup> After this, an angel appears to Zosimus, and relays the message that indeed, no one is perfect, and in order to discern where his spiritual path is headed, he must leave

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<sup>285</sup> Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, 8.

<sup>286</sup> “Hwæðer ænig munuc on eorðan sy þæt me mage aht niwes getæcen oððe me on ænigum þingum gefultimian þæs þe ic sylf nyte oððe þæt ic on þam munuclicum weorcum sylf ne gefylde, oþþe hweðer ænig þæra sy þe westen lufiað þe me on his dædum beforan sy.” Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 62. Translation: “Can it be that there is any monk on earth who can teach me anything new or help me in any matters that I myself do not know, or is there anyone among those who love the desert who is superior to me in his actions?”, 63.

his current monastery and journey to a monastery near the Jordan: “Ac þæt þu mæge ongytan and oncnawan hu miccle synd oþre hælo wegas, far ut of þinum earde and cum to þam mynstre þæt neah Iordane is gesæt.”<sup>287</sup> Interestingly, the Old English version elides a biblical reference which occurs in the Latin: “egredere de terra et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui, ut Abraham ille patriarcharum eximius, et ueni ad monasterium quod iuxta Iordanem adiacet flumen.”<sup>288</sup> The Latin version of the vita references Genesis 12:1, “dixit autem Dominus ad Abram egredere de terra tua et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui in terram quam monstrabo tibi.”<sup>289</sup> Despite the elision of Abram/Abraham’s name in the Old English recension, it is not likely that an Anglo-Saxon audience would have completely missed or overlooked the reference. The textual echo to “go out from your fatherland” would invoke Abraham’s calling. The nature of the implication is clear, that to progress in his sacred path, he has to journey away from his ancestral home for something that will lead to a place that is everlasting. As a patriarch of the faith, Abraham is an archetype of wandering in exile, looking for his divine home, and a signifier

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<sup>287</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 62. “But in order that you may be able to perceive and understand how great are other paths to salvation, go out from your land and come to the monastery which is situated near the Jordan,” 63.

<sup>288</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 146. ““Go out from your land and your family and from the house of your father’, as did Abraham the great patriarch, and go to the monastery which lies near the river Jordan,” 147.

<sup>289</sup> Douay-Rheim: “And the Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father’s house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.”



of the promise of God that conversion means the reception of God's favor and blessing.<sup>290</sup> This scriptural subtext places the wandering of Zosimus, and then the wandering of Mary, into this divine heritage, revealing to an Anglo-Saxon audience the sacred discourse and path of the life of a hermit and monastic.

In chapter three, Zosimus leaves his childhood monastery, and locates the monastery near the River Jordan, as he had been directed by the angel. He approaches the gate of the monastery, and is subsequently allowed inside, and soon received as a member of this new monastic community. As a member of this community, it is expressed that they all share the same goal: “þæt heora ælc wære on lichaman dead and on gaste libbende.”<sup>291</sup> This statement reflects the inherent liminal nature of monasticism, in that every expression of asceticism is intended to mimetically enact the life of the angels, where the corporeal becomes subsumed in incorporeality. The monastic overtly stands in between life and death, held in tension through overcoming their passions in spiritual struggles.

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<sup>290</sup> Charles Wright discusses the poetic adaptation of the Old English Genesis in talking about Abraham's promise and blessing, where the poet reversed the order of Genesis 12:2 and 12:3: “[The poet's] purpose, Doane suggests, was ‘to stress Christian interpretation of the Blessing of Abraham, the second blessing being the greater.’ Doane is surely right that the blessing of Abraham's own progeny, the Israelites, would have been less relevant to an Anglo-Saxon audience than the promise that through Abraham all gentile nations would be blessed. To the extent that the historical destiny of those gentile nations, including the *gens Anglorum*, is understood to have been fulfilled through their conversion, the blessing is given a Christian interpretation; even so, it is neither a veiled allegory nor a shadowy figure, but a literal promise.” Charles D. Wright, “*Genesis A ad litteram*,” in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, Michael Fox and Manish Sharma, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 152. The importance of Abraham as a monastic exemplum in Anglo-Saxon poetry will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>291</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 64. “That each of them should be dead in body and living in spirit,” 65.

Additionally, in chapter five the narrator mentions that the gate of the monastery always remains closed, except to let a monk back inside, and that the monastery was so removed from society, nobody in the area knew it existed:

Ðæt geat soðlice þæs mynstres næfre geopenod wæs ac symle hit wæs belocen, and hi swa butan æghwilcre gedrefednysse heora ryne gefyldon, ne hit næfre næs to geopenigenne buton wenunga hwilc munuc for hwilcere nydþearfe ut fore. Seo stow wæs swa westen and swa digle þæt næs na þæt an þæt he wæs ungewunelic ac eac swilce uncuð þam landleodum him sylfum.<sup>292</sup>

The corresponding Latin text differs in one sense. The Latin refers to the locale of the monastery as *solitarius*, defined variously as “who live or acts alone, solitary, practiced alone,” or “single, alone, not accompanied by others,” “remote, distant, uninhabited,” and “one who lives the religious life as a solitary, hermit.”<sup>293</sup> This semantically stresses the connection between the nature of the remoteness of the monastery, and the inhabitants themselves, in that both are removed from society. The Latin term indicates the spatial resonance of the location, its purpose, and its inhabitants.

In contrast, the Old English version uses “*weste*,” previously seen in the *Guthlac* poems and defined as “waste, uncultivated and uninhabited, desert,” “useless, unproductive,” “desolate,” and “deprived and devoid.” In the Old English text, the perpetual closure of the gate acts in tandem with the term *weste* to suggest the delimited nature of the monastery. It is not only remote, but it ironically participates in a landscape that appears inimical to life, and in that sense,

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<sup>292</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 66. “In truth the gate of the monastery was never opened but was always shut up, and thus they fulfilled their routine without any disturbance; nor was it ever to be opened unless perchance some monk wen tout for some necessary purpose. The locality was so desolate and so hidden that not only was it uninhabited but it was also even unknown to the people of the country themselves,” 67.

<sup>293</sup> *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, <http://logeion.uchicago.edu/solitarius>. Accessed 15 February 2019.

the monastery, the land, and its inhabitants reify the liminal space of life and death, physically and spiritually. The tone of *weste* as being an uninhabited wasteland heightens the nature of monastic life as one who hastens to be dead to the world. This presents a rhetorical shift which creates a unique expression of Anglo-Saxon spirituality, one that is concomitant with other monastic and hagiographic texts, but infuses a characteristically insular Old English semantic to convey the trope of spiritual struggle and the angelic life. The author of the Old English version demonstrated an awareness of the Byzantine foundations of this hagiography, but allowed it to be adapted into Anglo-Saxon culture through the intentional lexical shifts.<sup>294</sup> This will be seen later in the chapter pertaining to Mary's attempts to enter the church in Jerusalem.

Even though the monk Zosimus has been guided into a monastic community that practices this self-mortification with fervency, the text indicates that although they hasten toward it, they have not arrived. Scheil writes that the "audience can assume that Zosimus' motivation is less than perfect and that he may be 'taught a lesson' in the course of the narrative. The text tells us that Zosimus is a fine ascetic monk, but there is a sense, right from the start, that Zosimus' self-congratulatory mastery of his ascetic body is incomplete."<sup>295</sup> Within the narrative, it becomes clear that the guidance of Zosimus to this monastery by the angel was not for the monastery, its residents, and the tenor of its praxis in of itself, but that the monastery is another part of his pilgrimage on his journey to perfection.

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<sup>294</sup> For more on the witness of Byzantine theology in the Old English vita of Mary, see Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Byzantine Theology in the Old English *De Transitu Mariae Aegyptiace*" in *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt*, Old English Newsletter *Subsidia* vol. 33 (Kalamazoo: The Medieval Institute, 2005), 9-29.

<sup>295</sup> Scheil, "Bodies and Boundaries," 139.

The next part of his spiritual pilgrimage is continued in the narrative, along with the other monks, in chapter 6, where they depart from the monastery at the beginning of Lent.<sup>296</sup> After receiving the divine sacrament and an exhortation from the abbot, the gates of the monastery are then opened, and the monks flow out, singing from the psalter, “Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea; quem timebo?”, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?”<sup>297</sup> Their monastic tradition is then to cross the Jordan, dispersing and wandering into the wilderness of the desert, making sure to not see each other as they fulfill their fast:

Ðonne hi hæfdon Iordane þa ea oferfaren, þonne asyndrede hine æghwiltne feor fram oþrum, and heora nan hine eft to his geferum ne geþeodde, ac gif heora hwilt oþerne feorran geseah wið his weard, he sona of þam siðfæte beah and on oþre healfe wende, and mid him sylfum leofode and wunode on singalum gebedum and fæstenum.<sup>298</sup>

The monks multiple enact signs of threshold crossing. This first occurs in the opening of the gate of the monastery, where they chant from the psalms a phrase that acts as their battle cry when they wander into the desert, then second in the crossing of the Jordan, where the community experiences a symbolic disembodiment in their dispersal. This diaspora of the community is necessary to enter into self-denial and abnegation of their own body, and participate in the monastic and hermetic heritage of solitary struggle in the wilderness. With keeping in mind the sense of *weste* in which their monastery inhabits, their monastic struggle is even more heroic in

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<sup>296</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 66. “On þam drihtenlican dæge þære forman fæstenwucan, þe we nemniað Halgan Dæg.” Translation: “On the Lord’s day of the first week of the fast, which we call Holy Day,” 67.

<sup>297</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 68.

<sup>298</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 68. “When they had crossed over the river Jordan, then each one separated himself far from the others, and none of them joined up with his companions again, but if anyone of them another in the distance coming towards him, he immediately turned away form the path of his journey and went in another direction, and lived and remained by himself in continuous prayer and fasts,” 69.

its asceticism, because they are compelled to wander even further into a desolate, deprived, and uninhabitable wasteland to pray and fast. The monks removed themselves from society, then they remove themselves from their own society in their spiritual struggle and test.

The tradition of this monastery holds that, after they have fasted, prayed, and struggled in the expansive desert waste, that they return to the monastery on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. The monks traverse the desolate landscape, cross the Jordan again, and then cross over the threshold of the monastic gates again. Scheil writes that “at the heart of the ascetic experience are silence and mystery, solitude and introspection. Although the monks live in community and struggle together against the demands of the flesh, their greatest triumphs over the body occur alone, in solitude, cut off from one another even as they attempt to deny their own bodies.”<sup>299</sup> While this is true conventionally and broadly, the experience of Zosimus in crossing the Jordan and into solitary struggle defies this and subverts our hagiographic expectations. His ascetic experience can only be fulfilled in his encounter with Mary, who in turn is the exemplum and icon of monastic struggle, an embodiment of the solitary and community within themselves as one who is dead and alive in the desolate landscape. Zosimus’s greatest ascetic experience is not centered on this spiritual self-exile during a season of fasting, but in his meeting an angel who lives in the flesh. Coon writes about the life of Mary and similar hagiographic texts that “the *vitæ* of ascetic women and men reveal the theological messages central to any understanding of Christian desert spirituality. Hagiographers recast the desert as a sacred terrain, where emaciated hermits recreate Christ’s passion through ascetic practices. In

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<sup>299</sup> Scheil, “Bodies and Boundaries,” 140.

return, God endows both female and male bodies with salvific powers.”<sup>300</sup> To achieve this theological expression, the narrative soon turns from being centered on Zosimus, and then our perspective is shifted to the spiritual subordination of Zosimus to mystical icon of struggle and liminality that Mary typifies.

Chapter seven narrates the beginning of the first encounter between Zosimus and Mary. Zosimus, having traveled for twenty-six days, moving deeper and deeper into uninhabitable regions of the desert, hopes to find some sort of spiritual father that can teach him edifying truths.<sup>301</sup> Having traveled a long duration, and needing to observe the midday liturgical hour, he stops to pray by kneeling and singing the office. It is at this moment Zosimus looks to his right, and sees something “on mennisce gelicnysse on lichaman hine æteowan, and þa wæs he ærest swiþe afyrht, forþan þe he wende þæt hit wære sumes gastes scinhyw þæt he þær geseah.”<sup>302</sup> Zosimus, in his hope to meet someone—specifically a desert father—who can offer spiritual truths to him, his hope is both answered and subverted in the presence of Mary. Clare Lees considers the dichotomy between conversion and spiritual pride that seems to be part of the condition of Zosimus, and says that “this dual theme is brought into explicit relation because Zosimus, who desires to learn something he did not know before, (lines 62-7, cf. 192-5), is led to Mary, who stands as the revealed object of—in the place of—Zosimus’s desires and instructs

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<sup>300</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 71.

<sup>301</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 70. “forðan þe he gewilnode, swa swa he eft sæde, þæt he sumne fæder on þam westene funde, þe hine on sumum þingum getimbrede þæs þe he sylf ær ne cuðe.” Translation: “Because he desired, as he himself said afterwards, to come across some father in the desert, who might edify him in certain matters,” 71.

<sup>302</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 70, 72. “[He saw something] appearing in human physical form, and he was at first greatly frightened, because he thought that it might be a phantom of some spirit that he saw there,” 73.

him in the workings of the divine as exemplified in her life.”<sup>303</sup> Mary of Egypt is the embodiment of a theological reality, made rhetorically clear in her appearance as a ghostly apparition. Her being perceived as a “gastes scinhyw,” a ghost of a spirit, connects Mary’s presence to the desolate and devoid nature of the desert landscape. She is as much a bearer of theological truth and ascetic praxis as she is an undefinable wanderer that exists within competing matrices of physicality and spirituality.

In fear, Zosimus makes the sign of the cross as an apotropaic act against what he fears to be a demonic presence, then finishes his prayers. When his prayers conclude, he sees her again, but this time it is a clearly a woman, who is “swiþe sweartes lichaman heo wæs for þære sunnan hæto, and þa loccas hire heafdes wæron swa hiwte swa wull and þa na sidðran þonne oþ þone swuran.”<sup>304</sup> The appearance of her skin being blackened, and her hair being white, are indicative of her time and exposure to the uncultivated elements of the desert wasteland, suggesting that in the time she has spent there, she has lived in continual exposure. Mary’s shadowy, desiccated form reveals the thoroughness of her penitence and conversion in transforming her into something else that mimics the harshness of the desert climate. In writing about the intersections of the spiritual and the feminine of hagiography, Sheila Delaney writes that “it is a delicate position, for the body has to be depreciated, but not so far as to damage a creation of God, and it has to be appreciated, but not beyond the claims of spirituality.”<sup>305</sup> Mary of Egypt invokes this

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<sup>303</sup> Clara E. Lees, “Vision and Place in the Old English Life of Mary of Egypt” in *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt*, Old English Newsletter *Subsidia* vol. 33 (Kalamazoo: The Medieval Institute, 2005), 58.

<sup>304</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 72. Translation: “She was extremely black in her body because of the sun’s heat, and the hair of her head was as white as wool and no longer than down to her neck,” 73.

<sup>305</sup> Sheila Delaney, “The Somaticized Text: Corporeal Semiotic in a Late Medieval Female Hagiography,” in *Textual Bodies: Changing Boundaries of Literary Representation*, ed. Lori Hope Lefkovitz (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 118.

idea well. Her physical attributes become a signifier of who she really is as a wandering ascetic, made physically unattractive as a way of rebuking her previous sinful life, and transforming her corporeal nature into something that can be appreciated through pious veneration. This is again made clear in chapter ten, after Zosimus has caught up to Mary, who was fleeing from his sight. When he catches up to her, Zosimus says to Mary, “Eala, ðu gastlice modor, geswutela nu hwæt þu sie of þære gesihþe , forþam þu eart soðlice Godes þinen. Geþinga me nu, of þam geongran dæle for þyssere worulde dead gefremed.”<sup>306</sup> The narrative of this hagiography situates Mary as the image of what he and his fellow monks are striving for, to hasten to be dead to the world. Zosimus acknowledges that Mary is already there due to her communion with God. This is again confirmed when both Mary and Zosimus are lifted up, “arisan hi butu of þære eoþan,”<sup>307</sup> “levitating off the ground,” suggesting that her spiritual existence embodies spatial ambiguity; she is physically present, yet removed from physical constraints. Mary’s ascetic wandering, appearance, and spiritual capabilities show her in perpetual liminality. She is both dead and alive, and in the world, but not of it.

Of course, Mary was not always this way. The hagiographic trope of Mary being a harlot who experienced a dramatic conversion is central to the effectiveness of this text. In chapter thirteen, she begins to narrate her life to Zosimus before her time in the desert, which is done so that Zosimus may understand the “unalyfedan bryne minra leahtra þe ic hæfde on þære lufe þæs

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<sup>306</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 76. Translation: “O spiritual mother, reveal now what you are in your appearance, for you are truly God’s handmaid. Intercede for me now, you who have been made dead to this world with regard to the concerns of youth,” 77.

<sup>307</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 76.



geligeres.”<sup>308</sup> Her story is presented as one of unbridled concupiscence, which does not abate, and leaves her economically and spiritually impoverished. Coon notes that according to “classical standards, Mary was the worst kind of harlot because she engaged in intercourse not from financial need but to satisfy lust. She always carried a spindle, as if to mock the distaffs of the chaste, charitable women of sacred and classical discourse.”<sup>309</sup> This must have been made all the more worse with the next moment in Mary’s life, where she sees a group of Africans and Egyptians in a hurry to board a ship. When she inquires about the ship’s destination, she is told that they intend to go to “Hierusalem faran woldon for þære halgan rode wurðunga.”<sup>310</sup> On this sacred pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Mary continues her practice of sexual depravity on the boat with the various sailors and travelers, saying that “nis nan asecgendlic oððe unasecgendlic fracodlicnyse hiwung þæs ic ne sih tihtende and lærende, and fruma gefremed.”<sup>311</sup> Her sexual sin is placed in contrast with the space in which she tells her audience about it. Her experiences, devoid of sacredness, and enacted while surrounded by a crowd, are a textual witness to the sinful lifelessness of her actions, while her self-exile and mortification in the desert counterintuitively deepen her life.

This desolation of sacredness that Mary embodies in the narrative is typified when she arrives in Jerusalem, and attempts to enter the church for the feast. This specific moment in the

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<sup>308</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 82. Translation: “the illicit fire of the vices to which I was subject in my love of sexual depravity,” 83.

<sup>309</sup> Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 86-7.

<sup>310</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 84. Translation: “[to go to] Jerusalem for the honouring of the holy cross,” 85.

<sup>311</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 86. Translation: “There is no form of obscenity, speakable or unspeakable, of a kind that I did not incite and teach, after becoming its instigator,” 87.

life of Mary, before her conversion, situates her experience as a perpetual liminal figure. Mary narrates that on the morning of the feast of the exaltation of the holy cross, she saw people running to the church. She says that she “yrnan mid þam yrnendum, and samod mid heom teolode toforan þam temple becuman.”<sup>312</sup> The subtext is that Mary, despite her curiosity, or enthusiasm, for participating in this ritual, is not in earnest a member of the sacred community of believers. Because she is not a member of this sacred community, she can not engage in sacred things and rituals, and is effectively a social outcast. The narrative emphasizes this aspect of alienation and banishment when she attempts to actually cross the threshold of the church. Mary says that

þa þa seo tid becom þa halgan rode to wurþigenne, þa ongan ic nydwrælice gemang þam folce wið þæs folces þringan, and swa mid micclum geswince ic unsælige to þæs temples dura becom mid þam þe þær ineodon. Þa ic sceolde in on þa dira gangen, þa ongunnon hi butan ælcere lættinge ingangan; me witodlice þæt godcunda mægen þæs ganges beweredede, and ic sona wæs ut aþrunge fram eallum þam folce, oððe ic ænlipigu on þam cafertune to læfe oþstod.<sup>313</sup>

Hagiographic texts tend to portray static images of holiness, where responses to external forces are narrativized tropes that seamlessly point to and signify sacred behavior and dispositions in the face of turmoil and violence. This passage works differently, humanizing the saint in her sorrow. Mary, for whatever reason, is compelled to venerate the cross. But she can not.

Analogous to Guthlac being taken to the threshold of hell, he is refused entry because he does

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<sup>312</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 88. Translation: “[she began to] run then with those who were running, and along with them I strove to get to the front of the temple,” 89.

<sup>313</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 88. Translation: “When the time came to venerate the holy cross, then in the midst of the people I began to push forcefully against the crowd, and so with great difficulty I, in my wretched state, got to the temple door with those who went in there. When I expected to enter the door, they began to go in without any impediment; truly, divine power hindered my passage, and I was immediately pushed away from all the people, until I alone stood in the courtyard by myself,” 89.

not belong there. However, Mary has been denied entry, in an obverse theological movement similar to the expulsion from the garden, in a sorrowful tenor. Gazing upon the cross is reserved for a sacred community, and it is in this moment Mary realizes that she does not belong, and is banished from the threshold, exiled beyond God's presence, until she is aware that she stands alone. Emma Campbell, in writing about the Old French version of Mary's vita, writes that "even before her exile in the desert, Mary is thus a liminal figure in a way that ironically invokes the liminality of the saint. Instead of being the result of religious vocation, Mary's exclusion from social networks is the result of her pursuit of a sexual career that makes her a sinner on a superhuman scale."<sup>314</sup> The pervasive nature of her sexual sin rhetorically reinforces Mary's liminal identity because it signifies her individualism and how that operates within her actions, rather than inclusion within a community.

Mary continues her story, and recounts the moment in which she is ultimately led to her conversion. She narrates that

and hi ealle þyder inn onfangene wæron butan ælcere lettinga; þa wæs ic ana ut asceofen. Ac swilce me hwilc strang meniu ongean stode þæt me þone ingang beluce, swa me seo færlice Godes wracu þa duru bewerede, oððe ic eft standende on þæs temples cafertune.<sup>315</sup>

Magennis, in writing about how the Old English vita of Mary is not Ælfrician in authorship, notes that Mary's life avoids additional rhetorical movements that Ælfric normally provides in addition to his sources, suggesting that the Old English version is a word for word approach,

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<sup>314</sup> Emma Campbell, *Medieval Saints' Lives: The Gift, Kinship and Community in Old French Hagiography* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 160.

<sup>315</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 88. Translation: "And they were all received inside without any hindrance, while I alone was thrust out. But as if some strong host stood in front of me to bar entry for me, so God's vengeance suddenly blocked the door, until again I was left standing in the courtyard of the temple," 89.

rather than adaption.<sup>316</sup> While this is generally true, there is a critical difference in this excerpt of Mary's story from the Latin edition. In the Old English version, Mary offers a theological impetus for why God prevented her from crossing the threshold of the temple: "*Godes wracu,*" or God's wrath. The Latin edition has Mary say that the blocking of the threshold was as if a "host of soldiers" stood in the way.<sup>317</sup> This reifies and centers a peculiar Anglo-Saxon theology of exile, in that exile and banishment are the result of and attendant with God's wrath. The Latin and Old English recensions operate within their cultural frameworks, and provide heuristics for understanding God's agency in the world and how it interacts with the holy and profane. Here, the Old English is clear in that holy wrath and exile are theologically coupled, and this becomes suggestive that secular exile is a typologically mimetic of divine exile.

Semantically, if wrath and exile are rooted together in Old English, then we are to read Mary's exile and God's wrath as coming from the same source, and in a larger sense, the banishment incurred upon all of humanity in exclusion from paradise is the result of a theological wrath.

In terms of Mary's liminal status, and in assuaging God's wrath and her exile from the divine presence, the most significant aspect will be her conversion experience. The denial she experienced in being able to venerate the rood in the temple proved to move her emotionally and spiritually:

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<sup>316</sup> Hugh Magennis, "St Mary of Egypt and Ælfric: Unlikely Bedfellows in Cotton Julius E. vii?" in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross, eds. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 101.

<sup>317</sup> "Sed quasi multitudo militaris est obvia, ut mihi ingrediendi aditum clauderet." Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 176. Translation: "But it was as though a host of soldiers was in my way, to block my passage to get in," 177. To be clear, the militant, perhaps wrathful tone of a host of soldiers is not lost on me. However, this could also be interpreted as a sense of defensive agency — that the soldiers were protecting sacred space, rather than acting as agents of wrath and force. This could be analogous to the cherubim protecting the entrance to Eden with a flaming sword, in that banishment was the result of God's wrath, but the cherubim signify guardianship over the entrance.

þa onhran soðlice min mod and þa eagan minre heortan hælo andgit, mid me sylfre þencende þæt me þone ingang belucen þa unfeormeganda minra misdæda. Þa ongan ic biterlice wepan and swiðe gedfred mine breost cnyssan and of innewearde heortan heofende forðbringan þa geomorlican siccetunga.<sup>318</sup>

The emotional nature of this reflects not only sorrow over her misdeeds, but the very nature of banishment itself, in that it is intended in certain cases to be a corrective that leads to rehabilitation and establishment back within a community. In her alienation, she looks up, and sees an icon of the Virgin Mary, presumably above the threshold of the church. She begins praying to the Virgin Mary through the icon of the church, and promises that when she sees the the cross that Christ was held on, that she will “wiðsace þissere worulde and hire dædum mid eallum þingum þe on hyre synd, and syððan fare swa hwider swa þu me to mundbyrdnyse geredst.”<sup>319</sup> Her previous alienation from the Christian community results in another alienation, but with a different purpose. This self-banishment removes her from not only society, but the negative implications that the “world” carries with it, including the possibility to act on temptations, and mire herself back into her proclivities. Giving herself to the Virgin Mary, and by proxy, her son Christ, instates her into a new world that is predicated on a differing set of sensibilities, and the imposition of ascetic practices that signify a new life that will lead her to a new world. Thus Mary, in this act, becomes a new person.

