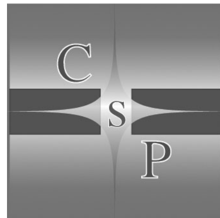
Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier

Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier

Edited by

Geraldine Barnes
with Gabrielle Singleton



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier, Edited by Geraldine Barnes with Gabrielle Singleton

This book first published 2005. The present binding first published 2008.

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2008, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, Australia

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-84718-801-X, ISBN (13): 9781847188014

Contents

Introduction
Geraldine Barnes and Adrian Mitchell 1

Bede's Mapping of England
Diane Speed 9

Infideles in the *Opus Maius* of Roger Bacon
Amanda Power 25

Pilgrims and Soldiers:
Constructing the Town in Medieval Histories
Helen Fulton 45

The Icelander Abroad:
Hjalti Skeggjason's Swedish Mission
Kári Gíslason 67

Frequent Flyers in Old Norse Myth
Margaret Clunies Ross 79

Journeys of the Mind:
Pearl as Travel Literature
Anna McHugh 97

Marco Polo's return voyage from China:
Its implications for 'The Marco Polo debate'
John H. Pryor 125

The Further Travels of Sir John:
Mandeville, Chaucer, and the Canon of Middle English
David Matthews 159

Mapping the Grotesque:
Inventing and Possessing the World
in Early-Modern England
L.E. Semler..177

William Dampier's *Itinerarium*
Geraldine Barnes and Adrian Mitchell..........................207

Notes on Contributors 231

Index...235

Introduction

GERALDINE BARNES AND ADRIAN MITCHELL

Not only is there a literature of travel and discovery; literature itself has long battened on to the imaginative enticements and actual excitements offered by travel and discovery. The art of seduction as practised by Othello rested on his recounting of the exotic, with some conjoint implication of transference between the exotic and the erotic — a tale

> of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
> Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th'imminent deadly breach,
> Of being taken by the insolent foe
> And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,
> And portance in my traveller's history,
> Wherein of antres [caves] vast and deserts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
> It was my hint to speak. Such was my process,
> And of the cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders. (*Othello*, I.iii)

It was the danger, the strangeness, the very novelty of all this — Othello's bewitching pilgrimage — that seduced Desdemona and impressed Shakespeare's audience. Two hundred years later, Shelley's 'Ozymandias' begins with an 'I' who 'met a traveller from an antique land who said . . .' and the poem goes on uninterruptible from that point, in some part of Othello's very own landscape, a poem uninterruptible like another compelling, compulsive travel narrative, by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner.

The somewhat manic Ancient Mariner goes on and on for a hundred stanzas, telling the story of how he shot the albatross, the very symbol of the eternal wanderer, and a

vaguely religious icon, too, so that his punishment is also a pilgrimage, a spiritual awakening. Coleridge's Mariner not only wanders the oceans of the world, he also traipses through a whole lot of other travel narratives: he travels through books as well as through latitudes. The stanzas about the colourful sea-snakes ('Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, / They coiled and swam; and every track / Was a flash of golden fire') have been lifted out of the writings of William Dampier,[1] for example. The literature of travel and discovery is not just about geography and coming to know the unknown, it is also about other books of travel and discovery. Travel writers consult other books about travel and write allusions to them into their accounts. They write not just a narrative of what they have seen, but also of what they have read. In the case of Sir John Mandeville, there is an open question of just how much he had in fact seen; clearly, what he had read impressed him rather more. He might unkindly be thought of as the ur-plagiarist; whereas in fact his procedure was one less of appropriation and more of integration of all that could be searched out, almost exactly like that of the atlas makers of his own and later times.

Patrick White's Voss, an imagined German explorer rather closely resembling Ludwig Leichhardt (who by disappearing into the Australian outback not only traversed the continent but crossed from historical actuality into myth and legend), is asked by his patron whether he has studied the map. 'The map? . . . I will first make it',[2] he says, stating the exquisitely obvious, for the purpose of his expedition into Australia's centre is to explore and discover. It is a harsh joke against his kind of German-ness as well as against the obtuseness of his colonial British financier. But we are reminded that not really all that long ago it was still possible to travel into unmapped regions. Maps, of course, are

[1] As first noted by John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), 49, 479 n. 42.
[2] Patrick White, *Voss* (London: Penguin, 1960), 23.

inherently unstable. They change their meaning over time. A map is drawn in the first place as a record of where someone first went. Everybody else uses it as a guide rather than as an account, as an indicative reference. Maps also become manifestos of ownership: they announce an imminent takeover. They become, in this sense, both record and agent of change. Maps are one coded form of a travel narrative; more familiar to us are journals, diaries, logbooks, and travelogues.

