This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. J.T. Palmer and M. Gabriele, on 13 August 2018.

Available online: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429950421>

CHAPTER FOUR

Apocalypse and Reform in Bede's *De die iudicii*

Peter Darby, University of Nottingham

Eschatology and reform have both emerged as prominent themes in recent research on the writings of Bede (ca. 673 – 735), a monk at the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. One of the most significant historiographical developments in the study of Bede in the past 50 years has been a widespread appreciation of his commitment to effecting change within the Church. The foundations of this shift were established in Alan Thacker's essay of 1983, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," which considered Bede's prose *Uita sancti Cuthberti*, *Historia ecclesiastica* and *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* in light of passages selected from his exegetical and homiletic writings.¹ The enduring value of Thacker's essay is that it demonstrates that Bede's desire for improvement was expressed at various different moments in time across several literary genres. A series of influential studies of Bede's exegesis by Scott DeGregorio subsequently detected strong reformist impulses in Bede's mature commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah, Old Testament books concerned with the reform

¹ Alan T. Thacker, "Bede's Ideal of Reform," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, eds. Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough & Roger Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 130-53.

of the Israelite people and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.² Another important contribution was made in 2008 by Julia Barrow, who pointed out that the changes called for in Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* are variously framed as appeals to ancient Church traditions, documentary precedents, or Patristic teachings, even in cases where such recommendations appear to be Bedan innovations.³ The emergence of reform as a substantial theme has had a significant impact on Bede scholarship, fuelling a complete reappraisal of how his relationship with the world beyond the cloister is understood. No longer seen as passive, uncritical and withdrawn, the “New Bede,” as defined by DeGregorio, is characterised a vocal advocate for ecclesiastical change and a forceful critic of the world around him.⁴

² Scott DeGregorio, “*Nostrorum Socordiam Temporum*: The Reforming Impulse of Bede’s Later Exegesis,” *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 107–22; “Bede’s *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Reform of the Northumbrian Church,” *Speculum* 79 (2004): 1–25; “Monasticism and Reform in Book IV of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010): 673–87; “Visions of Reform: Bede’s Later Writings in Context,” in *Bede and the Future*, eds. Peter Darby and Faith Wallis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 207–32.

³ Julia S. Barrow, “Ideas and Applications of Reform,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c.600–c.1100*, eds. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 345–62, with discussion of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* at 355–6.

⁴ Scott DeGregorio “Introduction: The New Bede,” in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 1–10.

Bede's longstanding interest in eschatology is well established.⁵ The monks of Wearmouth worshipped in a church covered in paintings of scenes from the Book of Revelation, placed there – Bede tells us – to remind people to scrutinise their consciences with due rigour.⁶ Bede was greatly interested in end-time scenarios but always vehemently opposed to predictions concerning the timing of the apocalypse; indeed, a letter of 708 reveals that Northumbrian monks frequently discussed how many years remained in the present age. Such speculations annoyed Bede because he viewed them as being based upon fanciful interpretations of Scripture.⁷ Through frequent copying after his death Bede's writings became part of the Christian Latin cultural mainstream, with some of his most popular texts discussing eschatological matters at length (*De temporum ratione*, *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *Expositio Apocalypseos*).⁸ This essay investigates how Bede's interest in

⁵ Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (2nd edn, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 1xiii–1xxi and 353–75; Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Faith Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1–85; Celia Chazelle, “Debating the End Times at Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 80 (2015): 212–32.

⁶ Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 6 (adornment of Wearmouth), trans. and ed. Christopher Grocock and Ian N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36–7. For discussion see: Paul Meyvaert, “Bede and the Church Paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 63–77.

⁷ Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14–15, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), 624–5.

⁸ *De temporum ratione*, witnessed in 146 medieval manuscripts, was Bede's second most popular work overall and the one copied most frequently in the Carolingian Age. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, which includes expositions of 1 and 2 Peter, is witnessed in more than 100

the apocalypse overlaps with his reformist ideals through a detailed study of *De die iudicii*, a hexameter poem witnessed in more than 40 medieval manuscripts.⁹ It will first discuss the poem's circumstances of composition, before considering where it sits within the tradition of Latin eschatological verse. Next, the apocalypticism of *De die iudicii* will be assessed with reference to Bede's wider corpus of writings. Finally, *De die iudicii* will be examined in light of Bede's interest in reform.

Circumstances of Composition

Most scholars who have had reason to comment on the issue have accepted *De die iudicii* as a genuine work of Bede's.¹⁰ Nevertheless, some lingering doubts about the matter persist.¹¹

medieval manuscripts, and marginally fewer copies of Bede's commentary on Revelation are extant. Figures from: Joshua A. Westgard, "Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and Beyond," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201–15, at 211.

⁹ Bede, *De die iudicii* [hereafter *DDI*], ed. Jean Fraipont, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), 439–44. On the transmission of *DDI* see: Michael Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," in *La trasmissione dei testi latini del Medioevo / Mediaeval Latin Texts and their Transmission*, vol. 3, eds. Paolo Chiesa and Lucia Castaldi (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008), 44–137, with stemma codicum at 137. Patrizia Lendinara, "The *Versus de die iudicii*: its Circulation and Use as a School Text in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *Foundations of Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Rolf H. Bremmer Jr & Kees Dekker (Paris: Peeters, 2007), 175–212, provides a detailed list of manuscripts at 193–212.

¹⁰ E.g. M. L. W. Laistner and Henry H. King, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1943), 127; Leslie Whitbread, "After Bede: The Influence and

The other serious contender is Alcuin of York, an accomplished poet and scholar who died in the year 804.¹² *De die iudicii* is preserved alongside a poem attributed to Alcuin in one extant manuscript.¹³ Additionally there are points of overlap between *De die iudicii* and Alcuin's writings, most notably the use of the phrase *vive deo felix* in the epilogue, a construction that is used nowhere else in Bede's corpus but which crops up several times in material connected to Alcuin.¹⁴ However, any similarities between *De die iudicii* and Alcuin's writings (for

Dissemination of his Doomsday Verses," 32–3; George Hardin Brown, *Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 90–2.

¹¹ Janie Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 72–4; Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 281, note 671; Patrizia Lendinara, "Alcuino e il *De die iudicii*," *Miscellanea di studi in memoria di Cataldo Roccato Palermo* = *Pan 18–19* (Palermo: Università degli studi di Palermo, 2001): 303–24, and "Translating Doomsday: *De die iudicii* and its Old English Translation (*Judgment Day II*)," in *Beowulf and Beyond*, eds. Hans Sauer and Renate Bauer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang AG, 2007), 17–67, at 17 and 40, n. 3 (although cf. "Circulation and Use," 176–7: '*DDI* ... will likely be restored to Bede's canon').

¹² On Alcuin's life and career see Donald A. Bullough, "Alcuin [Albinus, Flaccus] (c.740–804)," *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and his *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). An argument in favour of Alcuin's authorship of *DDI* is summarised by Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, 72–4.

¹³ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 89 (Salzburg, s. ixⁱⁿ), f. 1r–2r. Date and provenance: Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," 133. See further: Whitbread, "After Bede," 251; Lendinara, "Circulation and Use," 193.

¹⁴ *DDI*, 161; Alcuin, *Carmina*, 12, 28, and 101, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), at pp. 237, 247 and 328; Alcuin, *Epistolae*, 29, 65, 95, 102, 252 and 262, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH, Epp. 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), at pp. 71, 109, 140, 149, 408

example, their shared use of the unusual adjective *celsithronus*, or the constructions *tacito sub murmure*, *fessa senectus*, or *pia virgo Maria*) can be explained by Alcuin's knowledge of the poem and the high regard in which it was evidently held at York during Alcuin's formative years.¹⁵

The earliest manuscript copies of *De die iudicii* date from the ninth century.¹⁶ The poem often appears alongside Bedan material, and he is typically credited as its author under

and 420. The phrase *vive deo felix* was used in a letter to Lull by 'Koaena', a master at York, and also by Hincmar of Rheims, Walafrid Strabo, Rabanus Maurus, Sedulius Scottus, and Theodulf of Orléans. See further: Lendinara, "Alcuino e il *De die iudicii*," 312–15; Steen, *Verse and Virtuosity*, 73; Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 87–8.

¹⁵ *Tacito sub murmure*: DDI, 12; Alcuin, *Carmina*, 9, p. 234 and *Epistolae*, 310, p. 479. *Fessa senectus*: DDI, 129; Alcuin, *Carmina*, 9, p. 231; compare Lucan, *Bellum ciuile* (*Pharsalia*), 2, verse 128, ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Leipzig: Teubner, 1988), p. 29; also Bede, *De temporibus*, 16, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), p. 601, etc. *Pia virgo Maria*: DDI, 148; Alcuin, *Carmina*, 89 (p. 310), 109 (p. 338), 110 (p. 341); also Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina*, 8.3, ed. Friedrich Leo, MGH Auct. Ant. 4. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), p. 182 (cited by Bede in *De arte metrica*, 12, ed. Calvin B. Kendall, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), p. 117). On *celsithronus*, which is also used in Bede's *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, see: Michael Lapidge, "Bede and the *Versus de die iudicii*," in *Nova de veteribus: mittel- und neulateinische Studien für Paul Gerhard Schmidt*, eds. Andreas Bihrer & Elisabeth Stein (Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2004), 103–11, at 105. A great many additional parallels between DDI and Alcuin's oeuvre are presented in Lendinara, "Alcuino e il *De die iudicii*."