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<sup>318</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 90. Translation: “Then truly knowledge of salvation touched my mind and the eyes of my heart, when I reflected that the inexpiable circumstances of my misdeeds had closed the entrance against me. Then I began to weep bitterly and beat my breast in great tribulation and, as I lamented from deep in my heart, to bring forth sorrowful sighs,” 91.

<sup>319</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 92. Translation: “I will at that moment forsake this world and its works along with everything that is in it, and afterwards I will go wherever you guide me as my advocate,” 93.

This is further situated when she attempts to enter the church again. Mary says that after her prayer,

syþþan næs nan þincg þe me utsceofe oþþe me þæs temples dura bewerede, and ic þa ineode mid þam ingangendum. Þa gegrap me witodlice stranglic fyrhto, and ic wæs eall byfigende gedrefed þa ic me eft to þære dura geðeodde þe me wæs ær ingang belocen, swilc me eall þæt mægen þe me ær þæs inganges duru bewerede æfter þan þone ingang þæs siðfætes gegearwode.<sup>320</sup>

Her repentance now situates her within an inclusion that alienates the world, and in that manner, Mary remains betwixt and between heaven and earth, but closer to crossing the threshold of heaven in her renunciation. This is embedded in the divine command she receives from a voice from heaven: “gif þu Iordane þæt wæter oferfæst, þær þu gefærst and gemetst gode reste.”<sup>321</sup> This command is not unlike the echo of Abrahamic exile and wandering for a new land that was imposed on Zosimus, which now Mary is asked to participate in. This is not to say that Mary and Zosimus are “new Abrahams,” but that they becoming part of the theological discourse that invokes alienation from your home to seek out a new, true, everlasting home, through the act of wandering in the desert and becoming homeless. Zosimus and Mary appear to foresee what Michel De Certeau would term as the “*wandersmänner*,” those who walk and make use of spaces that cannot be seen by other voyeurs:

the ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text”

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<sup>320</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, 92. Translation: “From now on there was nothing that pushed me out or hindered me from the temple door, and I entered with those who were going in. Then in truth a powerful fear seized me, and I was trembling all over in excitement when I again came to the door where entry had previously been closed to me — it was just as if all the force that previously had guarded the door against my entry, afterwards prepared the entry for my path,” 93.

<sup>321</sup> Magennis, *The Old English Life of Saint Mary the Virgin*, 94. Translation: “If you cross over the river Jordan, there you will experience and obtain good repose,” 95.

they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms.<sup>322</sup>

As they walk, wandering, deep in the desert, they live lives that intrinsically cannot be witnessed. Mary, receding deeper into the desert *weste*, encodes upon the landscape her liminal presence, and the desolation of the recesses of the desert reify that identity for her. In making use of a space that cannot be seen, she encourages theological realities to become physical by imposing the power of her conversion upon the landscape. Michael Bintley has argued that regarding civilization and wilderness that “there is no clear binary opposition between the two; they cannot, for example, be defined simply by distinguishing the rural from the urban, or civilisation from the ‘natural’ world.”<sup>323</sup> From there, Bintley argues that Anglo-Saxon conceptions of space are flexible because within an Augustinian framework, “no place is presented as being irredeemably evil.”<sup>324</sup> While this is a compelling argument that does seem to apply for other texts, such as Guthlac's asceticism converting the *beorg* before his passing, it does not seem to apply here in the world of Zosimus and Mary. Despite the artifice of the monastery, and the presence of monastics and saints, the desert remains a *weste*, and its inhabitants remain between states of transition as liminal figures. There is no *locus amœnus* found here, because the desert indicates purpose of space that translates to eschatological goals. Gail Ashton, in critiquing what

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<sup>322</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93.

<sup>323</sup> Michael D. J. Bintley, “Where the Wild Things Are in Old English Poetry,” in *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, eds. Michael D. J. Bintley and Thomas J. T. Williams (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 205.

<sup>324</sup> Bintley, “Where the Wild Things Are,” 205.

has been said of the liminal nature of Mary, invokes Caroline Walker Bynum's discussion on the subject, saying that the

female desert saint does not undergo liminality in the sense of 'gender or role reversal, or contact with the mystical, interiorised spirituality of a woman saint from whom is gained a powerful humility'. Instead, the female experience is one of continuity... the female desert saint achieves spiritual growth by remaining as she is — a marginalized figure, focused on her body in a series of sexual temptations and food miracles, man's unrecognised other. In this way, she is allowed to be more fully immersed in Christ.<sup>325</sup>

As has been stated, Mary's liminality is an observable perpetual state. Her transition and crossing of the threshold of the church was also a mystical threshold crossing, but the power in it is the reorientation of her alienation and banishment from society. In this command from the heavenly voice, she shifts what it means to be marginalized by redefining the experience in her conversion. Mary's marginalization shifted according to context, such as her social marginalization due to her lust, or her marginalization from the church, or now her marginalization from society again, but taken of her own holy volition. Her injunction to wander the desert, the desolate space, engages early monastic practice. Daniel Caner writes about the desert monk Antony that his account of living in the desert "captures the spirit that motivated many fourth- and fifth-century Egyptians to seek out the desert frontiers in order to become strangers to 'the world.' *Xeniteia* was the term that became used for the voluntary alienation by which ascetics sought release from material and social circumstances that might hinder their ability to trust in God and make

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<sup>325</sup> Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint* (London: Routledge, 2000), 26.



spiritual progress thereby.”<sup>326</sup> Regarding *xeniteia* and alienation, John McGuckin writes about the temptation to connect those terms together, saying that

although 75% of the United Kingdom population, according to a recent newspaper survey, are supposed to be currently experiencing ‘metaphysical alienation’ allied with a sense of ‘spiritual vacuity’ in the face of the impending millennium, we must none the less rein in our modern apocalypticism sufficiently to note that no such sense whatsoever of the loss of confidence in the self or ambiguity of identity is traceable in the ascetical rhetoric surrounding *xeniteia*.<sup>327</sup>

There may be some truth to parts of McGuckin’s claim, but in being able to observe liminality in hagiographic texts, especially of a Byzantine era saint, we see that Mary experienced that precise metaphysical alienation at the threshold of the church. As a threshold person, with her attempts to enter rebuffed because of God’s wrath, Mary’s alienation was predicated on crisis and ambiguity, which led to her conversion. Mary’s voluntary submission to the Virgin Mary and to Christ also leads to her voluntary acceptance of the command to leave and cross the Jordan, a spatial signifier of a life that is trans-borders and confirms self-exile. Crossing the Jordan signals where society ends, and where the desolate waste begins where Mary will perform her ascetic struggle, and become the icon herself of the betwixt and between state of life and death in its various readings.

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<sup>326</sup> Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Desert Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>327</sup> John McGuckin, “*Xeniteia* in Monastic Literature,” in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider: Papers from the Thirty-second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998*, ed. Dion C. Smythe (London: Routledge, 2000), 27. Despite his writing this paper at the turn of the millennium, I would assert that McGuckin would still hold these assumptions.

### Conclusion

The examples of *Guthlac A* and *B*, and the Old English vita of Mary of Egypt, act as textual witnesses to the embodied act of exile. Wrath is reserved for the unholy; blessing for the converted and holy ones. In either distinction, exile is the result of and at times concomitant with wrath, but the wandering ascetic in the wilderness demonstrably subverts the nature of exile by creating a sacred expression of it.

Moreover, these hagiographic texts reveal the peculiarity of Anglo-Saxon ideas concerning exile that demonstrate the enculturation of patristic and monastic discourse, and then subsequently adapted into a framework that reflects their own theological anxiety about place and time. The *Guthlac* poems and Mary of Egypt's vita, important in their own political theological respects, are the products of patristic inheritance and the assertion of Anglo-Saxon Christian identity that was concerned with what home really meant, and what it took to get there. *Guthlac* and Mary of Egypt are rhetorically representative of being threshold people, having been led to the entrances of hell and heaven, and in being threshold people, find their way to cross an important theological boundary. The liminal nature of these saints—the observed positions of their betwixt and between saintliness—place the Anglo-Saxon within a theoretical construct that explains their own theological anxieties about salvation, their place within divine narrative, and the purpose of suffering and self-exile for something more substantial than the fens of the insular landscape.

### Chapter 3: Liminality, Homiletics, and the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Liturgical Context

Early Anglo-Saxon spirituality is embodied by the concept of wandering. Characterized by being outside the margins of society, ascetics wander in this world, never resting until the true home in the heavens is found. Previous chapters have considered the role in which patristic sources influenced this wandering mindset, how exile is embodied in hagiography, and what renouncing earthly citizenship constitutes in being exiled from heaven, and living as a threshold, liminal person, perpetually in the middle of earth and heaven. Attention in this chapter will be turned to the concept of the “stranger,” what that means theologically, and within monastic contexts for Anglo-Saxons. The concept of exile, as seen in the idea of the stranger, will be considered through discussing monastic regula and Anglo-Saxon preaching.

There has been extensive work on source study and other critical methods for thinking about these theological texts in Anglo-Saxon England; however, much more remains in considering the theological impetus for Anglo-Saxons, such as in their asceticism and eschatology.<sup>328</sup> An oblique awareness that these texts arose from a liturgical context should not stop at mere acknowledgment, but rather lead to an analysis of how these theological themes

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<sup>328</sup> For example, see Hugh Magennis, “Ælfric Scholarship,” in *A Companion to Ælfric*, edited by Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1-34. In this chapter, Magennis gives a broad view of the movements of Ælfrician scholarship, and notes that much of the work done on Ælfric’s literary output had initially been limited in attempts to deduce the identity of Ælfric. From there, methodological thought has been primarily focused on philology, discovering source material, and the intellectual movements of the Benedictine Reform of the tenth-century. In reflecting on twentieth-century scholarship, Magennis only refers to three scholars who touched on the theology of Ælfric (p.23-4). With few exceptions, such as Milton McC Gatch who wrote on eschatology in the sermons of Ælfric and Wulfstan (“Milton Gatch pointed out in 1977, raising the flag for Ælfric the theologian, that it had been the fate of Ælfric [and Wulfstan] ‘to be admired by modern scholars chiefly as stylists,’” p. 21), or Johanna Kramer exploring the Ascension in Anglo-Saxon preaching and art in her text *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, the theology of these sermons has been largely not been discussed. However, for an in-depth view of the intersection of theology and society in Anglo-Saxon England, Helen Foxhall Forbes’ *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England: Theology and Society in an Age of Faith* is remarkable in its scope for discussing creedal Christianity and how it is adapted and enculturated in medieval Anglo-Saxon society.

emerge, and consideration of what meaning they offer for monastics and other Anglo-Saxon Christians. Given the religious and theological nature of the texts that feature an exilic trope in Anglo-Saxon literature, two areas of textual sources will be considered in this chapter to offer a lens for a theological culture of exile: the monastic Rule of Benedict from the sixth century, and Anglo-Saxon homiletics, where the multivalence of the exile as a liminal person will be explored and developed into a coherent, yet diverse expression of the Christian life for Anglo-Saxons. More specifically, I will argue that the Rule of Benedict in Anglo-Saxon England offered the possibilities in which a theology of exile could be preached on and written about by the monastic culture of the Benedictine Reform. The “stranger” in Anglo-Saxon culture carried a range of meanings, from someone who is dangerous, to someone who is in need of hospitality, and in a universal sense, an identity we all share, and monastics, taking their cue from scripture, were deeply concerned about the meaning of “stranger.” Therefore, this chapter will show what others have yet to discuss — how monastic culture created an environment where the motif of exile could thrive in Anglo-Saxon England through the concept of the stranger.

### **Anglo-Saxon Exegesis and Preaching**

A natural place to start for an analysis of theology in Anglo-Saxon preaching in the context of the Benedictine Reform is to consider the role of the exegetical tradition at this time, since how scripture is interpreted is often crucial for revealing theological ideas. Unfortunately, just as the performing of critical analysis of theology in Anglo-Saxon preaching has suffered, the same can be said for an examination of Anglo-Saxon exegesis. Paul Szarmach begins his essay “Ælfric as Exegete: Approaches and Examples in the Study of the *Sermones Catholici*” with the assertion that “if we take the long view of history of medieval exegesis, Ælfric of Eynsham

does not appear on the horizon.”<sup>329</sup> This seems to still be true, so that Szarmach’s assertion from his 1989 essay still stands: “There is no dominant, authoritative view of Ælfric’s exegesis.”<sup>330</sup> Despite that lack of a singular authoritative view, it still remains possible and necessary to discern an exegetical tradition for Ælfric and other Anglo-Saxon homilists.

Regarding the exegetical literary output of Old English during the time of the tenth-century monastic reform, Milton McC. Gatch posits that exegetical texts fall into the homiletic genre because of the climate of monastic reform. The Benedictine Reform in Anglo-Saxon England, an effort undertaken by the bishops Æthelwold, Dunstan, and Oswald, sought to stabilize monastic worship in Anglo-Saxon England. A result of that was the established primacy of the Rule of Benedict, which followed the example of previous conciliar decisions, as well as the development supplemental consuetudes, such as the *Regularis concordia*, sanctioned by the Council of Winchester in 973, and Ælfric’s *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.<sup>331</sup> Both of these texts infer the authority of the Rule of Benedict, but also show adaptation of the Rule for Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Paul Szarmach, “Ælfric as Exegete: Approaches and Examples in the Study of the *Sermones Catholici*” in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, edited by Patrick J. Gallacher and Helen Damico (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 237. This is not say that no works exist that consider Anglo-Saxon preaching and exegesis; one recent publication—Derek Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks: Liturgical Interpretation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015)—attempts to place medieval Anglo-Saxon monastic interpretation in conversation with modern exegetical methodologies.

<sup>330</sup> Szarmach, *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, 237.

<sup>331</sup> “The Rule of Benedict became normative in early medieval Europe through its adoption at synods in Aachen chaired by St. Benedict of Aniane in 816 and 817 and subsequently achieved authoritative status throughout the Carolingian empire. Benedict of Aniane’s writings clarify that the Rule’s normativity comes not from the inherent superiority of its legislation above other competing rules but rather it most clearly exemplified the common tradition.” Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks*, 30.

<sup>332</sup> “But in *Regularis concordia*, the *Regula S. Benedicti* is already assumed to be the only monastic rule followed in England, hence it is not an agreement ‘of the rules’ (*regularum*), but a ‘monastic’ (*regularis*) agreement.” Jesse D. Billet, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England, 597-c. 1000* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2014), 179-80.

Previously composed homiliaries and exegetical commentaries were not neglected, but newly composed exegetical works were not the focus in this time, because the texts and ritual of liturgical observance were privileged. However, Gatch also writes that in terms of exegesis, “the most original application of the theory of multiple meanings were applications to the words and actions of the liturgy; and biblical explication appeared most often in homiletic form.

Explication, like the other theological disciplines, became a handmaid of the liturgy.”<sup>333</sup> To add to this monastic context, Stephen Harris argues that “the order of prayer in a monastic office or a liturgy is neither haphazard nor accidental. The pericope, lection, gospel, collects, tropes, psalms, hymns, and homily of a Mass all fit together to fulfill the symbolic mandate of a particular moment in time.”<sup>334</sup> Derek Olsen says that “liturgy interpreted scripture in a variety of ways. That is, a composed, nonscriptural text would make an exegetical observation or connection that would interpret an image, unpack an allegory... These connections are found in hymns, collects, and Proper prefaces, but sermons and homilies as fundamentally liturgical genre appear in this category.”<sup>335</sup> Essentially, the various components of monastic divine worship, including preaching, demonstrate an intersection of catechesis, exegesis, and asceticism, where liturgical actions and preaching are both exegetical in nature — meaning that in both cases, scripture is designed to be understood and lived out. Additionally, Jean Leclercq argues that “the principal literary sources of monastic culture may be reduced to three: The Holy Scripture, the patristic

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<sup>333</sup> Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 11.

<sup>334</sup> Stephen Harris, “The Liturgical Context of Ælfric’s Homilies” in Aaron J. Kleist, ed., *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation* (Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 143.

<sup>335</sup> Derek Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks: Liturgical Interpretation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 101.

tradition, and classical literature. The liturgy... is the medium through which the Bible and the patristic tradition are received, and it is the liturgy that gives unity to all the manifestations of monastic culture."<sup>336</sup> The structured worship of the liturgy of the hours pervaded the monastic experience, and monastic worship was replete with scripture, especially with the praying of the psalms in every monastic liturgical office. Other examples are how antiphons are chanted to introduce psalms, which may be taken from scripture, or are used to elucidate a portion of scripture in context of a feast day. Moreover, the canticles of the Liturgy of the Hours are songs based on scripture; for example, every morning at the hour of Matins, the *Benedictus*, which is the song Zechariah sings at the circumcision of his son John the Baptist,<sup>337</sup> helps interpret scriptures already heard that morning, it contextualizes the labor of the monastic, and offers the potential of further exegesis of scripture heard and chanted in later hours. So to Leclercq's assertion, I would like to suggest a specific text that serves in achieving this exegetical coherence and monastic culture: the Rule of Benedict itself.

The Rule of Benedict, while adapted to local customs, and eventually translated from Latin to Old English by Æthelwold in the middle of the tenth-century, was the standard for

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<sup>336</sup> Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Catherine Misrahi, trans. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 87.

<sup>337</sup> Luke 1:68-79.

monastic spirituality and governance.<sup>338</sup> To this point, Smaragdus of Saint-Mihel, a ninth-century abbot and commentator of the Rule of Benedict, notes in the prologue to his text of monastic spirituality, *Diadema monachorum, The Crown of Monks*, that “monks have the custom of reading the Rule of Saint Benedict each day at the morning chapter meeting.”<sup>339</sup> Particularly as a result of the Benedictine Reform, monastics in later Anglo-Saxon England would have been familiar with the Rule of Benedict not just as a text for monastic governance, but also as a spiritual text. Meditation on the Rule of Benedict comprised an aspect of *lectio divina* — the act of sacred reading. This occurs in how the Rule was read to monastics upon their reception in the monastery a total of three times during their novitiate,<sup>340</sup> and while they were expected to read it on their own time, a chapter from it was read and heard every morning, and commentaries regarding the Rule or other monastic texts were composed to be read alongside, or read and heard in the evenings.<sup>341</sup> In terms of Æthelwold’s text, there are 8 manuscripts of the Old English Rule of Benedict—5 of which are extant, and 3 which are fragments—which suggests not only the popularity of the Rule of Benedict itself, but also the popularity of the vernacular

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<sup>338</sup> Jacob Riyeff, trans., *The Old English Rule of Saint Benedict with Related Old English Texts* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2017), 13. For more on the Old English translation of the Benedict’s Rule, see Riyeff’s recent translation; Mechthild Gretsch, “Æthelwold’s translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin exemplar,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 121-51; Jerome Oetgen, “The Old English Rule of St. Benedict,” *American Benedictine Review* 26 (1975): 38-53; Mechthild Gretsch, “The Benedictine Rule in Old English: a Document of Bishop Æthelwold’s Reform Politics” in *Words, Texts, and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture, Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 131-58, Michael Korhammer, Karl Reichl, and Hans Sauer, eds. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992); Rebecca Stephenson, *The Politics of Language: Byrhtferth, Ælfric, and the Multilingual Identity of the Benedictine Reform* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); and Christopher Riedel, “Praising God Together: Monastic Reformers and Laypeople in Tenth-Century Winchester,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 284-317.

<sup>339</sup> David Barry, trans., *Diadema monachorum: The Crown of Monks* by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihel (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>340</sup> Chapter 58.9-13.

<sup>341</sup> Barry, *The Crown of Monks*, 1. Smaragdus suggests that his text *Diadema monachorum* be read in the evenings as the Rule is read in the mornings.



translation.<sup>342</sup> Additional consuetudes, such as the aforementioned *Regularis concordia* and *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, and way in which monastics were immersed in the Rule itself suggest a culture where the Rule of Benedict was heavily reflected and meditated on for how it could best be practiced. Given that the Rule of Benedict is such a foundational text for monastic living, and for as much as monastics were saturated in the Rule, I assert that exegetical practices and other literary constructs developed from the spiritual environment that the Rule portrays and enacts for those who come to it as an authoritative text.

The exegetical nature of the Rule of Benedict, on the one hand, is very much on the surface. For example, Chapter 7 begins with biblical explication: “Clamat nobis scriptura divina, fratres, dicens: *Omnis qui se exaltat humiliabitur et qui se humilitat exalbitur. cum haec ergo dicit, ostendit nobis omnem exaltationem genus esse superbiae.*”<sup>343</sup> While the Rule of Benedict is certainly not a homily or sermon,<sup>344</sup> explication of scripture does occur in the Rule, such as in this moment, and scripture is utilized by Benedict to express particular ways of describing

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<sup>342</sup> See Mechthild Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 227. Gretsch offers here full information on the various manuscripts that remain of the Old English Rule of Benedict.

<sup>343</sup> Timothy Fry, ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981), 7.1-2, 190. “Brothers, the divine scriptures cry to us, saying, all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Therefore this is said, showing us that all exaltation is a kind of pride,” 191. All Latin quotations from the Rule comes from this edition. All Old English quotations of the Rule of Benedict will come from H. Logeman, ed., *The Rule of S. Benet.: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Interlinear Version* EETS Original Series 90,120 (London: N. Trubner and Co., 1888). All translations of Latin and Old English are my own, unless otherwise noted. In this chapter I am privileging the Latin text, given it’s role as the source text for the Old English, and will refer to Æthelwold’s version where differences or other elucidations should be noted.

<sup>344</sup> It is not uncommon to see the terms “homily” and “sermon” used interchangeably, but there is a technical distinction: homilies are concerned with exegeting scripture, while sermons are catechetical in nature. Their exigency may still arise from a liturgical context, but the purpose is different. However, it should also be noted that many texts composed for preaching, including the medieval era, are not limited generically to being either a homily or sermon. For example: “Ælfric does not distinguish between the *sermo* and *homilia*. Indeed, Milton McC Gatch observed long ago that ‘even those [sermons] treating almost exclusively exegetical materials, are, I believe, catechetical in purpose.’” Robert K. Upchurch, “Catechetical Homiletics: Ælfric’s Preaching and Teaching During Lent” in *A Companion to Ælfric*, 226.

monastic behavior. In an interesting liturgical development, the later *Regularis concordia* of Æthelwold is especially regarded for being one of the first sources for liturgical drama with the trope *Quem quæretis* (“Whom are you seeking”), mandated to be performed for the feast of Easter.<sup>345</sup> This Easter play is a singing of how Christ’s tomb is discovered empty from his resurrection, and allows for reflection on the synoptic accounts of Matthew 28, Mark 16, and Luke 24. In this instance, the monks live out the scriptural narrative, and even embody it: “All in all, by a multiplicity of signs, the monks embodied the Resurrection of Christ for themselves and the laity. Through such representational practices, every participant was able to visualize and, even more, live out the New Testament stories and their prefigurations in the Old Testament.”<sup>346</sup> The acting out of this trope provides a hermeneutical and exegetical environment that allows the history of salvation to be both embraced and lived out. Because of the fullness of monastic exegetical labor, the traditionally ascribed medieval four-fold reading of scripture—literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogic<sup>347</sup>—becomes applicable the various facets that comprise monastic life. This in turn provides a model for approaching the interpretation of biblical texts within an Anglo-Saxon Benedictine framework. But I also endeavor to take this a step further, and suggest that if divine worship and preaching serve each other to exegete scripture, and the

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<sup>345</sup> *Regularis concordia* 5.51. See Thomas Symons, ed., *Regularis Concordia: Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953). See Nils Holger Petersen, “The Representational Liturgy of the *Regularis Concordia*” in *The White Mantle of Churches*, 107-17, Nigel Hiscock, ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), for more on the monastic drama of the *visitatio sepulchri*.

<sup>346</sup> Isabelle Cochelin, “When Monks were the Book” in *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: Production, Reception, and Performance in Western Christianity*, Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 71.

<sup>347</sup> This four-fold sense of scripture has other iterations, where there may not be a clear delineation, as explained here: “Thus a system of interpretation developed that perceived multiple levels of meaning in Scripture, broadly divided into the literal and historical level, the allegorical level (sometimes subdivided into allegory and anagogy, a form of allegory that referred specifically to the afterlife), and the moral application (also called the tropological level).” Frans van Liere, “Biblical Exegesis through the Twelfth Century” in *The Practice of the Bible*, 160.

text of the Rule has those moments as well, then other moments of the Rule potentially operate in the same way as well. The Rule of Benedict is replete with a spectrum of liturgical action, stemming from multiple chapters on how to perform the Liturgy of Hours, and from other communal actions and gestures. This is especially seen in areas of the Rule that discuss excommunication, which acts as a corollary to the established Anglo-Saxon theme of being an exile. The actions associated with excommunication in the Rule of Benedict serve as a way of applying multiple meanings of scripture to liturgical action, as well as provide an environment for how the excommunicated, the exile, and the stranger or wanderer inform each other in Anglo-Saxon England.