The essays in this collection — a selection of papers presented at the University of Sydney Centre for Medieval Studies workshop 'Travel and Cartography from Bede to the Enlightenment' (August 22-23, 2001) — track a variety of travel narratives from the eighth century to the early years of the eighteenth. Each is concerned in some way with the application of the medieval geographical imagination, or with the enduring influence of that imagination upon post-medieval travel and discovery writing. Ranging from the literal and historical to the imaginary and the symbolic, the voyages under discussion show how the concept of narrative mapping has changed over time, and how it encompasses cosmogony, geography, chorography, topography, and inventory. Writing is not just text, but also context — and as for writing at large, so for the literature of travel and discovery in particular. All the essays in the volume offer illuminating perspectives on the rôle of spiritual and secular interests in shaping a variety of medieval and early-modern literary voyages.

Diane Speed shows how Britain is charted from a Roman perspective in the Anglo-Saxon scholar Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and how Bede pursues a narrative journey through a variety of 'subnational agendas' — from Kent, to Northumbria, to Mercia, and so on — within a superordinate ideal of an England mapped and united by ecclesiastical rather than secular power. Amanda Power investigates the use of geographical record in the service of Christendom and conversion in Roger Bacon's

thirteenth-century *Opus Maius*. Bacon was, she argues, a radical medieval cosmographer in that his concern was factual — to reveal European ignorance of geography and ethnography and to remedy that defect through contemporary eyewitness account. Helen Fulton traces the manipulation of medieval geography to secular ends in her examination of the function of chorography and topography in pilgrim guidebooks, eyewitness accounts of travellers to urban centres, and chronicles from the fourth to the twelfth century: in the later chronicles, urban topography is politicised to martial ends and urban chorography is superseded by commercial 'mapping'. Kári Gíslason reads the narrative of the journey of Hjalti Skeggjason from Iceland to mainland Scandinavia, as related in Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century history of the kings of Norway, *Heimskringla*, as a key to the cultural and political map of thirteenth-century Iceland.

The essays by Margaret Clunies Ross and Anna McHugh examine the expression and landscape of mythological and spiritual travels. In her discussion of the dangerous journeys in quest of knowledge and power by the Frequent Flyers of pre-Christian Scandinavia, Clunies Ross shows how, in Old Norse literary sources, the pagan mythological world was organised on a principle of horizontal and vertical axes, where the critical boundaries were those between the worlds of the Norse gods (*Ásgarðr*), of humans (*Miðgarðr*), and of giants (*Jǫtunheimr*). Relocating the Middle English poem *Pearl* from its standard categorisation as 'vision' or 'dream' poetry to travel text, in which the voyager is the soul, McHugh explores extra-terrestrial voyaging in the Christian scheme of things. In a new reading of *Pearl* as 'travelling text', not only is the reader invited to undertake a meta-textual pilgrim's progress towards transcendent meaning, but the poem itself confronts its semiotic inadequacy in representing that spiritual journey.

The essays by John Pryor and David Matthews address issues of validity and validation in the two most famous of

medieval journeys, by Marco Polo and Mandeville. John Pryor tests medieval narrative against scientific fact to refute the popular view that Marco's visit to China in the last decade of the thirteenth century was largely imaginary. Basing his examination on the replication of thirteenth-century climatological phenomena throughout the twentieth century, Pryor examines Marco's travels against global patterns of meteorology to argue against recent claims that his eastern travels did not extend beyond the Black Sea. By meticulous examination of the world's bi-annual meteorological systems he is able to demonstrate how the itinerary and layovers of Marco's return trip from China in 1290, related in his *Devisement du Monde*, tally with the seasonal pattern of monsoons and prevailing winds from the South China Sea to Constantinople. Knowledge of the monsoonal systems of the South China Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Indian Ocean evidenced in the narrative could, Pryor postulates, have derived only from accurate firsthand knowledge — in all likelihood that of Marco Polo himself.

In the wake of the great Renaissance voyages of discovery, the authenticity of the thirteenth-century journeys related in Mandeville's *Travels* began to be questioned. By the seventeenth century Mandeville was largely considered a fabulist. The *Travels by John Mandevile, Knight* appeared only in the first edition of Samuel Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625) and were silently dropped thereafter. Although at least seven printings of the *Travels* appeared between 1618 and 1696, they were in cheap editions with crude woodcuts. In his essay, David Matthews relocates Mandeville and his travels from the context of spurious geography and unreliable narrative to a prestigious position on the literary map of eighteenth-century England. As Matthews demonstrates, in the emerging canon of Middle English literature Mandeville was rehabilitated and reconfigured as British historian and writer of fiction, in the approved novelistic sense — worthy of a place beside Chaucer in the literary pantheon.