¹⁶ Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," 131–3.

a title such as “*versus Bedae presbiteri de die iudicii*.”¹⁷ Furthermore, Michael Lapidge points out that no manuscript directly attributes *De die iudicii* to any poet other than Bede.¹⁸ *Judgement Day II*, an Old English translation of *De die iudicii*, clearly identifies Bede as the author of the poem it is based upon.¹⁹ The version of the Latin poem featured in the *Historia regum* is similarly credited to him.²⁰ Another observation in support of Bede’s authorship of *De die iudicii* is that the poem exhibits techniques and qualities praised in *De arte metrica*, a guide to the composition of Latin verse that Bede produced for his students.²¹ There is also a great deal of commonality between the apocalyptic vision set out in the poem and Bede’s various other writings, as will become clear below.

Lapidge has settled the issue of the poem’s authorship by conducting a detailed analysis of the poem’s metrical patterning.²² This study reveals strong parallels between *De die iudicii* and the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, a poem in 979 hexameters that was indisputably

¹⁷ For example, the tenth-century manuscript London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A I displays the following rubric in red (f. 51r): ‘INCIPIUNT VERSUS BEDAE PRESBITERI DE DIE IUDICII’. Bede is named as author of the poem in 31 of the 42 manuscripts catalogued by Lendinara: “Circulation and Use,” 182.

¹⁸ Lapidge, “Bede and the ‘*Versus de die iudicii*’,” 104.

¹⁹ Graham D. Caie, *The Old English Poem “Judgement Day II”* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 1, 32. On *Judgement Day II* see further: Patrizia Lendinara, “Translating Doomsday,” and “Circulation and Use,” 186–91.

²⁰ *Historia regum*, 26, ed. Thomas Arnold, *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: vol. II. Historia regum, Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores* 75 (London: Longman, 1885), 23–7.

²¹ Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 190–1.

²² Lapidge, “Bede and the ‘*Versus de die iudicii*’.”

written by Bede.²³ Hexameter verses are constructed through the alignment of six metrical units, or “feet.” The two main types of feet are dactyls (one long syllable followed by two short syllables) and spondees (two consecutive long syllables). As Andy Orchard explains, “since the fifth foot is almost invariably a dactyl in Anglo Latin verse, and the sixth foot must be either a spondee or a trochee, in practice metrical variation in the Anglo-Latin hexameter can be measured in the first four feet.”²⁴ Sixteen different combinations of dactyl (=D) and spondee (=S) are possible in the first four feet of a hexameter, and careful analysis reveals an author’s preference for certain combinations over others. Orchard’s study of Bede’s Anglo-Saxon predecessor Aldhelm (c. 639–709) reveals a strong tendency towards the pattern DSSS, used in 29.54% of his hexameters; this configuration was also the one most commonly used in the *Aeneid*, although Vergil employed it far less frequently than Aldhelm (14.39%).²⁵ Lapidge’s analysis reveals that the most popular construction used in *De die iudicii* is, however, DDSS (20.25%), which matches the most prevalent formation in the *Vita metrica S.*

²³ Bede, *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, ed. Werner Jaeger, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, Palaestra 198 (Leipzig: Mayer and Müller, 1935). Bede identifies himself as the author of the metrical *Life* in the poem’s prologue. Additionally, the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* is mentioned in Bede’s autobiographical list of writings in *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V. 24, ed. by Michael Lapidge and trans. by Paolo Chiesa, *Storia degli inglesi* (Rome; Milan: Mondadori, 2008–2010), ii. 482.

²⁴ Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 246. As Orchard points out at p. 85, Bede forbids the use of a spondee in the fifth foot in *De arte metrica*.

²⁵ Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 84–6. For the *Aeneid*, see George E. Duckworth, *Vergil and Classical Hexameter Poetry: A Study in Metrical Variety* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 157 (table 1).

Cuthberti (15.43%).²⁶ Furthermore, Lapidge demonstrates that the four most popular patterns across these two poems are identical and appear in the same order of preference: DDSS, DSSS, DSDS, DDSD. Lapidge's study takes additional stylistic characteristics into account, including the use of elision and non-use of hiatus in *De die iudicii*, concluding that the metrical techniques employed in the judgement day poem and the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* are "indistinguishable," and that "there can be no doubt that Bede composed both."²⁷

The final eight verses of *De die iudicii* (lines 156–63) form a distinct epilogue which directly addresses a recipient named Acca using verbs in the imperative mood. The epilogue is fully preserved in three medieval manuscripts and partially preserved in eleven more.²⁸ Lapidge's study of the transmission of *De die iudicii* demonstrates that the full eight-line epilogue can be regarded as an integral part of Bede's original poem.²⁹ Although the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database lists three other men bearing the name

²⁶ Lapidge, "Bede and the '*Versus de die iudicii*,'" 106–108. DDSS is also the combination used most often in Bede's hymn for Æthelthryth (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 3.20): Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 187–91. An extremely thorough treatment of the hymn is offered by Stephen J. Harris, *Bede and Æthelthryth: An Introduction to Christian Latin Poetics* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2016), 126–272.

²⁷ Lapidge, "Bede and the '*Versus de die iudicii*,'" 106–108.

²⁸ This information is derived from the list of manuscripts provided by Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," 131–3. A hand-list of manuscripts is provided by Lendinara, "Circulation and Use," 193–212.

²⁹ Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," 133–5: "Bede's hypothetical autograph ... included lines 1–154 and 156–163 (the dedication to Acca), but did not include line 155." See also: Leslie Whitbread, "A Study of Bede's *Versus de die iudicii*," *Philological Quarterly* 23 (1944): 193–221, at 205–6.

Acca (or variations thereof) who were active in the eighth century, by far the most likely candidate to be the recipient of *De die iudicii* is the priest who succeeded Wilfrid as bishop of Hexham after the latter's death in 710.³⁰ Acca of Hexham was the dedicatee of several of Bede's biblical commentaries and the two men enjoyed a long-lasting association.³¹ Acca was the source for several episodes documented in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, some of which concern the themes of death and judgement.³² A copy of Bede's commentary on Revelation was sent to Acca, and *De eo quod ait Isaias* was written by Bede in response to a question received from the bishop regarding the post-judgement fate of the damned.³³

³⁰ In addition to Acca of Hexham (=Acca 3), the database at www.pase.ac.uk includes bishops of Dunwich (=Acca 2) and Hereford (= Acca 4), as well as a witness to three Kentish charters (=Acca 1). An overview of the life and career of Acca of Hexham is offered by Alan Thacker, "Acca [St Acca] (D. 740)," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³¹ Bede explicitly addressed the following writings to Acca: *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, *De eo quod ait Isaias*, *In Marci euangelium expositio*, *In principium Genesis*, and *In Ezram et Neemiam*. Additionally, *De templo* addresses an unnamed bishop who is normally identified with Acca (see note 41, below).

³² *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III. 13, ed. Lapidge, ii. 82-94 (a sick Irish scholar faces everlasting death and the torments of hell), IV. 14, ed. Lapidge, ii. 228-36 (a vision forewarns a boy of his death), and V. 19, ed. Lapidge, ii. 424 (Acca talks with Wilfrid about the judgements of heaven).

³³ The sending of *Expositio Apocalypseos* to Acca is mentioned in the preface to Bede's *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), p. 3. The best edition of *De eo quod ait Isaias* remains the one edited by Jacques Paul Migne, PL 94 (Paris: 1862), cols 702-10.

A strong case can be made that the most important interpersonal relationship that Bede engaged in as an adult was the one he shared with Acca. Traditionally Bede and Acca's interactions have been framed in terms of friendship and collegiality.³⁴ Evidence in support of this position includes Acca's role as the most significant patron of Bede's writings, the positive account of the bishop's life offered in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and the fact that Bede wrote a dedicatory epigram for the church of St Mary at Hexham.³⁵ Walter Goffart takes a different view, and he has recently likened the arrangement between Bede and Acca to the one that exists between academics and the agencies that fund their research.³⁶ The matter has been addressed in a recent study of Northumbrian hagiography by Clare Stancliffe,

³⁴ E.g. Charles Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), i. xxxiii; Dorothy Whitelock, "Bede, his Teachers and Friends," in *Famulus Christi*, ed. Gerald Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), 19–39, at 26–7; David P. Kirby, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum: Its Contemporary Setting* (Jarrow Lecture, 1992), 6 (reprinted in Michael Lapidge, ed. *Bede and his World: The Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1994), ii. 905–26); Alan Thacker, "Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert," in *St. Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, eds. Gerald Bonner, David W. Rollason & Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989), 103–22, at 121.

³⁵ *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V. 20, ed. Lapidge, ii. 426–8. On the epigram for St Mary's Church see Michael Lapidge, "Some Remnants of Bede's Lost *Liber epigrammatum*," *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 798–820, at 804.