### **The Rule of Benedict and Excommunication**

These themes have precedence in other Anglo-Saxon textual sources. For example, in the ninth-century *Diadema monachorum* of Smaragdus, which was composed for the purpose of offering the monastic advice trying to live a holy life, contextualizes monastic ascetic practice with its teleological exigency. In a chapter entitled “On Those Who Despise the World,” Smaragdus advises that the “saints fly from what is dear to the lovers of this world, and rejoice in the world’s adversities more than they delight in prosperity.”<sup>348</sup> From a scriptural basis, the ascetic nature of the Christian monastic is rooted in the act of “fleeing the world” and subordinating the flesh for spiritual transformation. This is evinced in the witness of the prophet John the Baptist, as one whose voice cried in the wilderness, and lived on locusts and honey, and wrapped himself in camel’s hair.<sup>349</sup> This paradigm is also embodied in the monastic exemplum of

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<sup>348</sup> Barry, *The Crown of Monks*, 39.

<sup>349</sup> For John the Baptist’s introduction in the synoptic Gospels, see Matthew. 3:1-6; Mark, 1:1-6, and Luke, 3:1-6.

Jesus Christ, who was led by the Spirit to spend forty days in the desert fasting, and engaged in conflict with Satan and wild beasts.<sup>350</sup> In these examples of John the Baptist and Christ, their existence or situations become emblematic of living on the borders or periphery of society. Flying from what is cherished by the world, they retreat into the wilderness, and return from it changed.

Spatially, though, at those points of narrative in the New Testament, John the Baptist and Christ did not physically leave the world; their flight was adjacent to what the world represents, so that in “fleeing the world” in a lateral sense, they also enact a flight focused on the soul’s ascent. In not participating in the structures of a society focused on deadening the ability to perceive God through comforts, they manifested a path for others that would be trod by desert mothers and fathers, hermits, monastics in community, and anchorites. The monastic life is inherently liturgical, in terms of both the Liturgy of the Hours and the stipulations of the rule they follow. While that life is predicated on asceticism and living a perpetual lent,<sup>351</sup> the liturgical context is rooted in cenobitic structures and practice. This path embodies a discourse of being in the world, but not of it. In short, the life of the monastic is one of self-exile, where social comforts and community found in the world are disregarded.

Smaragdus’s commentary on the monastic life, in light of the act of fleeing worldly prosperity, explicates the relationship between the lover of the world’s comforts and God: “There is general agreement that those to whom this world offers prosperity and every comfort are

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<sup>350</sup> See Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; and Luke 4:1-13.

<sup>351</sup> “Licet omni tempore vita monachi quadregesimae debet observationem habere” (“The life of a monk ought to have the observance of Lent at all times”). Fry, *RB 1980*, 49.1. Or, as written in the Old English Rule: “þeh þe on ælcere lif munecas lænctenfaestenes sceale 7 gehealdsumnesse” (The life of a monk must be in the observance in everything a Lent). Logeman, *The Rule of S. Benet.*, 84.

strangers to God.”<sup>352</sup> Smaragdus does not offer any elaboration on where this general agreement comes from, but the demarcation he notes is critical: the individual who accepts comfort in this world is a stranger to God. This strangeness to God in a negative sense, however, finds its positive sense in asceticism — the one who flees from the world and its comfort becomes a friend to God as they become a stranger to the world. As we see this with the work of Smaragdus, we also see that becoming estranged to the ways of the world is clearly exhorted in Benedict’s Rule. Chapter four of the Rule, *Quæ sunt instrumenta bonorum operum*, “The Instruments of Good Works,” begins with multiple verses of scripture detailing a sense of orthopraxy:

*In primis Dominum Deum diligere ex toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute; deinde proximum tamquam seipsum. Deinde non occidere, non adulterare, non facere furtum, non concupiscere, non falsum testimonium dicere, honorare omnes homines, et quod sibi quis fieri non vult, alio ne faciat.*<sup>353</sup>

These verses of scripture, taken from the synoptic gospels, the epistles of Romans, I Peter, and the deuterocanonical book of Tobit, demarcate ethical behavior imposed on all Christians, monastic or not, and begin to demonstrate the way of living that separates or produces a sense of strangeness of the monastic to the world. The meaning is clear: the instruments of the world are the reverse of these behaviors, which are the application of evil works. The structure of a godly ethical behavior is focused on a sense of what it means to practice good works in the world, so that the ways of the world become even stranger, and that evil works becomes converted.

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<sup>352</sup> Barry, *The Crown of Monks*, 39.

<sup>353</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 4.1-9, 180, 182. “First, love the Lord God diligently from the whole heart, whole soul, and whole power; then also your neighbor as yourself. Then do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not covet, do not say false testimony, honor everyone, and do not do to another what you would not want done to yourself.” Italic’s Fry’s.

This ethical structure is continued in this chapter, but it is shifted into an ascetical praxis: “*Abnegare semetipsum sibi ut sequatur Christum. Corpus castigare, delicias non amplecti, ieiunium amare.*”<sup>354</sup> Again, these points are taken from the gospels, particularly Matthew 16:24 and Luke 9:23. Both ethical senses become contextualized so that behaviors become synthesized into an all encompassing selflessness, which engenders the evocative nature of how habit and mind are then expressive of a way of living that is not of this world — meaning that it is one of ascent. To deny yourself and chastise your body is to deny the substance you inhabit, and to controvert the needs of your body, so that you become a living expression of the angelic life, and begin an upward momentum while remaining embodied. Additionally, the inclusion of scripture, while on the surface may act as a recalling of the a divine textual witness to behavior, also actively participates in a type of exegetical practice, where the scriptures become explicated through being placed in a specific context of behavior. The monastic indebted to the Rule of Benedict as an authoritative text for how to live, and as they hear it read to them and reflect on it, begins to understand how these scriptures operate for their spiritual edification and growth. Scripture, in this sense, becomes explicated and understood because it becomes lived out through monastic behavior.

The exegetical nature of the Rule becomes reified with the following exhortation: “*Saeculi actibus se facere alienum, nihil amori Christi praeponere.*”<sup>355</sup> The word *alienus* has a specific range of meaning in Latin, invoking ideas of hostility, enemies, inconsistency, but also something that is alien and foreign. This sense of otherness is particularly captured in the Old

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<sup>354</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 4.10-3, 182. “Deny yourself in order to follow Christ. Chastise your body. Do not embrace enticements, but love fasting,” 183.

<sup>355</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 4.20-1, 182. “Your way of acting is to be alien to the world; the love of Christ is to be placed before nothing else,” 183.

English version of the Rule: “fram weorulde dædum don alfræmedne, æniþing cristes lufan na foresttan.”<sup>356</sup> *Bosworth-Toller* defines *ge-ælfremedan* as “to alienate, estrange,”<sup>357</sup> which glosses the Latin *alienus*. While this sentence in the Latin text of the Rule can carry connotations of a monastic being hostile and inimical to the ways of the world, the Old English translation lets those ideas simply be inferred from what monastic behavior produces. Smaragdus comments in his exegesis of the Rule of Benedict for this portion to therefore “let the monk, having become a stranger to the world’s ways, draw to his Creator in order to be enlightened,” and to “let him trust in the future promises, and live very far removed from the din of worldly affairs,” and to “regard himself as dead to the world, and to show that he is crucified to its enticements. He should direct the point of his mind at the place he desires to reach; he should put before his soul’s eyes the blessedness of the future life and fix his love on it.”<sup>358</sup> The methodology for monastic behavior is entirely rooted in the sense of otherness that is imposed on the monk, setting up a binary that invites the ascetic in between it, because they are both present and not-present in the world. The Rule of Benedict presupposes that the monk will be a stranger and an alien while inhabiting both the world and the flesh, for the purpose of controverting both. This is consonant with the scriptural witness of the monastic exempla of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, and is foundational for the exegetical lens in which the scriptures are placed into the Benedictine framework and understood. In terms of this unique monastic exegetical experience, Leclercq

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<sup>356</sup> Logeman, *The Rule of S. Benet.*, 20. “From the deeds of the world be a stranger, and do not set anything before the love of Christ.”

<sup>357</sup> Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,” *Ge-ælfremedan*. 22 July 2010. Accessed June 5, 2018. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/046991>.

<sup>358</sup> David Barry, trans., *Commentary on the Rule of St Benedict* by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihel (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2007), 185-6.

notes that the ensuing result for the monk is from “the outgrowth of the practice of monastic life, the living of the spiritual life which is the meditation on Holy Scripture. It is a biblical experience inseparable from liturgical experience.”<sup>359</sup> The exegesis that the Rule of Benedict offers to its adherents places the scriptures into a lens of ascetic practices that privileges the analogical sense — that the behavior exemplified in the Rule is one of the journey to the kingdom of God, and by continual practice of living the scriptures, the one who was a stranger to God becomes a stranger to the world, as they begin to inhabit a heavenly country, first with their mind, then with their body.

Through participation in the act of self-exile from the world, the monastic is able to eventually find their community as established with other exiles who have found their comfort to be God in the world. Despite the positive way this sense of exile can be realized, the individual engaging in a spiritually-focused exile enters in a complex reality of belonging and not-belonging. Their lives are demonstrably liminal as they flee from the world while remaining in it. Moreover, the complex nature of this spiritual path is not limited in its goal to finding community with other monastics, or finding friendship with God through ascetic practices. It is to enact a habit of living where the boundaries of living and experience become more and more blurred and indistinguishable. This leads to the goal of the monastic, again as expressed by Smaragdus:

This is why holy persons yearn to despise the world and bring the movement of their mind back to things above... Those who after renouncing the world pant after the heavenly country with holy desires are raised above their concern for

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<sup>359</sup> Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 213.



earthly things as though by wings; with groans they regard the place they have slipped into, and with great joy apply their mind to the goal they will arrive at.<sup>360</sup>

The monastic, as an exiled figure, stands between this world and the next; therefore, the holy person here is liminal, being in-between the worlds they participate in. As they renounce the world, they long for another; as they long for it and practice their life, their mind, and eventually the rest of them, arrives at the heavenly country. As they desire good things, Smaragdus advises that the monk is raised up over the world. Their pilgrimage is holistic, encompassing their mind, their body, and their spirit, and while they occupy a place in the world, their actions and mindset become detached from it; the monastic remains physically situated in the world and embodied, but they begin to live as if they are not. The spiritual reality of their life becomes clearer as they work toward their goal: ascension.

This process of ascension, initially focused in the mind, being proleptic of the eschatological bodily ascension, is predicated on the liminality of the stranger — which is rooted in the Rule of Benedict, in terms of the reception of new monastics, and the disciplinary measure of excommunication. Chapter 58 outlines the procedure for receiving someone who intends to become a monk: “Noviter veniens quis ad conversationem, non ei facilis tribuatur ingressus, sed sicut ait apostolus: *Probate spiritus si ex Deo sunt*. Ergo si veniens perseveraverit pulsans et illatas sibi iniurias et difficultatem ingressus post quattuor aut quinque dies visus fuerit patienter portare et persistere petitioni suae, adnuatur ei ingressus et sit in cella hospitem paucis

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<sup>360</sup> Barry, *The Crown of Monks*, 39.

diebus.”<sup>361</sup> The monastic coming to the monastery is treated as an outsider — not simply because at that point they occupy a status of being a stranger, but to begin showing monastic candidate what it means to take on that life. They must stand and knock at the door for four or five days; if the individual has persisted, then they are to be received inside, and can stay in the guest quarters. After a few days of residing in the guest quarters, then the individual can begin associating with novice monastics. As the individual intends to transition from one way of life into another, they are in metaphorically and physically a liminal figure, standing at the threshold of a door way, making their presence known, as they simultaneously embody who they are currently, but are attempting to detach from it. While doing so, as they stand at the door and knock, the would be monastic hopes to peer through the threshold into they mystery of a new community. At this moment, the monastic is placed within multiple connotations of what it means to be a stranger, so that even while they are potentially accepted into the monastery, they never lose their liminal status of what it means to be a monastic and a Christian.

While this is potentially a positive transition and threshold crossing—*into* a new community—Benedict’s Rule also concerns itself with the obverse: the excommunicated from the monastic community. To be clear, excommunication has had a lengthy and complicated use, seen in a variety of instances and purposes. Levi Roach notes how secular and ecclesiastical bodies became mingled in legal codes, stating that Alfred the Great’s (d. 899) legal code, compiled circa 893, decreed that “those who break their oath and pledge shall not only be

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<sup>361</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 58.1-4, 266. “Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry, but as the Apostle says, *Test the spirits to see if they are from God* (1 John 4:1). Therefore, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door, and if at the end of four or five days he has shown himself patient in bearing his harsh treatment and difficulty of entry, and has persisted in his request, then he should be allowed to enter and stay in the guest quarters for a few days,” 267 (emphasis Fry’s).

outlawed, but also excommunicated — here for the first time in the history of Anglo-Saxon law secular and spiritual sanctions are intended to reinforce each other.”<sup>362</sup> Additionally, Sarah Hamilton discusses the rite of reconciliation of excommunication, found in the tenth-century Romano-German pontifical, saying that “the purpose of excommunication was to coerce opponents of the clergy into settlement with them at a time when secular justice was simply not effective.”<sup>363</sup> This shows that excommunication had potential political purposes that suggest a method of repentance among factious parties. Elaine Treharne discusses the more ecclesial and penitential context for excommunication, saying that

excommunication is an essential part of the procedure of church discipline and the Anglo-Saxon legal system in general. In its most complete form, it is the harshest penalty a bishop can impose on one who has sinned so heinously, or persisted in sinning to such an extent, that he must be denied access to the salvatory sacrament of the Eucharist and, often, removed from the congregation. The sentence of minor excommunication meant simple exclusion from communion, while major excommunication indicated wholesale ostracism from the Christian church and community.<sup>364</sup>

In this manner, we see how varied the practice could be, as well as its attendant purposes, and its importance to the church and its adherents. The spiritual implications of excommunication spoke

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<sup>362</sup> Levi Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 120.

<sup>363</sup> Sarah Hamilton, “Remedies for ‘great transgressions’: penance and excommunication in late Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 94.

<sup>364</sup> Elaine Treharne, “A unique Old English formula for excommunication from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995): 189.

to the most important aspects of the Christian life.<sup>365</sup> And for as varied as it is in the church and the parish level, monastic regula show a similar variance, including the Rule of Benedict. In Benedict's Rule, Chapters 23-30 are explicitly concerned with penal aspects of communal living, with Chapters 24-30 and Chapter 44 focused on what degree of fault deserves varying levels of communal expulsion. Benedict's Rule represents his reception of an earlier monastic tradition from the text *The Rule of the Master*, which is also concerned with excommunication as a disciplinary measure, but is often much more stringent.<sup>366</sup> More often than not, excommunication is intended to be a consequence after multiple reproofs, and may not necessarily be excommunication from the community as a whole. Instead, the punitive measure might be exclusion from the common table for meals, or perhaps being unable to lead a psalm or refrain in the oratory during liturgical hours, as seen in chapter 24, entitled *Qualis debet esse modus excommunicationis*, "What Sort of Measure Ought to be for the Excommunicated":

Secundum modum culpae, et excommunicationis vel disciplinae mensura debet extendi; qui culparum modus in abbatis pendat iudicio.  
Si quis tamen frater in levioribus culpis invenitur, a mensae participatione privetur. Privati autem a mensae consortio ista erit ratio ut in oratorio psalmum

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<sup>365</sup> In another source, Gildas (ca. 500-70) wrote in a letter that exists in a fragment that "Noah did not wish to keep his son Ham, teacher of the magic art, away from the ark or from sharing his table. Abraham did not shrink from Aner and Eschol when he was warring with the five kings. Lot did not curse the banquets of the Sodomites. Isaac did not forbid Abhimelech and Ahuzzath and Phichol, leader of the army, to share his table: but they swore oaths to each other after eating and drinking. Jacob was not afraid of contact with his sons, whom he knew to be idolaters. Joseph did not refuse to share the table and cup of Pharaoh. Aaron did not spurn the table of the priest of the idols of Midian. Moses, too, lodged and banqueted in peace with Jethro. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not avoid eating with publicans, so as to save all sinners and whores." Michael Winterbottom, ed. and trans., *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1978), 80. This is noted as a fragment, so of course other context might be missing, but Gildas seems to be an early example for advocating leniency for those who have sinned within the community.

<sup>366</sup> "Often the disciplinary legislation of the RB reflects more the spirit of an earlier age than of its own times. This is largely due to Benedict's choice of sources and traditions and especially his very conscious effort to shape monastic life and discipline according to the Gospel (RB Prol.21; 11.9; 23.2)." Fry, *RB 1980*, 419-20.

aut antiphonam non imponat, neque lectionem recitet, usque ad satisfactionem.  
Refectionem autem cibi post fratrum refectionem solus accipiat.<sup>367</sup>

For more serious offenses, the Rule prescribes that no other monk should engage with the offending brother: “Is autem frater gravioris culpae noxa tenetur suspendatur a mensa, simul ab oratorio. Nullus ei fratrum in nullo iungatur consortio nec in colloquio... nec a quoquam benedicatur transeunte nec cibum quod ei datur.”<sup>368</sup> Benedict’s Rule, adapted from *The Rule of the Master*, is evocative of the spiritual significance of rebellion within a community in the way the spiritual reality is depicted through an incarnate one. The corresponding chapter of *The Rule of the Master*, chapter 13, in dealing with excommunication, suggests that:

When the deans have informed the abbot about the offense of the disobedient one—no longer to be called a brother but a heretic, no longer to be called a son of God but a servant of the devil, one who by going counter to the way saints act has become so to say a sort of scab in the flock—let the abbot summon him, with his deans present and the entire community standing round... Since he is branded an enemy of God, from that moment he may no longer be a friend of the brothers. Therefore from the moment of this excommunication he will be assigned by his dean, in order to preclude idleness, to some work where he will be alone and isolated. At this work he may not be joined by any of the brethren to help him; he may not be consoled by anyone speaking to him. All must pass by regarding him in silence. If he asks a blessing, no one may reply: ‘God’ [bless]. Whatever is given may not be signed with the cross by anyone. Whatever he does individually and on his own over and above the work assigned him is to be thrown aside and destroyed. He is to be alone everywhere, with no comfort but his guilt.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 24.1-5, 220. “There are ought to be due proportion between the seriousness of a fault and the measure of excommunication or discipline. The abbot determines the gravity of faults. If a brother is found guilty of less serious faults, he will not be allowed to share the common table. Anyone excluded from the common table will conduct himself as follows: in the oratory he will not lead a psalm or a refrain nor will he recite a reading until he has made satisfaction,” 221.

<sup>368</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 25.1-2, 6, 220, 222. “A brother guilty of a serious fault is to be excluded from both the table and oratory. No other brother should associate or converse with him at all... He should not be blessed by anyone passing by, nor should the food that is given him be blessed,” 221, 223.

<sup>369</sup> Luke Eberle, trans., *The Rule of the Master* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 150-2.

Clearly, there is a resemblance, but Benedict's text remains a distant relative to *The Rule of the Master*. They do correspond to each other in the schema that excommunication represents a drastic sense of separation *within* the community for the purpose of repentance, but rhetorically and theologically, the sense of banishment is made stronger in Benedict's source.<sup>370</sup> Despite the difference between them, with each increase of punitive measures, the monk needs to make satisfaction in terms of the spiritual benefit that he is then bereft of. From full participation in the liturgical offices, to the danger of eating unblessed food,<sup>371</sup> the offending monk is intended to experience the effects of their spiritual illness in very real ways. Despite these punishments, though, they are still integrated members of the community, although in a precarious situation for their spiritual health, as well as public humiliation. Additionally, these measures are intended to produce repentance, so that the monk may become fully reintegrated into the community, and remove the public nature of their shame. And while these gradations of excommunication invoke a sense of the liminal nature of monastic life, chapter 44 of the Rule, *De his qui*

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<sup>370</sup> *The Rule of the Master* "speaks of the excommunicated monk as one who is not to be addressed as 'brother' but as a 'heretic,' and not as a 'son of God' but as a 'demon's workman.' He is compared to Judas, and is one who follows the devil (RM 13.14). In all this the Master is developing a theology of excommunication that is rejected by the RB." Fry, *RB 1980*, 422.

<sup>371</sup> For example, the story of a nun consuming unblessed lettuce from a garden, and thereby eating a devil, from *The Dialogues of Gregory*, as discussed by Helen Foxhall Forbes: "a nun wanted to eat a lettuce from the garden but neglected to sign herself with the cross beforehand, and was immediately possessed by a devil. An abbot was called, and when he ordered the devil to leave, it complained 'I did nothing! I was sitting on the lettuce and she bit me!' This highlights the perceived importance of Christian ritual in daily life, especially for keeping away invisible and ever-present dangers, and prayers and liturgical texts echo this in their frequent references to devils and requests for protection against them." Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, 79. As the *Dialogues of Gregory* were translated into Old English, I would wager such a penalty would be quite terrifying for a serious Benedictine monastic. Additionally, Timothy Fry notes that "the order that the food given to the excommunicated person is not to be blessed is consonant with the early Church's concept of the the 'communion of saints,' which was not a matter of communication between Christians on earth and the consortium of saints in heaven, but of the sacramental sharing among Christians at any time: 'holy things to holy people' (Fry, *Rule of St Benedict*, 424). It might be difficult to know how the Anglo-Saxon monk would have understood this penalty, but given the *Regula* says to treat all vessels and goods of the monastery as holy vessels of the altar (Chapter 31, "The Qualifications of the Monastery Cellarer), the common table being one of *communion*, and what that implies, probably would not have been lost on them.

excommunicantur, quomodo satisfaciant, “On the Manner of Satisfaction by the Excommunicated,” contains a prescription that figuratively and physically demonstrates the in-between state of a monastic needing to make reparations:

Qui pro gravibus culpis ab oratorio et a mensa excommunicantur, hora qua opus Dei oratorio percelebratur, ante fores oratorii prostratus iaceat nihil dicens, nisi tantum posito in terra capite, stratus pronus omnium de oratorio exeuntium pedibus; et hoc tamdiu faciat usque dum abbas iudicaverit satisfactum esse.<sup>372</sup>

As an act of public penance, the monk literally lies at the threshold of the doorway to the oratory, physically acting out a symbolic gesture of eschatological separation as the remaining monks cross the threshold of the oratory as a community, with the monk on the floor humbled and alone, waiting until satisfaction has been made. This finds its analog in non-monastic settings too, where liturgical rituals around the season of Lent called for the expulsion of penitents from the church, and that some penitents were expected to kneel outside the doors of the church and cry out to Christ for forgiveness until they had made satisfaction and could enter.<sup>373</sup> The monk at the limen of the oratory becomes a threshold person — the other monastics observe the

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<sup>372</sup> Fry, *RB 1980*, 44.1-3, 244. “Anyone excommunicated for serious faults from the oratory and from the table is to prostrate himself in silence at the oratory entrance at the end of the celebration of the Work of God. he should lie face down at the feet of all as they leave the oratory, and let him do this until the abbot judges he has made satisfaction,” 245.

<sup>373</sup> “Public penance was bracketed by two liturgical rituals performed by the bishop at the beginning and end of Lent: the first a rite of dismissal, expelling penitents from the church on Ash Wednesday, and the second a rite of absolution and reconciliation on Maundy Thursday. During the intervening period, Wulfstan states in *Sermo de cena domini*, the penitent was expected to go to the church *dæges 7 nihtes* (Bethurum 237/52-3, ‘day and night’) to kneel outside the doors, calling out to Christ and praying for forgiveness until he was once again permitted to enter.” Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 137.

expulsion, but within this ritual process, the monastic become an ambiguous person in the community, both part and apart in the community, and so the rift is even more pronounced. The theology underlying this praxis—whether it’s corporal punishment, as mentioned in the Rule, or gradations of excommunication—is rooted in eschatological separation as shown in the commentary on Benedict’s rule from Smaragdus:

And if the abbot thinks fit, they are to be expelled from the monastery, because such a life has no bodily kin, nor does a society of brothers have those whom death possesses in their proud soul. For it is right that such people should be punished with blows and expelled; they do not deserve to be with Christ the humble Lord. But let them be separated from the everlasting promises of God with their master the devil, who was cast out of the kingdom of heaven because of his pride.<sup>374</sup>

This theological construct is intended to portray not only the deeply communal structure of cenobitic monasticism, but to strongly suggest the telos of the monastic: the eschatological reality of a profound integration into the kingdom of heaven, of which the monastic is supposed to practice while living. However, the monk who has retained a prideful disposition is said to have no place in community — “no society of brothers.” The individual becomes placed within the margins, on the peripheral of belonging. While this eschatologically concentrated fear is absent in Benedict’s Rule, it is reflected in *The Rule of the Master*: “Moreover, all the just in their glory will then see you at the judgment, when you have been separated from them and placed at the left among the goats, and they will laugh at you... And he did not realize that for enemies who are faithless to the Lord, there will come a time of eternal punishment.”<sup>375</sup> The monastic tradition, between Benedict interpreting his monastic source, and Smaragdus

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<sup>374</sup> Barry, *Commentary*, 353.