The concluding essays, by Liam Semler and by Geraldine Barnes and Adrian Mitchell, examine the material and cognitive apprehension of the world in the early modern era. Liam Semler demonstrates how, for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century aristocratic European collectors, the amassing of curiosities of the natural and material world offered symbolic opportunities for world dominion through knowledge of its individual corporeal wonders. The practices of inventory and antique-work can be seen to extend, Semler argues, to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century narrative and cartographic description of the New World as a place to be apprehended materially as much as mentally. The organisation of the world in the early-modern period can therefore be viewed in terms of antique-work or *grotesquerie*, which arranges disparate visual components to define and assert rank and status — most notably by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I — as occupants of the central point in a 'cosmos of fantastical luxury and imagination'.

Seventeenth-century cosmographers typically divided the world into four known parts: Europe, Asia, Africa, America. Some had a fifth: the South Land / *Terra Australis Incognita*. Columbus, Magellan, and Drake had uncovered the New World and proved the existence of the Antipodes, but the very existence of the Southern Continent or *Terra Australis Incognita* had been contested in the medieval period and still existed primarily in the European imagination. Even Mandeville didn't get that far; his voyage ends in the Far East. That, too, was as close as Drake got. In the post-Renaissance world, *Terra Australis* was the new New World — and a region where classical, medieval, and Renaissance cartographical and geographical tradition still resonated. Although William Dampier aligned the authorial Prefaces of his *A New Voyage Round The World* (1697) and *A Voyage to New Holland* (1703) with the scientific aims and methodology of the Royal Society, key points in both these narratives recall pre-modern concepts of cosmography.

Dampier regarded the high point of his career as a navigator and explorer his discovery and naming of the luxuriant island of New Britain, which took him close to regions which medieval tradition had situated beyond the reach of travellers from this world. In their essay, Barnes and Mitchell propose that Dampier's idealised vision of New Britain and its natives in *A Voyage to New Holland* on one level exemplifies that intersection of pre-modern notions with the ‘new’ science which constitutes his personal cosmography and, on another, affirms the Elizabethan faith in commerce as the medium through which negotiated transaction becomes the qualitative measure of the racial other. Resonances of medieval beliefs about the nature and location of the terrestrial paradise constitute a palimpsest to *A Voyage to New Holland*, in which the principles of the new science become circumscribed within pre-modern traditions of cosmography. Which confirms the book of Ecclesiastes is right again: there is indeed no new thing under the sun.

* * *

Keats’s charmed magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn, are just one formulation of the sense of enchantment, romance even, that the realm of possibility holds for us. Who knows what we may discover in our reading, or in our travelling — what we may see, what we may find, what we may learn? What the literature of travel and discovery provides us with above all else is testimony to the powerful drag of the imagination. Not the fanciful — though that is what excites Keats, as much as the adhesiveness of misty picturesque medievalism. The drag, rather, of the imagination which finds its expectations both met and challenged by what is discovered; and especially this sense of challenge. How can we appropriate what is new to us, how do we (as we say) make sense of it? We are thrown back on to our own powers of observation, memory, reflection. We have to stretch what we already know to encounter the unknown, so that the familiar

is itself re-adjusted to accommodate this new extension of experience. The effect works in two zones of our experience as we try to forge some kind of bridge between them. And we can be doing that by actually meeting the experience, or we can meet it in a written record, if the literature is competent enough to present us with the dimensions of the new: the new then, the new for us now.

Bede’s Mapping of England

DIANE SPEED

Modern historians of mapping have assumed a wide understanding of what ‘map’ might mean. With regard to medieval texts, the idea is understood to embrace a range of genres that includes, for example, world maps, zonal diagrams, land surveys, itineraries, street plans, and architectural drawings.[1] At the same time, it may refer to either visual or verbal texts.[2]

Bede’s name has been invoked in scholarly discussion of medieval maps in connection with his *De locis sanctis* (*On the Holy Places*) and his *De temporum ratione* (*On the Calculation of Time*), but thus far his *magnum opus* has remained outside such discussion. This paper, however, will argue that mapping is central to the meaning of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) and substantially informs the narrative structure which advances that meaning.[3] The respective associations of *De locis sanctis* and *De temporum ratione* with mapping provide a starting-point for this

---

[1] See Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger J.P. Dain, *English Maps: A History*, British Library Studies in Map History 2 (London: British Library 1999) 1–5; P.D.A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London: British Library 1991) 7–15. Delano-Smith and Dain (248 n. 1) point out that the liberalisation of the definition of ‘map’ was formally initiated by J.B. Harley and David Woodward in *The History of Cartography, 1: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1987) xvi.