³⁶ Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 235–328 and his "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," in *Innovation and Tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 203–26, at 218–20. Goffart's position is critiqued by Nicholas J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London: Routledge, 2006), 58–69.

which expresses the view that “Bede may not have found his relationship with Acca quite as friendly and straightforward as is commonly supposed, but as a priest in Acca’s diocese he will have needed to establish a working relationship with him.”³⁷ So far as I am aware the epilogue of *De die iudicii* is yet to be brought into the discussion. The penultimate verse of the poem (line 162) addresses *acca pater* (‘Father Acca’), and line 156 describes him as *charissime frater* (‘dearest brother’). Lapidge explains that a group of five English manuscripts (which he designates ε) has the variation *pastor* (“shepherd”) in place of *frater* in line 156.³⁸ On the surface such phrases appear to endorse the warm friendship interpretation traditionally favoured in the scholarship.

It is notable that Acca is not acknowledged as bishop in any extant version of the poem’s epilogue, and it is worth emphasising that *De die iudicii* therefore offers a unique perspective on the Bede-Acca dynamic. Every other time that Bede directly addressed Acca in his writings he used a form of *episcopus* or *antistes* to acknowledge his episcopal office.³⁹

³⁷ Clare Stancliffe, “Disputed Episcopacy: Bede, Acca, and the Relationship between Stephen’s *Life of St Wilfrid* and the Early Prose Lives of St Cuthbert,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 41 (2012): 7–39, at 35–6.

³⁸ Lapidge, “Beda Venerabilis,” 134.

³⁹ *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, preface (“Domino in Christo desiderantissimo et uere beatissimo Accan episcopo”), p. 3; *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, prologue (“Domino beatissimo et nimium desiderantissimo Accae episcopo”), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnout: Brepols, 1960), p. 6; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, prologue (“dilectissime ac desiderantissime omnium qui in terris morantur antistitum Acca”), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), p. 9; *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*, col. 699 (“Domino in Christo dilectissimo et cum omni semper honorificentia nominando antistiti Accae”), ed.

Additionally, in the preface to *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum* Bishop Acca is mentioned in connection with the genesis of Bede's first commentary on Acts;⁴⁰ Acca is almost certainly the "most beloved of bishops" addressed in the prologue to the late-career commentary *De templo*;⁴¹ and Bede also refers to Acca's episcopal status in the *Historia abbatum* and several chapters of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.⁴²

The lack of any mention of Acca's office in the epilogue to *De die iudicii* raises the difficult issue of the poem's date of composition. Lapidge plausibly suggests that perceived

Jacques Paul Migne, PL 94 (Paris: 1862); *De eo quod ait Isaias*, col. 702 ("Domino beatissimo et intima semper charitate venerando, sancto antistiti Accae"); *In Marci euangelium expositio*, prologue ('dilectissime antistitum Acca'), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnout: Brepols, 1960), p. 432; *In principium Genesis*, preface ("Dilectissimo ac reuerendissimo antistiti Acca'", ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), p. 1; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, prologue ('reuerendissime antistes Acca'), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnout: Brepols, 1969), p. 237.

⁴⁰ Bede, *Retractatio in Actuum apostolorum*, preface ("uenerabilis episcopi Accae"), ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnout: Brepols, 1983), p. 103.

⁴¹ Bede, *De templo*, prologue ("dilectissime antistitum"), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnout: Brepols, 1969), p. 144. Acca is usually assumed to be the text's dedicatee, e.g. Seán Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), pp. xxxi and 2–3 n. 20; Joshua A. Westgard, "New Manuscripts of Bede's Letter to Albinus," *Revue Bénédictine* 120 (2010): 208–15, at 211 n. 8. The form of address used in *De templo* corresponds exactly to the words used to address Acca in Bede's commentary on Mark. For further discussion see Peter Darby, "Bede, Iconoclasm and the Temple of Solomon," *Early Medieval Europe* 21 (2013): 390–421, at 396–7.

⁴² *Historia abbatum*, 20 (p. 384); *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III. 13, ed. Lapidge, ii, p. 60), IV. 14 (ii, 226), V. 20 (ii, 428), V. 23 (ii, 470).

metrical imperfections might identify it as an early composition of Bede's, a position recently endorsed by Emily Thornbury.⁴³ Lapidge highlights four metrical errors in the received text of *De die iudicii* and suggests that comparable mistakes were made in the first recension of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, a work that he places in the immediate aftermath of King Osred's accession in 705.⁴⁴ Many errors of scansion were corrected in a "vulgate" version of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, issued at some point before Bede wrote his prose *Life* for the same saint no later than 721.⁴⁵ It is therefore suggested that the prosodic faults in *De die iudicii* are juvenile mistakes by Bede with its composition being broadly contemporaneous with the first recension of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*. If the above hypothesis is correct, the reference to Acca as *pater* could well imply that *De die iudicii* was composed before Acca

⁴³ Lapidge, "Bede and the 'Versus de die iudicii'," 110–11; Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 189–91.

⁴⁴ The genesis of the different versions of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* are explained in Lapidge's "Bede's Metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*," in *St. Cuthbert, Cult and Community*, eds. Bonner, Rollason & Stancliffe, 77–93. The *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* hails King Osred as a new Josiah and describes him as venerable and mature in lines 552–55; Lapidge explains (p. 78) that such praise implies that the poem was written soon after Osred's accession, before the king acquired a reputation for wickedness.

⁴⁵ Lapidge, "Bede's Metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*," 78–85. The two recensions of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* are compared by Neil Wright, "The Metrical Art(s) of Bede," in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, eds. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe & Andy Orchard (2 vols, Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2005), i. 150–70. A small number of errors of scansion can be identified in the vulgate version of the *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*: Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, 19 (cited by Wright at 153).

became bishop.⁴⁶ However, the omission of *De die iudicii* from Bede's autobiographical list of works in the *Historia ecclesiastica* would require explanation if that is the case.⁴⁷

Another consideration is that all of the other evidence for Acca's involvement in Bede's career dates to the period after his elevation to the episcopacy. If *De die iudicii* is accepted as an early composition then the epilogue would preserve the first documented interaction between the two men to come down to us. An alternative is to assign the poem to the period of time between the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica* in c.731 and Bede's death on 26 May 735. This hypothesis is not wholly satisfactory either, not least because it leaves the issue of the metrical imperfections highlighted by Lapidge unexplained. Bede was active as a scholar right up until his very last day.⁴⁸ The date of Acca's death is not certain, although he outlived Bede by at least a couple of years.⁴⁹ Annals preserved in one of the very earliest manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the so-called "Moore Bede" (Cambridge University Library, Kk. 5. 16), record that Acca was driven from his see in 731, the same year in which Ceolwulf, king of Northumbria was captured, tonsured and then restored to his

⁴⁶ Lapidge, "Beda Venerabilis," 131.

⁴⁷ This issue is acknowledged by Lapidge: *Storia degli inglesi*, I, p. li. Two other texts do not feature in the list: *De locis sanctis* and *De VIII quaestionibus*.

⁴⁸ *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 580–7.

⁴⁹ Two traditions exist regarding the date of Acca's death. The 'E' recension, or Peterborough manuscript, of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud 636) has 737: Susan Irvine, ed. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle volume 7, MS E* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), p. 36. The *Historia regum* records Acca's death under the year 740: *Historia regum*, 36, pp. 32–3.

kingdom.⁵⁰ Acca, however, does not appear to have been reinstated and a new bishop of Hexham was consecrated whilst he was still alive.⁵¹ The political machinations of Northumbria after 731 could arguably be seen to provide a suitable context for the unusual forms of address employed by Bede in the epilogue to *De die iudicii*, the term *pater* avoiding the thorny issue of Acca's contested episcopal rank while still conveying respect for his long-standing patronage. Such an interpretation would allow us to read the epilogue as farewell message from Bede to a deposed Acca, and it would explain the poem's absence from the autobiographical list of writings in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24. A late date of composition would also align *De die iudicii* with the prologue to Bede's late-career commentary *De templo*, which urges the recipient (who is almost certainly Acca himself) not to dwell on the

⁵⁰ The Moore Annals are printed in Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, 572–3. The entry *sub anno* 735 reads: “Ceoluulf rex captus et adtonsus et remissus in regnum. Acca episcopus de sua sede fugatus (King Ceolwulf was captured and tonsured and returned to his kingdom. Bishop Acca was chased from his see).” See: Joanna Story, “After Bede: Continuing the *Ecclesiastical History*,” in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds. Stephen D. Baxter, Catherine E. Karkov, Janet L. Nelson & David A. E. Pelteret (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 165–84, at 168–74.

⁵¹ The annalistic continuations preserved in a group of late-medieval manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica* record Frithuberht's consecration under the year 735: *Continuatio Baedae*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, *Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 572–3. Cf. *Historia regum*, 33, p. 31.

bitter experiences of the world and instead focus on eternal rewards just as John did when writing the Book of Revelation on the island of Patmos.⁵²

It remains an open question whether *De die iudicii* is a juvenile piece that came to be overlooked when Bede compiled his list of writings for the *Historia ecclesiastica*, or a late work containing a small number of errors of scansion untypical of Bede's mature poetry, or perhaps even a mid-career work in which Bede for some reason abandoned his normal practice of formally acknowledging Acca's episcopal status when addressing him. These difficulties should not obscure the fact that the terms used to address Acca in the epilogue are more informal than usual; this evidence deserves to be brought into any future attempts to define Acca's association with Bede.

Poetic Precedents

Bede's library gave him access to a substantial number of poetic sources, some of which touched upon eschatological themes whether briefly or at length⁵³ *De die iudicii* contributed to a thematic strand which, although relatively minor, had become an established part of the

⁵² *De templo*, prologue, pp. 144–5. On the date of *De templo* see Lapidge, *Storia degli inglesi*, I, p. lvi; Darby, "Temple of Solomon," 395–6; Arthur G. Holder, "New Treasures and Old in Bede's *De Tabernaculo* and *De Templo*," *Revue Bénédictine* 99 (1989): 237–49, at 236–7.

⁵³ For the poetry known to Bede see: Plummer, *Baedae Opera Historica*, I, pp. 1–liii; M. L. W. Laistner, "The Library of the Venerable Bede," in *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 237–66, at 263–6; Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 191–228.

Christian Latin poetic tradition in Late Antiquity.⁵⁴ Eschatological content crops up in a wide variety of formats including *tituli*, acrostics, and abecedary hymns. The grand drama of the apocalypse is well suited to the epic qualities conveyed by hexameter verse, so it is no surprise to find that some of the poets who engaged with this subject before Bede used the same metre as that chosen for *De die iudicii*.

The most influential Latin hexameters of all were composed before the Christian era by Vergil (70 BC – 19 BC). A substantial number of Vergilian echoes have been detected in Bede's poetry including multiple allusions to each of the twelve books of the *Aeneid*.⁵⁵ The opening lines of *De die iudicii* describe a scene in which the poem's protagonist sits alone amongst flowering plants beneath the windblown branches of a shady tree.⁵⁶ A similar scene is described in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* which relates how, after consulting with the

⁵⁴ I am indebted to the excellent summaries of the Late Antique material offered by Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Early Christian Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also his "Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology," in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins and Stephen J. Stein (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), 221–53.

⁵⁵ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 105–115 and 226–7. The influence of Vergil on Bede's poetry is discussed by: Neil Wright, 'Bede and Vergil,' *Romanobarbarica* 6 (1981): 361–79; Michael Lapidge, "Bede and the Poetic Diction of Vergil," in *Poesía latina medieval (siglos V–XV): actas del IV Congreso del "Internationales Mittellateinerkomitee,"* eds. Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz and José M. Díaz de Bustamante (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 739–48; Seppo Heikkinen, "Vergilian Quotations in Bede's *De arte metrica*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007): 101–9.

⁵⁶ *DDI*, 1–5. The debt that these lines owe to Vergil is highlighted by Steen, who describes them as "a model of good Anglo-Latin verse," *Verse and Virtuosity*, 74–6.

Cumaeen Sibyl, the hero Aeneas receives a guided tour of the underworld. There he meets his deceased father and observes an afterlife in which people are judged according to the virtue of their lives on Earth, with some enjoying comfort and others being subjected to torture. A passage concerning the transmigration of souls begins with Aeneas observing a calm scene in a secluded grove with blooming flowers and rustling trees.⁵⁷ Another point of overlap between Book 6 of the *Aeneid* and *De die iudicii* can be detected in the description of hell as a ‘blind prison’ in line 116 of Bede’s poem. Aldhelm and Paulinus of Nola also used the phrase *carcere caeco* at the end of hexameters, but the construction ultimately derives from a well-known verse of Vergil’s.⁵⁸

errantesque animae flammis in carcere caeco (DDI, 116)

dispiciunt clausae tenebris et carcere caeco (*Aeneid*, 6.733)

Vergil’s likening of the underworld to a sightless prison drew the attention of Jerome, and Augustine critiqued this verse whilst ruminating on the nature of sin in *De civitate Dei* 14.3.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 6.703–9, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 249.

⁵⁸ Aldhelm, *De virginitate* (*Carmen*), 2223, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, MGH Auct. ant. 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), p. 444. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 15.195, ed. G. de Hartel, CSEL 30 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), p. 60.

⁵⁹ Jerome, *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, *In Ioelem*, 1, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 76 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), p. 164, and *Epistulae*, 133, ed. Isidor Hilberg, CSEL 56 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1918), p. 242. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIV. 3, eds. Bernard Dombart & Alphonse Kalb, CCSL 48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), p. 417; see also 21.13, p. 779. Both passages from *De civitate Dei* feature in the anthology of Augustinian material compiled by

Bede's use of the phrase *carcere caeco* in the same metrical position as Vergil sparks a chain of associations that encompasses the original line from the *Aeneid*, various attempts to echo it by Christian Latin poets before Bede, plus the Patristic discourse regarding the verse that Bede would likely have encountered in his private reading.⁶⁰

Commodian and Orientius were early pioneers of eschatological Christian Latin verse. Orientius is thought to have been active in Gaul in the early fifth century.⁶¹ His lengthy two-book poem in elegiac couplets known as the *Commonitorium* may have been known to Bede in some capacity.⁶² Orientius expressed the view that he was witnessing the last rites of a world close to death, and a sustained description of the judgement is offered in *Commonitorium* Book 2.⁶³ There is uncertainty about whether Commodian lived in the third century or the fifth.⁶⁴ His major work the *Instructionum libri II*, an anthology of 80 mostly

Eugippius that circulated widely in the Middle Ages and was known to Bede: *Excerpta ex Operibus S. Augustini*, ed. Pius Knöll, CSEL 9 (Vienna: C. Gerold, 1885).

⁶⁰ See further Harris, *Bede and Æthelthryth*, x–xi.

⁶¹ Johannes Schwind, "Orientius," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*, ed. Hubert Cancik & Helmuth Schneider (Leiden: Brill, 2002–2011), x, 209.

⁶² Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, 15. See also: Brown, *Companion to Bede*, 82.

⁶³ Orientius, *Commonitorium*, 2.347–92, ed. Robinson Ellis, CSEL 16 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1888), 240–2. See further: Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 160–2.

⁶⁴ Those who place Commodian in the third century include: Karla Pollmann, "Commodianus," in *Religion Past and Present*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski & Eberhard Jüngel (Leiden: Brill, 2005–2013), vol. 3, p. 299. Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 162–4 suggests that Commodian was active in North Africa or Southern Gaul after the year 450. On Commodian, see further: Jean Daniélou, *The origins of Latin*

acrostic poems, includes compositions devoted to eschatological subjects including the time of Antichrist, the end of the age, and the day of judgement (in the latter example the initial letters of the first words of each line reveal the phrase *DE DIE IVDICII*).⁶⁵

Prudentius (348 – after 405) and Paulinus of Nola (d. 431) engaged with apocalyptic themes in their verse sporadically. Paulinus attributed his conversion to Christianity to a fear of an impending judgement and believed that signs of the end of the age proliferated in the present day.⁶⁶ Several correspondences between Paulinus’ poetry and Bede’s *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti* have been proposed.⁶⁷ With regards *De die iudicii*, the use of the phrase “*deus aetherius*” in line 45 echoes a hexameter from the *Carmen* for St Felix that adopts the same noun-adjective combination in an identical metrical position.⁶⁸

nec deus aetherius bis crimina uindicat ulli (DDI, line 45)

quam deus aetherio Felicis honore serenat (Carmen 26, line 34)

Christianity. A History of early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea, Vol. 3, trans. David Smith & John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), 99–126.

⁶⁵ Commodian, *Instructionum libri II*, 1.41 (*De antechristi tempore*), 1.43 (*De saecvli istivs fine*), 1.45 (*De die iudicii*), ed. J. Martin, CCSL 128 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), pp. 33–9.

⁶⁶ Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 158–60.

⁶⁷ Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, passim; Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 221–2. See further: Neil Wright, “Imitation of the Poems of Paulinus of Nola in Early Anglo-Latin Verse,” *Peritia* 4 (1985): 134–51, at 135 and 149–51.

⁶⁸Also: Bede, *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, 1, verse 64 (p. 63): “Quem deus aetherio sublimis honore sacrauit.” Paulinus’ *Carmen* 26 was a major source text for Bede’s *Vita Sancti Felicis*: Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 222.

The *Liber Peristefanon*, a collection of fourteen poems by Prudentius which celebrate Christian martyrs, was known to Aldhelm and Bede.⁶⁹ Prudentius occasionally introduces eschatological themes into the *Liber Peristefanon*, discussing, for example, the intercessory role that the subjects of his poems will perform at the end of time.⁷⁰ One of the poems in another of Prudentius' works, the *Liber Cathemerinon*, considers the last judgement, the wrath of God and the slaying of Antichrist.⁷¹

A hexameter poem known as the *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem de resurrectione mortuorum et de iudicio Domini* was written by an unknown author, perhaps a North African, in the late fifth or early sixth-century.⁷² This composition demonstrates knowledge of works by Vergil and various Christian Latin poets, and it is more than twice the length of Bede's *De die iudicii* at 406 lines long.⁷³ Orchard has drawn attention to several correspondences between the *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem* and Aldhelm's poetry, and he lists four further

⁶⁹ Prudentius, *Liber Peristefanon*, ed. Maurice P. Cunningham, CCSL 126 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966). For Bede and Aldhelm's knowledge of this work see: Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, passim; Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 185 and 224; Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 171–8.

⁷⁰ Prudentius, *Liber Peristefanon*, 4, lines 9–60 (pp. 286–8), 6, lines 157–62 (p. 320) and 10, lines 1131–40 (p. 369) (as cited by Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 157).

⁷¹ Prudentius, *Liber Cathemerinon*, 6, lines 77–112 (pp. 31–3), ed. Maurice P. Cunningham, CCSL 126 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).

⁷² *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem de resurrectione mortuorum et de iudicio Domini*, ed. Jan H. Waszink (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1937). On the date and provenance of the poem: Karla Pollmann, "Carmen ad Flavium Felicem," in *Brill's New Pauly*, ii. 1109; Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 209–10.

⁷³ Waszink, *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem*, 37–8.

lines that are echoed in *De die iudicii*.⁷⁴ This evidence suggests that both Bede and Aldhelm had read the *Carmen ad Flavium Felicem* and knew it reasonably well. The *Carmen* offers vivid descriptions of heaven, hell and the return of God at the end of time. Of the eschatological poetry that Bede indisputably knew only this composition is comparable to *De die iudicii* in terms of scope, length, and level of detail. There is some thematic resonance with *De die iudicii*, including a strong emphasis on God as the only hope for avoiding the dire punishments that await the wicked, a stress on the importance of penance, and a concern to establish the equality of everyone before God.⁷⁵ Both poems begin by ruminating on the wonder of nature and go on to describe the eventual destruction of the world through fire. There are, however, no parallels in *De die iudicii* for two of the most noteworthy sections of the *Carmen ad Flavium Felicem*: the verses that celebrate God's creation of the world; and the lines that describe the breaking open of graves and restoration of the dead to their bodies to face the last judgement.⁷⁶ Unlike *De die iudicii* the *Carmen ad flavium felicem* pays little attention to eschatological signs, and it treats heaven first and hell second (in contrast to Bede who treats those subjects in the reverse order).

Orchard also detects cases of linguistic resonance between *De die iudicii* and Aldhelm's poetic works.⁷⁷ One of these involves a line from a brief eschatological section of

⁷⁴ Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 200–2.

⁷⁵ *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem*, lines 40–44, *DDI*, 22–3 (God the only hope); *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem*, 380–406, *DDI*, 13–46 (penance); *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem*, 161–175, *DDI*, 80–81 (equality).

⁷⁶ *Carmen ad Flauium Felicem*, 43–63 (Creation), 152–60 (resurrection of the dead).

⁷⁷ Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 257 n. 56, and 287.

Aldhelm's *Carmina ecclesiastica*, a series of poems composed for the dedication of churches or altars. The fourth item in the collection contains poems dedicated to each of the twelve apostles.⁷⁸ The verses for Simon, the eleventh apostle, are fleshed out with six eschatologically themed hexameters.⁷⁹ One line, which conjures up an image of melting hills and mountains, is echoed in *De die iudicii*:

et mundi moles montes collesque liquescant, (*Carmina ecclesiastica* 4.11.8)

terra tremet montesque ruens collesque liquescant (DDI, 51)

Both constructions ultimately owe a debt to a passage from the Book of Judith, but Bede's direct dependency on Aldhelm's phraseology in this instance is nevertheless clear.⁸⁰

Judgement day was the subject of several early-medieval Latin abecedary poems (in which the first letters of the initial words of each stanza customarily spell out the letters of the Classical Latin alphabet from A–Z). Two such compositions are included in the *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae*, an assemblage of diverse materials, many of which have connections to the Insular World and can be dated to the eighth and ninth centuries.⁸¹ It is very likely that a

⁷⁸ Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, 4, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, MGH Auct. ant. 15, 19–31. On the *Carmina ecclesiastica* see Joanna Story, "Aldhelm and Old St Peter's, Rome," *Anglo-Saxon England* 39 (2011): 7–20.

⁷⁹ Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, 4.11, lines 5–10, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Judith 16.18 (Vulgate): "Montes a fundamentis movebuntur cum aquis: petrae, sicut cera, liquescent ante faciem tuam." Scriptural citations in Latin follow *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem* eds. Bonifatius Fischer, Johannes Gribomont, H. F. D. Sparks, Walter Thiele & Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975).

⁸¹ *Hymni de die iudicii* beginning "A prophetis inquisivi" and "Audax es uir iuuenis," ed. Martha Bayless & Michael Lapidge, *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae* (Dublin: School of Celtic

different abecedary was known to Aldhelm, an octosyllabic composition in twenty-three stanzas beginning *Altus prosator*. That poem, which according to Jane Stevenson was the product of an Irish cultural milieu in the seventh century, explores the themes of Creation, hell, and paradise, with seven stanzas devoted to the “day of the Lord.”⁸² *Altus prosator* draws freely upon eschatological passages from the New Testament, especially the Book of Revelation and the synoptic gospels.⁸³ The hymn influenced Aldhelm’s own octosyllabic verse, but whether or not it was also known to Bede is an open question.⁸⁴ Bede certainly did know of another eschatologically-themed hymn in abecedary stanzas that begins “*Apparebit repentina*”.⁸⁵ The opening stanza of this poem, which Bede referred to as an “alphabetical

Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1998), 186–90, with commentary by Andy Orchard at 276–83. The date and provenance of the *Collectanea* are considered in the same volume by Lapidge, “The origins of the *Collectanea*,” 1–12, and Mary Garrison, “The *Collectanea* and medieval florilegia,” 42–83 at 77–83.

⁸² Jane Stevenson, “Altus Prosator,” *Celtica* 23 (1999): 326–68. The poem is edited in John H. Bernard and Robert Atkinson, ed. *The Irish Liber hymnorum* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1898), i. 66–83.

⁸³ For example, in line 125 the reference to stars falling to earth ‘like the fruit of a fig tree’ (*cadent in terram sidera ut fructus de ficulnea*) echoes Revelation 6.13, as well as the synoptic accounts of the Olivet discourse: Matthew 24.32–5; Mark 13.28–31; Luke 21.29–32 (compare Isaiah 34.4). On the poem’s use of biblical language and images, see: Stevenson, “Altus Prosator,” 334–5 and 347–8.

⁸⁴ Aldhelm’s knowledge of *Altus prosator* is established by Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 54–60.

⁸⁵ *Apparebit repentina* is edited by Karl Strecker, MGH Poetae 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), 507–10. For discussion of its date and provenance see Marina Smyth, ‘The Origins of

hymn on the day of judgement” (*hymnum de die iudicii per alphabetum*), is excerpted in *De arte metrica* as part of a discussion of rhythmic verse.⁸⁶ The passage quoted by Bede likens the arrival of the Day of the Lord to a nocturnal visit from a thief. This image appears several times in the New Testament, and Bede engaged with it repeatedly in his commentary on Revelation, although it does not feature in *De die iudicii*.⁸⁷

One final group of eschatological poems remains to be considered: the Latin translations of a judgement-themed acrostic purporting to be a Sibylline prophecy. Writings associated with the Sibyls, female prophets from Classical Antiquity, were popular amongst medieval audiences who saw revelations of Christianity in them.⁸⁸ A poem on the day of judgement in Greek hexameters is preserved in Book 8 of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, a collection

Purgatory through the Lens of Seventh-Century Irish Eschatology,’ *Traditio* 58 (2003): 91–132, at 99–100.

⁸⁶ Bede, *De arte metrica*, 24, p. 139: ‘Apparebit repentina / dies magna domini / fur obscura uelut nocte / in prouisos occupans (the great Day of the Lord will suddenly appear like a thief in the dark night attacking the unprepared).’

⁸⁷ Mark 13.32–6; 2 Peter 3.10; 1 Thessalonians 5.2; Revelation 3.3, 16.15. Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 4, 12, 28, ed. Roger Gryson, CCSL 121A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 265, 345, 457. Also Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 70, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 539–40.

⁸⁸ On the medieval tradition see: Bernhard Bischoff, “Die lateinischen Übersetzungen und Bearbeitung aus den *Oracula Sibyllina*,” *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1951), 121–47; Bernard McGinn, “*Teste Dauid cum Sibylla*: The Significance of the Sybilline Tradition in the Middle Ages,” in *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honour of John H. Mundy*, eds. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford, 1985), 7–35; James T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 198–201.

of prophetic texts arising from a variety of different cultural contexts.⁸⁹ A 31-line Latin translation of the Greek poem, which likely dates to the seventh century and has been variously labelled as Hiberno-Latin or a product of the Canterbury School, reveals the phrase ‘*IESUS CHRISTI DEI FILIUS SALVATOR CRUX*’ in its acrostic device.⁹⁰ This version, which begins ‘*Iudicio tellus*’, is preserved uniquely in a manuscript now in Leipzig amongst a diverse selection of materials including poetry by Aldhelm.⁹¹ Aldhelm’s knowledge of the

⁸⁹ The Greek poem is edited by Johannes Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 8 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902), 153–7. On the *Oracula Sibyllina*: Markus Sehlmeier, ‘*Sibyllini libri, Sibyllina oracula*,’ in *Brill’s New Pauly*, vol. 13, 412–3.

⁹⁰ For an edition of the 31-line Latin poem and Canterbury as its place of origin, see: Walther Bulst, “Eine anglo-lateinische Übersetzung aus dem Griechischen um 700,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 75 (1938): 105–14. On the case for Canterbury see further: Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 196; Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 16; Filippa Alcamesi, “The Sibylline Acrostic in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: The Augustinian Text and the Other Versions,” in *Foundations of Learning*, eds. Bremmer and Dekker, 147–73, at 152–8. The poem is alternatively identified as Hiberno-Latin by David Howlett, “Insular Acrostics, Celtic Latin Colophons,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 35 (1998): 27–44, at 39–44 and “Wilbrord’s Autobiographical Note and the *Versus sybillae de iudicui Dei*,” *Peritia* (2008): 154–64, at 161–4.

⁹¹ Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Rep. I. 74 (Western Francia, s. ix¹), ff. 24r–25r. Bernhard Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, 3 vols (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), ii. 2272. The contents of the manuscript are discussed by Alcamesi, “Sibylline Acrostic,” 152–3.

31-line Latin poem is secure.⁹² It is likely that Bede would have encountered an alternative 27-line translation of the same Greek original, which begins “*Iudicii signum*,” in Book 18 of Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*.⁹³ Patrizia Lendinara plausibly suggests that *De die iudicii* was influenced by Sibylline verses, although some of the more notable images common to the tradition are not replicated in Bede’s poem (for example, *De die iudicii* does not describe the earth as sweating or barren, or as opening itself up to reveal hell).⁹⁴

Apocalypticism

Bede's *De die iudicii* is notable for the coherency and range of its apocalyptic vision: it ruminates on the post-mortem fate of the soul, hell, heaven, the signs that are expected to precede the day of judgement, and the action of the judgement itself. Nowhere else in his corpus of writings does Bede offer such an emotive account of the last judgement as here; the presentation of *De die iudicii* from a first-person perspective creates something far more

⁹² Bulst, “Eine anglo-lateinische Übersetzung,” 105–6; Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 195–200.

⁹³ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII. 23, p. 614. On Augustine’s attitude towards Sibylline literature: Pier Franco Beatrice, “Sibylline Oracles”, trans. Matthew O’ Connell, in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 792–3.

⁹⁴ Patrizia Lendinara, “The *Versus Sibyllae de die iudicii* in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Apocryphal Texts and Traditions in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds. Kathryn Powell and Donald G. Scragg (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 85–101, at 100–101: “*De die iudicii* ... betrays knowledge of the acrostic in its insistence on the role of Christ as judge, the account of his arrival and the signs which precede it, accumulated rather than listed in a few central lines of the poem.”

vibrant than the matter of fact description that is found, for example, in the poem's prose counterpart in *De temporum ratione*.⁹⁵ The eschatology of *De die iudicii* is largely traditional: it owes a substantial debt to biblical material, especially passages from the Gospels, the Petrine epistles, and various prophecies from the Old Testament. The poem makes several direct allusions to the language of the Latin Bible. For example, the phrase *uoce gementi* ('moaning voice', *DDI* line 18), echoes a phrasing from Psalm 101.6, and the *carmina lugubria* ('mournful songs') mentioned in verse 5 recall the mourning over Tyre in the Book of Ezekiel (27.32).⁹⁶ Other phrasings connect *De die iudicii* to the linguistic register of Latin Patristic exegesis in a manner that is entirely typical of Bede. For example, *uita perennis* ('everlasting life', *DDI* 136) is a construction that Bede employed more than twenty times elsewhere, and *maculas uitae* ('stains on life', *DDI* 7) is used in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* and also features in Bede's commentaries on Luke, Mark and Acts.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *De temporum ratione*, 70.

⁹⁶ Regarding the *carmina lugubria*, see also: Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfredi*, 26, ed. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, p. 104.

⁹⁷ *Vita perennis*: Bede, *De templo*, 1 (pp. 172 and 186), and 2 (p. 216); Bede, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.12 (p. 83), 2.2 (p. 194), 2.7 (p. 231), 2.13 (p. 268), 2.17 (p. 304), 2.23 (p. 351 and 357), 2.25 (p. 378), ed. David Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955); *In Cantica canticorum*, 3, ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), p. 255; Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, p. 306; Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, p. 196; Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 1 (p. 39), 2 (p. 122), and 4 (p.37); *Historia abbatum*, 1 (p. 24); *Hymnus de opere sex dierum primordialium, et de sex aetatibus mundi*, stanza 25, ed. Jean Fraipont, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), p. 410; *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II. 7, ed. Lapidge, i, 44; and III. 13, ed. Lapidge, ii. 64. *Maculas uitae*: Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 26, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), p.

De die iudicii is consistent with some of the major principles of Bede's eschatological thought. The poem anticipates time unfolding into the future under the shadow of a looming day of judgement and various supernatural signs that will warn of its coming.⁹⁸ This aligns with the temporal perspective set out in the Olivet discourse, a monologue delivered by Jesus shortly before the Passion, versions of which are offered in the three synoptic gospels. Signs of the end of the age listed in the Olivet discourse include the emergence of false messiahs, wars, famines, persecutions and earthquakes, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and unusual occurrences in the moon, sun, and stars.⁹⁹ The Gospels according to Matthew and Mark both state that the timing of the end is known only to the Father, and all three accounts of the Olivet discourse encourage constant vigilance.¹⁰⁰ The unexpected arrival of the apocalyptic drama is likewise emphasised in *De die iudicii*: the trembling earth, which represents the first sign of the coming end, will arrive "unexpectedly," and the arrival of God to commence the act of judgement will come "suddenly."¹⁰¹

De die iudicii frequently stresses the universality of God's judgement. The act of judgement is imagined as a grand trial at which the secrets of all people from all ages of time

1305; Bede, *Expositio Actuum apostolorum*, 10, p. 53; *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, 2 (p. 116); *In Marci euangelium expositio*, 1, p. 450.

⁹⁸ *DDI*, 47–58 (signs of the end of the age); 67 (time unfolding into the future).

⁹⁹ Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21. 5–38.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 24.36, Mark 13.32 (timing of the end not known); Matthew 24.42–51, Mark 13.33–7, Luke 21.36 (watchfulness encouraged).

¹⁰¹ *DDI*, 50 (*repente*), 58 (*subito*).

will be publicly revealed.¹⁰² The poem begins with the protagonist imagining a gathering of “all humankind” (*genus humanum ... omne*), and it later describes how crowds will be drawn from “everywhere” (*undique*) for the last judgement.¹⁰³ The inescapable nature of the event is emphasised in verses that stress that the rich and powerful and those puffed up with pride will stand in fear alongside the poor.¹⁰⁴ A similar concern to demonstrate that God’s judgement will cut across all social groupings can be seen in the three-chapter block of judgement-themed visions in Book 5 of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.¹⁰⁵

In verses 50–56 of *De die iudicii* the protagonist considers the signs that will precede the coming of God. All of the indicators mentioned are large-scale changes affecting the earth or cosmos: earthquakes, collapsing hills and mountains, roaring seas, changes in the sky, and irregular activity in the sun and moon. This list owes a very obvious debt to the group of natural signs listed in the Olivet discourse. Matthew 24.29 makes the following statement, which conflates images from Isaiah 13.10 and 34.4: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” *De die iudicii* embellishes this as follows: “stars will fall and the sun will darken in

¹⁰² *DDI*, 36–7 and 59–71. See also: *In epistulas septem catholicas, In epistolam Iacobi*, 5, ed. David Hurst, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), p. 219.

¹⁰³ *DDI*, 10, 60. See also: Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ *DDI*, 80–81: ‘Stabit uterque simul tumidus pauperque potensque / Et miser et diues, simili ditone timebunt.’

¹⁰⁵ *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V. 12–14, ed. Lapidge, ii. 372–92. Drythelm (a man who became a monk at Melrose) saw a clerk, a layman and a woman suffering in hell (V. 12). The other two episodes concern a Mercian man of military rank and a craftsman attached to a Northumbrian monastery.

the gold-red east, the pale moon will not exhibit its nocturnal lamp, and signs threatening death will come from heaven.”¹⁰⁶ Bede’s poem passes over the signs listed in the gospels that directly affect human affairs (famines, wars, false messiahs, and persecutions), or that relate to specific earthly locations (the desolation of Jerusalem, flight from Judaea, and destruction of the Jerusalem Temple). The emphasis that *De die iudicii* places on natural and cosmological signs is shared by many medieval Irish eschatological texts.¹⁰⁷

De die iudicii predicts that the act of judgement will involve “vengeful flames” (*flammis ultricibus*), respite from which will only be offered to those purged of every sin.¹⁰⁸ Sinners will be tortured by a fire-vomiting river (*fluuius igniuomus*) and worms that will gnaw away at their hearts.¹⁰⁹ The poem also imagines a post-judgement punishment in hell involving worms with fiery teeth.¹¹⁰ Such images recall Sirach 7.17 (“the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms”), Isaiah 66.24 (“they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched”), and Judith 16.17 (“The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of

¹⁰⁶ *DDI*, 54–6: ‘astra cadunt rutilo et titan tenebrescit in ortu / pallida nocturnam nec praestat luna lucernam / de caelo uenient et signa minantia mortem’.

¹⁰⁷ Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh and John Carey, “Introduction (the Judgement and its Signs),” in *The End and Beyond: Medieval Irish Eschatology*, eds. John Carey, Emma Nic Cárthaigh & Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2014), ii. 549–65.

¹⁰⁸ *DDI*, 72–6. For the phrase *flammis ultricibus* (line 72), see also: *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 5.14 (II, p. 392); *In principium Genesis*, 4 (p. 219).

¹⁰⁹ *DDI*, 82–3. The adjective *igniuomus* is relatively rare, but it is also used at *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, 11, verse 325 (p. 82) and 28, verse 605 (p. 105).

¹¹⁰ *DDI*, 105.

judgment; he will send fire and worms into their flesh”).¹¹¹ The fire of judgement day is a theme explored in many of Bede’s other writings including *In principium Genesis*, *De temporum ratione*, *De tabernaculo*, and *In epistolam II Petri*.¹¹² In *De temporum ratione* Bede is very careful to establish exactly what will be destroyed in the apocalyptic blaze; his lengthy treatment of this matter concludes that the firmament of heaven and the ethereal heaven will remain intact. It is “this heaven of air” (*caelum hoc aerium*) that will be destroyed, that is: the aerial space closest to earth in which birds are presently able to fly. Likewise, *De die iudicii* specifically locates the judgement day fire “in that place where the *aer* now extends its empty lap.”¹¹³

The view that the fates assigned at the day of judgement will be sustained for all eternity is an important underlying principle of Bede’s eschatological teaching. This matter was the subject of discussion between Bede and Acca in 716 or shortly thereafter, as the short tract *De eo quod ait Isaias* makes clear. That text presents a forceful rebuttal of an

¹¹¹ Scriptural citations in English follow the New Revised Standard Version: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom & PHEME PERKINS (revised 4th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Sirach and Judith are not accepted as part of the biblical canon in some Christian traditions, but both were included in the Codex Amiatinus, a complete single-volume Latin Vulgate produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the early eighth century.

¹¹² Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 2, p. 130; *De temporum ratione*, 70, pp. 540–1; *De tabernaculo*, 2, ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnout: Brepols, 1969), p. 72; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, pp. 277–80.

¹¹³ *DDI*, 74: “et quo nunc aer gremium diffundit inane...”. See also: Bede, *De natura rerum*, 25, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), pp. 216–17.

interpretation of three verses from Isaiah 24 that could be interpreted in such a way as to offer hope to the devil and the damned that their post-judgement punishments might eventually be diminished.¹¹⁴ Bede's conviction that the fates assigned at the judgement will be irreversible is expressed at the beginning of *De die iudicii* in verses that speak of "everlasting wrath" and characterise God as the "eternal judge".¹¹⁵ Subsequent verses refer to "perpetual punishments" of "everlasting hell", where the wretched roam in darkness "forever".¹¹⁶ The part of *De die iudicii* devoted to hell complements comparable material in *De eo quod ait Isaias* and the various afterlife visions incorporated into the *Historia ecclesiastica*. There is particularly strong overlap between *De die iudicii* and the account of Drythelm's vision of the punishments of the pre-judgement afterlife in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.12; features common to both sources include darkness, fire, foul smells, extremes of hot and cold, torturous mental anguish and unbearable physical pain.

The vivid description of hell in *De die iudicii* is balanced by a comparable, but shorter section devoted to heaven.¹¹⁷ Before a resplendent vision of God and the Virgin Mary surrounded by a "celestial senate" is presented, *De die iudicii* first defines heaven by listing several things that will be absent from it; many words that were specifically linked with hell earlier in the poem are reused in order to achieve this.¹¹⁸ The view expressed in verse 128 of *De die iudicii* that there will be no night-time in heaven aligns seamlessly with the final

¹¹⁴ Bede, *De eo quod ait Isaias*, cols 702–10.

¹¹⁵ *DDI*, 8 (wrath), 44 (eternal judge).

¹¹⁶ *DDI*, 108 (perpetual punishments), 93 (hell), 98–9 (darkness).

¹¹⁷ *DDI*, 124–54.

¹¹⁸ E.g. *dolor* and *gemitus*, lines 114 and 129; *frigora* and *flammae*, 102 and 131.

chapter of *De temporum ratione*, where eternity is characterised as an everlasting day unbound by the regular rhythms of earthly time.¹¹⁹ Other features of the vision of heaven presented in *De die iudicii* are paralleled in three metrical psalm adaptations traditionally attributed to Bede.¹²⁰

Three major eschatological concerns of Bede's do not feature in *De die iudicii*: the time of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews by Enoch and Elijah, and the pre-judgement "test of patience for the saints" (an idea taken over from Jerome to explain what will happen in the 45-day period after the end of the 'abomination of desolation' mentioned in the Book of Daniel).¹²¹ In Chapter 69 of *De temporum ratione* the time of Antichrist and conversion of the Jews are described as "two very certain indicators" (*duo ... certissima ... indicia*) that the

¹¹⁹ *De temporum ratione*, 71, ed. Jones, pp. 542–4.

¹²⁰ *Carmen de psalmo cxii*, *De psalmo lxxxiii*, and *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*, ed. Jean Fraipont CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 447–50. On the metrical psalms: Elena Malaspina, "Tre meditazioni salmiche di Beda il Venerabile," in *Studi di poesia latina in onore di Antonio Traglia, Storia e Letteratura* 146–7, 2 vols (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1979), ii. 973–87; Michael Lapidge, *Bede the Poet* (Jarrow Lecture, 1993), 3–4 (reprinted in Lapidge, ed. *Bede and his World*, II, 929–56). The parallels with *DDI* are most evident in the longest of the three compositions, the hexameter poem *Soliloquium de psalmo xli*. This poem stresses the beauty of heaven (lines 9–14, 21–24) and the joys of everlasting life with God (17–19, 44–6). It also focusses on the emotional struggles of the individual in the present life (15–16, 25–43), on which see further: Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 194–7.

¹²¹ Daniel 12.11–12. The "test of patience" is explained in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, pp. 329–31; *De eo quod ait Isaias*, col. 708; *De temporum ratione*, 69, p. 539. In all three instances the inspiration is Jerome, *Commentarii in Daniele*, 4. 12. 12, pp. 943–4, ed. Franciscus Glorie, CCSL 75A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964). See further: Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, 121–3.

day of judgement is approaching.¹²² There Bede explains that Enoch and Elijah will return to preach to the Jews for three and half years before a coterminous period of horrific persecution under Antichrist commences. By the time that Bede came to issue *De temporum ratione* in the year 725 he had developed a very precise sense of exactly what would happen immediately prior to the day of judgement.¹²³ *De die iudicii* offers no hints that its author expected the apocalypse to be ushered in by an ordered end-time sequence, preferring instead to outline a series of generic supernatural signs inspired by the Olivet discourse. The omission of Antichrist from the poem, a major theme in Bede's writings from the early career commentary on Revelation onwards, is particularly conspicuous.¹²⁴

Reform

Apocalypticism frequently overlapped with reformist impulses in the Middle Ages.¹²⁵ In attempting to define the intentions of *De die iudicii*, it is helpful to develop terms suggested in Gerhart Ladner's study of the "idea of reform" in Late-Antique Christianity (although in doing so we must bear in mind that a great deal of research, including work undertaken on

¹²² Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 69, ed. Jones, p. 538.

¹²³ Peter Darby, "Bede's History of the Future," in *Bede and the Future*, eds. Darby and Wallis, 115–38.

¹²⁴ Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, 116–21.

¹²⁵ For the twelfth and thirteenth centuries see: Bernard McGinn, "Apocalypticism and Church Reform, 1100–1500," in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, eds. McGinn, Collins and Stein, 273–98. The interaction between apocalyptic thought and ideals of reform is a recurring theme in Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*.

Gregory the Great by Ladner himself, has acknowledged that the Latin verb *reformare* was not typically used by early-medieval authors when attempting to enact ecclesiastical change on an institutional level).¹²⁶ Nevertheless, Ladner's distinction between strands of “contemplative reform” and “active reform” provides a useful lens through which to consider the intentions of the poem that Bede sent to Acca.¹²⁷ These terms can be defined as follows: contemplative reforms develop the inner resolve of individuals through the instillation and reinforcement of particular values and perspectives, whilst active reforms outwardly target the behaviours or practices of institutions or groups of people. Bede actively campaigned for an overhaul of the Northumbrian Church towards the end of his life, as his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* of 734 makes clear, but the reformist subtext of *De die iudicii* is most appropriately categorised as contemplative given the poem's focus on individual behaviours.

¹²⁶ Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 26. On the language of reform in the period 600–1100 see Barrow, “Ideas and Applications of Reform”, 345–62, with discussion of Bede at 355–6. Ladner discusses the terminology used by Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), in whose works *reformare* normally refers to the personal improvement of individuals or groups of people, in his “Gregory the Great and Gregory VII: A Comparison of their Concepts of Renewal”, *Viator* 4 (1973): 1–26.

¹²⁷ Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 26. The terms used by Ladner are inspired by Gregory the Great's teachings on the active and contemplative lives; the tensions that bishops faced in balancing these ideals in the tenth century are explored by Thomas Head, “The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages,” eds. John S. Ott & Anna Trumbore Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 250–64.

De die iudicii is deeply introspective, but it should not be regarded as an exclusively inward looking piece because of the valedictory epilogue to *Acca*.¹²⁸ The poem promotes a mind-set oriented around continuous improvement of the self that can be achieved through a cycle of eschatological reflection, heartfelt repentance and outward displays of penance. The need for a rigorous process of self-examination is made all the more pressing by the prospect of a sudden apocalypse. The poem conveys a sense of urgency by asking a series of questions of the mind, tongue and flesh:

Why mind, I ask, are you slow to explain yourself fully to the Doctor? Or why, tongue, are you saying nothing while you have time for remission? ... Why, flesh, do you lie in filth, full of crimes of wickedness? Why not cleanse your sins with profuse tears, and beg for yourself the nourishment of a peaceful cure?

129

The characterisation of God as *medicus* recalls an earlier part of the poem in which sin is metaphorically styled as a sickness that only the ‘heavenly doctor’ can heal.¹³⁰ The protagonist mentions different body parts which are involved in various immoderate acts: he

¹²⁸ Cf. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 196–7.

¹²⁹ *DDI*, 33–4 and 39–41: “Cur, rogo, mens, tardas medico te pandere totam? / vel cur, lingua, taces, ueniae dum tempus habebis? / ... Quid tu in sorde iaces, scelerum caro plena piaculis? cur tua non purgas lacrimis peccata profusis, / et tibi non oras placidae fomenta medelae?”

¹³⁰ *DDI*, 23. For the Patristic background to this analogy see: Rudolph Arbesmann, “Christ the *medicus humilis* in St. Augustine,” *Augustinus Magister* 2 (1954): 623–9 and “The Concept of *Christus medicus* in Augustine,” *Traditio* 10 (1954): 1–28.

strikes his guilty heart, spreads his limbs on the floor and urges tears to stream down his face.¹³¹

Such strong imagery emphasises the importance of the expiatory process. That process is envisioned as a fervent affair involving copious weeping, a great deal of mental anguish and visible displays of emotion. One overarching message of *De die iudicii* is that frequent contemplation of the post-judgement fates can direct the individual towards better conduct in life (as mentioned above, Bede detected the same lesson in the apocalypse paintings in St Peter's Church, Wearmouth).¹³² A sharp line is drawn in *De die iudicii* between the present, in which action can be taken to improve the chances of a positive outcome at the end of time, and a post-judgement future in which the opportunity to seek God's forgiveness will have passed, never to return. The importance of confessing sins and seeking forgiveness for them is driven home by verses 27–32, which invoke the biblical figure known as the 'good thief' or 'penitent thief', a man crucified next to Jesus who engaged in a terminal act of confession (Luke 23.33–43).¹³³ The penitent thief admitted his crimes, accepted his punishment and assured his salvation by acknowledging Jesus and the kingdom of heaven. Bede examined the biblical accounts of the penitent thief's story in his commentaries on Luke and Mark and also alluded to the episode in a wide range of additional

¹³¹ *DDI*, 13–24.

¹³² See above, note 6.

¹³³ *DDI*, 27–32: "Nonne exempla tibi pendens dabat in cruce latro, / peccati quantum ualeat confessio uera? / qui fuit usque crucem sceleratis impius actis, / mortis in articulo sed uerba precantia clamat, / et solo meruit fidei sermone salutem, / cum christo et portas paradisi intrauit apertas."

texts, including one of his Lenten homilies, *De temporum ratione*, and the commentaries on Song of Songs, 1 Peter, and Genesis.¹³⁴

If the primary impulse of *De die iudicii* concerns the conduct of individual Christians, there are nevertheless some verses that detectably echo Bede's late-career concerns about the wider ecclesiastical landscape. Problems faced by the contemporary Church are highlighted in several of Bede's mature writings, especially the letter to Ecgberht of 5 November 734 and the commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah.¹³⁵ The former text urges Ecgberht, who had become bishop of York in 732, to correct a series of ecclesiastical and societal problems with the assistance of his kinsman King Ceolwulf. The proposed solutions include the convening of regular church councils, cleaning up degenerate monasteries or revoking their privileges, and ensuring adequate training for bishops and priests appointed to serve the Church in Northumbria. Bede also asked Ecgberht to create new bishoprics and campaign for the

¹³⁴ *In Lucae euangelium expositio*, 6, pp. 402 and 405; *In Marci euangelium expositio*, 4, p. 632; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.22, p. 159; *De temporum ratione*, 71, p. 543; *In Cantica Canticorum*, 4.5, ed. by David Hurst CCSL 119B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), pp. 296–7; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, p. 247; *In principium Genesis*, 1 (pp. 47 and 72), 4 (p. 196). The passages from the commentaries on Luke and Mark are discussed by Paul Hilliard, “*Quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit*: Prosperity, Adversity and Bede's Hope for the Future of Northumbria,” in *Bede and the Future*, eds. Darby & Wallis, 181–206, at 184–5.

¹³⁵ See: Thacker, “Bede's Ideal of Reform,” and the studies by DeGregorio cited above in note 2.

elevation of York to an archiepiscopal see in line with Gregory the Great's original missionary plan.¹³⁶

By the time that he came to write the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* Bede clearly thought that the monastic ideal had become severely compromised in Northumbria. Bede's letter places a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Church leaders, and Ecgberht is asked to set a good example so that the souls of his flock will not be endangered at the day of judgement.¹³⁷ One section of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* complains about bishops who indulge in the trappings of luxury. Whilst exonerating Ecgberht himself from direct criticism, Bede explains that some of his colleagues have surrounded themselves with men devoted to various vices 'and other allurements of a slack life'. Three of the five behaviours criticised are laughter (*risus*), jokes (*ioci*) and intoxication (*ebrietas*).¹³⁸ All three also appear together in *De die iudicii* in an artfully crafted three-verse list of "injurious pleasures" that will cease to exist after the day of judgement.¹³⁹

ebrietas, epulae, risus, petulantia, iocus,

dira cupido, tenax luxus, scelerata libido,

¹³⁶ *Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertum Episcopum*, ed. Grocock & Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 123–61. On the elevation of York: Joanna Story, "Bede, Willibrord and the Letters of Pope Honorius I on the Genesis of the Archbishopric of York," *English Historical Review* 127 (2012): 783–818, especially, 812–6.

¹³⁷ *Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertum Episcopum*, 14, p. 150.

¹³⁸ *Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertum Episcopum*, 4, p. 128: "... sed potius illos qui risui iocis fabulis commensationibus et ebrietatibus ceterisque uitae remissioris illecebris subigantur."

¹³⁹ *DDI*, 118–20. Here, six individual nouns are followed by six adjective-noun pairings, and there is internal rhyme in verse 119 (*cupido ... libido*).

somnus iners, torporque grauis, desidia pigra.

intoxication, feasts, laughter, wantonness, jest,

dire lust, persistent debauchery, sinful desire,

stagnant sleep, heavy torpor and indolent idleness.

140

Although the linguistic correspondences highlighted here are too generic to be drawn into the debate over the poem's date of composition, the overlap between the injurious pleasures listed in *De die iudicii* and the negligent behaviours condemned in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* is intriguing; as he directed the bishop's attention towards troubled religious houses shortly before his death, Bede no doubt took some comfort from a conviction that some of the practices blighting the corrupt monasteries would ultimately cease to bother the elect at the arrival of the final judgement, the greatest reform act of all.

Conclusion

In Chapter 70 of *De temporum ratione* Bede explains that it is more important to arrive at the day of judgement free from sin than debate where or how it will happen. This statement reminds us that what *De die iudicii* reveals about the place that the day of judgement should occupy within the psyche is more important than any expectations for the end of time disclosed within its verses. The apocalypticism of *De die iudicii* does not manifest itself in the form of dates-oriented predictions, but rather as a cultural force that framed the individual lives of its author, recipient and subsequent readers. *De die iudicii* channels its emotive

¹⁴⁰ Compare Galatians 5, 19–21.

imagery into a formula for self-improvement that has frequent contemplation of the last judgement at its heart, and which stresses the urgent need for individuals to confess, repent and perform penitential acts. It is well known that Bede was a committed advocate of large-scale ecclesiastical changes in his maturity, but *De die iudicii* allows us to witness him attempting to enact positive transformations on a smaller scale by using eschatological themes to inspire individuals. It is significant that Bede chose to address his judgement day poem to Acca, a figure who had a high profile within Northumbria and was himself in a position to influence the behaviour of others. *De die iudicii* was circulated relatively widely by early medieval standards and, as we have seen, it contributed to a growing body of eschatological Latin verse. Its author was one of the leading intellectual figures of his lifetime in the West and a prominent advocate of the mature warnings against apocalyptic speculation issued by St Augustine.¹⁴¹ It is clear that *De die iudicii* was not written from the intellectual margins of medieval Europe but can instead be regarded as a product of mainstream eighth-century Christian Latin culture.

¹⁴¹ For an overview of Augustine's views on eschatology, see Paula Fredriksen, "Apocalypticism," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 49–53 and "Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo", *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 151–83. Also: Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 131–50 and Palmer, *Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, 30–54.