<sup>375</sup> Eberle, *The Rule of the Master*, 151.



interpreting Benedict, moves seamlessly between the individual and the corporate, so that a holistic sense of salvation is emphasized; this creates a situation that is not unlike the structures and importance of communal bonds and the fate of exile in Anglo-Saxon communities, where the individual is also reflected in their place within a tribe and familial structures. As an aside, this seems particularly important, as becoming part of a monastic community could be especially traumatic for children given to the monastery, as noted by Olsen when he writes about the monastic program of education for children entering a monastery:

You have to imagine what it would be like entering a monastery in tenth-century England. A child, somewhere between the ages of seven and eleven would be taken from their family, mother tongue, and the world of fields and woods and home handcrafts and would be placed within an utterly alien environment. The central experience would be trooping into the oratory many times a day to sing unknown songs in an unknown tongue.<sup>376</sup>

This means that the monastic experience is, from the beginning, and throughout differing contexts, rooted in being a stranger or alien, in all the ways those words convey a range of realities.<sup>377</sup> The sense of separation that the monastic feels with the various gradations of excommunication suggest the eschatological separation at the *parousia*; the sense of separation someone feels when they intend to join a monastery, and must wait outside the doors, displays the liminal position of being in the world and being out of it; and the child being given to a

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<sup>376</sup> Olsen, *Reading Matthew with Monks*, 88.

<sup>377</sup> For example, this is in regards to oblates of Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monasteries: “Although such children might be dedicated at birth, they would not be brought to live in the monastery until around the age of seven. And at that point, these children would have to learn to regard themselves as no longer part of their blood family, but as members of the new, spiritual *familia* of the monastery.” Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 94. This is interesting, in that oblates are liminal figures in a spectrum of ways, from their dedication at birth, but remaining with their birth family, to having to renegotiate their knowledge for another set rules to become a cohesive member of a new communal family that spiritually bonds them together. In many ways, it would seem, oblates would have a deeper understanding of the tragedy of excommunication from a community than other monastics arriving at a later age.

monastery as an oblation, experiencing the pedagogical methodology of learning Latin while chanting the Psalter and liturgical hymns, experiences the separation that predicates a journey into a new country or community. In every instance, the reality of the exile and the alien as betwixt and between simultaneous realities becomes codified through liturgical and exegetical experiences. With the proliferation of the Rule of Benedict, and Benedictine monasteries in the tenth-century, the theological focus of eschatology and spiritual ascendancy is firmly situated within an environment that privileges the liminal and the exilic to contextualize the individual and corporate Christian experience, and these theological concepts have immediate impact in communities.

The spiritual and physical landscape becomes altered as the individual experiences the devastation of separation — from the community, and from the “promises of Christ,” so that their end is ruin; or, in an Anglo-Saxon sense, to embody the *wraeclast*—the “exile’s path”—that the exile in their banishment is betwixt and between.<sup>378</sup> Given the prominence of Benedictine monasticism in Anglo-Saxon England, this must be a particularly powerful influence in the way theological identities were constructed, as sermons were composed for the liturgical seasons of the *temporale* and the *sanctorale*, and as liturgical observations—such as the Rogationtide or

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<sup>378</sup> Interestingly, for all this concern regarding the excommunicated from monastic communities from Benedict, others have noted how the liturgical rite of excommunication was slow to appear in liturgical books: “What is odd is that whilst rites for baptism are recorded amongst the earliest liturgical books to survive, the earliest excommunication rites do not appear until much later, from c. 900 CE and first appear in collections of canon law; excommunication is not recorded in liturgical books until the early eleventh century.” Sarah Hamilton, “Interpreting Diversity: Excommunication Rites in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries” in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Helen Gittos and Sarah Hamilton (England: Ashgate, 2016), 128-9. This seems to suggest that perhaps historically the trend of the Church was to emphasize these aspects of admittance and belonging, as opposed to exclusion or expulsion, with the rite of Baptism (and certainly the Eucharist) being the chief characteristic for interpreting a sense of what ecclesiological structures privilege. And while such rites are liminal themselves, they are not necessarily indicative of wandering or exile, although that subtext might be present.

Ascension—reified the wandering of the Anglo-Saxon, as if they were on an exodus of their own to a promised land that is beyond the margins.

### **Eschatology, Rogationtide, and the Stranger**

Two examples from the tenth-century Blickling homiliary might be helpful to observe this sense of wandering, exile, and eschatology. Despite the anonymity of the collection, which leads to questions of discerning authorship and audience, and supposed lack of theological sophistication, Robin Aronstam argues that the Blickling homilies “bring us closer than most other surviving texts to the concerns of ordinary Christians in the late Anglo-Saxon period.”<sup>379</sup> Additionally, Gatch asserts that the homilist or compiler was able to show “something approaching a coherent statement of eschatological doctrine,”<sup>380</sup> so this collection can begin demonstrating the homiletic environment in which a theology of exile might have resided, before moving into a Benedictine Reformed context. In Blickling X, entitled *Pisses middangeardes ende neah is*, “The End of this Middle-World is Near,” there is a clear eschatological focus, grounded in a sermon that points to plagues and death ravaging the country, similar to the later Wulfstan’s *Sermo lupi ad anglos*, but the concern for the Blickling homilist is not how these evils befalling the nation are indicative of a people steeped in sin; rather, there is a slight reorientation of focus at the beginning where the homilist urges to not let these evils “colap̃ to swiþe seo lufu þe we to urum Hælende habban sceoldan.”<sup>381</sup> The homilist does exhort their audience to right

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<sup>379</sup> Robin Ann Aronstam, “The Blickling Homilies: A Reflection of Popular Anglo-Saxon Belief,” in *Law, Church, and Society: Essays in Honor of Stephan Kuttner*, edited by Kenneth Pennington and Robert Sommerville (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 277.

<sup>380</sup> Milton McC Gatch, “Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies,” *Traditio* 21 (1965), 124.

<sup>381</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 109. “Greatly cool the love which we must hold for our Savior.” Translations of the Blickling Homilies are mine, unless otherwise noted.

living, whether monk, laymen, clergy, or king, and this leads them to offer and explicate a parable of a rich influencer. The rich man suddenly dies, and a kinsman who loved the rich man, in grief, leaves their country, and “ac he unrotmód of his cyþþe gewát & of his earde, & on þæm lande fela wintra wunode.”<sup>382</sup> Later in the parable, the bones of the dead rich man appear to the kinsman and admonish him to repent, and the kinsman “onwende from ealre þisse worlde begangum.”<sup>383</sup> The kinsman in this parable offers a synthesis of how exile is lived out; they leave their country due to grief, but are then restored on a path to their true native country, heaven, through the act of conversion.

This also simultaneously enacts the ascetic labor of being in the world, but not of it, in that existentially they occupy and embody a space they seek to leave behind more fully, which is the monastic movement of ascension of the heart mind that precedes the body. This becomes even more significant, considering the placement of this homily in the manuscript: it precedes Blickling XI, sermon entitled *On þa halgan þunres dei*, “On Holy Thursday,” which is the feast of the Ascension. Gatch is confident in placing Blickling X as a sermon for Holy Wednesday, the final day of Rogationtide.<sup>384</sup> The feast of the Ascension is the liturgical celebration of the moment in scripture where, post-Resurrection, Christ is exalted in the heavens through a literal ascension of his body into heaven. The Blickling homilist proclaims that it “wæs on þyssum dæge þæt ure Drihten Hælend Crist þa menniscan gecynd þe he genam to his godcundnesse ahafen him sylfum ofor heofonas 7 ofor ealle engla þretas he eft to þæm fæderlican setle eode,

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<sup>382</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 113. “But he with a sorrowful mind departed his known country, and remained in that land for many years.”

<sup>383</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 113. “He converted from all of the ways of the world.”

<sup>384</sup> Gatch, “Eschatology,” 121.

þanon he næfre onweg ne gewat þurh his þa ecean godcundnesse.”<sup>385</sup> Through Christ’s act of ascension, the divide between humanity as a stranger, and humanity as a friend of God becomes blurred with the physical body of Christ occupying the space of heaven; in this, both Christ and humanity operate and reside within an in-between space, despite the continued nature of the Christian as a stranger, in its manifold senses. This idea is strengthened rhetorically later when the homilist, after recounting the narrative of Christ’s ascension, offers an exegesis of certain elements of the pericope. The homilist allegorizes the white garments that the angels wore, saying that “þa hwitan hrægl þara engla getacniap þone gefeán engla 7 manna, þe þa geworden wæs,”<sup>386</sup> and then elaborates further on what that joy means, saying “7 him þa wæs eac heora geféa 7 heora blis geeced þa hie wiston þæt heora epel þær on heofenum sceolde eft gebuen 7 geseted weorþan mid halgum sawlum, 7 þa halgan setl eft gefylde mid þære menniscan gecynde, þe deofol ær for his oforhygdum of aworpen wæs.”<sup>387</sup> Here, the Blickling homilist notes a theologically rich exchange, which is both soteriological and eschatological in view. Christ, as a redeemer who embodies God and mankind, has carried humanity with him in the Ascension. The Ascension is where the liminal position of humanity is called to mind, as humanity is embedded in Christ, and as humanity journeys upward with Christ, the devil is exiled, so that as one is cast out, the other takes that place. However, according to the Blickling homilist, this is a reality that

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<sup>385</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 115, 117. Morris’s translation: “It was on this day that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ exalted the humanity that he united to his divine nature above the heavens and above all the hosts of angels, when he went to the abode of his Father, from which, by reason of his eternal Godhead he has never departed,” 114, 116.

<sup>386</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 121. Morris’s translation: “The white garments of the angels denote the joy of angels and men that then occurred,” 120.

<sup>387</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 121. Morris’s translation: “And their joy and bliss was moreover increased when they became aware that their home in heaven should thereafter be inhabited and peopled by holy souls; and that the holy seat, from which the devil had previously been cast out for his pride, should be occupied by mankind,” 120.

is happening, but is not fully complete. Its perfection will be found in the *parousia*, the “*domes dæg*.” The homilist sets this up earlier in the homily, noting that almost all the signs for Doomsday have occurred, save one:

we witon þonne hweþre þæt hit nis no feor to þon; forþon þe ealle þe tacno 7 þa forebeacno þa þe ure Drihten ær toward sægde, þæt ær domes dæg geweorþan sceoldan, ealle þa syndon agangen, buton þæm anum þæt se awerigda cuma Antecrist nugét hider on middangeard ne com.<sup>388</sup>

Of particular interest in this passage is the use of *cuma*, and its application to the Antichrist. *Cuma* means “comer, guest, stranger,”<sup>389</sup> and all those iterations carry a similar range and meaning of someone not inhabiting an established place of their own — of someone wandering, or passing through. This theological trope of the stranger is one that has concrete precedence in monastic literature, whether through sheer usage of the term, or evoked through ideas of excommunication. In Blickling XI, the mentioning of the devil potentially recalls all the various senses in which *cuma* is utilized, with the Antichrist or the devil as a stranger or exile, as well as other textual analogs and the connection of excommunicated monks as satanic and exiled themselves.

In keeping with the monastic idea of the stranger, the sense of being a wanderer or a stranger becomes important to consider for its particular exegetical meaning for Ælfric. The sense of *cuma* and its eschatological significance appears in Ælfric’s sermon “*In letania maiore*,”

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<sup>388</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, 117. Morris’s translation: “Nevertheless we know that it is not far off, because all the signs and and fore-tokens that our Lord previously said would come before Doomsday, are all gone by, except one alone, that is, the accursed stranger, Antichrist, who, as yet, as not come hither upon earth,” 116.

<sup>389</sup> Bosworth, “An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.” *Cuma*. 21 March 2010. Accessed December 15, 2017. <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/006805>

“On the Great Litany,” a sermon given on the first day of Rogationtide. Coming from this Benedictine monastic milieu of community and eschatology, *cuma* is coherent with the monastic exegetical tradition. For example, according to a search of the *Old English Dictionary Web Corpus*, the word *cuma* appears in forty-three different Old English texts; eight of those texts were composed by Ælfric, and three instances of *cuma* appearing are found in Old English editions of the Rule of Benedict. As it appears in the Rule of Benedict, it is concerned with the reception of strangers and hospitality, noting that strangers should be received as Christ himself; in some examples of Ælfric’s preaching, it appears in the first series of his homilies, in the Nativity sermon, referring to Mary as a stranger, since there was no room in the inn for her to give birth; it also shows up as he exegetes the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31-46, where when you offer assistance to a stranger, you also do so to Christ. I would like to note here the deeply eschatological note in which this parable ends — that not treating the stranger as Christ results in eternal separation from heaven. However, the sense of *cuma* in Ælfric’s sermon for the first day of Rogation, while inherently carrying the semantic and theological freight of what came before it textually, also looks ahead as it enacts an eschatological movement that is unique for considering the Ascension.

In terms of the homiletic environment concerning Rogationtide during the Anglo-Saxon period, Malcolm Godden notes that “the abundance of Old English sermons for the period shows that it was a major occasion for preaching to the laity, and Ælfric provides homilies for all three days in both Series.”<sup>390</sup> Liturgically, the days of Rogationtide call for processions; these processions are a mimetic act to mitigate that sense of separation of humanity and heaven, while

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<sup>390</sup> Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary* EETS SS 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 145.

simultaneously emphasizing the journey to heaven, as the boundaries of lands are traversed and prayed for, for the blessing of crops and the apotropaic function of ameliorating disaster. As monastic processions and preaching are catechetical in nature, both assist in an exegetical methodology for interpreting scriptures associated with Rogation, as well as other concomitant pericopes or spiritual texts with similar themes. M. Bedingfield mentions the often dramatic nature of preaching for Rogationtide, with sermons often emphasizing heaven and hell.

According to Bedingfield, this means that

this emphasis makes the penitential processions of Rogationtide a preparation for approaching heaven, and failure to observe Rogations, or failure to do so appropriately, carries the threat of punishment in hell...Rogationtide is an instructive and a liturgical preparation for the reenactment of the Ascension into heaven, specifically of its elevation of humanity to heaven, in the Rogationtide and Ascension liturgies.<sup>391</sup>

The physical nature of the procession, being on the periphery of landscapes, is inherently suggestive of boundary crossing in terms of life and death, of leaving earth for heaven; the procession is a physical embodiment of the path in following Christ to their new home, acting as exegetical commentary as much as it is a ritualistic marker of the landscape. The crossing of delimited boundaries demonstrates the gravity of what these physical limitations meant for Anglo-Saxons. For example, the Gildas notes that “cursed is he who removes boundary stones, particularly those of his neighbor.”<sup>392</sup> This sense of space is critical for understanding what boundaries and other thresholds mean for Anglo-Saxons. C. P. Biggam writes about the task of the “beating of bounds,” where

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<sup>391</sup> M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Great Britain: Boydell Press, 2002), 193-4.

<sup>392</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 82.



numbers of people followed local dignitaries in an annual procession around parish boundaries. Part of the tradition was to inflict an unpleasant experience of some kind on boys in the party, such as striking their heads against boundary stones, or turning them upside down at crucial points on the boundary line. All of this was intended to help them and others remember exactly where the markers were situated.<sup>393</sup>

The pre-occupation with borders for Anglo-Saxons reveals their anxiety regarding space, and needing to know what was an appropriate threshold to cross. Boundaries, beating the bounds, and other processions also intersect with theological acts too. Johanna Kramer notes that “Rogationtide and Ascension are additionally linked by their common concern with boundaries and borders: both feasts, the processions, and other cultural practices... are all spatial-processes, whether physical movements through space or a boundary-crossing Christological event that is reimagined and celebrated as part of the Christian liturgy.”<sup>394</sup> As monastics and laity enact the procession, they embody and internalize the Ascension, following Christ as he is exalted.

The task of rogation itself, enacted in the Greater Litany, was previously a different day set aside for fasting on April 25, but by the time of the later Anglo-Saxon period, this time of prayer, fasting, and processions became connected with an earlier Gallican observance.<sup>395</sup> Moreover, the terminology associated with this observance has been varied and complex, as noted by Joyce Hill:

The Greek work from which the Latin *litania* (and its incorrect but very common alternative spelling *letania*) was derived meant ‘supplication’ or ‘petition’. Various forms of supplicatory or litanic prayer were established early in the history of the church and are by no means confined to the Major and Minor

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<sup>393</sup> C. P. Biggam, “Sociolinguistic aspects of Old English colour lexemes,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 24 (1995): 61.

<sup>394</sup> Johanna Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 148.

<sup>395</sup> Godden, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 145.

litanies; it is simply that the term was applied to these particular days because supplicatory prayer was one of their defining features. A common alternative name is ‘Rogation Days’, derived from the Latin *rogare*, ‘to ask’, ‘to petition’, used more commonly with reference to the three days before Ascension than the Litany Day of 25 April. In vernacular contexts the Anglo-Saxons usually employed the term *gandæg* (pl. *gandagas*), literally ‘walking-day’, reflecting not the defining feature of supplicatory prayer but the visible marker of external processions, although *bendagas* or *gebeddagas*, ‘petition days’, ‘prayer days’, were possible alternatives.<sup>396</sup>

This liturgical context is the foundation for what Ælfric and other homilists deliver in their homilies for Rogationtide. The notion of prayer, as seen with the varied and expansive terms used to describe the task and observance, saturates the theological and ascetic framework in which this was performed. The performance of prayer is the overarching concern for this observance, and the neglecting of it demonstrates liturgical and spiritual incoherence. And as with so many other aspects of liturgical narrative and eschatology, being unmindful of the spiritual nature of the act of prayer and processions yields divine separation; not participating in these prayers and processions leaves one bounded, and makes them a stranger to God.

The sermon *In letania maiore* is primarily catechetical in nature, with later allegorical exegesis of scripture. In terms of sources, the pericope for this sermon is from Luke 11:5-13, where Christ offers the parable of the friend at midnight in which someone asks for three loaves of bread. This parable resonates with the theme of the litanic prayer in terms of urgent and insistent petitioning of God. Godden notes that Ælfric was probably familiar with an exposition of this pericope from Bede in a copy of Paul the Deacon’s homiliary, and was probably familiar with interpretations of Smaragdus and Haymo, but rather his sermon was influenced by sermons

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<sup>396</sup> Joyce Hill, “The *Litaniae maiores* and *minores* in Rome, Francia and Anglo-Saxon England: terminology, texts and traditions,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 2 (2000): 212.

from Augustine.<sup>397</sup> Ælfric begins by explaining the significance of Rogationtide, saying that these days are set aside for prayer: “on þissum dagum we sceolon gebiddan ure eorðlicra wæstma. genihtsumnysse. 7 us sylfum gesundfulnysse 7 sibbe. 7 þæt git mare is ure synna forgifenysse.”<sup>398</sup> The observance of Rogationtide was initially linked with times of penance and prayer, and here Ælfric recalls that for his audience.<sup>399</sup> With the introduction of this sermon beginning with an emphasis on prayer for the forgiveness of sins, he is able to rhetorically link corporate and individual behavior with either spiritual efficacy or harm, in that the sin of the people manifests itself with the wrath of God. At the outset, the audience of this homily is reminded of the reality that the world they inhabit is on the border of the spiritual landscape, where the land must be prayed for, and the spiritual health of the people is a reflection of the health of where they live. This is not unlike the monastic trajectory of inhabiting the wilderness, but transforming it through prayer and spiritual warfare, such as what is seen in the *Guthlac A*. The forgiveness of sins leads to abundance; sinfulness leads to waste.

Following this, Ælfric includes a section that teaches on the origins of Rogationtide, possibly sourced from Amalarius,<sup>400</sup> noting that the observance of this time was established in Vienne during a time of great natural disaster, including how “7 feollon cyrcan 7 hus. 7 comon wilde beran 7 wulfas 7 ábiton þæs folces micelne dæl; 7 þæs cynges botl wearð mid heofenlicum

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<sup>397</sup> Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 145.

<sup>398</sup> Peter Clemons, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The First Series* EETS S.S. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 317. “On this day we must pray for the abundant increase of our earthly fruits, and healthfulness for ourselves, and peace, and more than that the forgiveness of our sins.” Translations of Ælfric's homilies are mine, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>399</sup> “Most homilies for the occasion, Latin and English, emphasise penitence and almsgiving as the particular concerns for Rogationtide.” Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 146.

<sup>400</sup> Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 146.

fyre forbærnd.”<sup>401</sup> Following this influx of divine wrath, Mamertus, the bishop, calls for a three day period of fasting for the aversion of disaster. Rhetorically, Ælfric links the origin of Rogationtide with the repentance of the people of Nineveh, suggesting the scriptural precedence of fasting to overcome divine wrath that leads to natural disaster and destruction.<sup>402</sup> From there, the custom of a three day period of fasting and repentance continued in the church.

After making this connection, Ælfric uses the momentum of the historical and scriptural context to exhort his audience that “we sceolon eac on ðysum dagum begán ure gebedu 7 fylían urum haligdomum út 7 in. 7 þone ælmihtigán god mid geornfulnyse herian.”<sup>403</sup> Here the procession is explicitly mentioned, with the inclusion of following relics in and out of the church.<sup>404</sup> In a substantially physical way, this invokes the liminal nature of Rogationtide; not only are participants expected to walk along the boundaries of fields, to move in and out of the church, but also to follow a reminder of our fate with the physicality of a relic. Within this act of procession, following a relic, the physicality of this liturgical moment exegetes the purpose of Rogationtide and the meaning of the Ascension by reminding the participants how they border both life and death as they bid God for their personal health and the health of their crops.

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<sup>401</sup> Clemoes, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 317. “And churches and houses fell. And came wild bears and wolves and they devoured a large portion of people. And the palaces of the kings were burned with heavenly fire.”

<sup>402</sup> Godden, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 147. Here, Godden notes that previous textual sources (Amalarius, Gregory of Tours, and Haymo) do not link the Vienne disaster with Nineveh, but Vercelli 19 mentions both Vienna and Nineveh. Godden concludes that by presuming by Ælfric’s time, the two ideas were linked together as a common tradition.

<sup>403</sup> Clemoes, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 318. “We should also on these days offer our prayers and follow our relics out and in, and with devotion praise the almighty God.”

<sup>404</sup> Thorpe translates *haligdomum* as “relics” in this instance, but the denotation seems to be more ambiguous, suggesting either simply holiness, sanctity, or more specifically, a sacrament. In my translation, I used Thorpe to translate *haligdom* because following a relic makes the most sense liturgically, unless they were following consecrated eucharistic elements in procession.

Following this, Ælfric then recounts the gospel narrative in his sermon, and moves into exegesis of the Luke 11:5-13 pericope. For this, Ælfric relied on sermons 61 and 105 from Augustine.<sup>405</sup> Augustine allegorizes the three loaves of bread, asserting that “when you have gotten the three loaves, that is, to feed on and understand the Trinity, you have that whereby you may both live yourself, and feed others.”<sup>406</sup> Stemming from the result of intentional petitioning, belief in the Trinity yields personal nourishment for soul and body, but perhaps more importantly, it offers the ability to feed strangers. This evokes a diverse concept of relationships, in that with feeding on the loaves as divine nourishment, one becomes placed within the perichoretic nature of the Holy Trinity. Participating in the divine communion of the Holy Trinity is integral for the soul, but even more than that, though, the Christian is intended to feed the souls of others, which is indicative of Benedictine hospitality. In as much as the monastic is a stranger, the monk is supposed to actively care for and feed strangers, spiritually and physically. For Augustine, this exhortation is incumbent for all Christians, when he preaches that “Now you need not fear the stranger who comes out of his way to you, but by taking him in may make him a citizen of the household: nor do you need fear lest you come to the end of it.”<sup>407</sup> In the spiritual literature that Ælfric would have been familiar with, the concept of being a stranger might be someone to fear, as seen in the *Diadema monachorum* of Smaragdus, but the exhortations to practice charity to the stranger are also parallel to the one made a stranger due to spiritual rebellion.

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<sup>405</sup> Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 145.

<sup>406</sup> Augustine, “Sermon 51,” translated by R.G. MacMullen. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 6, Philip Schaff, ed. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/160355.htm>, section 4.

<sup>407</sup> Augustine, “Sermon 51,” section 4.

From this allegorical exegesis of Augustine, Ælfric continues in his exegesis of the Lukan pericope. Stemming from Augustine’s use of “stranger,” Ælfric says that “he cwæð cuma. for ðan þe we ealle syndon cuman on ðysum life. 7 ure eard nis na her: ac we synd her swilce weigfærende menn; An cymð. oðer færð; Se bið acenned: Se oðer forðfærð. 7 rymð him setl.”<sup>408</sup> This is sourced from Augustine’s sermon: “A friend has come to you ‘out of the way,’ out, that is, of the life of this world, in which all men are passing along as strangers, and no one abides here as possessor; but to every man it is said, ‘You have been refreshed, pass on, go on your way, give place to the next comer.’”<sup>409</sup> In glossing Augustine for his audience, Ælfric again rhetorically carries the multivalence of what it means to be a stranger, from the patristic and monastic Latin tradition, to the vernacular sources. And in a broader sense, this use of *cuma* would indicate that we—the auditors of this homily—are identifying as exiles and wanderers, “*weigfærende menn*,” in search of a home. This idea of one departing, and another taking their place finds an analog in Blickling XI, where humanity, in its journey of ascension, takes the place of the devil from the throne he once occupied in the heavens. With Ælfric, this is demonstrated by explicating the transitory nature of our existence, in that our life is not our own, and that as we die, we yield our place for another to take possession. Here, Ælfric conveys the soteriological reality that as we die, we yield our place to another here, but again, as we die, we take our rightful place over the Antichrist in triumph with Christ, because it isn’t just that the Christian follows Christ in procession, but that he carries us with him.