[2] See Harvey, *Medieval Maps*, 7–9.

[3] All references are to *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon 1969) from which both Latin and English quotations are taken.

argument, since they share relevant discourses with the *Historia*.

De locis sanctis had its origins in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem made in the late seventh century by Arculf, a bishop of Gaul. On his way home he was blown off course and was received for a time by Adamnan, Abbot of Iona, to whom he described his travels. Soon afterwards, between 686 and 688, based on the notes he had taken, Adamnan wrote a guide-book to the Holy Places, *De locis sanctis*; to illustrate the verbal text he added ground-plans of four particular sites in the Holy Land, copied from sketches Arculf had made for him: the church at Jacob's well, the church at the Place of the Ascension, the basilica on Mount Sion, and the building complex on Mount Golgotha. In 702–03 Bede abridged Adamnan's text to produce his own *De locis sanctis*, and copied the four drawings into it. The plans appear in manuscripts of both works from the ninth century, and are treated as maps in the scholarly literature.[4]

Later on, in the *Historia*, completed in 731,[5] Bede adds to his record of this encounter between Arculf and Adamnan (V.15) short but precisely detailed accounts of the sites of the Lord's birth, passion, resurrection, and ascension, and the tombs of the patriarchs (V.16–17). These accounts he

[4] For the primary texts see *Adamnan's De Locis Sanctis*, ed. Denis Meehan, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 3 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1958) and Bede, *De Locis Sanctis*, J.-P. Migne ed., Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina (Paris, 1844–91) 94 cols 1179–90. Bede's abridgement also makes use of material from sources other than Adamnan: Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, 506–07 n. 1. See also J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe,' Jarrow Lecture 1962, in *Bede and His World*, pref. Michael Lapidge, 2 vols (Aldershot: Variorum 1994) 1: *The Jarrow Lectures 1958–1978*, 76–78; David Parsons, 'Books and Buildings: Architectural Description Before and After Bede,' Jarrow Lecture 1987, in *Bede and His World* 2: *The Jarrow Lectures 1979–1993*, 733–39; Delano-Smith and Dain, *English Maps*, 9–11 and 249 n. 11; Harvey, *Medieval Maps*, 12–13. Date of Adamnan's text: Delano-Smith and Dain, 9; date of Bede's text: Delano-Smith and Dain,10.

[5] Date: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, xvii.

introduces as extracts from Adamnan's text, although their immediate source is in fact his own earlier abridgement.[6] Adamnan's text he recommends as a useful resource for those who can know about such distant places only from books (V.15) — that is, he himself regards the descriptions of the sites, presented as they might be encountered by the traveller, as verbal maps to be visualised and followed in the mind's eye. In this they have a function similar to the ground-plans in the earlier texts. If Bede's awareness of the principle of verbal mapping is thus plainly evident in one part of the *Historia*, it will *a priori* be promising to investigate its presence in other parts.

De temporum ratione, produced in 725, is a development of work found in earlier forms in his *De natura rerum* (*On the Nature of Things*) and *De temporibus* (*On Times*), both from *ca* 703.[7] Bede's *De temporum ratione* became central to a *computus* tradition that flourished during the medieval period. *Computus* texts are concerned with the measurement of time in the context of the cosmos, with special reference to the calculation of future dates for Easter. In the field of cosmology, considerations of time and space are interdependent, and illustrations in the *computus* texts sometimes take the form of world maps with relevant indications added. Bede himself supplied no such visual aids alongside his verbal argument, but they were sometimes introduced into his work by subsequent copyists.[8] The

---

[6] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 508 n. 2.

[7] All three texts are edited by Charles W. Jones in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols): *De natura rerum*, 123A (1980) 173–234; *De temporibus*, 123C (1975) 580–611; *De temporum ratione* 123B (1977). For dates see see Wesley M. Stevens, 'Bede's Scientific Achievement,' Jarrow Lecture 1985, *Bede and His World* 2, 648.

[8] For the illustrated *computus* tradition and Bede's centrality see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World*, British Library Studies in Map History 1 (London: British Library 1997) 52–96. For Bede's use of existing materials and his own contribution see Stevens, 'Bede's Scientific Achievement', *passim*.

potential for visualisation in Bede's verbal descriptions and instructions, that is, was realised by medieval readers in actual mapping, with the implication that the verbal text itself was effectively verbal mapping.

The calculation of Easter emerges as a major discourse in the *Historia*, and this is discussed below as it is arguably related to Bede's mapping of England. The immediate and obvious manifestation of *computus* mapping in the *Historia*, however, comes at the very beginning.