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<sup>408</sup> Clemoes, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies*, 319-20. “He said ‘stranger,’ for we are all strangers in this life, and our place is not here. But here we are as wayfaring men; one comes, another leaves. One is born, the other dies, and opens his seat.”

<sup>409</sup> Augustine, “Sermon 51,” section 2.

Ælfric's uses of stranger and life are more complex than simply wandering or waiting until our time has come to give up our seat, because he is clear in saying "ure eard nis na her": "our home is not here." There is a clear sense of possession that Ælfric is expressing, and it is rooted in an eschatological hope, in that they do not yet inhabit the Promised Land, but look for the kingdom Christ, in which they would have performed a liturgical procession that would hint at that sacred reality. Within a monastic context, this use of "stranger" also suggests an intertext with Smaragdus and the liminal environment in which the monastic, and all Christians, find themselves. For Smaragdus and the author of Blickling XI, the idea of being a stranger is predicated on rebellion, making insurrection within communities, or disruption of other significant relationships, worthy of expulsion. Ælfric's use is not divorced from that context, but is exegetically interrogated in this sermon for Rogation, and is consonant with Augustine and the Benedictine tradition. The *cuma* for Ælfric participates in the way the stranger is a trope for the monastic relationship with God, their community, and the world over all.

### **Conclusion**

The eschatology rooted in being a stranger is designed to subvert the way of the world, and to recognize that no one is home; the only stable concept is the Benedictine vow of stability to the community, but everything else is subjected to intensified journeys that are realized through ascetic praxis. The stranger is lost, but continually finding themselves, and continually redefining who they are in proximity to the stranger next to them. All are lost, wandering, and in exile, but then all are compelled to nourish each other with God, and in doing so, the liminal nature of the monastic, and other Christians, is controverted into a concrete identity expressed in

the Trinity as they find their true home, having followed in the procession behind Christ's Ascension in the heavens.

The separation evinced in the Rule in terms of excommunication participates in the eschatological moment that the scriptures point to. In the Rule, excommunication reveals the sacred reality of spiritual exile: banishment from a divine and holy community. Additionally, the Rogationtide liturgical praxis and the exegetical choices Ælfric made for this homily demonstrate the monastic synthesis of worship and preaching as a means of living out the scriptures. By performing the liturgical Rogation procession, then hearing the explication of what the scriptures mean, the potential is realized for the monastic or other auditors to embody exegesis. As Ælfric operates within the spirit and culture of the Rule and the patristic exegetical tradition, and its ways of embodying eschatological communion, the multivalent possibilities of being a stranger in this world become all the more pronounced, so that in time, living as strangers in exile, the follower of Christ might find true home.



#### Chapter 4: Anglo-Saxons, the Old Testament, and the Patriarch Abraham

The preceding chapters have examined the ideas and roles of various genres to uncover the theological culture in which Anglo-Saxons defined themselves as spiritual exiles. Anglo-Saxon Christians, indebted to patristic literature, monastic *regula*, homilies, and the scriptures, constructed a theological identity that was perpetually liminal. Always crossing thresholds, both physical and spiritual, through the ascetic praxis of deprivation and the multivalent possibilities of exile, they rejected conventional constructs of home for a theological reality, situated in an eschatological hope of the heavenly *patria*. They wander, never arriving at their true country until they enact their own *transitus* in death. However, the act of wandering never happens for its own sake, but as a means of finding rest. Being a stranger to the world through depriving yourself from comforts, removing yourself from kinship, and enacting the physicality of processions offer mimetic possibilities for experiencing spiritual realities of inclusion and exclusion.

The idea of the Latin *patria*, of the fatherland, in Anglo-Saxon contexts becomes more narrowed and situated within the sense of the *epel* — the search for a spiritual home, and what that spiritual home means. This chapter will consider the idea of the spiritual home for Anglo-Saxon Christians, and what it means to see yourself as the one who wanders for home. To do this, attention will be turned to various approaches of the Old Testament by Anglo-Saxons. The Old Testament was a vibrant and vital text for constructing aspects of Anglo-Saxon theology, in terms of identity, place, eschatology, and the confirmation of being a wandering people through the insertion of their narrative into the divine history of Israel.

This chapter will first consider aspects of the Old Testament and Jewishness in Anglo-Saxon England. Discussion will center on the presence of the Jew as a figure and figment of sacred narrative for Anglo-Saxons, then focus will shift to consider how Gildas, Bede, and Archbishop Wulfstan of York approached moments of Old Testament as history that offered an interpretation for their own present condition. Moreover, their rhetorical and theological movements demonstrate readings that aid in constructing a liminal identity for the early British and Anglo-Saxons. After discussing that, attention will be turned to an important figure that typifies wandering and faithfulness in Hebraic and Christian expressions — the patriarch Abraham. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the voice that speaks to Zosimus and Mary in the *vita* of Mary of Egypt, and tells them to cross the river Jordan for the desert, carries the reference of Abraham's call by God to leave his country and search for a land of promise. This chapter will offer a reading of the patriarch Abraham as a monastic exemplum of ascetic praxis, wandering, and the hope of finding home.

Regarding the patriarch Abraham, the German Old Testament scholar Rudolf Kittel writes that “we find Abraham wandering up and down the land of Canaan as a nomad chief. He has immigrated hither from a distant land. Sometimes he pitches his tent at Shechem, sometimes he turns towards Bethel, building altars and founding sanctuaries at both places.”<sup>410</sup> Abraham, called from his Chaldean home by God to wander the desert landscape to settle a place of rest, was himself a multivalent symbol of theological importance to Anglo-Saxons regarding identity, promise, and ascetic living. His presence creates an opportunity to interpret texts through a specific lens of Anglo-Saxon monastic spirituality. Abraham is a spiritual signifier of how Anglo-

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<sup>410</sup> Rudolf Kittel, *A History of the Hebrews in Two Volumes*, trans. John Taylor (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 136-7.

Saxons enter into the salvation history of Israel and ascetic praxis, pointing to the reality of the heavenly *epel*, of the theological stranger in between two worlds.

### **The Old Testament, Jewishness, and Anglo-Saxons**

In the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede writes of the story of a certain brother named Cædmon, who lived in a secular habit at the monastery of Streanaeshalc. Bede notes that this Cædmon was given a special grace by God for composing religious songs that were inspired by scripture, turning the narrative of scripture into “extremely delightful and moving poetry.”<sup>411</sup> As it goes, we learn that Cædmon did not always demonstrate this grace. One evening, while others were taking turns singing at a banquet at the monastery, he recused himself, lacking the confidence to sing. When he fell asleep later that evening, he dreamt of being visited by someone who urged him to sing. Hesitating, Cædmon asks in the dream, “Quid debeo cantare,” “What must I sing?” To which the mysterious visitor replies, “Canta principium creaturarum,” “Sing about the beginning of created things.”<sup>412</sup> From there, Cædmon immediately begins to sing:

Nunc laudare debemus auctorem regni caelestis, potentiam Creatoris et consilium illius, facta Patris gloriae: quomodo ille, cum sit aeternus Deus, omnium miraculorum auctor extitit, qui primo filiis hominum caelum pro culmine tecti, dehinc terram Custos humani generis omnipotens creavit.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 414. “In huius monasterio abbatissae fuit frater quidam diuina gratia specialiter insignis, quia carmina religioni et pietati apta facere solebat, ita ut, quicquid ex diuinis litteris per interpretes disceret, hos ipse post pusillum uerbis poeticis maxima suauitate et conpunctione compositis in sua, id est Anglorum, lingua proferret.” Translation: “In the monastery of this abbess there was a certain brother who was specially marked out by the grace of God, so that he used to compose godly and religious songs; thus, whatever he learned from the holy Scriptures by means of interpreters, he quickly turned into extremely delightful and moving poetry, in English, which was his own tongue,” 415.

<sup>412</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, 416, 417.

<sup>413</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, 416. Translation: “Now we must praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory and how He, since he is the eternal God, was the Author of all marvels and first created the heavens as a roof for the children of men and then, the almighty Guardian of the human race, created the earth,” 417.

The hymn that Cædmon miraculously composes refers to the generative act of God in Genesis in creating the heavens and the earth. In these few lines, Cædmon summarizes the labor of God in creation, crafting the heavens, the earth, and humanity. This hymn points to numerous channels of inquiry and investigation, particularly involving the use of scripture, and its adaptation and interpretation in Anglo-Saxon monastic and other institutional contexts. Samantha Zacher suggests that “the poem we refer to as ‘Cædmon’s hymn’ represents an important myth of origin for both Anglo-Saxon audiences *and* scholars, who would see this composition as the beginning of biblical verse in English, and Cædmon as the ‘father of English history.’”<sup>414</sup> Cædmon’s hymn, therefore, does not only point to itself, but to other uses of scripture in Anglo-Saxon England that were adapted, translated from Latin into Old English, or put into verse.

Cædmon’s hymn came from inspired origins to describe the transcendent genesis of creation and existence. Inherently, it is a song of praise. It also operates didactically. As the hymn invokes and condenses the Genesis account of creation, it reifies a significant theological point that God created the “heavenly kingdom.” In that sense, Cædmon’s hymn also rhetorically performs instruction of the faith and interpretation of scripture, but theologically, it also foregrounds an eschatological hope at the outset of the poem. According to Bede, Cædmon also

canebat autem de creatione mundi et origine humani generis / et tota Genesis historia, de egressu Israel ex Aegypto et ingressu in terram repromissionis, de aliis plurimis sacrae scripturae historiis, de incarnatione dominica, passione, resurrectione et ascensione in caelum, de Spiritus Sancti aduentu et apostolorum

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<sup>414</sup> Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 10. Emphasis hers.

doctrina; item de terrore futuri iudicii et horrore poenae gehannalis ac dulcedine regni caelestis multa carmina faciebat.<sup>415</sup>

It is because of this myth of sacred poetry, and what Bede says that Cædmon learned of the faith afterwards, that led others to claim that the poems of Junius 11 were authored by him.<sup>416</sup> This verse acts as a textual signpost for the hope of reaching the heavenly kingdom that we are now exiled from as a consequence of Adam's transgression. This transcendent space of creation is what we look towards, but have yet to fully encounter. Embedded within this hymn, like so many other patristic texts, and their adapted functions in Anglo-Saxon contexts, is the hope of stability, and the ceasing of wandering, and the imposition of a new identity that is centered on dispensing an earthly habitation for a heavenly citizenship and dwelling. By calling Cædmon the "father of English history," a precedent is established to look to the scriptures to exegete the experiences of those who inhabit the British Isles, in which other authors participate. This also demonstrates a critical issue of how scripture is used, its rhetorical context, and anxieties surrounding the dynamic nature of spiritual texts, including the transmission of ideas and the act of translation.

Richard Marsden has noted that before vernacular translations, there were composite texts that were circulated of the Old Testament Vulgate where certain books were selected and

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<sup>415</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, 418. "He sang about the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole history of Genesis, of the departure of Israel from Egypt and the entry into the promised land and of many other of the stories taken from sacred Scriptures: of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of the Lord, of his ascension into heaven, of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the apostles. He also made songs about the terrors of future judgment, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the joys of the heavenly kingdom," 419.

<sup>416</sup> While Cædmon's authorship of Junius 11 is now discredited, Hall argued that the list of topics that Bede relates of which Cædmon sang about reveals the typical catechetical instruction that one would have received, and hence his argument for basing theological unity on Augustine's text for catechism. See Hall, "Old English Epic," 189 ff.

compiled; complete texts of the Old Testament existed, but were rare.<sup>417</sup> The Benedictine monk Ælfric, in the late tenth century, wrote in his preface to his vernacular translation of Genesis about his anxieties regarding the task of translation and the embedded spiritual meaning of scripture in the Old Testament, saying that

Pa ungelæredan preostas, gif hi hwæt litles understandað of þam Lydenbocum, þonne þingð him sona þæt hi magon mære lareowas beon, ac hi ne cunnon swa þeah þæt gastlice andigit þærto, hu seo ealde æ wæs getacnung towardra þinga oþþe hu seo niwe gecyþnis æfter Cristes menniscnisse wæs gefillednys ealra þæra þinga, þe seo ealde gecyndaðis getacnode towarde be Criste be hys gecorenum.<sup>418</sup>

Ælfric's anxiety can be sourced from many different areas, but a primary concern is the way scripture is used. Because of a lack of understanding from insufficient training, scripture might be used to justify certain choices or behaviors, or create narratives that run contrary to the spiritual meaning of scripture. The underlying issue here is not just the problems inherent in translation, or lack of training in exegesis, but rather that texts became a part of the social consciousness in which they are used.<sup>419</sup> The hope of Ælfric is for a supposed pure reading and use of scripture, which is inherently untenable. The subtext for this is embedded in competing hierarchies of authority and interpretation. Anglo-Saxon Christians, before and after Ælfric, used

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<sup>417</sup> Richard Marsden, *The Texts of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-2.

<sup>418</sup> S. J. Crawford, ed., *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis* EETS 160 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 77. "For unlearned priests, if they understand little of Latin books, then it seems to them that they might immediately be made a distinguished teacher, but they do not know the spiritual meaning of them, how the old law was a symbol of things to come, or how the New Testament, or how Christ after the incarnation was the completion of all things, which the Old Testament symbolized about Christ or about his beloved." Translation my own.

<sup>419</sup> Brian Stock has written on this idea before with the concept of "textual communities," which he defines as "a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community, but it is also a social entity." *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 150.

scripture to create a divine narrative for themselves that offered a way to enact salvation history, which meant that scripture was read, interpreted, adapted, and understood for their own needs. But this also concerns the tension between medieval constructs of the Jewish person in relation to the scope of their Christian vision, and how Jewishness was employed by Anglo-Saxons.

The use of the Old Testament by Anglo-Saxons is, at times, a use of Judaism and Jewishness to fulfill their own religious needs. Within this is a complicated hierarchy of what was useful according to positive or negative valences of meaning. Coming from a historiographic perspective, the medievalist Gavin Langmuir writes concerning the rise and phenomena connected to antisemitism,<sup>420</sup> and notes the distinction that arose of “anti-Judaism” and antisemitism, where anti-Judaism is centered on hostility due to system of belief and faith, and antisemitism is hostility towards Jews that is not focused on faith.<sup>421</sup> Rather than categorizing early Christian and medieval representations of hostility towards Jews as simply antisemitic, Langmuir offers the distinction that the premise of faith played a role in this categorizing, and wrote how a more precise definition of antisemitism was needed.<sup>422</sup> This attempt at definition is inherently difficult in writing about the context of Anglo-Saxons. As has been noted in recent

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<sup>420</sup> Langmuir offers a note for the semantics regarding the term antisemitism, saying that “the word ‘antisemitism’ has been given many meanings. Since there is in fact no such as ‘semitism,’ save when referring to a language, the term is literally meaningless when applied to Jews, which is why I refuse to hyphenate ‘antisemitism.’ Moreover, since the word has been used to denote such a remarkably diverse variety of phenomena over millennia of history, it is semiotically ambiguous. That meaninglessness or ambiguity has made it a very unreliable and often misleading tool for the analysis of historical or contemporary events. Yet its continuing use is testimony to the conviction that there has indeed been something either unique or highly unusual about hostility to Jews. And that, whether we use ‘antisemitism’ or some other term to denote it, is the fundamental issue. Has there not been an unusual kind of hostility to Jews? The issue is important both for our descriptions and explanations of historical events and for our understanding of contemporary and future events.” Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 16-7.

<sup>421</sup> See Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, 4-5.

<sup>422</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, 5.

works by Andrew Scheil and Samantha Zacher, focus on Jews in Anglo-Saxon England is typically situated post-Conquest, after 1066. The presence of Jewish people was at best exceptionally minimal until after the Norman Conquest, which has led to the scholarly idea of an “imaginary,” or as Steven Kruger refers to it, the “spectral Jew.”<sup>423</sup> However, Scheil and Zacher have recognized the need for scholarly work on Jewish identity in Anglo-Saxon England. Scheil writes that

absent from Anglo-Saxon England in any real physical sense, Jews were nevertheless present as imaginative, textual constructs, manifest only in the distorted shadow cast by the Christian tradition. ‘Jews’ and ‘Judaism’ will thus stand for, in essence, a nexus of rhetorical effects, a variety of representational strategies built into the very structure of medieval Christianity.<sup>424</sup>

Zacher notes the rhetorical force of Jewish presence in Anglo-Saxon literature and the textual tradition in which Jewishness arises, such as in patristic literature. She writes that “although Anglo-Saxon authors looked to patristic and continental paradigms when writing about Jews and Jewish history, their writings were never simply imitative or derivative; on the contrary, poets, homilists, and historiographers wrote about Jews and Jewishness in original ways that constructed and reflected their own unique politico-theological experience.”<sup>425</sup> The presence of Jews and the construct of Jewishness was a malleable concept that afforded rhetorical and

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<sup>423</sup> For more on this idea, see Steven F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>424</sup> Andrew Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>425</sup> Samantha Zacher, “Introduction: The Jew in the Anglo-Saxon Imagination,” in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 6.



theological possibilities built within their absence for Anglo-Saxon Christians.<sup>426</sup> In that manner, the liminality of Anglo-Saxons is also extended to how Jewish presence was crafted through their textual aims; lacking an identity of their own due to the absence Jewish people in England, an identity was created for Jews in early medieval England that situated ambiguity and anxiety upon them as a way of resolving their own tensions as Anglo-Saxons regarding faith, place, and identity. Or, as Jeremy Cohen would say it regarding medieval Christians, “in order to meet their particular needs, Christian theology and exegesis created a Jew of their own... a hermeneutically and doctrinally crafted Jew.”<sup>427</sup> And in crafting this, Anglo-Saxons could elide the essence of Jewishness, and the Jewish community, to create Jews as serving a theological purpose for themselves and their spiritual and existential needs. The absence of Jewish people in Anglo-Saxon England prior to 1066 did not prohibit them from using Jewishness and constructing an embodied Jew, stemming from the Old Testament and other textual sources, as a way of forming a theological community through the adoption of Jewish salvation history. This will be evident later in this chapter in the way the patriarch Abraham is used within a Christian monastic context.

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<sup>426</sup> The malleable nature of Jewishness was also structured semantically. Stephen J. Harris notes the work of Bernhard Blumenkranz in an essay of his, where Blumenkranz outlines a rhetorical differentiation of Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew: “among medieval Christian writers there is a hierarchy of valuation in the terms, *Judaei* being pejorative, *Israelite* being relatively neutral, and *Hebrew* being laudatory. Particular Christian writers, such as Isidore of Seville, were very careful with their terminology, but others, such as Leo the Great, were not. The clarity of the distinctions in the terms is compromised by their use in two narratives: a narrative of physical kinship to Abraham and a narrative of spiritual kinship to Abraham. These two narratives were known as the *Ecclesia ex circumcisione* and the *Ecclesia ex gentibus* (as in Amalarius of Metz), or the *Israel of the flesh* and the *Israel of the spirit* (as in Bede). When searching for ‘the Jew’ in Anglo-Saxon England, then, we ought to be aware of both narratives and how they contextualize the three terms.” Stephen J. Harris, “Anglo-Saxons, Israelites, Hebrews, and Jews,” in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 27-8.

<sup>427</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

## Gildas, Bede, and Wulfstan: The Old Testament and Anglo-Saxon History

Gildas, a monastic living in the British Isles, wrote his *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*,<sup>428</sup> “On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain,” circa 540. In this text, he offers rebukes and critiques of the spiritual and religious observances and practices—or rather the lack thereof—concerning his contemporaries, and the results of lax orthodoxy and orthopraxy for the people of the British Isles. In the preface to this text, he makes his purpose clear:

In hac epistola quicquid deflendo potius quam declamando, vili licet stilo, tamen benigno, fuero prosecutus, ne quis me affectu cunctos spernentis omnibusve melioris, quippe qui commune bonorum dispendium malorumque cumulum lacrimosis querelis defleam, sed condolentis patriae incommoditatibus miseriisque eius ac remediis condelectantis edicturum putet.<sup>429</sup>

In his concern for the state of his earthly *patria*, Gildas complains about the two groups of people responsible for the deplorable state of the British Isles — the kings and the priests. Regarding the kings of Britain, Gildas notes that

reges habet Britannia, sed tyrannos; iudices habet, sed impios; saepe praedantes et concutientes, sed innocentes; vindicantes et patrocinantes, sed reos et latrones; quam plurimas coniuges habent, sed scortas et adulterantes; crebro iurantes, sed periurantes; voventes, sed continuo propemodum mentientes; belligerantes, sed civilia et iniusta bella agentes; per patriam quidem fures magnopere insectantes, sed eos qui secum ad mensam sedent non solum amantes sed et munerantes.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Hereafter referred to as *De excidio*.

<sup>429</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 87. “In this letter I shall deplore rather than denounce; my style may be worthless, but my intentions are kindly. What I have to deplore with mournful complaint is a general loss of good, a heaping up of bad. But no one should think anything I say is said out of scorn for humanity or from a conviction that I am superior to all men. No, I sympathise with my country’s difficulties and troubles, and rejoice in remedies to relieve them,” 13.

<sup>430</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 99. “Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but they are wicked. They often plunder and terrorize — the innocent; they defend and protect — the guilty and thieving; they have many wives — whores and adulteresses; they constantly swear — false oaths; they make vows — but almost at once tell lies; they wage wars — civil and unjust; they chase thieves energetically all over the country — but love and even reward the thieves who sit with them at table,” 29.

Gildas's invective against the kings of Britain continues, but even in this excerpt, it is clear that those who were set to rule are far from demonstrating and practicing principles that lead to the flourishing of an ethical country; from his perspective as a monk, it would signify godlessness, and the symptoms of that are a fractured country that is destroying itself physically and spiritually. And in that manner, the priests of Gildas's time fare no better in his esteem:

Sacerdotes habet Britannia, sed insipientes; quam plurimos ministros, sed impudentes; clericos, sed raptores subdolos; pastores, ut dicuntur, sed occisioni animarum lupos paratos, quippe non commoda plebi providentes, sed proprii plenitudinem ventris quarentes; ecclesiae domus habentes, sed turpis lucri gratia eas aduentes; populo docentes, sed praebendo pessima exempla, vitia malosque mores; raro sacrificantes et numquam puro corde inter altaria stantes; plebem ob peccata non corripientes, nimirum eadem agentes; praecepta Christi spernentes et suas libidines votis omnibus implere curantes.<sup>431</sup>

Again, the litany of crimes committed by the priests of Britain is much longer, but indicates the condition in which Britain finds itself in regarding those who are supposed to lead by example what a spiritual and godly life looks like. It is in these issues that Gildas situates his complaints, for the sake of recalling to his people right living to preserve the earthly *patria* of the British Isles. The subtext for this is rooted in the mimetic nature of a physical experience that mirrors transcendent and sacred possibilities. N. J. Higham notes that the *De excidio* has a moral purpose, which is stated in the opening lines, quoted above: first, to “rehearse and establish the ‘damages and afflictions’ suffered by the ‘fatherland;’” second, to “explain why those same ‘damages and afflictions’ had come about,” and to place responsibility on the appropriate parties;

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<sup>431</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 118. “Britain has priests, but they are fools; very many ministers, but they are shameless; clerics, but they are treacherous grabbers. They are called shepherds, but they are wolves all ready to slaughter souls. They do not look to the good of their people, but to the filling of their own bellies. They have church buildings, but go to them for the sake of base profit. They teach the people — but by giving them the worst examples, vice and bad character. Rarely do they sacrifice and never do they stand with pure heart amid the altars. They do not reprimand themselves. They make mock of the precepts of Christ, and all their prayers are directed to the fulfillment of their lustful desires,” 52.

third, to reproach those responsible, this was done with an “explanation that was couched entirely in terms of morality and obedience to God,” where Gildas complains against the moral condition of the responsible parties so that obedience to God could be restored; and fourth, proffering the idea that God would restore favor on the British through their repentance.<sup>432</sup>

Given the nature of Gildas’s rhetorical and spiritual aims, these objectives place Gildas’s interpretive framework within a liminal construct that centers the cohesiveness of a moral *communitas*, where the ideological expressions of religious practices dictate that everyone is theologically equal, and therefore susceptible to God’s judgement. The rite of passage that his contemporaries experience as a *communitas* is predicated on the transition of their place within the scope of God’s salvific history as those who were obedient to God, but then rebelled through negligence of observing God’s laws. Because of various transitions, liminality is encoded upon the British, and the Anglo-Saxons. Ian Wood has noted that the period of late antiquity, the early medieval era, and the end of the Viking raids “was a time of transition, or rather transitions” that resulted in the collapses of empires and the rise of nation states.<sup>433</sup> These transitions, especially those peculiar to the British Isles, place the entire group, and by extension the *patria*, as a site for divine wrath and instability that points to an eschatological doom. Because of this temporal and theological suspension, in the tension of being a people going through transitions, they are ambiguous until they communally cross thresholds that reinforce their identity. Higham notes that the transition of the *adventus Saxonum*, according to Gildas, was a result of the spiritual torpor that pervaded the British Isles. Higham writes that “borrowing his stance as a providential

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<sup>432</sup> N. J. Higham, *The English Conquest: Gildas and Britain in the fifth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>433</sup> I. N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

historian from the Bible and from Church histories, he conceived this Saxon domination not as a political and military problem, *per se*, but as a consequence of the breakdown between God and his people, as a consequence of their iniquity.<sup>434</sup> To do this, Gildas invokes the theological and scriptural imagination of the Old Testament to create a sense of divine history, and therefore divine trajectory. Gildas and other medieval authors with similar aims acted within a prophetic stance, as Robert Hanning writes regarding the role of the prophets of Israel:

The prophetic institution of Israel broke down distinctions between past and present, present and future, and caught up all history in a long, divinely-ordered arc through which God guided Israel. The prophets not only prophesied, they reminded: to them, what the Lord had done and continued to do was as important as what he could and would do in the future, for the Lord ruled over all time.<sup>435</sup>

Gildas wrote as a prophetic voice for the people and the whole of the *patria* of the British Isles, effectively interpreting the British people and landscape as within the promised covenant of Israel. This connection is clearly made in the beginning of Chapter 26, where he recounts the Battle of Badon Hill, and writes that “ex eo tempore nunc cives, nunc hostes, vincebant, ut in ista gente experiretur dominus solito more praesentem Israelem, utrum diligat eum an non.”<sup>436</sup>

Regarding the theological imagery of Israel placed upon the British by Gildas, A. C. Sutherland writes that “Gildas’s conception of the Britons as a latter-day house of Israel embraces both their privileged status as a chosen, that is a christian, people among heathen, and the Old Testament pattern of retributive justice, which interprets calamities as the hand of God chastising the

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<sup>434</sup> Higham, *The English Conquest*, 11.