Book I, chapter 1, opens with an explanation of the island's position in the world with reference to mainland Europe, on the one hand, and the oceans beyond, on the other:

> BRITTANIA Oceani insula, cui quondam Albion nomen fuit, inter septentrionem et occidentem locata est, Germaniae Galliae Hispaniae, maximis Europae partibus, multo interuallo aduersa.
>
> (BRITAIN, once called Albion, is an island of the ocean and lies to the north-west, being opposite Germany, Gaul, and Spain, which form the greater part of Europe, though at a considerable distance from them.)

This is followed by a note on the length, breadth, and circumference of Britain, followed in turn by an indication of the points where Britain and Europe most nearly approach each other: to the south lies Belgic Gaul, from which the shortest journey, of fifty miles, is between Gaul's Boulogne (*Gessoricaum*), in the land of the Morini, and Britain's Richborough (*Rutubi Portus*). The explanation of Britain in terms of its facing the continent then gives way to a note of what lies on the other side of the island:

> A tergo autem, unde Oceano infinito patet, Orcadas insulas habet.
>
> (Behind the island, where it lies open to the boundless ocean, are the Orkney islands.)

This account assumes the reader's ability to understand directions and distances very much as in a visual map, locating the relationship of the places mentioned to each other on a plan in the mind's eye. The idea that Britain is marginal to continental Europe, and that the ocean not only surrounds islands but lies beyond all land, immediately suggests a typical world map of the so-called T-O kind, which sets the three known land masses within a circle, the O, whose bounding circumference is the ocean. The East is at the top, Asia occupies the upper half of the circle, Europe the lower left quadrant, and Africa the lower right quadrant, the three separated from each other by bodies of water. The Mediterranean is, as it were, the upright stroke of the T, the Don is effectively the left horizontal stroke, and the Nile serves as the right horizontal stroke; Jerusalem often marks the approximate centre of the world. Britain, Ireland, and other further islands appear near the edge of the lower left quadrant.[9] English examples include the Anglo-Saxon, or Cotton, World Map, from *ca* 1050, found in a manuscript with *computus* material, and the large Hereford World Map, painted on parchment, from the late thirteenth century.[10]

---

[9] For the tradition of T-O maps see, for example, Harvey, *Medieval Maps*, 18–37; P.D.A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (London: British Library 1996) 20–39; Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 4–5.

[10] For reproductions of these maps, see Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 19 and 29, respectively; Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 28 and facing 1, respectively; Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 8 and Plate VII, respectively. Detailed sections of the Hereford World Map, together with text and translation of all the inscriptions, are provided by Scott D. Westrem, *The Hereford Map: a Transcription and Translation of the Legends with Commentary*, Terrarum Orbis 1 (Turnhout: Brepols 2001).

Although there is no extant world map specifically from Bede's period, those from later periods are thought to represent a continuing tradition that went back to Roman times.[11] The oldest extant detailed world map, however, is not much later than Bede, and it is clearly related to the T-O type. This is the Albi sketch map, from the second half of the eighth century, produced in Spain or south-western France, and found in a manuscript collection of geographical excerpts, where it is placed near the geographical chapter (I.2) of the early-fifth-century world history of Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* (*Seven Books of History against the Pagans*).[12]

The geographical chapter in Orosius, recognised as an important influence on the development of the T-O map,[13] is also recognised as the main source of Bede's opening passage.[14] It is not impossible that Bede was familiar with actual T-O maps as well as with Orosius, but either way it is clear that his *Historia* begins with a substantial verbal map reminiscent of the T-O type.

In repeating Orosius's advice on the nearest continental port for prospective travellers to Britain (*transmeantibus*),

---

[11] Scholars' particular views vary, but there seems to be consensus in principle: see Harvey, *Medieval Maps*, 19–25; Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 22–27; Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 11.

[12] *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversum Paganos libri VII*, ed. C. Zangemeister (Leipzig: Teubner 1889). For the Albi map see Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 32, where the T-O pattern is unmistakable but not so identified; Edson refers to the T-O type later as emerging from the Carolingian renaissance (164).

[13] Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*, 31–35. The ongoing authority of Orosius in world maps is illustrated by the reference to his history as a source on the Hereford Map: Westrem, *The Hereford Map*, 6–7.

[14] Bede also makes some use of Pliny, Solinus, and Gildas in this chapter: his sources are identified in the annotations and notes to the chapter in *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica*, ed. Charles Plummer, 2 vols (1896; rpt Oxford: Clarendon 1961) and accepted by Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 14–15, and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon 1988) 6–10.

Bede makes clear the continental, or Roman, perspective of the narrating voice. Britain as land and text comes into cognisance on a journey from Gaul, the western limit of the Roman Empire before the conquest of Britain itself. The opening sentences have given Britain position and dimension, but it is only once the island is gazed upon by travellers from the continent that it acquires meaning as potential human habitation. This factor, established at the outset, remains the assumed position of the text throughout. The same factor also frames the whole text that follows as a kind of travel diary, or memorial itinerary, which will lead the reader as traveller through an historical landscape to the end of the *Historia*, when he or she will join the Bedan narrator in the present time and place from which he has spoken, from memory, all along.

Adopting the traveller's gaze, the reader is shown the natural resources of the land that make human habitation viable, and a summary note of that habitation is provided in the comment that the land used to have twenty-eight noble cities and other fortified places. This further strengthens the effect of mapping the land, for one way in which world maps like the Cotton and Hereford Maps declare their concern with the inhabited, and especially civilised, world is through miniature drawings of cities or castles at relevant sites. Human experience of the land is likewise assumed in the scientific explanation of seasonal variations in daylight that follows and further associates the mapping of Britain with *computus*.

The rest of the first chapter is concerned with the position and properties of Ireland and the settlement of Britain by the Britons, Picts, and Irish (*Scotti*), in turn. No motive is attributed to these Celtic immigrations, and there is no concern for the lives of these ancient peoples beyond the fact of their settling the land. In this sense the first chapter may be regarded as pre-history.

History proper may be said to begin in chapter 2, as the unspecified travellers of chapter 1 are traced back to one named Roman general who pioneers the journey to Britain from the land of the Morini which, the reader is reminded,

allows for the shortest crossing — the general information of chapter 1 is now individualised in his personal experience. Until the arrival of Julius Caesar, Britain has remained unvisited and unknown (*inaccessa atque incognita*). Britain has existed, has even been inhabited, but it is textually insignificant until the advent of the first traveller, this man from Rome. The mapping factor thus constructs the overall narratorial point of view; both actual and textual significance are available only in terms of Roman perception, which is the assumed inheritance of both narrator and reader.

The rest of Book I continues to present Britain as meaningful only insofar as it is viewed from the continent. In that situation its primary identity is as the other to an established, focal entity, and as such it is largely undifferentiated within. Particular locations in Britain are mentioned from time to time — Caesar, for example, marches to the Thames (I.2), Alban's martyrdom occurs at St Albans (I.7: *Verulamium*), the Britons build defensive walls in the North (I.12) and later win a victory at Mount Badon (I.16), Gregory's missionary Augustine arrives at Thanet in Kent in 597 (I.25) — but Britain is essentially one Britain, inhabited by the British collectively, and other to Rome; the Picts and the Irish are relegated to outlying areas, where they are geographically and culturally marginal to the central space inhabited by the Britons. The treatment of time reinforces the treatment of place: the narrative of Book I moves across six hundred years or so at a great rush, specifying but scarcely realising meaningful intervals of time, even as the space of the land is scarcely distinguished in its parts.

In the course of Book I Britain is colonised from Rome in two senses, first by the Empire, then by the Church, which retrospectively defines the Empire as secular, and the narrative travels back and forth between the secular and the religious in this Book as it does through the rest of the *Historia*. In Book I the oneness of Britain is articulated under both forms of colonisation.

Christianity first comes to the land in the time of a British king, Lucius: he writes to the pope asking to be made a

Christian, his request is granted, and the Britons receive the faith as a national group (I.4). The early Church in Britain is presented as simply sharing in the life of the universal Church. It is the general persecution of Christians under Diocletian that leads to the martyrdom of Alban (I.6–7) and Britain is invaded by the universal Arian heresy (I.8). Even when Britain becomes the source of a heresy that spreads through the rest of the world, through the teaching of the Briton Pelagius (I.10), the British Church itself is infected from abroad through a follower of Pelagius and has to seek help from the bishops of Gaul to combat the heresy in its ranks (I.17).

The pagan Germanic races who arrive in the fifth century are said to be from specific tribes and areas in Germany — the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes — and the respective areas of Britain in which they settle are named, thereby establishing the origin of the separate kingdoms in the writer's present; but at this stage the invaders are presented as acting in concert, with the one general effect of driving the British themselves to outlying areas of the land (I.15). On the eve of the second coming of Christianity from Rome — this time to the pagan English — the British pass into the background, an undifferentiated group in the generalised space of the land that bears their name (I.22).