<sup>435</sup> Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 6.

<sup>436</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 98. “From then on victory now went to our countrymen, now to their enemies: so that in this people the Lord could make a trial (as he tends to) of his latter-day Israel to see whether it loves him or not,” 28.

sinful.”<sup>437</sup> Therefore, Gildas imposes and crafts an identity that moves between Jewish and Christian. He does this especially in his *De excidio* in a lengthy discourse where the prophets of the Old Testament intervene in his work to speak to the condition of the Britain of his day:

Hic sane vel antea concludenda erat, uti ne amplius loqueretur os nostrum opera hominum, tam flebilis haec querulaque malorum aevi huius historia. Sed ne formidolosos nos aut lassos putent quonimus illud Isaianum infatigabiliter caveamus: ‘vae’, inquit, ‘qui dicunt bonum malum et malum bonum, ponentes tenebras in lucem et lucem in tenebras, amarum in dulce et dulce in amarum’, ‘qui videntes non vident et audientes non audiunt’, quorum cor crassa obtegatur quadam vitiorum nube, libet quid quantumque his supradictis lascivientibus insanisque satellitum Faraonis, quibus eius periturus mari provocatur exercitus strenue rubro, eorumque similibus quinque equis minarum prophetica inclamitent strictim edicere oracula, quibus veluti pulchro tegmine opusculi nostri molimen, ita ut ne certatim irruituris invidorum imbribus extet penetrabile, fidissime contegatur.<sup>438</sup>

Gildas presents a textual and theological link between Israel and Britain that presupposes a unity across spiritual conditions, that the sins Israel were judged for are the sins that have affected Britain. This link can be considered an intentional and rhetorical grafting of the British Isles into the landscape, politics, and spirituality of the people of Israel, but it could also be read as a sense of prefiguring that creates such a unified vision of God’s people, according to Gildas. Hanning notes that

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<sup>437</sup> A. C. Sutherland, “The Imagery of Gildas’s *De Excidio Britanniae*,” in *Gildas: New Approaches*, eds. Michael Lapidge and David Dumville (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1984), 159.

<sup>438</sup> Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 105. “Here, or even earlier, I should have finished this tearful history, this complaint on the evils of the age, so that my lips should not any longer have to speak of the actions of men. But in case people should think me afraid or tired of constantly heeding the warning of Isaiah: ‘Woe to those who say good is bad and bad good, putting darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter’, who ‘seeing do not see and hearing do not hear’, whose heart is veiled in a thick cloud of vices, I want to give a summary of the threats uttered by the oracles of the prophets against these five mad and debauched horses from the retinue of Pharaoh which actively lure his army to ruin in the Red Sea, and against those like them. These oracles will form a reliable and beautiful covering for the endeavour of my little work, to protect it from rain-showers of the hostile that will compete to beat upon it,” 36.

as a way of linking landmarks in the history of Israel to later actions of divine providence, typology was not original with Christian commentators on the Old Testament; but it was quickly adopted by the early ecclesiastical communities as a basis for preaching, teaching and controversy... it enabled the Christian exegete to establish not only God's control over history, but also the absolute uniqueness of Christ as the center of history.<sup>439</sup>

Rhetorically, Gildas does not appear to use typology overtly as a method for interpreting the Old Testament scriptures in light of the New Testament; he makes clear transitions from one to the other to build his argument according to his aims, and establishes a clear hermeneutic that creates a correspondence between salvific history and his contemporary issues. Regarding this, Andrew Scheil writes that in

Gildas's hermeneutic, the Old Testament functions as a mirror: "Ista ego multa alia veluti speculum quoddam vitae nostrae in scripturis veteribus intuens" [I gazed on these things and many others in the Old Testament as though a mirror reflecting on our own life]... Driven by this mimetic imperative, history seems to repeat itself, and Gildas cannot help but compare British events with the Old Testament turmoil of the Jews.<sup>440</sup>

This mirroring situates the British and the Anglo-Saxons as perpetually liminal; the recounting of the history of the Old Testament is a continual reliving of salvation history. It is more than reenactment, and more than remembrance, but a cyclical movement that crosses spatio-temporal acts and processes, where the moment of the past is perpetually relived in the present.

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* also demonstrates ways in which the Old Testament was imagined and used for their own rhetorical and spiritual purposes, the meaning it created for Anglo-Saxons, and shows how Anglo-Saxons might have imagined themselves. Daniel

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<sup>439</sup> Hanning, *The Vision of History*, 7.

<sup>440</sup> Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel*, 144.

Anlezark notes that Bede, writing within a patristic exegetical tradition, “self-consciously wrote for a young church at a crucial stage in its development, in the generations after conversion... Bede provides an insight into what those clergy whose role was to consolidate Christian belief in Northumbria were supposed to be thinking.”<sup>441</sup> To that end, Anlezark writes that for something as specific as the narrative of the Flood in Genesis, that “Anglo-Saxons’ sense of themselves as participants in a universal history which took the Bible as authoritative and normative, not only in matters of faith and morals, but also—and especially in the case of Genesis—as defining the true origin and, from an etiological and mythic perspective, the ultimate purpose of the world.”<sup>442</sup> Rowan Williams succinctly points to the culture and environment in which the *Ecclesiastical History* was written that provided this mythic etiology and sacred purpose, saying that between the fifth and eighth centuries, the social and political climate of Western Europe had shifted considerably with changes in ecclesiastical authority. Williams writes that in this time,

Rome was now above all the city in which the Pope resided, the focus of Church life in a Europe where Christianity was an expanding and massively energetic force. The papacy might not be a political power in the conventional sense, but—even more than the Eastern empire—it was the authoritative resource for images and ideas through which to understand what was happening in and to the emerging kingdoms of the West. The Church offered these new kingdoms a repertoire of stories against which they could measure themselves, a sense of being part of an unfolding universal drama, the possibility of establishing stable authority grounded in the law of God and the blessing of God’s agents on earth.

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<sup>441</sup> Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>442</sup> Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 13.



The peoples, the *gentes*, of Europe could clothe themselves in the dignity of the chosen people of God.<sup>443</sup>

This sense of universal drama, or what could be called a divine heritage, is present in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Use of this sacred repertoire allowed Bede to create and foreground the English into a sacramental literary history of that people, and grafted them into the larger textual witness of the scriptures. As a link to seeing how patristic thought was used, Bede enacts an interpretation and of events that allowed for the possibility to construct what it meant to be an Anglo-Saxon Christian, and the implications of that for the future.<sup>444</sup> In short, Bede's sense of patristic literary culture and historical events demonstrates a methodology in creating and reifying what it meant for them to be an exile, and to seek a citizenship in heaven. To do this, Bede looks to the past—both Anglo-Saxon and biblical narrative—to think about the future. Dominic Janes writes that in terms of exegesis in the Bede's period, the Bible was not understood “simply as literal description, but also as a succession of spiritual allegories. The diverse texts of the Christian past were interpreted according to a coherent system of symbolism, so uniting them. The resulting elision of time and the creation of universal truths and messages can be seen all through late antique and early medieval exegesis.”<sup>445</sup> The spiritual environment

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<sup>443</sup> Rowan Williams and Benedicta Ward, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: An Introduction and Selection* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012): 1-2. Williams is a noted scholar of theology and was the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury from 2002-2012. While this is an introductory text for the study of Bede, his own introduction to the volume is intended to perform the work of demonstrating how Bede participates in the development of English identity.

<sup>444</sup> For example, in reference to the fall of Rome by the Goths, Bede shifted in his way of interpreting that event between his texts *On the Reckoning of Time* and the *Ecclesiastical History*, where Rome's fall gained more significance in the latter. See M.R. Godden, “The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: rewriting the sack of Rome,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 47-68.

<sup>445</sup> Dominic Janes, “The world and its past as Christian allegory in the early Middle ages” in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 103-4.

and patristic heritage found in Anglo-Saxon England conditions the way texts are used to impose salvation history onto other narratives, and from there create other ways of reading scripture and history that reifies the liminal nature of the Anglo-Saxon Christian.

This way of reading scripture is in the *Ecclesiastical History*, I.15, when Bede writes about the *adventus Saxonum*, the migration of the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes into Britain.

Nicholas Howe writes that the Anglo-Saxons post-Conquest created narratives that reinforced their past experiences in light of their present identity:

the Anglo-Saxons developed a myth of migration that captured the interplay between their geography and history. As they understood, the movement from continental origins to island home embodied the movement from past to present. By evoking the geography of the northern world, the myth translated chronology into a spatial pattern.<sup>446</sup>

As they translated and interpreted their movement within a spatial pattern, Anglo-Saxons also interpreted this experience within the scope of divine history. And given the use of Old Testament narrative within Anglo-Saxon sources before 1066, it is clear that they enacted ideas of myth, migration, and embodiment of divine history pre-Norman Conquest. The interplay between geography and natural history becomes intersected with salvific history, where the history of the chosen people of God became their history too, so that the Old Testament becomes a mimetic source for contextualizing their own experiences.

Bede is a significant figure in crafting this sense of divine narrative. In I.14 of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede narrates that as the Picts relented in their invasions among the Britons, there was cultural affluence due to their crops, which then led to general conditions of immorality between both laity and ordained because of their ease in life. They were then

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<sup>446</sup> Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 34.

subjected to plague and attacks from the north, but they still did not repent from their spiritual death. To rebuff the attacks, their king Vortigern had invited the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes to the island for the purpose of holding back the Picts, and Bede suggests that “quod Domini nutu dispositum esse constat, ut ueniret contra inprobos malum, sicut euidentius rerum exitus probauit.”<sup>447</sup> The tribes fought back the enemies of the Britons, and coexisted well enough, only until they increased in number on the island: “Non mora ego, confluentibus certatim in insulam gentium memoratarum cateruis, grandescere populus coepit aduenarum, ita ut ipsis quoque qui eos aduocauerant indigenis essent terrori.”<sup>448</sup> Despite the fact that Bede says these groups were “called,” or invited, the Britons were terrified at the Angles and Picts joining forces, who in turn began extorting the Britons for resources, with the alternative that the Angles and Picts would bring their fury upon them. Bede records that the threats of the Angles and Picts were certainly committed, but he interprets the moment through the lens of Old Testament history:

Siquidem, ut breuiter dicam, accensus manibus paganorum ignis iustas de sceleribus populi Dei ultiones expetiit, non illius impar qui quondam a Chaldaeis succensus Hierosolymorum moenia, immo aedificia cuncta consumpsit. Sic enim et hic agente impio uictore, immo disponente iusto Iudice, proximas quasque ciuitates agrosque depopulans, ab orientali mari usque ad occidentale nullo prohibente suum continuauit incendium, totamque prope insulae pereuntis superficiem obtexit.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, I.14, 48. “As events plainly showed, this was ordained by the will of God so that evil might fall upon those miscreants,” 49.

<sup>448</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, I.15, 52. “It was not long before hordes of these peoples eagerly crowded into the island and the number of foreigners began to increase to such an extent that they became a source of terror to the natives who called them in,” 53.

<sup>449</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, I.15, 52. “To put it briefly, the fire kindled by the hands of the heathen executed the just vengeance of God on the nation for its crimes. It was not unlike that fire once kindled by the Chaldeans which consumed the walls of and all the buildings of Jerusalem. So here in Britain the just Judge ordained that the fire of their brutal conquerors should ravage all the neighbouring cities and countryside from the east to the western sea, and burn on, with no one to hinder it, until it covered almost the whole face of the doomed island,” 53.

The reference to the Chaldeans stems from the book of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, chapter 52, where it records Nebuchadnezzar invading Judah, breaking through the walls of Jerusalem, destroying the Temple, and laying waste to the city. The catalyst for this siege was that Nebuchadnezzar had placed Zedekiah as a king of Judah, but then Zedekiah formed an alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt: “Et disrupta est civitas et omnes viri bellatores fugerunt et exierunt de civitate nocte per viam portae quae est inter duos muros et ducti ad hortum regis Chaldeis obsidentibus urbem in gyro et abierunt per viam quae ducit heremum.”<sup>450</sup> This moment is echoed in Bede’s account of the Angles and Picts terrorizing the Britons, where “alii transmarinas regiones dolentes petebant; alii perstantes in patria trepidi pauperem uitam in montibus siluis uel rupibus arduis suspecta semper mente agebant.”<sup>451</sup> The intertext of scripture of the Chaldeans destroying the city in the *Ecclesiastical History* acts as an interpretive lens for understanding the history of the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons within a theological context, and shows the ways in which a place subject to spatio-temporal limits becomes unstable and susceptible to sin and destruction. It is a corollary for comprehending the events involving the Angles and the Picts, so that it becomes a divine narrative, and then the history of God’s chosen people, Israel, becomes subsumed and later appropriated for the Anglo-Saxons, invoking the idea

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<sup>450</sup> Jeremiah 52:7. Douay-Rheims: “the city was broken up, and the men of war fled, and went out of the city in the night by the way of the gate that is between the two walls, and leadeth to the king’s garden, (the Chaldeans besieging the city round about,) and they went by the way that leadeth to the wilderness.”

<sup>451</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, I.15, 52. “Some fled sorrowfully to lands beyond the sea, while others remained in their own land and led a wretched existence, always in fear and dread, among the mountains and precipitous rocks,” 53.

that they are the New Israel.<sup>452</sup> The initial arrival of the Angles and the Saxons to the British Isles, however, is clearly not seen as favorable. While they are seen as God's agents of wrath, neither Gildas nor Bede situate the *adventus Saxonum* as an event that shows them in a positive light; the possibilities for them to be interpreted as the New Israel stem from ideological matrices of interpretation and reinterpretation in the act of rewriting their communal and historical narrative. Nicholas Howe writes that

although Bede did not see the migration as a military or political event, he did believe it crucial for the history of his people and envisioned it through the terms of a conversion narrative. The coming of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes was for him, as well as for those who read his *Historia*, a divinely inspired journey like the Exodus of the Israelites. He recognized that migration was the necessary precondition for Gregory's apostolic mission to the island.<sup>453</sup>

In turn, later, the Anglo-Saxons become a chosen people, with a divine narrative of wandering, possession, dispossession. The motif of possession and dispossession is critical for Anglo-Saxons, as a people who experienced both, but then interpreted what both might mean for them as they placed themselves within salvation history and searching for a land of promise that converts land and people. In reference to Augustine's mission to Canterbury and the conversion of the Angles, Nicholas Howe writes that

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<sup>452</sup> In considering the relationship between Anglo-Saxon and being the New Israel, Zacher writes that "this configuration of England as the New Israel had idiosyncratic rhetorical force in the late thirteenth century. Numerous examples of this same trope had appeared much earlier, however, in Anglo-Saxon texts and culture as authors began to imagine their own *communitas* (defined in different ways in different historical periods) as the New Israel. Thus, in his eighth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the Venerable Bede used the trope of chosenness to establish his own *gens Anglorum* as the New Israel, united under one church. Bede's application of the concept both adopted and broke with Paul's understanding of Christian universalism: although Bede's imagined community was ecclesiastical (not political), his concept of unity pertained to Britain, not a pan-Germanic or pan-Christian ideal. This application changed and became increasingly political and 'Anglo-centric' (in both senses of the word) in subsequent periods as the nascent concept of 'nation' began to take shape." Zacher, "Introduction," 12.

<sup>453</sup> Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 5.

imagining Britain as Canaan is to place its landscape in Old Testament history, and that means to acknowledge that the occupation of the island was also an act of dispossession. For the promised land can only be defined as “promised” if those who once lived in it have been unworthy must be driven out. Anglo-Saxon writers did not know the luxury of an island without inhabitants; their story of place had always to deal with the intertwined acts of possession and dispossession, both as historical fact and as a future possibility.<sup>454</sup>

Walter Goffart suggests that the *Ecclesiastical History* “does not look as though it were a work of advocacy. It is about the past and effectively ends many years before the time of writing.”<sup>455</sup> I disagree that it is simply about the past. The *Ecclesiastical History*, translated from Latin into the vernacular, was influential for Anglo-Saxons in understanding their past, and in creating a future rooted in an eschatological hope found in scripture. Bede’s hagiographical account of the history of the Angles and the Picts performs a complex task that offers a history of the church in the British Isles. Bede spatially centers the geography of Britain, and strengthens the identity of the English people in terms of nation and religion, and creates a synthesis between both that marks a

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<sup>454</sup> Nicholas Howe, “The Landscapes of Anglo-Saxon England: Inherited, Invented, Imagined,” in *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe*, eds. Nicholas Howe and Michael Wolfe (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 92-3.

<sup>455</sup> Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 253.

coherent theological unit predicated on a spiritual identity that results in them becoming a sacred community.<sup>456</sup>

Bede's reference to the Chaldeans places a sacred relationship upon the British, where their relation to God, whether in terms of favor or wrath, is a continuation of salvation history. This means that what had happened before Bede's time, and the centuries following Bede and the events and literature created after him, could be understood within this framework too. Diane Speed writes that Bede's

understanding of the world would probably have enabled him to take such events on board without difficulty: although the *History* obviously records events of linear time, as it is itself an event in linear time, it simultaneously locates itself and other events in non-dimensional eternity, all equally present to the eye of the

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<sup>456</sup> Up until this point in my dissertation, the idea of citizenship has been in the context of a theological possibility, presenting a contrast in a physical, spatial place and identity that was rooted in the sacred. The presented binary was between the scope of earth and heaven. The term nation in this context is difficult to discuss, and perhaps not wholly applicable, at least in the case of modern ideas of nationhood. In Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (London: Verso, 2006), the political scientist Anderson has written that a nation is "an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign," (6). He goes on to say that it is imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion," (6). Anderson then defines limited as "even the largest of [nations], encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet," (7). A nation is "sovereign because the concept was born in an age which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm," (7), and it is "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship," (7). In Jennifer Neville, "History, Poetry, and 'National' Identity in Anglo-Saxon England and the Carolingian Empire," in *Germanic Texts and Latin Models: Medieval Reconstructions*, eds. K. E. Olsen, Antonia Harbus, and T. Hofstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), Neville uses Anderson's theory of nationhood, and specifically the term "imagined community" to discuss medieval analogs of the experience of people forming and operating within a collective identity that parallel more modern constructs. Neville concludes that "the fiction of universal participation is part of nationalism's rhetorical strategy for gaining authority," (126). I argue that aspects of Anderson's concepts do apply, and some will not. For the sake of this dissertation, Anderson's sense of an imagined community can certainly be applied within a theological context. For another approach on English identity, see John Hines, "The Becoming of the English: Identity, Material Culture and Language in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994): 49-59.

creator. This textual simultaneity, I suggest, imitates, or mimes, the actual simultaneity which is the very essence of eternity.<sup>457</sup>

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* offers the momentum of salvation for a people anxious to understand their place as they stand between earth and heaven, and on the threshold of the sacred and transcendent as a liminal people, on the shores of insular landscape and waiting to enter their heavenly *epel*. And again, as seen in Anglo-Saxon hagiography, wrath and promise are inextricably linked in the insular Christian experience, and carries a multivalence of meanings dependent on context. In this sense, wrath is showered on the Britons for their supposed lax morality and spiritual rebellion in invoking the help of the identifiable "Other," the alien and strangers to ward off their enemies. This carries traces of how the identity of the stranger can be dangerous in both secular and spiritual contexts.

Bede and Gildas were not the only ones to make this move of placing a biblical sense of God's wrath onto the English. Archbishop Wulfstan of York wrote numerous homilies that speak to a spiritual anxiety of divine penalty due to negligence in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Wulfstan looks to the history and people of Israel in the Old Testament to accomplish a message of spiritual vigilance in the wake of moral and somatic destruction in his homily *Be godcundre warnunge*, "On Divine Admonishment": "Leofan men, utan spyrian be bocan georne 7 gelome hwæt þa geforan ða þe God lufedon 7 Godes lage heoldan, 7 hwæt þa geforan ða þe God gremedon 7 Godes lage bræcan, 7 warnian us be swylcan."<sup>458</sup> Wulfstan then goes on to relate the

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<sup>457</sup> Diane Speed, "Bede's creation of a nation in his *Ecclesiastical History*," *Parergon* 10, no. 2 (1992): 139-40.

<sup>458</sup> Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 251. "Dearly beloved, let us search through the Bible zealously and often for what they obtained who loved God and observed God's law, and what they obtained who enraged God and broke God's law, and take warning for us." Translation my own.



giving of the law to Moses as recorded in Leviticus 26. If the people of God walk in the precepts of the Lord, they will experience favor, power, and privilege in areas such as weather and agricultural provision, military prowess, and cultural stability and peace:

Dabo vobis pluvias temporibus suis, et terra gignet germen suum et pomis arbores replebuntur. Adprehendet messium tritura vindemiam et vindemia occupabit sementem; et comedetis panem vestrum in saturitatem et absque pavore habitbitis in terra vestra. Dabo pacem finibus vestris dormietis et non erit qui exterreat. Auferam malas bestias et gladius non transibit terminos vestros. Persequemini inimicos vestros et corruent coram vobis. Persequenter quinque de vestris centum alienos et centum ex vobis decem milia cadent inimici vestri in conspectu vestro gladio. Respiciam vos et crescere faciam multiplicabimini et firmabo pactum meum vobiscum.<sup>459</sup>

The space in which this admonishment was situated was rooted in a very specific time, for a particular group of people. Wulfstan openly expands the theological possibilities of this admonishment to Moses and God's people to become a prefiguring of a Christian covenant with God for the exercise of obedient orthopraxy. God's provision is not just in terms of abundance, but it is also centered in the role that the land plays for Moses and his people. The ground will be fruitful, and it will be inhabited by its rightful possessors, while the alien, or the inimical stranger is driven away. This affords the interpretive possibility of the typological and mimetic nature of the Old Testament to reflect the eschatological hope of a permanent, stable, and blessed home for Israel, and therefore by extension Anglo-Saxons.

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<sup>459</sup> Vulgate text, Leviticus 26:3-9. Douay-Rheims: "I will give you rain in due seasons. And the ground shall bring forth its increase: and the trees shall be filled with fruit. The threshing of your harvest shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land without fear. I will give peace in your coasts: you shall sleep, and there shall be none to make you afraid. I will take away evil beasts: and the sword shall not pass through your quarters. You shall pursue your enemies: and they shall fall before you. Five of yours shall pursue a hundred others: and a hundred of you ten thousand. Your enemies shall before you by the sword. I will look on you, and make you increase: you shall be multiplied, and I will establish my covenant with you."

In being a diligent homilist, Wulfstan also provides the negative admonishment for spiritual negligence, as given to Moses by God, paraphrasing the following portion of Leviticus 26. As anticipated, the obverse becomes true for those who have voiced their assent to following God, but then act in rebellion or forgetfulness of God's precepts:

Si autem non audieritis me neque feceritis precepta mea, constituam in uos inopiam, famem, et pestem, et animam uestram tabescentem faciam, et persequenter uos inimici uestri, et fugietis nullo persequente; et ponam uobis celum ferreum et terram eream, et erit uacuum uirtus uestra. Terra non dabit fructum suum, et arbores agri uestri non dabunt fructus suos. Adducam super uos gladium, et trademini in manus inimicorum uestrorum; et erit terra uirtus deserta, et ciuitates uestre destructe. Et cum deserta fuerit terra propter peccata populi, et ipsi qui remanserint tabescentes pronuntiabunt peccata sua et peccata patrum suorum quoniam despexerunt me et precepta mea spreuerunt.<sup>460</sup>

Wulfstan's appropriation of the blessings and curses of Israel's covenant with God marks a significant appeal to concepts of place, possession, and provision for Anglo-Saxons in respect to landscape. Nicholas Howe asserts that Anglo-Saxons did not create moral binaries of "the innocence of landscape and the corruption of civilization. The very powerful and sustaining binary they did embrace, between the transience of this loaned, earthly life and the permanence of the heavenly home, did affect the ways in which they imagined the landscape."<sup>461</sup> Howe's assertion can be found in Wulfstan's admonishment to the Anglo-Saxons. The conversion of the

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<sup>460</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 252. "If, however, you do not hearken to me nor fulfill my commandments, I shall inflict poverty, hunger, and pestilence upon you, and I shall make your lives a waste, and your enemies will persecute you, and you shall flee when no man pursueth you; and I will make to you the heaven above as iron, and the earth as brass, and all your strength shall be in vain. The ground shall not bring forth her increase, nor the trees of the field yield their fruit. I will bring in upon you the sword and you shall be delivered into the hands of your enemies, and your land shall be desolate and your cities destroyed. And when the land is made desolate because of the sins of the people and those who remain are wasting away, they shall confess their sins and the sins of their fathers whereby they despised me and despised my commandments." Translation from Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan*, 174. Bethurum notes that "constituam... suos" closely corresponds to Deuteronomy 28: 20-1, (355).

<sup>461</sup> Howe, "The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England," 92.

land becoming a *locus horribilis*, and turning creation inimical to life is emblematic of deprivation of comforts and provision that one encounters through. One might recall the condition imposed on humanity in Genesis 3:17-18 through the transgression of Adam and Eve,<sup>462</sup> as noted in Bede's commentary *On Genesis*: "For by the sin of man the earth was cursed, so that it gave birth to thorns, not in order that the earth itself, which is without sense, would feel the punishments, but so that it should put the crime of human sin always before men's eyes, whereby they should from time to time be reminded to turn away from sins, and toward the commands of God."<sup>463</sup> The effects of evil come upon the land through pestilence and desolation, so that the corruption of people cultivates divine wrath upon the landscape. Bede further interprets God's curse with regards to plant life, saying that

poisonous plants were created for the punishment and for the torment of mortals. And it should be noted in regard to sin that we became mortals after sin. Men are mocked by barren trees, so that they may understand how shameful it is to be without the fruit of good works in the field of God, that is, in the Church, and so that they may fear that God may forsake them, because they neglect the barren trees in their fields and do not apply any cultivation to them.<sup>464</sup>

Bede sees the curses upon humanity as a tool for bringing humanity to repentance; the covenant between God and humanity made with Moses in Leviticus is a revisitation of this condition of blessings and curses predicated on orthopraxy in following God. The Old Testament text for Anglo-Saxons functions as a way of showing how life mimics spiritual, eternal conditions.

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<sup>462</sup> Vulgate: "Adam vero dixit quia audisti vocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de ligno quo praeceperam tibi ne comederes maledicta terra in opere tuo in laboribus comedes eam cunctis diebus vitae tuae. Spinās et tribulos germinabit tibi et comedes herbas terrae." Douay-Rheims: "And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou eat the herbs of the earth."

<sup>463</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 135.

<sup>464</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 135.

Wulfstan continues this trajectory, and uses the narrative of the Old Testament to show the precarity of existence apart from God, with the landscape reacting as a result of disobedience. This reflects the spiritual consequence of rebellion, and mirrors the very real consequence of invasion from physical enemies, which is destruction and dispossession. For Anglo-Saxons, the heavens becoming iron and the earth becoming brass is essentially an act of suppression, enclosing them in between what seemed to be potentially unlimited space. The earth yields nothing for them, and the heavens are inaccessible. Nicholas Howe notes that regarding the purpose of charters and landscape markers in determining boundaries, the question becomes “what is mine and what is not mine?”<sup>465</sup> Wulfstan’s homily shows that such a question becomes meaningless when the land you once had becomes desolate and the possession of the alien, making you a stranger in the land you once knew. As Anglo-Saxons were once the alien and then the possessor, they could become dispossessed and made strangers again. The implications of this for Anglo-Saxons were not limited to their present, but in this and other sermons, there was an eschatological concern as well.

Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* begins with a dire message: “Leofan men, gecnawað þæt soð is: þeos world is on ofste, 7 hit nealæð þam ende, 7 þi hit is on worlde a swa lengc swa wirse; 7 swa hit sceal nyde ær Antecristes tocyme yfelian swiðe.”<sup>466</sup> Nicholas Howe discusses

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<sup>465</sup> Howe, “The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England,” 102.

<sup>466</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 261. “Beloved men, know that which is true: this world is in haste, and it is near the end, and things in this world are ever long and worse; and it must needed that it is very evil before the Antichrist arrives.” Translation my own. The Antichrist is a significant symbol and figure for a number of Wulfstan’s homilies. For more on Wulfstan and his homilies regarding the Antichrist and eschatology, see Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 107-16; the article Ariane Lainé, “L’antéchrist dans les homélies eschatologiques de Wulfstan: un mal du siècle,” *Réflexions Historiques* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 173-87; and Joyce Tally Lianorons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 43-74.

Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, and its inherent eschatology: "Wulfstan artfully shapes his *Sermo* to move toward an inevitable conclusion: If the English do not repent and reform, they will know a future more horrifying than anything they have yet to endure or imagine in this world."<sup>467</sup> This sense of repentance and conversion is both individual and corporal, which presents the communal implications of faith, and what binds the Anglo-Saxons together.

Catherine Cubitt writes "early medieval religious thinkers like Bede and Wulfstan were perhaps less concerned with the question of evil, but rather with that of sin — the unfailing propensity of man to disobey God and be blind to the need to forgo worldly pleasures to win eternal joy."<sup>468</sup>

This is evident in Wulfstan's homiletic style. Wulfstan's homiletic fervency is not as methodologically aligned with exegetical tradition, although he does employ patristic sources and biblical explication;<sup>469</sup> rather, his purpose in preaching is to expand and extend what it means to be a moral person in the face of Viking invasions and the turn of the millennium, of which the mix constituted significant trauma and anxiety, and certainly ushered a need for the creation of spiritual meaning and moral urgency.<sup>470</sup> Such a condition gives rise to a reorientation of what it means to inhabit a particular landscape, and the concomitant tension of retaining agency and identity in a world that is inimical to one's place and how precarious the role of

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<sup>467</sup> Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 9.

<sup>468</sup> Catherine Cubitt, "Apocalyptic and Eschatological Thought in England around the Year 1000," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (2015): 30.

<sup>469</sup> "Lest the reader be misled by the fact that Wulfstan characteristically deletes the niceties of biblical explications from his sources, it may be well to stress the fact that he does not reject the exegetical tradition. It is, simply, irrelevant to his parenetic, or hortatory purposes, and its reflections are omitted lest they get in the way." Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 21.

<sup>470</sup> For more on the historical and situational context of Wulfstan's preaching, see Mary P. Richards, "Wulfstan and the Millennium" in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto, 41-48 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

possession is, where other peoples and their actions can signify the visitation of God's wrath. Wulfstan's eschatological framework is inclusive of the events that affected the Anglo-Saxons, and offers a lens for viewing their spiritual future regarding a heavenly place. If the world is in haste, and near its end, as Wulfstan preaches, then that necessitates active preparation for a new world that will be inhabited.

Wulfstan provides a historical framework for their contemporary problems, invoking Gildas and his *De excidio* to center his argument:

An þeodwita wæs on Brytta tidum Gildas hatte. Se awrat be heora misdædum hu hy mid heora synnum swa oferlice swyþe God gegræmedan þæt he let æt Engla here heora eard gewinnan 7 Brytta dugeþe fordon mid ealle.<sup>471</sup>

The significance of referencing Gildas and his *De excidio* in this sermon becomes critical when a term used to categorize who Gildas was is discussed, that of a *þeodwita*. Nicholas Howe offers further context for why this matters:

The usual translation of 'historian' (*B-T*, *þeodwita*, I1b) suggests that the *þeodwita* is concerned with the study of the past. Yet neither word in the compound refers to past time; understood literally, it names the figure who knows (*wita*) about a people (*þeod*). The distinction is crucial. Historians are committed to an objective study of the past, and if they choose to distort it from motives of ideology or nationalism they have, to our minds, betrayed their discipline. By contrast, the *þeodwita* owes allegiance to a communal group, the *þeod*, and relates its past to give its members some sense of cohesion or rouse them to action.<sup>472</sup>

Gildas crafted a sense of history where divinity was grafted on to it, and to create a meaningful sense of belonging and purpose — to remind them of their collective sense of a particular group

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<sup>471</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 274. "There was a historian in the time of the British called Gildas. He wrote about their misdeeds, and how they with their sins angered God so much that he finally allowed the army of the English to take their land and destroy the British entirely." Translation my own.

<sup>472</sup> Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 10.

of people, to exhort them to communal orthodox behavior, and to establish a hierarchy of knowledge about the past. Because of this context, the exigency in which the texts and rhetoric of Gildas, Bede, and Wulfstan are beholden to is to fend off that lack of communal cohesion, and to avoid divine retribution, which can mean destruction, but can also mean communal exile, deprivation of comforts, and left to follow a wandering path, to recall the fate of some who fled Jerusalem at its siege as a foretaste of eschatological judgment. The agency of the British becomes functionally abstract as they piece together their communal narrative. Howe argues is that this is a profoundly constructed concept for the Anglo-Saxons that constitutes the history a people built upon what is termed as the migration myth. Essentially, the construction of the *adventus Saxonum* contributes to a shared, communal identity, and provides the framework for their culture, history, and theology. The migration myth offers a way for Anglo-Saxon people to interject themselves into a divine trajectory of expulsion, wandering, and looking for the salvation of their people.<sup>473</sup> By constructing what their history is, they can in that manner forge their future by linking their identity with those who have experienced exile and wandering. Essentially, Anglo-Saxons were capable of creating a profound identity by crafting a history and narrative that aligns with, yet also elides its Jewish sources.

Gildas, Bede, and Wulfstan facilitated a methodology for constructing a liminal identity that was integrated into the communal experience of Old Testament salvation history and eschatological hope. Through conversion to Christianity, the idea of becoming a people that are

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<sup>473</sup> For example, Nicholas Howe has argued that the poetic texts *Exodus* and *Beowulf* “display a deeply absorbed sense of this myth as they portray the geographical circumstances and religious history of the Anglo-Saxons.” Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 2-3. This argument is developed further by Paul Battles to also include *Genesis A*: “Like *Exodus* and *Beowulf*, *Genesis A* does not allude specifically to the Germanic tribes’ movement to England, but the poem’s depiction of migrating biblical peoples owes much to the Anglo-Saxon migration myth.” Paul Battles, “*Genesis A* and the Anglo-Saxon ‘migration myth,’” *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2000): 44.

subjected to the conditions of the divine and the hope of eschatological promise becomes a palimpsest where other expressions of allegiance are written over what was once there. This constitutes an exchange that is commensurate with conversion — the exchange of citizenship or nationhood, in the sense they understood it, and invoking a citizenship of heaven that negates their previous identity as they cross a theological threshold. But in as much as they place themselves within this identity, it cannot be realized until they effectively reach their heavenly country in their death. Because of this, they are a perpetually liminal people, placed in between spatial and temporal matrices that compel them to gaze upward while within a vertical landscape that intends to keep them grounded. The Old Testament in the Anglo-Saxon imagination offers the possibility to construct and reconstruct what it means to invoke identity and purpose within a sacred narrative. Their identity was not rooted in their land or their language, but in their hope for a spiritual home. In that manner, Abraham becomes an important symbol of this hope for Anglo-Saxons.

### **“Our patriarch Abraham”: Anglo-Saxons and Abraham as a Monastic Exemplum**

Genesis 12:1 is where Abraham meaningfully enters the narrative of Old Testament history with his call from God to leave his home and look for a land of promise: “Dixit autem Dominus ad Abram egredere de terra tua et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui in terram quam monstrabo tibi.”<sup>474</sup> In his exegesis of this passage, Bede writes that

Now [Abram] is ordered by the Lord to set aside his intention of returning to Chaldea and to remove himself both mentally and physically from dwelling in Mesopotamia, so that, after leaving the country in which the city of pride was built and destroyed by the judgment of the Lord, he might come into the land in which he was to receive the grace

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<sup>474</sup> Douay-Rheims: “And the Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and go out of thy father’s house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.”



of the divine blessing, and beget as the reward of his faith and obedience a new and better progeny.<sup>475</sup>

This call situates promise and hope into the middle of living a life dictated by the sacred, where renouncing your country, and entering into wandering and exile is the ascetic means by which one enters into a place of promise and provision, and acts as a patriarch, or a “father,” to those who will follow in his footsteps. Jon D. Levenson writes that

in the Jewish tradition, Abraham is known as *’Avraham ’Avinu*, “Our Father Abraham.” As the father of the Jewish people, he is not simply their biological progenitor (and, as the tradition would it, the father of all who have converted to Judaism as well); he is also the founder of Judaism itself—the first Jew, as it were—and the man whose life in some mysterious ways pre-enacts the experiences of the Jewish people, who are his descendants and who are to walk in trails he blazed.<sup>476</sup>

When Anglo-Saxon Christians claim Abraham as their father too, then they seemingly intend to walk the trails he set for the Jewish people, in terms of space and theological promise. By embracing deprivation, and entering into the status of a holy exile, Abraham embodies what it means to be a threshold person, moving across geographic boundaries that reflect the journey to a heavenly country. When Anglo-Saxons call Abraham “father,” then they impose that threshold status on themselves too, for the hope of the eschatological home. For the medieval Christian, Abraham represents this promise, where the hope and trajectory of Israel as a people becomes the hope and trajectory of the Anglo-Saxons and later medieval Christians, as children of Abraham. Daniel Anlezark writes that

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<sup>475</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 245.

<sup>476</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 3.

by identifying themselves as Abraham's children, Anglo-Saxon Christians believed themselves to be the heirs to the promises made to him by God. This belief incorporated them into a tradition of reading the Jewish scriptures as texts with Christian meaning, a process initiated by the apostle Paul, and given an influential theoretical articulation by Augustine of Hippo, among other patristic authors.<sup>477</sup>

This is exemplified in the canon of the mass, where the elements of bread and wine become consecrated into the substance of Christ's body and blood, recalling Abraham's sacrifice to Melchizedek from Genesis 14:18-20: "upon which may you [God] deign to look with favor, and to accept them just as you deigned to accept the offering of your servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and the holy sacrifice and immaculate oblation offered to you by your high priest Melchisedech."<sup>478</sup> The gift presented to the high priest Melchizedek in Abraham's wandering is interpreted as a prefiguring of the Eucharist, where offerings and sacrifices are offered perpetually in heaven and earth. This prefiguring would not have been possible, unless it were for Abraham's obedience in self-exile. In commenting on Abraham's obedience to God and leaving his country, Bede writes that

it is certain that the fact that he went out from his country and from his kindred and from the house of his father when he was commanded to do so should be imitated by all the sons of that promise, among whom we too are included. Certainly we go out from our country when we renounce the pleasures of the flesh, from our kindred when we strive to strip ourselves of all the vices with which we were born (insofar as this is possible for men!), and from the house of our father when we struggle out of love for the heavenly life to abandon this world with its prince the devil.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Daniel Anlezark, "Abraham's Children: Jewish Promise and Christian Fulfilment," in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 131-2.

<sup>478</sup> Matthew Cheung Salisbury, ed., *Medieval Latin Liturgy in English Translation* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017), 25.

<sup>479</sup> Kendall, *On Genesis*, 247.

Here, Bede reflects the patristic heritage that he obtained, where our struggles in this life become a way of contextualizing the journey of renouncing the earthly *patria* for the heavenly country. And given the context of this exegesis, Bede also represents a particularly monastic strain of thought. While influenced by patristic sources, Bede was a Benedictine monk, writing for audiences familiar with monastic spirituality. In this manner, I argue that Abraham, while demonstrably an important figure to medieval Christians that signifies sonship with God,<sup>480</sup> was also a monastic exemplum of what self-exile and ascetic struggle in this world looks like, for the sake of the heavenly country. Because of this, Abraham, already a paradigmatic figure of Jewishness in the Old Testament for Anglo-Saxon Christians, becomes a figure that embodies monastic liminality in the sources where he appears.

The Benedictine commentator Smaragdus writes in chapter 92 of his *Diadema monachorum*, entitled “On What Is Written: Many Will Come from East and West and Will Recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven,” about the eschatological joy—or curse—for Christians that is referenced in Matthew 8:11-12.<sup>481</sup> In this chapter, Smaragdus refrains from mentioning eschatological separation, where those who are children of the kingdom of the devil are banished into further darkness, and the place they inhabit is a symbol of the life they lived on earth. While this subtext is certainly present, Smaragdus focuses on the joy of a heavenly banquet, writing that those present will “not be lying down bodily but

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<sup>480</sup> For example, Bede writes that “for we are all born into the world as sons of the devil on account of the sin of the first transgression; but by the grace of rebirth all of us who belong to the seed of Abraham are made sons of God, just as our Father who is in heaven says to us.” Kendall, *On Genesis*, 247.

<sup>481</sup> “Dico autem vobis quod multi ab oriente et occidente venient et recumbent cum Abraham et Isaac et Iacob in regno caelorum: filii autem regni eicientur in tenebras exteriores ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium.” Douay-Rheims: “And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

resting spiritually, not drinking in time but feasting eternally.”<sup>482</sup> Smaragdus employs this pericope from Matthew to represent the teleological aspect of ascetic suffering. The intertext of Abraham’s inclusion in this passage, and therefore in Smaragdus’s text for monastic spirituality, positions Abraham as a model for monastics that exemplifies the purpose of ascetic obedience, which is journey to the place of rest promised by God. In a textual echo to Abraham’s obedience, Smaragdus exhorts his monastic audience, saying “let us banish from ourselves all negligence, and from our mind all sloth; let us cast far from us the body’s impediments so that we may become family members of this beatitude and rest, and be found worthy of this holy feasting, as has been said.”<sup>483</sup> Abraham’s self-exile is recast as an ascetic discourse for removing sin and vice from oneself in monastic practice. The banishment of sin and negligence is the removal of those things that hinder one from crossing spiritual thresholds, those boundaries of transition that are necessary for casting oneself in an upward journey.<sup>484</sup>

This discourse is continued by Smaragdus in chapter 98, “What It Means That God Said to Abraham: Go out from Your Country and Your Kindred, and Come to the Land that I Will Show You,” referencing Genesis 12:1. To his monks, Smaragdus interprets this moment as a way of reading spiritual self-banishment. Smaragdus exhorts his readers “to go out from our country and our kindred, and let us come to the land that the Lord is going to give us after this life. What

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<sup>482</sup> Barry, *Crown of Monks*, 215.

<sup>483</sup> Barry, *Crown of Monks*, 216.

<sup>484</sup> An interesting discussion, but tangential to this discussion, involving Christian asceticism, promise, and Abraham involves the topic of circumcision. For more on this, see Samantha Zacher, “Circumscribing the Text: Views on Circumcision in Old English Literature,” in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, eds. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 89-119; and Anlezark, “Abraham’s Children,” 143-4.

is our country from which we are commanded to go out, if not our flesh?”<sup>485</sup> Following this, Smaragdus elaborates on this point to contextualize the ascetic tension between “flesh” and “country,” saying that “the country of our body is known to be the country of the dying when it is put in the service of great crimes. But if it has worked hard at virtues, it passes over by a most happy change to the land of the living.”<sup>486</sup> Abraham’s obedience and self-exile, as narrated in the Jewish scriptures, is appropriated with a spiritual and allegorical charge that carries its Old Testament origins, but theologically enacts out a new rhetorical task for Christian monastics to situate their own struggles within a comprehensive salvific narrative.

Smaragdus interprets the act of renunciation as an intentional transition, or threshold crossing, into a metaphorical new country that proleptically substantiates asceticism as a wandering journey that has a clear goal in mind, which God shows them, as God did for Abraham. Lynda Coon, in focusing on the gendered aspects of monasticism, writes of Smaragdus’s commentary on the Rule of Benedict, saying that “chaste monks keep their eyes always on the pleasures of heaven, and victorious monks are dressed in biblical garb... Monastic bodies then are like scriptural entities, onto which the history of Christian asceticism is written, from its biblical roots through its heroic age of martyrdom and ascetic brilliance.”<sup>487</sup> In detailing the act of physical renunciation and its purpose, Smaragdus both participates in a monastic heritage that posits one should be dead in body but alive in spirit, and incorporates the patriarch Abraham into the monastic heritage, where the monk lives as a wandering alien, suspended

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<sup>485</sup> Barry, *Crown of Monks*, 225.

<sup>486</sup> Barry, *Crown of Monks*, 225-6.

<sup>487</sup> Lynda Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 109.

between time and place, earth and heaven. Abraham also operates in the same manner within Junius 11.<sup>488</sup> Writing about vernacular poetry after the presence of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, Peter Clemons writes that

the environment was rearranged. Verticality took on a greater prominence in surroundings which had a heaven above and a hell beneath than it had had before in horizontal continuous time: the old Germanic term *middangeard*, ‘middle dwelling’, began to signify the region between heaven and hell rather than the inhabited land surrounded by sea. The connotations of language became increasingly complex dogmatically, ethically and materially. In principle, vernacular poetry’s symbolic expression of inherited potentials had much to offer a body of thought, such as this, founded on spiritual unseens.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> A principle edition for the Junius 11 manuscript is G. P. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931). However, other editions for each poem, *Genesis A and B*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*, will be used as reference for quotations and translations, noted below. Scholarship has attempted to adduce why these four texts have been anthologized together, such as in terms of theological unity and liturgical use. One article of note is J. R. Hall, “The Old English Epic of Redemption: The Theological Unity of MS Junius 11” *Traditio* 32 (1976), 185-208. Hall writes that “the unitive bibliographic features of Junius 11 invite consideration of the volume as a special collection of scriptural poems which, like the later Middle English plays constituting a biblical cycle, were compiled and organized by an editor or editors according to a definite plan,” p. 187. Among others, Hall notes that other critics suggest definite liturgical connections, such as with the Paschal liturgy, argued by T. A. Shippey, and that Barbara Raw saw a connection between Liber I of Junius 11 and the *Liber Responsialis* for Sunday lections from Sexagesima to Easter, pp. 187-8. Hall argues that the editor of Junius 11 was familiar with Augustine’s *De catechizandis rudibus*, suggesting Augustine’s treatment of salvation history is mimicked in the poems of Junius 11, and Wulfstan’s *Sermo* 6, p. 191. Later, Hall published a retrospective of this article, “‘The Old English Epic of Redemption’: Twenty-Five Year Retrospective” in *The Poems of Junius 11: Basic Readings*, 53-68, R. M. Liuzza, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), where he considers critiques against his work and later scholarship. In doing so, he accedes that *Christ and Satan*, whereas before he argued to be planned by the editor of Junius 11, was more than likely an afterthought, but still a necessary addition.

<sup>489</sup> Peter Clemons, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 229-30.

The poems of Junius 11—*Genesis A* and *B*,<sup>490</sup> *Exodus*,<sup>491</sup> *Daniel*,<sup>492</sup> and *Christ and Satan*<sup>493</sup>—all speak to this condition in some respect. The first three poems offer a poetic reimagining of the way God intervenes and works to cultivate a history of salvation. The *Genesis* poems take us through creation, transgression, and the call to Abraham to leave his life behind for the promise of a new land. *Exodus* details the tension between the Hebrew people and the Egyptians, and God’s work through Moses in delivering his people from Egyptian bondage, becoming self-exiled. *Daniel* centers on what it means to live life as an alien in another land, with the prophet Daniel attempting to remain faithful to God while living in Babylon. Finally, *Christ and Satan* borrows from the New Testament and apocryphal sources to narrate the fall of Satan from heaven, Christ’s act of harrowing hell, and then recursively recounts Christ’s temptation in the desert. Not only do these poems create a reimagined sense of salvation history for Israel, and by extension all Christians, but as texts they uncover an insular Christianity that was enculturated, revealing a synthesis of thought, language, and belief that show how the scriptures were adapted to their own anxieties and hopes, with the act of poetic adaption becoming exegesis.

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<sup>490</sup> Old English quotations will be taken from A. N. Doane, *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013). Modern translations will be taken from Daniel Anlezark, ed. and trans., *Old Testament Narratives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). For the sake of clarity, *Genesis B* is a surviving portion of an Old Saxon version of the Genesis narrative that has been inserted into what is called *Genesis A*, taking up lines 235-851.

<sup>491</sup> Old English quotations will be taken from Peter J. Lucas, ed., *Exodus* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994). Modern English translations will be taken from Anzelark, no. 2 above.

<sup>492</sup> Old English quotations will be taken from R. T. Farrell, ed., *Daniel and Azarias* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1974). Modern English translations will be taken from Anzelark, no. 2 above.

<sup>493</sup> Old English quotations will be taken from Merrel Dare Clubb, *Christ and Satan: An Old English Poem* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925). Modern English translations will be taken from Mary Clayton, ed. and trans., *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

In addition to all this, and more pertinent for this discussion, we see the patriarch Abraham moving seamlessly through all the poems, as a presence that invokes Jewish and ascetic discourse. In the *Genesis* poems, Abraham is called by God to leave his place: “Ða se halga spræc, heofonrices weard, / to abrahame, ece drihten: / gewit þu nu feran and þine fare læden, / ceapas to cnosle. carram ofgif, / fæder eðelstol.”<sup>494</sup> Abraham departs, and while on his journey, is given a glimpse of the land he will see: “þa hine cyning engla / abrahame ieuwde selfa, / domfæst wereda and drihten cwæð: / þis is seo eorðe þe ic ælgrene tudre þinum, torhte, wille, / wæstum gewlo, on gewæld don, / rume rice.”<sup>495</sup> In this poem, there is a deviation from the Vulgate in offering a description of the land, whereas the corresponding text of Genesis 12:7 neglects to describe at that moment any vision of the landscape.<sup>496</sup> Moreover, the poet appears to have conflated this verse with Genesis 15, where God tells Abraham that his seed will be strangers in a land not their own, and a covenant occurs between Abraham and God, and the land promised to Abraham’s heritage is described in terms of boundaries.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Doane, *Genesis A*, 211, ll. 1744-48a. Anlezark: “Then the holy guardian of the kingdom of heaven, the eternal Lord, spoke to Abraham: ‘Depart now on a journey, and take your freight, your possessions for your offspring. Give up Haran, your father’s native seat,’ 123, 125.

<sup>495</sup> Doane, *Genesis A*, 213, ll. 1784b-90a. Anlezark: “Then the king of angels, the glorious Lord of hosts, revealed himself to Abraham and said: ‘This is the all-green earth, bright and adorned with fruits, a spacious kingdom, which I will give into the rule of your descendants,’ 127.

<sup>496</sup> “Apparuitque Dominus Abram et dixit ei semini tuo dabo terram hanc qui aedificavit ibi altare Domino qui apparuerat ei.” Douay-Rheims: “And the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him: To thy seed will give this land. And he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.”

<sup>497</sup> Genesis 15:13, 18-21: “Dictumque est ad eum scito praenoscens quod peregrinum futurum sit semen tuum in terra non sua et subicient eos servituti et adfligent quadringentis annis... In die illo pepigit Dominus cum Abram foedus dicens semini tuo dabo terram hanc a fluvio Aegyptis usque ad fluvium mangum flumen Eufraten. Cineos et Cenezeos et Cedmoneos. Et Hettheos et Ferezeos Rafiam quoque. Et Amorreos et Chananeos et Gergeseos et Iebuseos.” Douay-Rheims: “And it was said unto him: Know thou beforehand that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land not their own, and they shall bring them under bondage, and afflict them four hundred years... That day God made a covenant with Abram, saying: To thy seed will I give this land, from the river of Egypt to even to the great river Euphrates. The Cineans and Cenezites, the Cedmonites, and the Hethites, and the Pherezites, the Raphaim also, and the Amorrhites, and the Chanaanites, and the Gergesites, and the Jebusites.”



In the poem *Exodus*, Abraham is introduced in line 18 in the context of Moses having led the people of Israel out of Egypt, from under the cruelty of the Pharaoh: Moses “wæs leof Gode, leoda aldor, / horsc ond hreðgleaw, herges wisa, / freom folctoga. Farones cyn, / Godes andsacan, gyrdwite band, / þær him gesealde sigora Waldend / modgum magoræssum his maga feorh, / onwist eðles Abrahames sunum.”<sup>498</sup> Abraham is also mentioned in the so-called “patriarchal digression” in the poem *Exodus*, comprising lines 362-446. When Abraham is presented, he is shown as a descendant of Noah, and characterized as an exile: “Swa þæt wise men wordum secgað / þæt from Noe nigoða wære / fæder Abrahames on folctale. / Þæt is se Abraham se him engla God / naman niwan asceop; eac þon neah ond feor / halige heapas in gehyld bebed, / werþeoda geweald. He on wræce lifde.”<sup>499</sup> Abraham is exemplified as the father of descendants who will receive a promise, particularly a home, the “*eðel*” guaranteed to him through covenant. He is also described as living in exile, meaning that he himself did not experience the crossing of the threshold into the promised *epel*, but because of the promise made to Abraham, his descendants will. In writing about the poem and context of the digression, Paul Ferguson has written that “the patristic concern with meaning over event is reflected in the opening lines of the poem. Here the poet makes clear that his subject is the salvation of mankind through Moses’ law, which provides relief for the saints who have completed their worldly pilgrimage, and enduring

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<sup>498</sup> Lucas, *Exodus*, 76-7, ll. 12-18. Anlezark: “He was beloved of God, a gifted and wise leader of his people, commander of the army and a bold general. He humbled Pharaoh’s nation, that enemy of God, by punishment with the rod, when the Lord of victories guaranteed it to him, their brave teacher, the life of his compatriots, and to the sons of Abraham a dwelling in a homeland,” 207.

<sup>499</sup> Lucas, *Exodus*, 124-5, ll. 377-83. Anlezark: “Thus wise people say in words, that Abraham was the ninth father from Noah in the line of descendants. That is the Abraham from whom the God of angels created a new name; furthermore, near and far holy multitudes were given into his protection, the power of the nations; he lived in exile,” 231. For more on the connection between Noah and Abraham in this digression, see Daniel Anlezark, “Connecting the Patriarchs: Noah and Abraham in the Old English ‘Exodus,’” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104, no. 2 (April 2005): 171-88.

counsel for those still among the living.”<sup>500</sup> This means that Abraham provides an exegetical moment for the audience of this poem to reveal spiritual wisdom. Stanley Hauer suggests the inclusion of Abraham and other patriarchs in this digression is the uncovering of epiphanic moments between these figures and God:

God’s interest in the Israelites is personal and immediate; at the theophany on Horeb (Ex. 3:1-4:17) he even discloses *his sylfes naman, / ðone ylde bearn ær ne cuðon* ([27b-28] ‘his own name, which the children of men had not known earlier’). The digression, however, presents us with the precedent to these events: for just as he was to do later with the Hebrews at the time of the exodus, so God had earlier revealed himself directly to Noah before the flood and to Abraham at the climax of the sacrifice, intruding at the last moment to prevent what otherwise seemed fated death. All these episodes are clear manifestations of the omnipotence of God and his divine intervention into mortal affairs.<sup>501</sup>

While this is certainly true in the narrative of Abraham’s life—that God intervenes in critical moments to stay death—his presence can also be a hermeneutic for the process of liberation and finding home. In Genesis, God tells him that his descendants will be held in bondage; here in the *Exodus* poem, that bondage is about to be broken. Abraham is placed in the middle of the narrative, as if he were in the middle of Red Sea, crossing on dry land through a divine threshold of freedom. Understood as an exile, Abraham’s liminality is extended to become a multivocal symbol as a monastic exemplum in his exile and threshold crossing. Abraham reflects the self-

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<sup>500</sup> Paul F. Ferguson, “Noah, Abraham, and the Crossing of the Red Sea,” *Neophilologus* 65 (1981): 283.

<sup>501</sup> Stanley R. Hauer, “The Patriarchal Digression in the Old English ‘Exodus’, Lines 362-446,” *Studies in Philology* 78, no. 5 (Winter 1981): 82. Moreover, Patrick McBrine has said that “the utter destruction of the Egyptian army, which leaves ‘no remnant’ (‘ne.. ænig to lafe,’ 508-9), can be contrasted with the survival of Noah and his kin after the Flood, who return to dry land ‘as the eternal remnant of the whole human race’ (‘eallum eorðcynne ece lafe,’ 370), or on a smaller scale with the sparing of Isaac, who survives ‘as the remnant of his people’ (*leodum to lafe*, 405a) and Abraham’s heir (*yrfelafe*, 403b). Those two moments testify to the mercy of God towards the faithful, but the Egyptians only wrath, whose annihilation serves as a warning to the reader.” Patrick McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 342-3.

exile that eventually occurs with the Israelites when they flee the Egyptians and search for their land.

In the poem *Daniel*, Abraham is presented within the context of Jewish people and obedience to God in the face of social alienation and death, where the people were practicing idolatry in Babylon.<sup>502</sup> Andrew Scheil has noted that for Anglo-Saxon, Babylon represented, among other things, a “deadly exoticism and evil of the city, inhabitants, and environs,” and “power, menace, and corrupt sensuality.”<sup>503</sup> This sense of danger rhetorically heightens the spiritual danger represented in this poetic text. The portion of the poem in which Abraham appears reflects the moment in Daniel, chapter 3, when Nebuchadnezzar had a statue made for the people to fall down before and worship: “et praeco clamabat valenter vobis dicitur populis tribus et linguis: in hora qua audieritis sonitum tubae et fistulae et citharae sambucaae et psalterii et symphoniae et universi generis musicorum cadentes adorate statuam auream quam constituit Nabuchodonosor rex.”<sup>504</sup> The threat of being cast into a burning furnace looms over those who do not comply with this mandate. The text notes that three Jewish men abstained from this worship, and with that, Nebuchadnezzar demands that these three men be brought to him, and when they persist in their refusal, Nebuchadnezzar “viris fortissimis de exercitu suo iussit ut

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<sup>502</sup> For a scholarly treatment of oracular and literary transmission regarding this poem, see Remly, “*Daniel*, the *Three Youths* fragment and the transmission of Old English verse,” in *Old English Biblical Verse: Studies in Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81-140.

<sup>503</sup> Andrew Scheil, “Babylon and Anglo-Saxon England,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 42, 43.

<sup>504</sup> Daniel 3:4-5. Douay-Rheims: “Then a herald cried with a strong voice: To you it is commanded, O nations, tribes, and languages: That in the hour that you shall hear the sound of the trumpet, and of the flute, and of the harp, of the sackbut, and of the psaltery, and of the symphony, and of all kind of music, ye fall down and adore the golden statue which king Nabuchodonosor hath set up.”

ligatis pedibus Sedrac Misac et Abdenago mitterent eos in fornacem ignis ardentem.”<sup>505</sup> The Old

English poem’s inclusion of Abraham is contained within the introduction of the three men:

Þær þry wæron            on þæs þeodnes byrig,  
 eorlas Israela,            þæt hie a noldon  
 hyra þeodnes dom        þafigan onginnan,  
 þæt hie to þam beacne        gebedu rærde,  
 ðeah ðe ðær on herige        byman sungon.  
 Ða wæron æðelum        Abrahames bearn  
 wæron wærfæste;        wiston drihten  
 ecne uppe,        *ælmihigne*.  
 Cnihtas cynegode        cuð gedydon,  
 þæt hie him þæt gold        to gode noldon  
 habban ne healdan,        ac þone hean cyning,  
 gasta hyrde,        ðe him gife sealde.  
           Oft hie to bote            balde gecwædon  
 þæt hie þæs wiges        wihte ne rohton,  
 ne hie to þam gebede        mihte gebædon  
 hæðen heriges wisa,        þæt hie þider hweorfan wolden,  
 guman to þam gyldnan gylde,        þe he him to gode geteode.<sup>506</sup>

Samantha Zacher notes that “whereas the Old Testament book of Daniel emphasizes the unfaltering faith of the Israelites who adhere to their law in exile, the Old English poet, by contrast, describes the general disobedience of the Jews who violate their covenant with God and forfeit their special status.”<sup>507</sup> I do not disagree with Zacher’s assessment, but would like present Abraham’s inclusion within the narrative of the three men and their disobedience to the king as a

<sup>505</sup> Daniel 3:20. Douay-Rheims: “he commanded the strongest men that were in his army, to bind the feet of Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, and to cast them into the furnace of burning fire.”

<sup>506</sup> Farrell, *Daniel*, 57-8, ll. 188-204. Anlezark: “There were in that prince’s city, men of the Israelites, who would in no way begin to accept the prince’s edict, that they should lift up prayers to that token, even though the trumpets sounded there at the idol. These were by noble descent sons of Abraham, they were faithful to the covenant, they knew the Lord, eternally on high, the Almighty. the royal youths made it known that they would neither have nor hold that gold as their god, but rather the high king, the shepherd of souls, who gave them grace. In addition, they often boldly said that they did not care at all for that idol, nor could that pagan people’s guide command them to pray, that they should turn there, the men toward the golden idol, which he had set up as a god for them,” 261.

<sup>507</sup> Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 91.

way of strengthening, in that moment, a profound obedience to God while living as alien people in Babylon. Their faithfulness preserves them from being somatically destroyed by fire, and in turn, confirms their position as children of Abraham. For an Anglo-Saxon audience, this offers an interpretive movement for Christian promise, that despite not belonging to the land you inhabit, and living as strangers among others, that God will be present through one's ascetic obedience.

Finally, there is a brief instance in the poem *Christ and Satan* where Abraham's inclusion is particularly significant. This moment occurs in the context of Christ's harrowing of hell, where post-Crucifixion, Christ descends into hell to free those who have been held captive, including Adam and Eve.<sup>508</sup> Charles Sleeth has indicated an analog or source for the moment that occurs in *Christ and Satan*, found in Blickling VII. Sleeth writes that

after Eve's release, in the homily, Abraham leads the delivered souls in a short doxology which closes the account of the Harrowing. In the poem the delivered souls, called the family of Abraham, lift Christ up with their hands as all proceed together to their heavenly dwelling, and the account of the Harrowing closes with a speech of some forty-two lines (470-512) by Christ to the delivered souls, linking the Fall of man to his own work of Redemption.<sup>509</sup>

The moment narrated in this text, an event of liberation from delimited space of exile from God's presence, is about threshold crossings, in terms of movement, boundaries, and status. This is seen in the presence of Christ, who, having crossed over into death, moves deeper and deeper into the recesses of creation, and into the site of exile for those transgressed, as if he were a monastic going further into the *weste* as part of an ascetic journey. In terms of Abraham, this moment also

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<sup>508</sup> For scholarly treatment on the harrowing of hell, see Karl Tambur, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007).

<sup>509</sup> Charles R. Sleeth, *Studies in Christ and Satan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 56.

situates him within threshold crossing too, and presents Abraham as an embodied figure of promise and redemption. The poet writes:

þæt, lā! wæs fæger þæt se fēða cōm  
 ūp tō earde, and se Eca mid him,  
 Meotod mancynnes, in þā mæran burh.  
 Hōfon hine mid him handum hālige  
 wītigan ūp tō ēðle, Abrahames cynn.<sup>510</sup>

This is the only reference to the patriarch Abraham in this poem, but he is indicative of significant theological possibilities for Anglo-Saxon Christians. In one sense, this complicates ideas of how Anglo-Saxons, or other medieval Christians, understood the afterlife. Ananya Kabir writes that “during early Christianity, there existed various conceptual systems for discussing the life hereafter. Within these systems, terms such as ‘paradise’, ‘third heaven’, ‘kingdom of heaven’, ‘bosom of Abraham’, and ‘place of refreshment’ were interlocked in semantic interdependence.”<sup>511</sup> It will be difficult to ascertain what space these people inhabited, but it is rhetorically and textually clear that this was not a final resting place, and even though it is spiritual, there can be movement in and out with a semblance of physicality that conveys impermanence, not the eternal, at least not until the final judgment. In this excerpt, Abraham continues to lead a migration up to a heavenly *epel*, a home where exile will not happen anymore. The wandering of Abraham, which began with his call by God to leave his father’s *eðelstol*, did not stop in the afterlife, but only after the salvific work of Christ. Thereafter, in Abraham’s obedience, he is rewarded with the true *epel* of heaven, in the presence of God. In this

<sup>510</sup> Merrel Dare Clubb, *Christ and Satan: An Old English Poem* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), 27, ll. 457-61.

<sup>511</sup> Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

manner, Abraham moves between typologies of interpretation for Anglo-Saxons, as the progenitor and father of Judaism, the ascetic exemplum of monastic obedience, and the faithful wanderer who waits for the eschatological promised land that the Lord will show him.

### **Conclusion**

The Old Testament scriptures in Anglo-Saxon England created the potential to understand migration and exile as theological expressions of a divine reality. The Jewishness embedded in the text, but not in the physical presence of Jews in early medieval England, allowed the rewriting of narratives that centered Anglo-Saxon experiences of hardship and invasion as a means to exhort the people, the *gens*, into communal repentance to alleviate God's judgment and enter back into covenant with God. This means that the Old Testament operated as a foundation for an eschatological hope for Anglo-Saxon Christians, in that the threat of exile would be controverted. The Old Testament scriptures, and the use of Jewishness in the formation of their communal identity, demonstrates the inherently liminal nature of Anglo-Saxons, who, through experiencing migration and trauma, move through physical and constructed spiritual thresholds that signify their hope for a stable home.

Abraham's presence in these poems, and in other texts, signifies a moment, experience, and hope that is bound in the liminal, until the final threshold can be crossed. As a monastic exemplum, he bears the vocation of being a stranger in the world and ascetic renunciation, a reinterpretation of Jewishness for Anglo-Saxon Christians, and a desire for the true home. John Howe writes that "the relative absence of sentiments about home life and domesticity in Old English poetry," and suggests that "the poetry of Anglo-Saxons is far more likely to urge thoughts of journeying to the heavenly home that it is to celebrate the return to the earthly

home.”<sup>512</sup> For Anglo-Saxons, Abraham becomes an attainable example for this path, that suggests faithful obedience to God will recast the exile-path as a journey to a joyful banquet with the other faithful in a place of provision, peace, and an ancestral community that will forget what it means to be banished, and no one will be a stranger anymore.

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<sup>512</sup> John Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 55.



## II. Conclusion

“‘We Are Strangers in this Life’: Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature” examines the intersection of exile and liminality as a way of understanding a theological reality that pervaded Anglo-Saxon literature. This dissertation considered the ways in which being a stranger, and an exile, carried a multivalence of interpretive intersections for Anglo-Saxons. One can be exiled and banished due to social disruption and malfeasance, and one could be self-exiled as a means of achieving a severing of the bonds of the natural world for the sake of a heavenly home. Theologically, both acts of exile run parallel to each other, and even become woven together, because they stem from the transgression of Adam and Eve, and the banishment from paradise, and God’s presence. All are exiled because of God’s wrath; some experience social exile in this life because of that fragmentation and wrath, becoming an embodiment of another’s anger that reflects the divine; and some experience exile because they know the path to ceasing their wandering rests in becoming a stranger to the world, the locus of our banishment and our condition. The theological literature of this time points to this being a condition that affects everyone. Regarding the practice of exile, Melissa Sartore has written that

exile and outlawry defined the social, political, and legal boundaries of Anglo-Saxon world. They were organizing principles of the Anglo-Saxon social order, instruments of the complex system of friendship, peace, feud, and revenge. As such, they were crucial means for the exercise of power and authority. To be without friends or to be expelled from one’s kinship group was the harshest sanction an individual faced in Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>513</sup>

This quote emphasizes the bonds and borders in which the act of exile, and those who were exiled, interacted. While it might be a subtext in Sartore’s assertion, the overt inclusion of the

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<sup>513</sup> Sartore, *Outlawry, Governance, and Law*, 19.

ecclesial—and more importantly, the theological—aspect of exile in this description is conspicuously absent. Perhaps it was not the aim of Sartore’s work to deal with the theological claims of exile, but it stands that an understanding of secular, or political exile, becomes clarified when viewed with the lens of the spiritual anxiety that buttressed exilic literature that was theological in nature. While scholars have certainly considered exile, spiritual culture, and theological sources for exile, there is a gap in considering the spiritual and religious dimensions of exile, as it pertains to how theological ideas influenced what exile means in Anglo-Saxon culture. This dissertation has intended to speak to this gap. The connection between exile and theology invites more substantial study and reflection between the relationship of secular and theological exile, and in how they inform each other.

What this dissertation has done is consider the patristic sources for this exilic mindset, and considered the ways in which theological literature contributed to the formation of being a spiritual exile by showing where, and how it occurs in religious genre, such as hagiography, homilies, monastic *regula*, and biblical commentary. Additionally, this dissertation employed the anthropological theory of liminality as a means of providing a vocabulary for discussing the performance of exile in its various contexts. These variety of texts and genres demonstrates the ways which Anglo-Saxon Christians had a faith that was liminal, making them a threshold people. This occurs in ascetic wandering, and being a stranger, which saturated the theological culture of Anglo-Saxon England. It influenced they way Anglo-Saxons conceived of space, identity, concepts of faith, and the construct of the heavenly *epel* that provided hope.

Chapter One provided a survey of biblical commentaries, monastic spirituality, and patristic literature to consider the ways in which Anglo-Saxon were formed in theological ideas

in the practice of exegesis and monastic contexts. Theodore of Tarsus, the Greek-speaking monastic who established a school in Anglo-Saxon England, was a significant figure in the formation of these areas. The Canterbury biblical commentaries demonstrate not only the exegetical methodologies that were circulated in Anglo-Saxon England, but also the textual witness of patristic heritage that becomes part of the literary landscape of their time. By introducing Eastern patristic literature, such as texts from John Cassian and John Chrysostom, later Anglo-Saxons would demonstrate an influence in the ideas that were proposed. One of these is Bede, whose commentaries and *Ecclesiastical History* revealed the intersections of patristic learning and exegetical techniques. Cassian's *Institutes* show a way of monastic governance and spirituality that emphasizes the betwixt and between nature of ascetic living, which by extension speaks to the theological condition of everybody. Finally, Chrysostom's treatise *No One Can Be Harmed* shows a theological reading of physical exile, regarding it as nothing, and provides a reorientation that forces us to look heavenward, for the heavenly *patria*.

Chapter Two examined hagiographic literature, and the way in which hagiography demonstrated a unique shift in Anglo-Saxon theological ideology. The vitae of the Guthlac poems and of Mary of Egypt, originally written in Latin and translated into Old English, demonstrate a shift that emphasizes the concept of wrath and journey, an idea that is semantically embedded in the concept of exile, or *wræc/wræcsip*. Space is a significant rhetorical site that encodes ascetic possibilities, and invokes the liminal through showing Guthlac and Mary as threshold people. Guthlac's suffering and asceticism, experienced in the periphery of the Mercian fens, while heroic and resolute, ultimately suggests this his suffering is not predicated on wrath. While he is still a participant in the theological condition of banishment from God's presence, his

faithfulness in suffering operates as a textual witness that undermines God's wrath. Guthlac is even brought to the threshold of hell by the demons, but is not permitted to cross over. The demons, who revel in their evil, remain perpetual exiles. Mary, the desert hermit that lived as a harlot before her profound conversion, is prevented from crossing the threshold of a church to venerate the cross. And as she relates her story, Mary says it was God's wrath that prevented her from entering the church. In this instance, God's wrath is what sets her on her journey that takes her into the depths of the desert, where she exists in between life and death, and within a liminal geographic site that is a peripheral *weste*. This chapter offers a unique reading that shows the role that wrath plays in Anglo-Saxon conceptions of faith, and how ideas of wrath and journey intersect with exile and liminality to show processes of repentance and the *telos* of asceticism, which the revoking of theological banishment.

Chapter Three discussed homiletics and the Rule of Benedict, and what it means to be a theological stranger and alien. Excommunication, which is a social and spiritual method for discipline within monastic settings, carries an eschatological valence that permeates the theological imagination of commentators and monastics. Excommunication, designed to inculcate repentance through separation from the community, was interpreted to be a prefiguring of eternal separation from God, where the monastic becomes a stranger to the divine and sacred space. However, the concept of the stranger is important in other ways. The stranger is also a condition that all of us bear — that we are all strangers in this life, and our home is not here. The stranger, while containing the possibilities of spiritual destruction, is also an indication of the estranged reality we all live in while we are between earth and heaven. The ritual processes of

Rogationtide act as a mimetic opportunity to walk the path to heaven, and to enter into the dire nature of the liminal stranger that has no true home until they arrive at their heavenly one.

Chapter Four examines conceptions of Jewishness and the Old Testament to understand other aspects of Anglo-Saxon religious identity that appropriated the promises given to the people of Israel in wandering for the heavenly *epel*. As previous chapters situated the Anglo-Saxon as a stranger, this chapter discussed how Anglo-Saxons constructed a narrative of judgment and favor that was predicated on the Jewishness embedded in readings of the Old Testament. This reifies the liminal nature of the Anglo-Saxon in the development of a communal identity to support their exigencies and interpretive aims, where they are suspended in the tension and anxiety of a precarious existence that could produce fragmentation and destruction if repentance is not practiced. The use of the Old Testament by authors such as Gildas, Bede, and Wulfstan demonstrate how wrath interacts with their religious framework. Moreover, in their use of Jewishness, Anglo-Saxons constructed the Old Testament patriarch Abraham as an important figure of monastic asceticism and obedience. Abraham, who is the embodiment of wandering in search of the promised *epel*, appears in texts as a signifier of how that wandering is practiced in faithfulness, and how God's favor, instead of wrath, is reckoned to those who are obedient.

For Anglo-Saxon studies, this dissertation provides a necessary theological reading of texts that looks at the lexical and semantic framework that was used to describe the multiplicity of exilic possibilities, within a variety of genres. These texts have not been placed in conversation before. While other scholarship provides tangential work in the formulaic expressions of exile, and performs source criticism for where textual analogs develop from, my dissertation focuses on the theological culture that formed what an exile *is* in Anglo-Saxon

England, and the condition is so painful. The breaking of human bonds is a typological witness to eschatological separation, and banishment from God forever. The chapters of this dissertation have shown how a theologically saturated culture envisioned processes of ameliorating the pain of separation, and methodologies for interpreting events and anxieties into a divine narrative of wandering that exiles walk.

This study is not comprehensive in of itself. The multivalence of the exilic condition demands more scholarship and rigorous study to continue uncovering the root of social fragmentation and punishment, and how theological rhetoric shaped discourses and practices of power. This dissertation, given the scope, could not speak to all the ways in which exile operates as a theological reality, pointing to the eschatological hopes and anxieties. “‘We Are Strangers in this Life’: Theology, Liminality, and the Exiled in Anglo-Saxon Literature” represents a hopeful foundation for further inquiry into the theological rhetoric and texts that shaped not just the Anglo-Saxon era, but before and beyond, in terms of how spiritual meaning is constructed within physical spaces.

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