The first stage of Augustine's mission takes place in Æthelberht's kingdom of Kent, and Augustine's headquarters are established in Canterbury (I.25). The Kentish, we have been told (I.15), are descended from the Jutes, yet Pope Gregory makes Augustine archbishop of the English as a whole (I.27: *archiepiscopus genti Anglorum*). At this point, the Kentish people are metonymous for the English as a whole, rather than literally constituting one part of that nation. Augustine is sent the *pallium* as a sign that he has authority to consecrate other bishops (I.29), and this foreshadows the sequential colonisation of individual parts of the land for the Roman Catholic Church in the ongoing narrative.

Britain remains a generally undifferentiated, outlying, area on a world map up to the last chapter of Book I. At that

point, however, the text swings away from Kent to Northumbria and its powerful but non-Christian king, Æthelfrith (I.34). The introduction of another Anglo-Saxon scene retrospectively redefines the Kentish scene as subnational rather than national. Through the remaining four books of the *Historia* Bede holds up the ideal of one England in which various kings and peoples work together in peace as members of the nationwide Roman Catholic Church, but he negotiates a textual journey through a mix of several distinct subnational agendas.

Having been introduced as a subnational entity, however, Northumbria is temporarily left aside at the beginning of Book II so that a new referential structure may be established. The realms of Kent, Northumbria, and the rest are not just racial groupings with petty kings as their leaders, they are missionary territories to be absorbed into the centralised Church. The narrative opens with a Life of Pope Gregory and an account of his determination to bring Christianity to the 'angelic' people of England (II.1: *non Angli sed angeli*), thereby affirming papal authority for the conversion of the English and a Roman definition of England's identity. The existing British Church is now unauthorised, its members heretical (II.2: *perfidi*), and it is thereby placed outside the missionary endeavour as either partner or target. The main practice which defines the British as heretics is their failure to accept the Roman practice for dating Easter, which becomes the dominant criterion for full membership in the Roman Catholic Church of the *Historia*; their main crime is their failure to preach Christianity to the pagan English, which necessitates the new mission from Rome and gives rise to the text that follows.

The new ecclesiastical structure is enacted with the appointment of bishops for the East Saxons and for Kent itself (II.3) and, when in due course Augustine is succeeded in Canterbury by Laurence (II.4), the principle of orderly succession is articulated. As appropriate for an ecclesiastical history, the text marks the progression of time in part by announcing each new ecclesiastical leader of the nation in turn, that is, each new archbishop of Canterbury (II.7, II.8,

II.18, III.20, III.29, IV.1, V.8, V.23), along with the regional bishops; the first archbishop of Canterbury to be obeyed by the whole English Church is Theodore (IV.1). The secular rulers who most nearly approximate to over-kings are, by contrast, merely listed together, prospectively, when the death of Æthelberht is noted (II.5). As far as Bede could have known, it would be ecclesiastical rather than secular power that would ultimately hold the English nation together. The point is made textually as the monastic narrating voice moves from one kingdom to another, as if to knit them all together in a unified vision through the power of the pen.

The conversion of the South well under way (II.3–8), the narrative shifts back to the North, recording the death of the Northumbrian king Æthelfrith (II.9). Under the next king, Edwin, Northumbria is converted (II.9–13), and a second archbishopric is established at York (II.14, 17), so that the potentially Christian nation is defined as extending south to north, from the Kentish coast to the Northumbrian borders. Graphically speaking, the rest of the conversion process is a filling-in of places in-between. In Book II, the East Saxons (II.3) and the East Angles (II.15) are also converted. Many people are converted in the course of Book III — the West Saxons (III.7), the Middle Angles (III.21), and the Mercians (III.24).[15] The last pagans are converted in Book IV — the South Saxons (IV.13) and those on the Isle of Wight (IV.16). The conversions are punctuated by occasional apostasies, but these pass. The pagan Picts beyond English territories are also converted (III.4).

Conversion on its own, however, does not achieve instant unity in the land. Two other factors emerge as particularly significant: the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular authorities, and the acceptance of one practice for the dating of Easter.

---

[15] These two groups are represented as distinct, with Peada as king of the Middle Angles and Penda as king of the Mercians and evidently over-king of the Middle Angles: see Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 278–79 n. 2.

The mapping of the Christian nation is seen to involve agreement and mutual assistance between Church and State. From the start, co-operation of the secular with the ecclesiastical authorities is recounted approvingly. Just as, for example, Æthelberht of Kent gives appropriate assistance to Augustine's mission, so Edwin of Northumbria works closely with Paulinus (II.14–15), Oswald of Northumbria with Aidan (III.3), Cynegisl of the West Saxons with Birinus (III.7), Sigeberht of the East Anglians with Felix (III.18), and both Sigeberht of the East Saxons and Oethelwald of Northumbria with Cedd (III.22 and III.23, respectively). The king provides the bishop with practical support, the bishop exercises spiritual direction of the king, and the implication is that the system works best when the Church holds the ultimate authority.

Within the basically Christian nation, the establishment of the centralised authority of the Roman Catholic Church under the pope and his deputies, the bishops, is mapped above all in the progressive acceptance of the contemporary Roman practice for the dating of Easter. The alternative is the Celtic practice, observed amongst the British and the English who come under their influence. Early warnings delivered to the British and the Irish by the Roman missionary bishops (II.2 and II.4, respectively) and to the Irish by the pope himself (II.19) foreshadow a looming crisis which is both brought to a head (III.3) and resolved (III.25) through the actions of Christian kings who submit to the Church. It is significant that the issue comes to a head textually in the realm, Northumbria, that lies furthest from Canterbury and, likewise, that it should be resolved definitively in the same realm, Northumbria, from which the authoritative narratorial voice emanates.

When Oswald comes to the throne of Northumbria, he asks the Irish by whom he was baptised while in exile to send his English subjects a missionary bishop, and the man sent is Aidan (III.3). Oswald's pious request is logical enough, given his background, and Aidan carries out his mission in the most admirable way, except that he follows the Celtic practice of dating Easter (III.17). The issue is finally debated

by clergymen representing the two sides at the Synod of Whitby, in the presence of King Oswiu and his son Alhfrith, who have been taught opposing practices. Oswiu is seeking agreement one way or the other, on the grounds that those who serve one God should observe the one rule, and he eventually declares the Roman practice best because he has been shown that it is based on the authority of St Peter and ultimately Christ himself. The episode demonstrates the importance of agreement between secular and ecclesiastical authority for the good of the State, while at the same time it articulates clearly the precedence over the State that should be accorded the Roman Catholic Church. Those who choose to continue in error physically remove themselves from Roman Northumbria and return to Ireland (III.26). The importance of the issue is emphasised through continuing references to it, notably concerning the later acceptance of the Roman practice by some of the British (V.15, 18) and Irish (V.22, 24), and the Picts as a whole (V.21). With his report of this last event Bede reproduces a long letter from Ceolfrith detailing to the Pictish king, Nechtan, the reasons for the rightness of the Roman practice. Acceptance of authority precedes full understanding of its rationale, in a kind of mimesis of faith itself. A comparable articulation of authority has been observed above, in the way the outer limits of the authorised Church of England were mapped first, to define the further missionary territories they contained.

Book IV is broadly concerned with the consolidation of the Church in England. Special efforts are made to improve learning in the Church (IV.2, 18), and the threat of heresy from abroad is now resolved by the English themselves without outside help, in Theodore's synod of Hatfield (IV.17). But this Book is especially rich in accounts of personal saintliness and the miraculous experiences of a number of men, women, and children, in various parts of the land (IV.3, 7–11, 14, 19–20, 22–32). These accounts confirm the presence and illustrate the benefits of a well-established, living, Church; they expound and exemplify the nature of the earthly Church as the collective of individual

Christians; and they show that this Church is in communion with the eternal kingdom. In mapping terms, the land and its peoples are identified as the Church, in a kind of foreshadowing of the Apocalyptic union of the new Jerusalem and the Lamb (Revelation 21).

One topic that distinguishes Book V is mission in a new guise: now it is initiated by English clergy who go to work variously amongst the Picts and the Irish who follow wrong paths (V.9) and the still-pagan Germanic peoples on the continent (V.9–11). In a sense, this represents a reversal of the perspective of the earlier parts of the *Historia*, where Britain and its peoples had significance only insofar as they were gazed on successively by the continental Empire and Church. But Rome still holds the key to salvation; it is not only from Rome that authority is derived but also to Rome that earnest faces turn. When Caedwalla, king of the West Saxons, and Cenred, king of Mercia, renounce their thrones and seek the life of holy men in Rome itself (V.7 and V.19, respectively), the implication is that they have chosen the better part.

Having become known,[16] Britain participates actively in the universal life that both unites continent and island without attribution of marginality to either and invokes awareness of a further plane of existence, from whose perspective all else is other, and one. This further plane of existence is the second topic that distinguishes Book V, manifest in several detailed visions of heaven and hell (V.12–14). Along with the narrator, the reader glimpses the spiritual cosmos beyond the physical cosmos, and understands, if not fully, that England is ultimately significant because it is gazed upon by its Creator. Bede's account of Adamnan's account of Arculf's account of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem (V.15–17) is a reminder both of the historical foundation of the Church and of its eternal destination.

[16] Cp. Psalm 139.1–6, 1 Corinthians 13.12.

The contents of the whole *Historia* may now be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY