Metanarratives of History:
Eusebian and Augustinian Perceptions of History in Orosius, Bede, and the Old English Translations

Tarcsay Tibor

Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, Bölcsészet- és Társadalomtudományi Kar

Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola, vezetője: Hargittay Emil, DSc

Textológia és régi irodalom műhely, vezetője: Hargittay Emil, DSc

Témavezető: Karáth Tamás, PhD Habil.

2019

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

LH – *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem*

HEGA – *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

OEHE – The Old English translation of *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

HE – The Old English translation of *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem*

Introduction

The present dissertation has a twofold aim. I will analyse four historiographical works: two Latin texts, Orosius' *Historiarum adversus paganos libri septem* and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and their respective Old English translations. The analysis will reveal the texts' historiographical metanarratives: their 'global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience.'[1] My focus will be narrower than complete epistemology: by historiographical metanarrative I understand the explanation provided for historical causation. This, of course, touches on broad issues, such as the question of power, legitimiacy, free will, obedience to the state, group and personal identity, and, due to the religious perception of the world, theology and salvation. At the same time, the dissertation will also tell a story of cultural and ideological change and adaption of how particular societies and individuals respond to crises, and define themselves in the face of the threat of extinction.

Humans are storytelling and 'meaning-seeking creatures';[2] humans simply cannot view events without a story of causation. Our attribution of agency and animacy not only to other humans, but animals, plants, natural phenomena, and even simply moving objects is hard-wired into our brains.[3] 'We are prone to alter our perception of causality so as to protect or enhance our self-esteem. We attribute success to our own dispositions and failure to external forces.'[4] Our imaginative narratives explain our relationship with the surrounding world, including the supernatural.

A metanarrative is a 'master narrative'[5] or a 'philosophy of history',[6] which, by using an 'overriding truth'[7] explains historical causation. It concerns itself with human and divine deeds, historical and temporal actions, about which *rational* enquiry can be made. In Breisach's definition, metanarratives reduce 'complex [historical] matters to the working of one or a few basic forces', relying 'on a metaphysics of permanent forces and patterns for achieving

---

[1] Stephen, *Retelling Stories, Shaping Culture,* p. 76.
[2] Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, p. 2.
[3] Buren & Scholl, 'Who's Chasing Whom?', *passim.*
[4] Hastorf, Schneider, & Polefka, *Person perception*, p. 73, quoted in Miller and Ross, 'Self-Serving Biases', p. 213.
[5] Lyotard, p. xxiv.
[6] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 122.
[7] Ayres, 'Meta-narrative', p. 510.

continuity in history.'[8] They depict history as 'an entity that had some inherent meaning that could be found rather than constructed.'[9] In Berkhofer's wording, a metanarrative, 'a Great Story' tells the story of the 'Great Past', the supposed totality of history, 'to make sense of the grand sweep of history and illuminate human destiny itself.' It offers a 'device for embedding partial (hi)stories in their larger context in order to show their significance or lessons or meaning.'[10] According to McGrath, metanarratives are authoritarian, 'generalizing narratives which claimed to provide universal frameworks for the discernment of meaning.' Teleologic by nature, metanarratives predicate the effective and final causes of all actions. As cultural artifacts, they enarrate a society's shared values and ethics. They propose examples to be followed or shunned by providing a narrative framework of historical interpretation. In Lyotard's concept, metanarratives posit a progess towards certain ethico-political end as inherently good, and thus perforce legitimise and delegitimise specific kinds of knowledge, attitude, and action.[11] By moralising history and subordinating human (and divine) action to a single *telos*, metanarratives empower their narrators, enabling them to control language and knowledge, the complete *episteme* and human experience of the world.

As Lyotard pointed out, metanarratives were the means of oppression in the past, especially by the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Although postmodernism's 'incredulity towards metanarratives'[12] has itself been criticised as a metanarrative itself,[13] the concept has been accepted by the scholarly community. At the same time, the word 'metanarrative' has been employed as a technical term in textual and discourse analysis to refer to the various *topoi*, markers, asides, etc., with which authors (often historiographers) glue their texts together, achieving coherence. These textual tools, of course, also by their very nature serve to construct a particular mode of enarration and construct a framework of reference, coming close to the first meaning of 'metanarrative.'[14] In the present dissertation I will use the word in this first sense: the ethico-political cultural narrative which orders and explains

---

[8] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 124.
[9] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 138.
[10] Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story*, pp. 39–40.
[11] Lyotard, pp. xxiv–xxv.
[12] Lyotard, p xxiv.
[13] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, pp. 126–128.
[14] Munson, *Telling Wonders: Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus*, p. 20–4.

hictorical knowledge, human and divine behaviour, and teleologically predicates a *telos* towards which individuals and communities must strive.

Breisach, in criticism of Lyotard, delineates three metanarratives, of which Lyotard's progressive one is only the third and the latest. Chronologically the first, 'the prevalent metanarrative in the ancient period relied for its unity on the perception of an inherent tendency of states and cultures to follow the cycle of ascendancy, acme of power and prosperity, and decadence.'[15] Later came the late ancient and medieval Christian view of 'the governance of history by Divine Providence and the ultimate permanence in a different ontological sphere.'[16] As I will show, neither the Antique nor the Christian metanarratives were without progressive elements, and the differences between the three metanarratives are not at all as clear-cut as Breisach depicts them. In fact, he himself subverts this point by demonstrating that the Theory of the Four Monarchies, a prominent teleologic ideology in Antiquity, 'was fully revived in the Renaissance period, shaped into a complex system by Giambattista Vico, and given new prominence in the twentieth century by Spengler, Toynbee, and others.'[17] The Theory of the Four Monarchies was a central element in Late Antique Christian historiographical thought, and as we will see, Orosius built his own metanarrative around it, while Augustine attempted to deconstruct it.

Major catastrophes and political, social, and economic upheavals, such as the collapse of states, bring the necessity to explain suffering and death sharply to the fore. The Axial Age,[18] which left an 'indelible impression on the way human beings related to themselves, to each other, and the world around them'[19] was a process and consequence of centuries of crises surrounding the perdition of the first great empires in the Middle East in the series of events

---

[15] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 124.

[16] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 125.

[17] Breisach, *On the Future of History*, p. 125.

[18] Although Jaspers' coinage of the term, and his definition of the Axial Age has been a subject of scholarly controversy, the notion that in a relatively brief span of time (without the advantages of global communication) spatially removed societies experienced an extremely similar religious and paradigmatic (perhaps metanarrative) shift is clear, although vastly different conclusions have been drawn from it, and extremely diverse accounts and reasons have been attributed to Axial Age. (Joas, 'The Axial Debate as Religious Discourse', pp. 9–24.) The Axial Age is 'a shift from a mode of religious life which involved "feeding the gods"— where the understanding of human good was that of prospering or flourishing (as this was understood), and where the "gods" or spirits were not necessarily unambiguously on the side of human good— to a mode in which (a) there is notion of a higher, more complete human good, a notion of complete virtue, or even of a salvation beyond human flourishing (Buddha) while at the same time (b) the higher powers according to this view are unambiguously on the side of human good. What may survive is a notion of Satan or Mara, spirits which are not ambivalent, but rather totally against human good.' (Taylor, 'What was the Axial Revolution?', p. 31).

[19] Armstrong, *The Great Transformation*, pp. 3–49.

known as the Late Bronze Age Collapse.[20] It gave rise to theoretic and paradigmatic thinking: great universal religions, metanarratives, and philosophies of life.[21] Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism, the Judaism of the Hebrew prophets, Zoroastrianism, and the philosophy of Classical Greece are the results of this centuries-long series of catastrophic transformations, which threw the established cosmopolitan order of the world into chaos.[22] The cultural transformation resulted in a new perception and narrative of the world, which was nevertheless deeply rooted in the already millennia-old traditions. The Axial Age also saw the birth of historiography: the first attempts to record a logical narrative of causal concatenation between events, with the elucidation of the actors' intentions and motives.

As I will recount in Chapter 1, a comparable series of events occurred in the Mediterranean Basin between the third and ninth centuries AD: the Migration Period threw the established order of the Roman Empire into chaos. The decades of bloody civil wars surrounding the rise and fall of each barracks emperor, economic collapse, and the seemingly unstoppable expansion of the barbarian tribes, culminating in the Gothic Sack of Rome in 410, seemed to the citizens of the Empire to herald the end of the world.[23] To the contemporaries the unthinkable happened, as St Jerome described:

> [H]aeret vox, et singultus intercipiunt verba dictantis. Capitur urbs, quae totum cepit orbem: immo fame perit antequam gladio, et vix pauci qui caperentur, inventi sunt. Ad nefandos cibos erupit esurientium rabies, et sua invicem membra laniarunt, dum mater non parcit lactanti infantiae.

> (My voice sticks in my throat; and, as I dictate, sobs choke my utterance. The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken; nay more famine was beforehand with the sword and but few citizens were left to be made captives. In their frenzy the starving people had recourse to hideous food; and tore each other limb from limb that they might have flesh to eat. Even the mother did not spare the babe at her breast.)[24]

Pagans and Christians blamed each other for the catastrophes, following a long tradition of political and theological thought. The first chapter of my dissertation will explore the two

---

[20] Baskin & Bondarenko, 'The Axial Age as Cultural Transformation', pp. 9–19; Donald, 'An Evolutionary Approach to Culture', p. 69.
[21] Donald, 'An Evolutionary Approach to Culture', pp. 47 – 75.
[22] Cline, *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, pp. 1–138.
[23] Cline, *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*, p. 172.
[24] Jerome, *Letter CXXVII*, §12.

Christian responses to the crisis and the pagans' attacks, and the ideological backgrounds of these replies. The two metanarratives, the Eusebian and the Augustinian, are based on the works of Eusebius of Caesarea, the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the *Vita Constantini*, and Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Both metanarratives aim to explain the relationship between the world and the individual, the Creator and His creatures, group and individual identity, history and divine judgement. The two narrative schemata have a firm foundation in their starkly disparate perception of God, whence all of their views are logically derived. For Eusebius, the world was emphatically a subject to God, its omnipotent monarch; for Augustine, the cause of creation is unknowable without learning to know God Himself, an intimate process achievable only through charity, clear conscience, and faith.[25]

Eusebius worked in the fourth century and his perception of Christianity and the Roman Empire, the Church and the State, became the mainstream Christian narrative paradigm during the reign of Constantine the Great and beyond. Eusebius experienced decades of bloody warfare before the reign of Constantine ushered in a few decades of relative stability, and the emperor's explicit preference of Christianity. The emperor was, as it is apparent from Eusebius' writings, his personal hero and terrestrial saviour. As I will show, Eusebius' explanation of past events having taken place exactly as they did is an unambiguously moral one. For Eusebius the triumph of Christianity during the reign of Constantine was historical inevitability: it was foreordained by God from the beginning of times. History for him is telic: its single purpose was the establishment of a Christian world empire. Eusebius' narrative is deeply traditional, stemming from Semitic and Graeco-Roman historiography and was influenced by the imperial cult of the Roman emperors. For Eusebius morality and the corresponding judgment of God depended solely upon the individual's choice to convert to Christianity or worship the pagan gods. Christians thrive in the face of all opposition and will conquer the face of the earth; pagans will be - indeed, were - obliterated, and will die ignominiously. Constantine, the Christian World Emperor, is recast after the Platonic *nomos empsychos*, the philosopher king who is the living divine law: his will is that of God, and so are his friends and enemies. The *salus* of the Empire is dependent upon unwaveringly obeying the commands of the almost God-Emperor.[26]

In contrast, Augustine's metanarrative of history is more or less an anti-metanarrative, as I will demonstrate. Augustine argues that history cannot be interpreted any way. While

---

[25] Augustine, *On Genesis*, Chapter 2.
[26] See pp. 22–27 below.

acknowledging that history has an end, Judgement Day, Augustine denies that the series of events along the way can be understood or evaluated by humans morally, because it is only God who truly knows an individual's intentions, and it is solely the intent of an action which defines its morality. Starting from the Book of Job, Augustine proves that the welfare or misery of any person or community is not indicative of divine favour or displeasure. Famously, he negates the legitimacy of any state by claiming that they all stem from sin, and therefore lack the most basic criterion a state should possess: justice. To Augustine, the City of God is a supernatural entity comprising individuals, not communities; he even goes as far as saying that the Church itself is a part of the terrestrial city. No-one can be sure of anyone's salvation, apart from God: this is hidden in the individual's soul, which only God can read. Rome to Augustine is just another terrestrial city, destined ultimately to fall prey to its own discord and the conflicting interests of her citizens. The Community of the Saints in the afterlife is the only city a Christian should strive to be member of. Augustine's verbosely elaborated reply to the crisis of the Roman Empire was that we should place our trust not in worldly things, but strive to reach communion with God in the afterlife.[27]

After the discussion of the theoretical background, in Chapter 2 the textual analyses proper will begin. Since the texts I shall analyse have not been compared to each other in the way this paper will pursue, a customary review of secondary literature cannot be made at the beginning of the thesis. Instead, I shall review the scholarly works that deal with the historical perception of a particular work at the beginning of the respective chapter. Taking these reviews as the starting point of my analysis, I shall continue with the discussion of the texts, with especial attention to four aspects of the works: historical causation, salvation history, the interaction of grace and free will, and the history of the Church as community. At the same time, the idiosyncratic properties of the works will also be analysed in order to present as comprehensive a view as possible of their historical metanarratives and the changes between the texts.

Chapter 2 will take up the textual and metanarratological analysis of the first historiographical work proper, Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem* (henceforth LH). This text was written in response to the political and military disruption of the Empire under the reign of Honorius, and specifically as an explanation for the Gothic Sack of Rome in 410 AD, at the behest of Augustine himself. Orosius' work is entirely Eusebian in its

---

[27] See pp. 28–38 below.

metanarrative. Often dismissed by modern historians as a worthless piece of propaganda, it nonetheless proved to be extremely influential, partly because it was the first prose world history ever composed. Hundreds of manuscripts survive from the Middle Ages, and its data and metanarrative shaped historiography for centuries to come.

As I will demonstrate, Orosius' answer to the Christian crisis was an elaborate affirmation of the Eusebian explanation of history and power. LH has an intricate framework of numerological, typological, and figurative correspondences that argue that Rome is the promised Christian World Empire, and has been so from the dawn of history. Orosius was deeply influenced by the so-called Theory of the Four Monarchies: for him, the empires on which history is centred are Assyria, Macedon, Carthage, and finally Rome as the last and everlasting kingdom. God specially elected Rome to be the vessel of salvation, and despite the centuries-long resistance of the pagans it shall be so, even at the cost of the pagans' lives. Orosius unabashedly delights in recounting the horrors suffered by pagans as the punishments for their sins, and does not shun from falsifying his data to prove his point. For him the Gothic capture of Rome was the just punishment of pagans, directly effected by God, but mercifully ameliorated in consideration of the merits of the Christians in the Empire. His personal hero is Honorius, under whose Nicene Christian reign even barbarians are ostensibly converted, and they submit themselves peacefully to Roman rule - those who do not are, of course, completely destroyed.

Through creative mythopoesis, Orosius rewrote imperial Roman history in a way that turned every good emperor before Constantine into a secret Christian, and every bad one a conscious enemy of Christianity. Despite their efforts, the final triumph of Christianity is imminent; the only thing to retard it is the obstinacy of some Romans, still hanging onto the tatters of their pagan worship. These pagans dare to blaspheme, says Orosius, and claim that Christianity is the cause of Rome's downfall and destruction. LH wants to convince us that it is quite the opposite: Rome's lot was never better, and it will only continue to improve, provided that paganism ceases to exist. Orosius appropriates the Ciceronian categories of *historia* and *argumentum* in order to prove that his Nicene Christian perception of history is the only truth, and that his Eusebian metanarrative is the sole possible reading of history. The Orosian response to the crisis of the Late Empire is an audacious and creative reaffirmation of the Eusebian narrative paradigm; a triumphant apology which reverberated throughout history.

My next text, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (henceforth: HEGA) is based on Orosius' text and its metanarrative for a large part. Bede, as the title suggests, was writing about the origins and history of the Anglo-Saxon Church. His basic perception of the world, as I will argue in Chapter 3, and his explanations of the successful conquest of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons and the ousting of the Britons from their homeland are Eusebian. In Bede's depiction the Britons had been offered Catholicism time and again only to cast it off, and turn to Pelagianism. These lapses are first punished by God through invasions and natural catastrophes, offering a chance for the Britons to repent, which they do only to shortly fall into heresy again. This cyclicity of British faith and fortune replaces in the Bedan narrative the cyclicity of the fate of the pagan Romans. The third and final chance is offered to the Britons during the Anglo-Saxon invasion, when by converting the newcomers the Britons could include them in the Christian *oikumene* and thus pacify them. They refuse, and the wage of their sin is death and the permanent loss of their lands. The *positive* Eusebian metanarrative is transposed to the Anglo-Saxons, which Bede parallels with the supersession of Israel by Christianity. The Anglo-Saxons are speedily converted, with minor setbacks only which, with the assistance of 'a muscular and active God,'[28] are quickly overcome.

As I will show, for Bede the Anglo-Saxons cannot have anything but an ecclesiastical history: the fortunes of their kingdoms are bound up from the very beginning with that of the Church, and their political existence and prosperity depends upon their Christianity. Bede takes the Eusebian perfection of the Roman Church as a starting point and shows the maturation of the Anglo-Saxon Church into full communion with it. The anecdotal nature of Bede's work presents this maturation as a process of ever-increasing holiness, with the boundaries between this world and the next becoming ever more permeable. As the narrative progresses, miracles and visions of the otherworld constitute an increasing volume of the text. While telling the story of English salvation, however, Bede also tells us the story of Briton perdition: in fact, the two stories could not exist without each other, and it is the Britons' self-destruction that makes the triumph of the Anglo-Saxons possible.

Yet for all its triumphalist and theocratic overtones, I will demonstrate that Bede's work is not entirely Eusebian. A central question in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is the correct exercise of free will and the relationship between individual salvation and divine grace. For example, although the Britons are inherently and communally heretical, Bede grudgingly acknowledges

---

[28] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* p. 148.

that sometimes they do correct their ways; and he also recounts instances of Anglo-Saxons falling from grace. The narrative described in HE has a moral conclusion dissimilar from that of Orosius. In Bede's view, salvation is not predestined; it can be lost. The Britons are proof positive of this, and the text itself expressly serves as a warning and instruction to the English. By following the good examples presented by Bede and avoiding the evil ones, they *must* ensure their salvation and *may* ensure their prosperity.

Britain changed a great deal in the 150 years dividing Bede and King Alfred. Chapter 4 of my dissertation will show how the Viking invasions left the non-occupied parts of England impoverished and a great deal of Danelaw destroyed. Although for a long time it was assumed that well-nigh complete destruction of England at the hands of the Vikings was merely a literary *topos* in contemporary Old English texts, I will demonstrate that archaeological, material, and textual evidence proves that the framework of society completely unravelled in the 9th century, and that the constant warfare hurt the ecclesiastical infrastructure especially badly, churches and monasteries being easy targets for the Vikings. However, as a novel development, the crisis also forged a temporary alliance between the English and the Welsh.

From the very onset of the Scandinavian attacks we have Alcuin's letter to Higbald, which portrays the incursions in Eusebian terms as God's vengeance for the sins of the English, and this interpretation was prevalent even many centuries later. However, during the reign and cultural programme of King Alfred, a new, more Augustinian, metanarrative of history emerged, as I will show through the analyses of the two extant historiographical pieces: the Old English translations of Bede and Orosius.

It is likely on textual and metanarratological grounds that the *Old English Bede* (henceforth: OEHE) was authored earlier. Therefore this will be the first Anglo-Saxon text to be examined in Chapter 5. Although the translation follows the original quite closely for the most part, it removes several key chapters and passages from the Bedan text, severely toning down Bede's metanarrative. Such a crucial alteration is the omission of the passages accusing the Britons of heresy and portraying them as inherently damned - a change which puts the *adventus anglo-saxonum* into a quite different light. As I will argue, instead of divine punishment for sins (mentioned only once in the translation), the conquest of Britain is recast to be the result of extremely ill-advised political decisions. The Britons are portrayed as irrationally obstinate in their fear of Rome, who abandoned them to the depredations of the

heathens in 410AD only to reappear supporting the hated invaders two centuries later, and claiming superiority over British Christianity. The translator also significantly distanced Roman authority in the Old English text: many of the passages dealing with information about Rome were omitted, and half of the papal letters were completely removed. These letters served in Bede as proofs of his credibility and focalised Roman authority; their dramatic reduction in the translation re-focuses the narrative on Britain. Instead of advocating unity as only achievable through the Roman Church, the translation recast Christianity in general as the medium of peace and salvation. This new image of Christianity also includes the Britons – to the unravelling of Bede's semi-Eusebian metanarrative, which conversely made the Augustinian elements in HE much more conspicuous.

As I will demonstrate, this can be explained precisely by the ideological background of Alfred's program of cultural restoration. King Alfred saw the decline of the transmission of knowledge and wisdom in England as the cause of the Viking ravages, not divine vengeance. His program of intellectual renascence aimed at resurrecting the intellectual life of England, and presenting the new *literati* with models whose examples ought to be emulated or shunned, which is the very same motive which made Bede compose his work. I will argue that a literal translation of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, however, would have left the reader wondering whether the fate of the Anglo-Saxons will be the same as that of the Britons; only in this case it was pagans conquering orthodox Christians, a complete reversal of the Bedan roles. Such a text would have condemned the achievements of English Christianity, even their missions to spread Christianity on the Continent. This would have been subversive both to the Alfredan programme and the Church. In order to transmit the wisdom of HE, it therefore had to be adapted to the changed circumstances.

In the final chapter, I will go on to demonstrate that the same is also true about the *Old English Orosius* (henceforth: OEH). It is rather a paraphrase than a translation: in this case the omissions are so vast that a little over one fifth of the original text was retained, and without the *cwaeþ Orosius* insertions its source would hardly be recognizable. The remaining loci were also extensively altered: the translator frequently gave elaborate (and false) explanations for events and customs which were so distant from ninth-century England that they were likely incomprehensible to the English. I will demonstrate that at the same time, however, he also completely dismantled Orosius' carefully structured lattice of numerological and typological correspondences, obliterating HE's claims of Roman foreordainment. Typological readings are

retained and expounded, but as I will show, they are recast into foreshadowing a spiritual salvation history instead of the history of Rome. Whereas Orosius argues that Rome is the peak of human achievement, in a deeply Augustinian move the translator remoulds the image of Rome into the same as any other state in LH: a power-hungry state lacking justice and wreaking misery externally and internally.

The imperial Christianity of LH is also deconstructed: the good emperors are no longer privy to the counsels of God, nor are they hand-picked by Christ. OEH depicts them instead in an Augustinian, neutral light, acknowledging both their virtues and vices. Correspondingly, the Eusebian system of theocratic Christianity and imperial *salus* equalling spiritual salvation also disappears. As I will demonstrate, what is retained is the bare data Orosius was working with, and what Augustine originally wanted him to write: a narrative proving that the advent of Christianity did not affect Rome adversely. Nothing more; no claims that life is actually better under Christianity, or that God specially elected Rome for anything. Instead, the Old English text is a bleak catalogue of the miseries of this world, both before and after the coming and death of Christ. The Incarnation and the Cross, curiously neglected in Orosius, are much more prominent in the translation, and there are frequent interpolations which reorient the reader's attention to the next world. In fact, Orosius' claims about the improved welfare of the Romans are appropriated by the translator and transposed to the afterlife. Peace and happiness are explicitly not to be found in this world, where strife and transience rule. Instead, they are only available in the community of the saints. Grace and mercy are central in OEH, and are employed in ways resembling Augustine's doctrines. Much like Augustine, the translator denied the legitimacy of human power unless governed by justice, and urged the audience to seek the heavenly city instead of enmeshing themselves in the conflicts of the terrestrial one.

At the same time, OEH devotes special attention to the Goths, Orosius' hated barbarians. The translator profoundly transformed Orosius' idea of the Roman Empire as the Christian *oikumene* by depicting the Goths as the Romans' peers, equally participating in salvation and historical agency. The inclusion of the barbarian into the Christian would surely have resonated in the contemporaries of Alfred who saw the baptism of Guthrum as the surety of peaceful relations with the Danes – a situation very much like the relationship between the Romans and the barbarians under the reign of Honorius.

As I will show, the Anglo-Saxons of Alfred's times experienced a catastrophe and threat comparable to that of Bede's Britons and Orosius' Romans. They were facing the possible extinction of their way of life by an unstoppable foe that, according to their own logic and self-perception, should not have existed. Following the Eusebian logic, every single Roman, Briton, and Anglo-Saxon must have committed sins grave enough to be gruesomely punished by God. Our four authors employed different coping strategies. Orosius slightly restated the Eusebian metanarrative and cranked it up several orders of magnitude, attempting to alter our perception of causality so as to protect or enhance Roman self-esteem, and attributed Roman success Christianity, and Roman failure to external forces. Bede was in an easier position: his people were the beneficiaries of his world's Eusebian *modus operandi*, and the Britons were a sinful people only receiving their just deserts. When over a hundred years later the Anglo-Saxons found themselves on the wrong end of God's supposed stick, however, and Eusebian explanations no longer sufficed, Alfred and his intellectual companions turned to Augustine as their guide to history and life, changing their perception of the world, power, and history.

I. The Evolution of Historical Metanarratives

The present chapter shall chart the ideological predecessors of Orosius' most important work, *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem*. In order to fully appreciate the novelty of both the Augustinian perception of history and the striking difference of the Old English reworking of Orosius from the original, it will be shown how culturally embedded the Latin work was in the ideological trends of the day of its composition. Orosius during the creation of LH also wove in thoughts and conclusions that stand in stark contrast with those of Augustine, upon whose behest the work was written. Instead, he adhered to a much more traditional, Semitic and pagan, perception of history that in some cases even goes against the core element of the Johannine concept of Christianity, which radically divorces Jesus' divine kingdom and power from those of this world.[29]

Thus as a first step briefly Mesopotamian and Semitic historiography will be described based on biblical scholarship. Then, progressing chronologically, the Graeco-Roman historiographical and ideological developments will be assessed, with especial attention to the Augustan ideology and imperial cult. Moving on with the arrival of Christianity, the first Christian histories and their metanarratives will be introduced, after which the two most important perceptions of history will be analysed in detail: the Eusebian and Augustinian metanarratives.

Mesopotamian-Semitic historiography

Our documents of Antique Mesopotamian and Semitic historiography are rarely texts that would count as records of history, were they composed today. Instead, we have epigraphs,

---

[29] From the earliest times, Johannine Christology depict Jesus as a 'stranger from heaven' and posits 'a dualism between the world "below," which rejects Christ and the community, and the world "above," which is the spiritual home of Jesus and the community' (Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, pp. 126–39; Moloney, 'God, Eschatology, and "This World": Ethics in the Gospel of John,' pp. 210–215; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John,* p. 8.). It has been shown that John in his Gospel deliberately appropriated the language of power and soteriology employed by the Augustan (and later imperial) cult in order to present Jesus as the Only God in the face of the selfsame imperial ideology (Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John,* pp. 66–184.). Jesus became 'incarnate not to assume power in "the world" but to allow his followers to escape from it, leaving the power structure proper to it untouched.' Johannine Christology challenges the sinful world precisely by denouncing its sinfulness, and 'demands [that it] put itself at its disposal' (Tilborg, quoted in Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John,* p. 164.).

stelae, regal lists, heroic sagas, laws, and so forth. Indeed to speak about 'Mesopotamian-Semitic' history-writing is a generalisation: the vast stretch of time and space covered by this term includes several peoples (Sumerian, Hittite, Canaanite, Israelite, etc.,) in various stages of cultural development and under diverse formative influences. However, a consistent feature of documents ranging from the earliest Sumerian votive tables to the final redaction of the Old Testament texts in the 2nd century BC is the moral evaluation of the actions of men and the events of the world.[30] In essence, the fortunes of humans, peoples, and kingdoms are reduced to a binary scale of prosperity-catastrophe, and the reason for swinging from one status to another is always moral, i.e., whether the subject of the event obeys or disobeys divine commands.[31] In the case of Old Testament texts, the fate of individuals and states depends on whether they live according to the Covenant between God and Israel or are against it.[32] Importantly, both options are open to Gentiles as much as to Israelites (both individuals and communities): Melchizedek and Jethro prospered, whereas Saul or Jeroboam were stricken down.[33] Communities *en bloc* may be morally depraved and thus suffer,[34] and in some cases, the innocent people may be punished for the sins of their leaders.[35]

An innovation of the Old Testament metanarrative is the linear (in a qualified sense) or at least semicyclical perception of time and history.[36] Although there is a perceived repetition in the system of the events of the world (the rise and fall of kingdoms and peoples), the fate of Israel as the chosen nation is progressing steadily in the face of all adversity towards the fulfilment of the promise given to Abraham. God's punishments are corrective: they are to show that the sufferers strayed from the path of righteousness, and thus are their own impediment in the completion of God's promise. This does not necessarily imply an overarching teleological

---

[30] Seters, *In Search of History,* pp. 56–99.

[31] Seters, *In Search of History,* p. 239; Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula*, pp. 7–8: '[In the ancient Near East historiography] as the fortunes of political states rose and fell, they did so not in response to a unique constellation of historical factors, but in keeping with human virtue and vice. States and societies prospered when the king, who in this regard often stood vicariously for the people at large, honoured the divine order which had been instituted ab initio and never changed. When the state collapsed, it must be that the king had disregarded that divine order'; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 41: '[T[he king becomes in a manner responsible for the stability, the fecundity, and the prosperity of the entire Cosmos. This is as much as to say that universal renewal is no longer bound to the cosmic rhythm and it is connected instead with historical persons and events.'

[32] Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, pp. 30–138; Assman, 'Myth as *historia divina* and *historia* sacra', pp. 13–24; Deuteronomy 28.1ff.

[33] Seters, *In Search of History,* pp. 361–362.

[34] Numbers 16.44–50; 1 Samuel 5.1–6.5; Psalm 89.20; etc.

[35] Exodus 7.14–11.10, 'The Ten Plagues'

[36] The extent and actually newness of this 'novelty' has been debated for decades: Seters' chapter 'Israelite historiography' collects and summarises several of the most prevailing points of view.

view of history,[37] but signifies that the Old Testament authors viewed Israel's election as something singular, and a coordinating power of history.[38] This had an important impact on later Christian histories which assumed that the Christian community was the successor of Israel in all senses, including its historical destiny.

Greek and Roman historiography

History writing from the very beginning raised fundamental questions about human existence amid the events of the world. The first Greek historians made rational and reflective inquiry, *istoria*, into their past and present,[39] for example about why various peoples are located in their present places,[40] why the Greeks and Persians fought their wars,[41] or recorded momentous events.[42] These early indigenous Hellenic investigations were not without moral assessment, although less so than the Semitic and mostly biblical tradition of recording and interpreting history. A characteristic feature of these narratives is the linking of the perceived communal morals with the events happening to the community,[43] and a strong stress on the different identities assumed by separate communities (often on the basis of their ethics).[44] This aspect was present very strongly in Roman historiography as well, as Cartledge describes: 'the chief function of history for the Romans, as Tacitus colourfully but conventionally claimed (*Annals* 3.65), was respectively to excoriate and to praise paradigmatic examples of human vice and virtue.'[45]

This moralising perception of history reached an important development by the meeting of Greek and Semitic ideas in the 5th to 3rd centuries BC as a result of Hellenism and the

---

[37] Seters, *In Search of History,* p. 241.
[38] Seters, *In Search of History,* pp. 59–60.
[39] For a summary of the scholarship concerning the rationality and de-mythicisation of Greek histories, see Seters, *In Search of History,* pp. 11–12; Schepens, 'History and Historia: Inquiry in the Greek Historians', pp. 39–48; Nicolai, 'The Place of History in the Ancient World', p. 17; Cartledge, 'Historiography and Greek Self-Definition', p. 20.
[40] For instance, Hecateus in his *Journey Around the Earth*
[41] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 1.1.0.
[42] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.1.1.
[43] The fundamental role of history in the education and practice of rhetors, as a collection of *exempla* which can always be utilised to demonstrate the moral value and consequences of a type of situation or choice is described by Nicolai, 'The Place of History in the Ancient World', pp. 20–23. Moral evaluation in Herodotus and Thucydides: Cartledge, 'Historiography and Greek self-definition', p. 21.
[44] Nicolai, 'The Place of History in the Ancient World', pp. 14–16;
[45] Cartledge, 'Historiography and Greek self-definition', p. 21.

expansion of first the Macedonian and later the Roman Empires. A significant result was that as new vistas of knowledge became (physically) accessible to thinkers, the concept of history broadened, and now included not one particular people only (ethnic history), but the dealings of all known peoples: universal history. Semitic historiography, with its (comparatively) vast reserves of knowledge and detailed accounts reaching back to thousands of years, exerted a huge influence upon the worldview of Greek and later Roman intellectuals who in turn brought new ideas to Israelite thinkers. Whereas theretofore Greek history writing had been local and national, focusing on one particular event or location, now a larger picture unfolded where many peoples interacted, and faraway events could have profound consequences on seemingly unrelated occurences. These changes also helped Greeks to define themselves in *contrast* to other nations, historically, culturally, and morally.[46] The events happening to Israel, on the other hand, became seen as woven together with the fate of the other nations of the world, and even as exerting a huge influence on them.[47]

The supreme example of the confluence of the Graeco-Roman and Semitic historical tradition is the Book of Daniel.[48] Both Gentiles and the Jews shared a preoccupation with prophecies, and the apocalyptic narrative of Daniel, especially the so-called 'Four Monarchies' raised immense speculations among historiographers and has informed the discourse on the rise and fall of kingdoms ever since.[49] The speculation naturally mostly centred on the question of what the characters and objects in Daniel's prophecies may represent. The Dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its colossus of four empires, subsequently broken and superseded by a rock that fills the whole earth,[50] has been interpreted in countless ways, quite beyond the scope of the present work. A mash of prophecies originating in Asia Minor from Hellenic times,[51] in its simplest form the theory states that there will be only four empires in the world. An extended version appears in the Bible in Chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel, in the famous Dream of Nabuchadnezzar, where the king sees a colossus built of gold, silver, bronze, and a mixture of clay and iron; the colossus is broken by a rock which grows into a mountain that fills the earth. Manifold identifications of the empires were proposed both for the simple and extended forms

---

[46] Cartledge, 'Historiography and Greek self-definition', pp. 22–34.
[47] Seters, *In Search of History,* p. 58.
[48] For the composite Hellenic and Israelite nature of the Book of Daniel, see Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History, passim.*
[49] van Henten, 'Daniel 3 and 6 in Early Christian Literature'*,* pp. 149–170; Grabbe, 'A Daniel For All Seasons: For Whom Was Daniel Imporant?', pp. 229–246.
[50] Daniel 2.31–45.
[51] Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies', pp. 1–12.

of the theory, setting up elaborate hierarchies and numerological correspondences. The prophecy had found its way (without the biblical association, as far as we can tell) into Rome by the time of Velleius Paterculus' *floruit*,[52] and it was used by Roman historiographers to show Rome as the rock which smashes the colossus and fills the earth.[53] Later, *one* Christian reading identified Rome as the colossus' feet of clay and iron, destroyed by the rock of Christ; the mountain growing out of the rock and filling the earth was taken to have prefigured the Church.[54] This interpretation was established by Jerome[55] (although it probably originated from Josephus Flavius[56] or Pompeius Trogus[57]). A competing interpretation, surprisingly also proposed by Jerome, identified 'Old Rome', the pagan city, as the last transitory kingdom, and 'New Rome', the Christian empire, as the fifth, everlasting one (sometimes omitting reference to the preceding monarchies).[58] As we will see, in time this reading became the prevailing one, which ultimately appeared in Orosius' work.

Roman authors, concomitantly with Roman self-perception, saw themselves as superior and especially favoured by the gods. Quintus Ennius (c. 239–169 BC), already synchronised the perdition of Assyria with the foundation of Rome, and saw the latter as assuming leadership of the world.[59] Polybius (c. 200–118 BC) also perceived every nation of the world as linked with Rome as the first to achieve, and indeed to be destined to universal dominion.[60] These writers firmly established the role of Rome as a special, morally superior people among the many nations of the world. Especially in the face of their continued military success and the conquest of the empire of Carthage, it was not only Romans who saw themselves elected to universal power, but other nations also accepted this idea. Polybius himself was a Greek who emphatically argued for the Roman right of domination.

---

[52] Paterculus, *Res gestae divi Augusti*, 1/vi/6.
[53] Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies', pp. 12–18.
[54] Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies', pp. 18–21.
[55] Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 2/40; 504ff; Funkenstein, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung*, p. 36.
[56] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 696.
[57] Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies', p. 17.
[58] Pelikan, 'The Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of Rome as Historical Paradigm', pp. 85–89.
[59] Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History under the Roman Empire', pp. 1–21.
[60] Grafton & Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, p. 145; Cartledge, 'Historiography and Greek Self-Definition', p. 32.

Philosophical developments

The historical sense of self-importance, entitlement, and responsibility raised unavoidable philosophical questions. Greek and Roman political thinkers had already devoted considerable effort to defining the qualities of the good state. In many cases, the conclusion reached was that a good state must perforce have a good king or kings, and that these excellent rulers must themselves be *nomos empsychos* or *lex animata* (living/embodied law), practising *arete* (excellence, virtue).[61] Platonic philosophy states that reality is hierarchical: each level represents (symbolically and literally) the next, higher plane of existence.[62] Thus in the words of Diotogenes, the system of the state reflects the orders of the supernatural realm:

> Now the king bears the same relation to the state as God to the world, and the state is to world as the king is to God. For the state, made as it is by harmonising together many different elements, is an imitation of the order and harmony of the world, while the king who has an absolute rulership . . . has been transformed into a god among men.[63]

Other Greek philosophers, such as Ecphantus, stated that only a king is capable of instilling their subjects with moral goodness, and thus raise their level closer to the divine logos.[64] Alexander the Great was the spectacular example in the opinion of many of his contemporaries of such a divine king,[65] and even he considered himself divine, adopting the rituals of the Achaemenid emperors.[66] Rome during the age of kings also possessed royal cults, and even in the time of the Republic worship of military and civil leaders was widespread, both in the City itself and in the various provinces.[67] Secular and religious authority was conjoined, and success in political or military matters demanded the correct performance of religious acts, the magistrates serving as intermediaries between the gods and the citizens.[68] Rulers were

---

[61] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, pp. 151–52; Van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods*, pp. 114–11 Anson, *Alexander the Great*, p. 83; Fowden, 'The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society', pp. 33–59.

[62] Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', pp. 6–7.

[63] Diotogenes, quoted by Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 145.

[64] Ecphantus, quoted by Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p .149.

[65] Hamilton, 'Introduction', pp. 19–21 lists the opinions of Alexander's contemporary eyewitness accounts: Onesicritus, Alexander's chief pilot described the king as a "'philosopher in arms', a man with a mission", while Callisthenes' story "bore a distinct resemblance to the heroes of legend."

[66] Anson, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 84–85; Woolf, *Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome*, p. 244; Kreitzer, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', pp. 210–12.

[67] Woolf, *Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome*, pp. 243–46.

[68] Herz, 'Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors', pp. 304–05; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, passim.

considered to be appointed to their positions by *consensus deorum hominumque* (the consent of humans and gods).[69] Cicero, the most influential Roman pagan philosopher derived the justice which was the specific property of the Roman republic directly from the immutable divine and natural law.[70]

The apex of joining the above manifold trains of thought was reached under Julius Caesar. A historiographer himself, the first *de facto* emperor united the moral perception of the world, Rome's election, prophecies and the divine authorisation to rule in his works and public image.[71] Caesar deliberately enhanced his public image with divine honours. He instituted (or allowed to be instituted) a 'ceremonial wagon and litter for carrying his statue in the religious procession […] couch for his image at religious festivals, a flamen […] and the renaming of a month after him' among others.[72] The Imperial cult and its origins have been widely discussed,[73] and here only those particulars will be briefly touched upon that have an immediate bearing on the Christian development of the concepts of kingship, state, and their relation to the Church.

The Imperial cult and its developments

Octavian, building on the foundations laid by his adoptive father, appropriated the Greek ideas of the ruler as *soter* (saviour) and *euergetes* (benefactor) with much forethought,[74] and transformed himself into a messiah, providing people with hope, prosperity, and successfully bringing an end to decades of conflict.[75] Already during his lifetime, local cults were devoted to him in the East.[76] Although famously refusing to be called *dominus*, Octavian nonetheless permitted and officiated over the deification of his adoptive father, organised the 'Feast of the

---

[69] Lobur, *Consensus, Concordia and the Formation of Roman Imperial Ideology*, p. 27.
[70] Lane, 'Ancient Political Philosophy', §6.2.
[71] Billows, *Julius Caesar the Colossus of Rome*, pp. 200ff; Wardle, 'Caesar and Religion', pp. 100ff. As Wardle writes, the title of *divus* for the deification of Caesar was chosen for its ostensible tradition, firmly embedding the new god in a line of divine rulers.
[72] Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* 35; see Kreitzer, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', p. 212.
[73] See Wardle, 'Caesar and Religion', *passim*; Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self, passim*; Galinsky, 'Continuity and Change', pp. 71–82; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, pp. 27–66;
[74] Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, pp. 82–86;
[75] Herz, 'Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors', p. 306; Kreitzer, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', p. 216.
[76] Kreitzer, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', p. 13–215.

Twelve Gods' (himself appearing as Apollo),[77] accepted the religious title of *augustus* and cults to his personal qualities.[78] Like Julius, he was officially deified shortly after his death.

The influence of Octavian on the empire established by him was immense. He blatantly used the messianistic expectations pervading the Mediterranean cultures after centuries of protracted warfare, and posed as liberator and saviour both in a physical and spiritual sense. Commonly called a god (*theos)* in the East, and acknowledged by all as the son of a god (both *divi filius* and *o huius tou theou*), Octavian built the social and ideological cohesion of the principate on the unquestionable fact of his divinity.[79] The Augustan authors, influential to begin with, and further supported by generous imperial donations, fashioned and spread Octavian's ideology in the most malleable way, making it part and parcel of *Romanitas*. Ovid commemorated and predicted the deification of both Julius Caesar and Octavian in the *Metamorphoses,*[80] and Virgil predicted the advent of the new Golden Age under the auspices of Octavian,[81] a prophecy which managed to make its way even into Christianity, and was subsequently used by Constantine.[82] Velleius Paterculus wrote of Octavian's ascension in terms of fulfilling Danielic prophecy.[83]

Following Octavian, all his successors claimed their share of divinity (e.g., Caligula and Nero both identified themselves with the Sun as the highest god, Vespasian claimed healing

---

[77] A remarkable incident, as elsewhere on p. 95 Suetonius writes that Octavian drew close connection between Apollo and himself, possibly presaging the eventual adoption of Sun-worship (and an imperial cult mingled therewith) by the emperors.

[78] For example, the temples dedicated to his *Pax Augusta* and *Fortuna Augusta.*

[79] Herz, 'Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors', pp. 306–7.

[80] Ovid 15:843–70: 'He had barely finished, when gentle Venus stood in the midst of the senate, seen by no one, and took up the newly freed spirit of her Caesar from his body, and preventing it from vanishing into the air, carried it towards the glorious stars. As she carried it, she felt it glow and take fire, and loosed it from her breast: it climbed higher than the moon, and drawing behind it a fiery tail, shone as a star. Seeing his son's good works, Caesar acknowledges they are greater than his own, and delights in being surpassed by him. Though the son forbids his own actions being honoured above his father's, nevertheless fame, free and obedient to no one's orders, exalts him, despite himself, and denies him in this one thing. So great Atreus cedes the title to Agamemnon: so Theseus outdoes Aegeus, and Achilles his father Peleus: and lastly, to quote an example worthy of these two, so Saturn is less than Jove.

Jupiter commands the heavenly citadels, and the kingdoms of the threefold universe. Earth is ruled by Augustus. Each is a father and a master. You gods, the friends of Aeneas, to whom fire and sword gave way; you deities of Italy; and Romulus, founder of our city; and Mars, father of Romulus; Vesta, Diana, sacred among Caesar's ancestral gods, and you, Phoebus, sharing the temple with Caesar's Vesta; you, Jupiter who hold the high Tarpeian citadel; and all you other gods, whom it is fitting and holy for a poet to invoke, I beg that the day be slow to arrive, and beyond our own lifetime, when Augustus shall rise to heaven, leaving the world he rules, and there, far off, shall listen, with favour, to our prayers!'

[81] Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.788–97; *Eclogues* 4.8–17

[82] Eusebius, *Constantini imperatoris oratio ad coetum sanctorum*, ch. XIX.

[83] Paterculus, *Res gestae divi Augusti,* 1.6.6.

powers, Domitian took pride in being called 'god' and 'master', etc.), and generally speaking the *salus* (welfare) of the Empire was seen as and believed to be dependent on and corresponding to the *salus* of its divine ruler, who acted as a mediator between the spheres of the gods and humans.[84] In fact, 'so closely connected were divine descent and political power in the first century that Dio Chrysostom could use the expression *tou dios einai huios* (to be a son of Zeus) as synonymous with 'to be a ruler.'[85] The Augustan ideology, where the *princeps* was depicted as the sole foundation and guardian of the Republic and its welfare, saviour and master of the world, has been shown to have impacted even Judaism and Christianity considerably.[86] In fact, the two trends of universal history and divine kings coincided and assumed enormous power with the spread of universalising, mono- or henotheistic religions, and itself became one.

The Augustan ideology fully transformed into an official imperial cult when it appropriated and transformed the religion of Sol Invictus.[87] Emperor Heliogabalus (218–222) was the first to attempt to raise his own cult to the level of state creed, posing as the deity Heliogabalus himself, perhaps even declaring himself as sole God.[88] The emperor's experiment is most significant: he tried to create a universal, syncretic religion which combined all polytheistic and monotheistic worship, declaring that even 'the religions of the Jews and the Samaritans and the rites of the Christians must also be transferred to this place [his temple on the Palatine Hill], in order that the priesthood of Elagabalus might include the mysteries of every form of worship.'[89] Decius (249–251) also lent a universal character to the theretofore local and communal religion by issuing an edict that 'commanded every inhabitant of the Roman empire to sacrifice, to taste the sacrificial meal, and to swear that they had always sacrificed' to the emperor's *genius*.[90] The troubles of the third century took their toll on the imperial cult, but the idea nevertheless persisted.[91] The universal authority of pagan emperors

---

[84] Herz, 'Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors', pp. 311–14; Ziethen, *Heilung und römischer Kaiserkult*, pp. 186–90; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, pp. 38–39.

[85] Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, p. 142.

[86] Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, *passim*.

[87] Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', p. 11. As mentioned above, this identification of the *princeps* with the Sun goes back to Augustus himself.

[88] *Historia Augusta*, p. 111; Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire since the Death of Marcus Aurelius, §5.6.* Coincidentally, Eusebius viewed the worship of celestial bodies in pre-Christian times as God's provisional urging towards a truer and more sophisticated belief; see Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories,* p. 71.

[89] *Historia Augusta*, p. 113.

[90] Leppin, 'Old Religions Transformed: Religions and Religious Policy from Decius to Constantine', p. 100.

[91] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, pp. 356–67.

was accepted by Christians to a certain extent not only in socio-political issues, but in religious ones as well, even if the demanded sacrifice resulted in many martyrdoms.[92] For example, although Paul of Samostasa was removed from his see in 268 by an episcopal synod, he refused to leave until Aurelian's victory over the secessionist Palymerene Empire, when he was deposed by the emperor in person, even though Aurelian (270–275) was the establisher of a potentially rival cult,[93] and styled himself as *deus et dominus natus* (God and born ruler).[94]

The restoration and new golden age of the theocratic empire came in the last years of the third century with the reforms of Diocletian, who identified the *augusti* of the tetrarchy with Jupiter and the *caesares* with Hercules.[95] The Diocletian religious and political reform is central to understanding the Eusebian view of history as its direct forerunner. Diocletian, developing on the Augustan version of the imperial cult, placed *Romanitas* and the social basis of the empire on a fundamentalist religious ideology. Renewing the notion of the emperor as physical and spiritual saviour, the tetrarchy firmly fixed the inseparability of the State and religion: the emperors formed a *domus divina* (divine family), constituted from the sons of Jupiter and Hercules, divinely appointed to their positions. All offences against the socio-political system and rules were not simply crimes, but sins against the divine persons of the emperors. Obedience to the emperor was identified with religious orthodoxy, and the godhood of the emperors was ritualised in everyday life after the Persian model.[96] The *augusti,* Diocletian and Maximian, were the highest embodiment of the Supreme Being, *lex animata*, while the *caesares* were halfway ascended to divinity. The divine family commanded adoration and worship, and was viewed as the source of all power, laws, unity, and *salus*.[97] As Stern puts it, 'the reign of

---

[92] Whether the refusal to sacrifice to the emperor's *genius* or the emperor himself was seen as treason and thus as punishable, is a much-contested point. Although the acts of martyrs certainly take this position, there are convincing arguments to view it as a *topos* of martyrdom narratives; see Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, pp. 54–56.

[93] Leppin, 'Old Religions Transformed: Religions and Religious Policy from Decius to Constantine', p. 99.

[94] Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, p. 188. Paul was a peculiar new kind of bishop, possibly the very first who actively exploited the political power that came with the episcopal seat; he was accused of despising his *cathedra* and instead being an itinerant merchant. It is important to note, however, that already at this point Christians were conscious of the authority and power that resided in their community and was wielded by their leaders, on par with that of the imperial officials. Indeed, the deposition of Paul by Aurelian was made at the request of Marcellus, bishop of Rome: Shepherd, 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', pp. 66–67.

[95] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, p. 352; Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', pp. 4–5.

[96] Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', pp. 4–6; Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian,* pp. 24–25.

[97] Stern, 'Remarks on the "adoratio" under Diocletian', *passim*; Ryberg, 'Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art', p. 151; Nicholson, 'Hercules at the Milvian Bridge', p. 135. See *Panegyrici latini* quoted by Nicholson: 'All the good things in heaven and earth appear to come to us from the munificence of various Gods; but in fact they

Diocletian marks a caesura in the constitutional history of the West. Under him is born the notion of the Divine Right of Kings.'[98]

Diocletian might have been partly motivated in his reconfiguration of the imperial cult by his hazy knowledge of some aspects of Christianity, and an (eventually failed) desire to reconcile the two cults.[99] Pagan authors were certainly prepared to make such comparisons: Cornelius Labeo (3rd century AD?) writes that 'Zeus, Hades, Helios and Dionysius are four seasonal names of the one sungod who is also called Iao (the God of the Jews).'[100] Diocletian's concept in the 'Christianising' reading was to supplant, or equate, the Father with Jove and the Son with Hercules, and at the same time legitimise the Tetrarchy's rule beyond the doubt of any sect. The effort seems not to have been lost, even in the face of the persecutions. The apologist Arnobius in his *Adversus gentes* bases his argument for Christianity on the similarities of his starkly binitarian concept of the Christian God with several pagan gods, describing at length parallels between the *human* life of Jesus and the mortal origins and eventual apotheosis of, for example, Hercules.[101] Arnobius routinely compares Christ to culture heroes, martyred philosophers, and oracles in whom God dwelt;[102] and he describes Jesus as *a* messenger of a far exalted Supreme God.[103] Athanasius of Alexandria remarked that the Arian sect in Christianity seemed to take an intermediate position between strict Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism,[104] and routinely explained the relationship between Father and Son with reference to the portraits of the emperor.[105] Moreover, in his orthodox apology actual apotheosis by participation seemed to be available to mortals as well, and was the very aim of Christ's incarnation.[106] Archaeological evidence all supports the remarkable laxity of lay Roman Christians in identifying Christ with the sun god, for example in church mosaics and everyday utensils.[107]

---

come from the highest Gods, from Jupiter, ruler of the heavens and Hercules who makes peace on earth. In the same way, in all worthy enterprises, even those carried out by other people, it is Diocletian who takes the initiative and you that carry the thing into effect.'

[98] Stern 'Remarks on the "adoratio" under Diocletian', p. 189.

[99] Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome,* pp. 131–134.

[100] Quoted in Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', p. 5.

[101] Arnobius, *Adversus gentes¸* §1.38.

[102] Arnobius, *Adversus gentes¸* §§ 1.60–62.

[103] Arnobius, *Adversus gentes¸* §§ 2. 36, 63, 74

[104] Athanasius, *Against the Heathen,* § 3.67.

[105] Drake, 'The Emperor as a Man of God', p. 2.

[106] Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy,* p. 7; Athanasius, *Against the Heathen,* §3.33–35.

[107] Fine, *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity* , pp. 171–72; Shepherd, 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', p. 61.

Many Christian authors saw in a Platonic spirit political salvation as a prerequisite to spiritual salvation. The concept of *salus* covered many meanings: 'safety, well-being, salvation' were all connoted, at the same time problematising the Johannine division of the kingdom of Caesar and the kingdom of God, and offering a solution to the dichotomy.[108] Christians were required by authorities and encouraged by influential apologists to 'pray for [the emperor's] life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Cæsar, an emperor would wish.'[109] While Irenaeus in the second century (the first Christian to identify the kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream with states of this world) wrote that the fourth kingdom was to be Rome, to be divided into ten smaller realms,[110] just a few years later Tertullian claimed that only the continued existence of the Roman Empire stood between the world and the impending Apocalypse.[111] Tertullian's interpretation was influential, and leading Christians espoused it, rather than the Irenaean reading, in the coming decades.[112] Lactantius at the turn of the 4th century saw 'the continued existence of Rome as the one barrier to the disintegration of things,'[113] while Eusebius of Caesarea, as we will see, envisioned a Christian Roman world empire.

The Constantinian reform: The imperial cult merged with Christianity

The dissolution of the tetrarchy once more brought the empire on the brink of destruction, but the final catastrophe was averted by a new saviour: Constantine. The sole victor began the reformation of the state with great aplomb, and this went hand in hand with reforming the religious life of the empire to his own traditional, but Christian mould. It is not known when Constantine exactly encountered Christianity, but from the earliest records onwards he showed a favour to Christians, likely due to his parents' Christian conviction.[114] Initially neutral towards

---

[108] Simpson, *Cassell's New Latin Dictionary,* p. 532; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, p. 38–39.
[109] Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter 30.
[110] Irenaeus , *Against Heresies*, Chapter 26.
[111] Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter 32.
[112] Shepherd, 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', pp. 57–78.
[113] Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', p. 7.
[114] Although the depiction of Constantius in not at all unequivocal in our sources, the faith of Helena is well documented. Odahl also suggests that the argument made by Lactantius, the tutor of Constantine's eldest son, might have hit the mark. Lactantius in his works strongly argues that whoever raises their hand against the servants

pagan cults,[115] Constantine eventually officially adopted Christianity as his and the state's religion to the detriment of all other sects. Although for a long time interpreted as simply a shrewd political move, current scholarly consensus holds that Constantine genuinely believed in Christianity, whatever form and creed he actually held in his heart.[116] His choice was momentous, and it permanently transformed the fundaments of Christianity and its relationship with the world, politics, social order, and history. It must also be acknowledged, however, that Constantine was no revolutionary: all his actions and ideas have antecedents in the thoughts described above, and the gradual change he introduced in the religious and secular life of the empire are organic developments on Roman political and theological thought.[117] Pointing this out, while arguing that Rome was destined and elected by God for Christianity, was actually a favourite tool of contemporary Christian apologists.[118]

As a result of Constantine's conversion, Christianity came into possession of unprecedented influence and wealth with a speed that many members of the Church found difficult to cope with.[119] The Church, theretofore actively persecuted, or at most tolerated, suddenly became a vehicle of Constantine's designs for the reunification of the empire and the solidification of its current *status quo*.[120] Bishops began to wield authority commensurate with the large communities they were leading, on par with the highest state officials: for instance, as judges, they ranked immediately under the emperor.[121] The Church was becoming increasingly intermeshed with the Roman state by reason of its political assignment consequent upon imperial recognition.[122]

---

of God will by destroyed – and it would indeed have been quite evident to Constantine around 313 that, while all Roman rulers who had taken part in the Great Persecution were eradicated, he and Licinius, protecting the Christians subjects, prospered (Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 340, Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography,* p. 139).

[115] Lietzmann provides an excellent overview of the epigraphical and numismatic evidence of the iconographic development of the expression of Constantine's beliefs from conventional solar worship to full-blown Christianity; see Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, pp. 153–55.

[116] Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, pp. 76–77; Shepherd, 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', pp. 68–69; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 50.

[117] Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age,* pp. 29–109; Shepherd, 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', pp. 67–70.

[118] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 254.

[119] For a summary of the benefits, donations, and fiscal prosperity freshly enjoyed by the Church under Constantine, see Clark, *Christianity and the Roman Society*, pp. 95–97.

[120] Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, p. 116.

[121] Clark, *Christianity and the Roman Society*, *From Constantine to Julian*, p. 97.

[122] Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', p. 4.

The already chaotic political situation was aggravated by numerous schisms and the fact that the two (from a Christian point of view) almost completely separated halves of the Empire had no internal mechanisms to put a check on the increasingly widespread disagreements. Thus when Constantine moved into this power vacuum (first evidenced at the Council of Nicaea), he was greeted enthusiastically by the majority, and his ear and favour was sought constantly by the vying sects.[123] The emperor became the sole arbitrator in religious, theological and political questions – essentially a supreme pontiff, without ever becoming a priest.[124]

There are many indications that Constantine did indeed consider himself as the high priest of Christianity, as an intermediary between God and the people. He referred to himself variously as being 'inspired by the godhead',[125] 'equal to the apostles […] installed bishop by God for its [the Church's] outer affairs', [126] '[a] universal bishop appointed by God',[127] one to whom 'the Highest Divinity […] has committed by his divine nod the government of all earthly things',[128] and who rules by 'the consent of all […] performing the commands of God'.[129] Constantine, building on the Platonic idea of kingship, fully embraced the idea that he is a divine emperor, in direct relationship with God.[130] He was frequently depicted as saviour, reformer of the Empire, and by Christians, as hand-picked by God to be the most glorious and powerful monarch of all time.[131] Following Diocletian's suite, and approaching self-divinisation, heretics were treated as offenders against the law and the emperor's person.[132] Constantine even exhorted Shapur, the Persian king, to imitate him, and through his Christian piety secure the blessings of God and prosperity to his people.[133] The emperor himself summed up his agenda to the bishops assembled at the Council of Nicaea in 325:

---

[123] Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp. 131–2; Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, pp. 115–20.

[124] Famously Constantine was even able to convince and/or force the bishops attending the Council of Nicaea to use his own definition regarding the substantiality of the Persons of God: *homousios* was entirely the emperor's invention, who perhaps failed to understand the significance of his proposition: Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, pp. 118–119. It is curious to note that, when Constantine was promoted in 307 to *augustus*, he "also automatically assumed the title of *pontifex maximus*, which he never relinquished until he symbolically resigned the imperial power on his deathbed": Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 245.

[125] Lietzmann, *From Constantine to Julian*, p. 151.

[126] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV. 24.

[127] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, I. 44.

[128] Quoted in Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602,* p. 321.

[129] Eusebius, *Constantini imperatoris oratio ad coetum sanctorum*, Chapter 27.

[130] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 47 and 254–255; Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 333.

[131] Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age*, p. 6.

[132] Clark, *Christianity and the Roman Society*, p. 99.

[133] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV. 13; Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, p. 46; Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 139.

So as, in the course of all the years and the days that have passed, countless masses of peoples have been reduced to slavery, God has liberated them from that burden through me, his servant, and will lead them into the total brilliance of eternal light. That is why, dear brethren, I believe, with the purest confidence in God, that I am henceforth particularly distinguished by a special decision of Providence and by the brilliant benevolence of our eternal God.

[…]

You know me your fellow-servant, you know the pledge of your salvation which I have in all sincerity made my care and through which we have not only conquered the armed forces of our foes, but have also enclosed their souls alive to demonstrate the true faith of the love of man. But at this success I rejoiced most of all because it resulted in the renewal of the world.[134]

In short, Constantine, with the assistance of Christianity and its episcopal leaders constructed an absolutist imperial theocracy.[135] His victory over his enemies were proof of his election, and his election continued to ensure his infallibility and invincibility. It is even possible that he saw himself as the incarnate Logos.[136] Our greatest source on the foundation of Constantine's political theory is Lactantius, whereas most of our information on Constantine himself, his thoughts, agenda, and his perception by others comes from Eusebius of Caesarea. These two authors directly influenced Orosius, and played an important part in the fashioning of Christian historiography.[137]

---

[134] Gelasius, *Church History* 2.7.1–41 and Athanasius *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 41, quoted in Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age*, p. 132.
[135] Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 331.
[136] Clark, *Christianity and the Roman Society*, p. 101.
[137] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, pp. 15–23.

Lactantius and Eusebius: the perfection of history, emperor, and the empire

Lactantius, the *magister* of Crispus, Constantine's eldest son at Trier, wrote several apologetic works which were founded on the idea that God directly intervenes in history in the favour of Christianity, destroying all its enemies. His three works carry on the traditional moral perception of history, giving it a Christian turn. God is described as actively enforcing his plan with history: the eradication of evil and the triumph of Christianity against all adversity (the two, of course, being the same). Those who side with Christianity will be saved and rewarded, while its opponents mercilessly and cruelly annihilated. Lactantius does not hide his hatred of those he perceives as the enemies of God. They are judged by him according to their alleged personal vices, which are magnified to a global scale.[138] In a simple equation, evil men are bad rulers, and *vice versa*; they deserve to be destroyed on both accounts.

Lactantius was the first Christian historiographer to explain the success of his religion in the terms of competition between good and evil. He stereotyped historical actors into progressive and victorious Christians and oppressive, loathsome, soon-to-be-dead persecutors.[139] His political theory thus attempted to resolve the Pauline-Johannine problem of Christian collaboration with the state: although all power comes from God, rulers who forsake His allegiance are revealed by their wickedness and prompt destruction; whereas a good ruler is perforce selected and maintained by God, and can indeed be recognised by just this. Christian subjects are not simply required to comply with the wishes of a God-endorsed ruler, but are good Christians only if they do so.[140] This theory, as we shall see, a century later informed Orosius' ideas about Christian loyalty and *Romanitas* profoundly.

Furthermore, Lactantius wrote that the Apocalypse can only come if Rome is destroyed: thus the advantage of Christianity not only lies in the possible retardation of the destruction of the world at the prayers of Christianity, but also in that Christian princes manifestly fare better than their pagan opponents.[141] Thus Lactantius' argument for Christianity is entirely utilitarian: deeply filled with faith as he might have been, he attempts to persuade his readers only on the

---

[138] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, pp. 118–25.
[139] Barnes, 'Lactantius and Constantine', pp. 29–30.
[140] Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 341–42.
[141] Mommsen, 'St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress', p. 349.

basis of a strict reward-punishment system, where Christians survive, and pagans and heretics are consigned to dreadful death and oblivion.

Eusebius' *Reichstheologie* has been explored well in the last decades by several authors, such as Trompf, Barnes, Odahl, Hollerich, Cameron and Hall, and Allen.[142] His relationship with Constantine was intimate, and he was influenced by the emperor deeply, who was his personal hero.[143] Eusebius' attachment is central to our understanding of Orosius. Eusebius' *Chronicon* (albeit in the version edited by Jerome) was used extensively by Orosius while composing LH, and the depiction of the true Christian emperor influenced his ideas on the Christian state greatly. In short, Eusebius' works are the 'earliest manifesto of the political philosophy of the Christian Empire - to the Emperor belongs an authority from God over all things, including the Church. On earth he is the interpreter and ally of the divine logos. His will puts into effect the very will of God the Father.'[144] Eusebius firmly believed that God intervened in history actively in order to promote the cause of the Church,[145] and that the events he experienced were the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. As Barnes states:

> Eusebius presents the reign of Constantine as the culmination of human history […] Constantine has seen the Savior often, both while awake and in dreams, and the emperor directs his policies by the revelations God vouchsafes him – God, his champion and guardian, who protects him in battle and from secret plots, who sustains him in perplexity, who guides his administration and his armies, who inspires him to issue laws and spend money for the good of all.[146]

In Eusebius' perception, all events in history form a link in a chain that inevitably leads to the establishment of a Christian world empire: not only was this foretold in prophecies, but contemporary events clearly showed which path the universe was taking. According to him, the actions of Constantine gave Rome an entirely new quality, and in reference to the Danielic prophecy of the Four Monarchies, 'transformed Rome from its fourth-kingdom status into the righteous kingdom of the saints.'[147] Rome no longer is a kingdom that will be destroyed; it is

---

[142] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography;* Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*; Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*; Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the First "Court Theologian"'; Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*; and Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000'.

[143] Bardill, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age*, p. 4.

[144] Seston, 'Constantine as a "Bishop"', p. 129.

[145] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 162; Markus, 'Church history and early church historians', pp. 49–50.

[146] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp. 249–50.

[147] Breed, 'Daniel's Four Kingdoms Schema', p. 185.

taken up by the rock and will fill the whole earth with it; it will be the everlasting Christian World Empire.[148]

Although less hateful of the enemies of Christianity than Lactantius, nevertheless in Eusebius' works there is a certain satisfaction over the elimination of the adversaries of Christendom. This also includes a detailed description of the Jewish nation being superseded by Christianity, and punished excessively due to their impiety. However, Eusebius was 'less interested in *recurrent* instances of retribution […] than in the plan of salvation which made the Christianisation of the world under Constantine possible'.[149] The thought that there is a discernible plan in history, leading to the victory of Christianity, is the dominant theme in Orosius' work, and it is likely that he received this idea from Eusebius.[150] In both works, 'salvation is an expression of providence, the divine government of the world both physical and moral, which leads to God's acts of reward and punishment in history and beyond. No intelligent and virtuous person can observe the divine laws operating in nature without rising to the knowledge of God'.[151]

In Eusebius' depiction, Constantine did exactly that: he rose to perfect knowledge of God. Eusebius routinely compared the emperor to Moses, and in some cases, even to the Logos, stopping just short of equating him with Christ.[152] That this caused no theological problems for him is likely due to his borderline Arianism, which has often been discussed in scholarly works.[153] Like other Arians subordinating the Son to the Father, Eusebius found no difficulty in recognising the reflection of the binitarian hierarchy in the system of the terrestrial state.[154]

---

[148] Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, pp. 11–12.

[149] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 126.

[150] Eusebius, in his turn, was influenced by Sextus Julius Africanus (died c. 240) who was, to our knowledge, the first Christian history writer. He was among the first authors to explicate the prophecies of Daniel as referring to Christ, and in a chiliastic manner advocated everlasting righteousness and complete expiation of sins. He also relied on the comparison of the Bible and pagan authors, in order to establish numerological correspondences between the events of the various nations (this is especially important in Orosius). In the *Chronography* Africanus also developed the idea of the six ages of the world, followed by the Eternal Sabbath – a notion that proved to be extremely influential even down to the early modern period. Eusebius was also influenced by Origen, his teacher, to no small extent: several aspects of his theology (e.g., his strong opinion about the subordination of the Son to the Father) and political ideas (especially the eschatological significance of Rome) can be traced back to the Alexandrian church father.

[151] Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, p. 43.

[152] Cited in Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', p. 17; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, p. 50.

[153] Cameron & Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, p. 3; Clark, *Christianity and the Roman Society*, p. 99.

[154] Several of the statements of Eusebius' adored master, Origen, were quite harmonious with Arius' doctrines. The most important for us in this analysis is Origen's claim that the persons of the Godhead were not equal, but hierarchical. The Father reigns supreme, and to him the Son is subordinated even as the Holy Spirit is subordinated

In Arianism, the created Son, the Logos, was identified with the Shepherd, 'pasturing the stars in their courses and holding together the cosmos as flock, checking also the wayward elements in society, warding off the demonic forces of destruction and distortion, likened to marauding beast,' and was in its turn equated with the divinely appointed ruler of the Empire.[155] '[Eusebius] saw monotheism as having its earthly counterpart in loyalty to a single supreme emperor, and simultaneously in the one revealed truth given to the church.'[156] With Eusebius, Constantine is an interpreter of the Logos, a 'divine saviour'.[157] In some cases, it seems that Eusebius' appreciation of Constantine fell nothing short of creating a new Christ out of him, who brought divine order and reason into the world, while Christ simply is a self-declaration of God. Thus, the emperor was performing the same ordering and harmonising work on earth as the Logos was doing in the rest of the Creation. This characteristic depreciation of Christ will reach an even higher level in Orosius, as we will see, where the life and death of Jesus is neglected, and even God himself is reduced to a mere puppet in his own plan, the foreordained Fate of the world.

To sum up, Orosius was influenced by Lactantius and Eusebius in several of his overarching themes. From Eusebius, he continued the argument that there exists a master-plan of the universe and history, which, although apparent only in the *longue durée*, is intelligible. Those who identify with this plan and subordinate themselves to the will of God are rewarded, and, as long as they maintain their allegiance, they are infallible. This is especially apparent in the case of divinely selected rulers who are seen as the vicars of God upon earth. The mission of these God-entrusted kings is the establishment of a Christian world-empire which supersedes and expands upon the Chosen Nation of Israel, and which has indeed come about by Rome's adoption of Christianity. Henceforth history cannot be other than a series of victories (spiritual and military) against the remnants of paganism: the immortal spirit of Constantine continues to govern Rome from Heaven (where he assuredly ascended to) even after his death.[158]

---

to the Son. The Son and the Spirit function as mediators of the infinite power of the Father to the lesser creatures. (Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 70; Melissa, 'Ancient Political Philosophy' §3 'Doctrine of God'). Eusebius himself was able to sign the decrees of Nicaea only as a result of some wrangling of its actual wording (Stevenson, *Studies in Eusebius*, pp. 102–104; Edwards, 'The Arian Heresy and the Oration to the Saints', p. 379; Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', p. 3.).

[155] Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', p. 8.

[156] Chadwick, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', p. 6.

[157] Williams, 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', p. 14

[158] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 4.71–72.

From Lactantius, as much as from the Caesarean bishop, came the moral perception of the world. Non-Christians are, in Orosius' book, inherently evil, and consequently are to be punished and destroyed by God. Eusebius, contrary to Lactantius, permits that dissidents in the Church, and even the Church itself, may be punished, to correct any errors they might have fallen into.[159] This chastisement further reinforces the foreordainment of the Church's triumph. Whereas enemies are destroyed, the faithful, if they err, are merely castigated, which ceases as soon as they repent. In Lactantius' view, this option is unavailable to unbelievers, and as we shall see, Orosius adopts a special mixture of the two views.

Thus in the 4th century the Christian metanarrative of history and historiography, theretofore mostly at odds with the Empire and the *saeculum*, eventually came to conform with the millennia-old tradition of Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman history writing. Considering the sometimes radically anti-worldly message that the Gospels communicate, this is somewhat surprising, and even more so the fact that this mode of thinking has survived, and is prevalent even today. Jesus' words in the Gospel of John, that His Kingdom is not of this world seem to be ignored, while Paul's cautious advice of cooperation with the state is taken to the extreme.

However, shortly after Eusebius and his ideological inheritors a new perception of the world emerged, building on Johannine thought, and put forward by Augustine most notably in his *City of God*. Understanding the Augustinian idea of history is crucial to our appreciation of the difference between Orosius' original work and its Old English translation, especially in light of the fact that Orosius wrote the *Historiae* at Augustine's request.[160]

---

[159] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, pp. 132–33.
[160] LH 1/preface/1–16.

Augustine: an anti-metanarrative of imperfection

The perhaps most influential politico-historical work of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), the *City of God*, was the focal point of controversies in political theory from Antiquity to the present.[161] In the High Middle Ages, thinkers in the service of the Holy See referred to it for the confirmation of caesaropapism,[162] although as Dyson notes, Augustine was by the time of its composition deeply averse to any such union of the church and state.[163] This example shows that the *City of God* is a problematic work, capable of giving rise to directly opposing interpretations, which, as we will see, is one of the reasons why Orosius' concept of it differed so greatly from that of Augustine. However, as Orosius states, he was actually requested by Augustine to write his own work at the time when the first ten books of the *City of God* had already been completed.[164] As we shall see, even those first ten books depict (however tortuously) an entirely different perception of Rome, the world, its history, Christianity, and God, than what Orosius proposes in his work. Nevertheless, both works were prompted by the same events: the Gothic sack of Rome in 410 and the subsequent pagan fulminations against Christianity.[165] Let us see how Augustine responded to these, building a theretofore unprecedented *Weltanschauung*, which returns to Johannine theology, Christology, and opposition to the world. In the course of this, however, we must bear in mind that Augustine's political thought, and perception of the world and history is nowhere expressed in a unified form between the long detours on heresies, astrology, cosmology, Platonic philosophy, and countless other topics.[166] A great deal of scholarly effort has gone into summarising and/or reconstructing it, and I will briefly summarise the points that are relevant to the discussion of LH and OEH.

---

[161] Excellent discussions of the topic are provided in Fortin, 'Augustine's "City of God" and the Modern Historical Consciousness', pp. 323–43; Stone, 'Augustine and Medieval Philosophy', pp. 251–66; and Matthews, 'Post-Medieval Augustinianism', pp. 267–79.

[162] Harbison, 'Divine Purpose and Human History', pp. 479–80.

[163] Dyson, *St Augustine of Hippo: The Christian transformation of Political Philosophy,* pp. 142–169.

[164] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, pp. 6–7. Augustine was deeply aware of the peril, and even feared that when not read and understood in its entirety, the separate books might give rise to vastly different interpretations: see Vessey, 'History of the book: Augustine's City of God and post-Roman cultural memory', p. 29.

[165] Mommsen, 'St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress', p. 346; Ferrari, 'Background to Augustine's "City of God"', pp. 198–208.

[166] O'Meara, 'Introduction', pp. vii–viii; Dyson, *St Augustine of Hippo: The Christian transformation of Political Philosophy,* p. 48; Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine*, pp. vii–xi.

Augustine, although in his youth acceptive, even enthusiastic towards the Eusebian idea that the *tempora christiana* were indeed the apex of God's plan with history and the culmination of Rome's destiny, quickly became dis-convinced of this *Reichstheologie*, and was writing dismissively of such ideas already around 410. Augustine's conversion from viewing the Roman Empire as a divine instrument of the Gospel to well-nigh equating it with the terrestrial city is gradual, but ultimately definitive.[167]

Augustine's intention with the *City of God* was not only to respond to pagan canards about Christianity, but even more importantly perhaps to console Christians who, convinced as they were by Lactantius, Eusebius, and other Christian writers about the special election and destiny of Rome, were deeply shaken by its Gothic conquest in 410. Many dreaded that with the devastation of Rome the Apocalypse and the rule of the Antichrist were imminent.[168] To these millenalists and doubters Augustine offered several answers:

- he emphatically denies the significance of any numerological correspondences;[169]
- argues that the end of the world is not near in any intelligible sense; although mankind is living in the 'end times' calculated from the birth of Christ until the Second Coming, the length of this age is unknown;[170]
- the advent of the Armageddon is not related to the stand or fall of any state, city, or polity, and expressly not to the conquest of Rome by the peoples of Gog and Magog, identified with the Goths;[171]
- Rome is ephemeral, whose sole 'purpose' as a feeble parody that would only make Christians strive more towards the City of God had been fulfilled;[172]
- history is completely unknowable, and all events are ordained by the 'inscrutable design' of God;[173]

---

[167] Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, pp. 32–41.

[168] Augustine, *The City of God*, 20:8; 20:13.

[169] Augustine, *The City of God*, 13:11–12; 20:7; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine,* p. 27.

[170] Augustine, *The City of God*, 20:9–20:30; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine,* pp. 37–40.

[171] Augustine, *The City of God*, 20:11

[172] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:16 and 5:21; Weithman, 'Augustine's political philosophy' p. 245.

[173] Augustine, *The City of God*, 4:17 and 5:22; Markus 74.

- defeats and catastrophes *may* be God's way of chiding and correcting people,[174] *but* felicity is *not a reward*;[175]

- temporal felicity can be granted by demons,[176] or might simply be granted by God as a result of one's own achievements. In the latter case, however, the people who strive for temporal felicity are members of the terrestrial city, and not of the heavenly one;[177]

- similarly, individual captivity, rape, torment, murder, and other ills cannot imperil one's salvation as long as they remain steadfast in their faith.[178]

Augustine emphatically rejected the Eusebian world-view, and refuted it step by step.[179] Building upon Johannine Christology,[180] Augustine erected the core binary distinction of the *heavenly city* and the *earthly city*. In brief, these two cities are separated (and are mutually exclusive) on the basis of their loves: the heavenly city (the titular City of God) loves solely God and views the world as a place of pilgrimage from God to God. All that is contained in the world, including other individuals, are instruments to perfection through practice of our love of God. The terrestrial city, on the other hand, loves solely itself and seeks its own enjoyment. It views all else as an instrument for its own aggrandizement and maintenance. It does not acknowledge God, and its sole governing principle is *carpe diem*, at all costs, no holds barred. Both cities are metaphorical: they are not actual communities here and now. The city of God is

---

[174] 'However, it often happens that God shows more clearly his manner of working in the distribution of good and bad fortune. For if punishment were obviously inflicted on every wrongdoing in this life, it would be supposed that nothing was reserved for the last judgement; on the other hand, if God's power never openly punished any sin in this world, there would be an end to belief in providence. Similarly in respect to good fortune: if God did not grant it to some petitioners with manifest generosity, we should not suppose that these temporal blessings were his concern, while if he bestowed prosperity on all just for the asking we might think that God was to be served merely for the sake of those rewards, and any service of him would prove us not godly but rather greedy and covetous.' Augustine, *The City of God*, 1:8.

[175] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:24; Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine*, p. 75.

[176] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.24.

[177] 'To such men as these [illustrious Romans] God was not going to give eternal life with his angels in his own Heavenly City … If God had not granted to them the earthly glory of an empire which surpassed all others, they would have received no reward for the good qualities, the virtues, that is, by means of which they laboured to attain that great glory. When such men do anything good, their sole motive is the hope of receiving glory from their fellow-men; and the Lord refers to them when he says, "I tell you in truth, they have received their reward in full." They took no account of their material interests compared with the common good … they resisted the temptations of avarice; they acted for the country's well-being with disinterested concern, they were guilty of no offence against the law; they succumbed to no sensual indulgence. By such immaculate conduct they laboured towards honours, power and glory, by what they took to be the true way. … They have received their reward in full.' Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:15.

[178] Augustine, *The City of God*, 1:7–18.

[179] Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine*, p. 75; Markus, *The Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine,* pp. 45–71.

[180] Kuehn, 'The Johannine Logic of Augustine's Trinity: A Dogmatic Sketch', pp. 572–594.

still in its building from individuals who are concerned with their individual salvation; the earthly city is made up of individuals whose self-love directly contradicts the self-loves of other individuals, excluding any sincere fellowship.[181] Yet the cities nonetheless have a solid existence; their individual members belong to them and embody them already here in life. Thus the two polities are, in a sense, the final destiny of the individuals as well: after death their intermingling will be ultimately separated. Augustine elaborates copiously on several further aspects, but we need not outline the entirety of his arguments. Let us turn to his points which concern history, the state, and the world, Rome and Christianity.

To those Christians who, with Eusebius, expected an everlasting Christian world-empire, Augustine repeatedly presses home that however veiled and sugar-coated it might be, the lust for domination is characteristic of the earthly city, not of the heavenly one.[182] Political authority – indeed any authority in an earthly community – is the result of man's fallen condition and sinfulness.[183] Were humans sinless, good Christians, true and committed members of the city of God, there would be no need for political authority and polities at all. Augustine marshals theological reasons against the sort of divinisation of Christian Rome and its emperors that we have seen with Eusebius and Lactantius. In the paraphrasal of Griffiths,

> [t]o have the *libido dominandi* is to seek *dominatio*, which is, in turn, to seek to be a *dominus*. *Dominus* is the Latin rendering of the Tetragrammaton, the unsayable four-lettered name of God, a fact of which Augustine is much aware. When he writes of the *libido dominandi* as characteristic of the earthly city, then, he is depicting a desire to be God: idolatry again, in an elegantly lexical key, and again an explicitly theological account of what constitutes the politics of the earthly city.[184]

Ironically, while Claudianus, a Christian poet, could say about the consulate of Stilicho, whom somewhat later even Orosius vituperates, that 'there will never be an end to the power of Rome, for luxury and pride resulting in vice and enmities have destroyed all other kingdoms',[185] Augustine, in agreement with Scipio, Sallust, and Suetonius, writes that modern

---

[181] Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:1 ff.
[182] Augustine, *The City of God*, 1:31; 4:28; 5:19–20; 18:1–19:28.
[183] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy' p. 239; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine,* p. 72–105; Coleman, *A History of Political Thought*, pp. 322–35.
[184] Griffiths, 'Secularity and *saeculum*', p. 48.
[185] Claudianus' *De consulate Stilichonis* quoted in Mommsen, 'St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress', p. 347.

Romans are much worse in their governance of the state than their forebears were.[186] Thus, instead of development and constant amelioration in *temporibus christianis*, the earthly city is progressively ill-governed, losing even its sole virtue – that it is ordered. Conversely, the true law of the universe, peace,[187] is effortlessly maintained by God through all calamities, natural or political, without the least disturbance.[188]

On the other hand, Augustine does not equate Rome fully with the earthly city, nor does he condemn it fully. He acknowledges that many members of Rome have been, are, can and shall be citizens of the heavenly city. Correspondingly, many members of the Church, even among its leaders, are engrossed in themselves, their own prosperity, and thus are citizens of the ever-divided terrestrial city.[189] But Rome is nevertheless taken throughout the *City of God* as the *par excellence* representative of the earthly city,[190] sometimes in a radical sense. Augustine, for example, does not hesitate to note that both the terrestrial city and Rome were born of fratricide: the former by the spilling of Abel's blood, the latter by the murder of Remus.[191] The two cities, however, cannot exist without each other. The heavenly city, after all, recruits it members from among the fallen inhabitants of the terrestrial city, while the latter derives its pale imitation of justice from the city of God.[192] Rome is conceived as undergoing desecularisation in a specifically Christian sense, yet this in itself cannot elevate it on the level of the heavenly city. Importantly, it is beyond the power of any man to discern to which city an individual belongs to,[193] and outwardly there may not be a difference at all. According to Griffiths:

> [T]he principal difference between the rule of a pagan emperor and a Christian
> one lies in their understandings of what it is they do rather than in their judgements
> about what needs to be done. Pagans tend to understand what they do when they
> rule […] by appeal to temporal power or other realities of this age; Christian

---

[186] Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* p. 118; Augustine, *The City of God,* 2:21.

[187] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:12.

[188] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:13.

[189] Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, pp. 57–59; Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* p. 116; Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:1 and 18:49.

[190] Augustine, *The City of God*, 16:17; 18:2; 18:22.

[191] Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:5.

[192] Feldman, 'Religion and the Earthly City', pp. 989–91.

[193] Dodaro, 'Augustine on the Statesman and the Two Cities', p. 486; Griffiths, 'Secularity and *saeculum*', p. 42.

emperors and administrators understand (or ought to) what they do in terms of constraining damage and giving glory to God.[194]

To humans the *true* intentions of others, including God, and in many cases, our own selves, are unknowable; it is only to God to whom all is known and determined.[195] Precisely this is the reason why in Augustine's depiction no state, no matter how well-governed (unlike Rome), can ever approach being just or become just. That is the sole property of the city of God. Famously, all kingdoms without justice are but 'bands of robbers,'[196] and those that achieve a semblance of justice do so with torture, aggression, punishment.[197] However, that is a semblance only because truth, the foundation of justice, is hidden and unknowable.[198] Therefore 'true justice is found only in that commonwealth whose founder and ruler is Christ'.[199] Rome had never lived up to the erroneous standards of justice and republic set by Cicero,[200] and is a republic only in the manner of the earthly city, as it is bound together by the shared *material, terrestrial* interests of its dwellers and strives towards those. Thus, *only* if justice is omitted is 'the Roman people a people and its estate indubitably a commonwealth',[201] Augustine scathingly claims. Without justice, even those famous Roman virtues that her citizens love to boast of are nothing.

True virtue, however, comes from 'the *true* worship of the *true* God',[202] something which even those who are Christians in name might not render. Thus religion has nothing to do even with the temporal prosperity of nations, only as much as the moral dictated by a particular religion influences the welfare of people.[203] From Rome specifically the most that can be hoped is that it 'would become theologically neutral and leave the church alone'.[204]

In Augustine's view, the laws of the world have no power to promote one's salvation. Although they might have a corrective effect, but they stem from injustice, and it is hardly to

---

[194] Griffiths, 'Secularity and *saeculum*', p. 36.
[195] Coleman, *A History of Political Thought*, p. 294.
[196] Augustine, *The City of God*, 4:4.
[197] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:6; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, p. 92; O'Daly, 'Augustine', pp. 401–02; Coleman, *A History of Political Thought*, p. 293.
[198] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:6.
[199] Augustine, *The City of God*, 2:21; Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* pp. 119–20; Dyson, *St Augustine of Hippo: The Christian transformation of Political Philosophy*, pp. 67–68.
[200] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19: 21; O'Meare, 'Introduction', p. xxiv.
[201] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:24; Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* p. 122.
[202] O'Meare, 'Introduction', p. xxiv.
[203] Griffith, 'Secularity and *saeculum*', p. 37.
[204] Kennedy, *Secularism and its Opponents from Augustine to Solzhenitsyn*, p. 21.

be expected that one injustice (that of the earthly city's law) will set another injustice (sin) aright.[205] Terrestrial legislation, as noted above, is also based on fear and coercion, whereas a true believer will follow the laws of God out of pure, selfless love. Conformity to any system of rule thus holds no redemption; indeed it might be positively sinful, if it is aimed at securing greater earthly rewards.[206] Augustine sardonically suggests in several places that the only way Rome as a polity might have advanced the cause of Christianity was that it created martyrs.[207]

Having thoroughly deconstructed the idea of a *Roma christiana* and its boundless power, Augustine concentrates on the individual's faith and morality. His writings are about Christian emperors, kings, and magistrates, using their powers to actions which stem from their Christian conviction.[208] For there is one thing that even a member of the city of God may legitimately desire of the world: peace. However, while the earthly city construes peace as free enjoyment of worldly things, the peace of the heavenly city is rest in God. The peace of the terrestrial city is not fulfilling. It can never have enough, and thus inherently leads to the disruption of the selfsame peace. Citizens of the city of God, on the other hand, understand and accept that earthly peace is temporary. What they are ultimately striving for is *true* peace: immaculate, timeless, and invulnerable: thus perforce belonging to the otherworld. [209]

As we have seen, according to Augustine no ruler can achieve perfection. Authority and secular power only serve (if put to good use) to corral the disruptive self-loves of the members of the earthly city. And yet, however well-intentioned a ruler may be, they can only serve their city through injustice. But can they serve the city, a community that, driven apart by the loves of its citizens, does not exist in any meaningful manner? Augustine reduces the field of action again to the level of the individual: if we remove justice from a city, all we are left with is the terrestrial city. Remove the city, 'and what are all men but simply men?'[210] The basic assumption of the *City of God* is that 'a human society mirrors the individual man writ large."[211] Individual loves determine all aspects of the community. Therefore salvation lies not in any illusory worldly group. The heavenly city, interspersed as it is here with the terrestrial one, will

---

[205] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:19.
[206] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', pp. 240–43.
[207] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:14; 8:20; 13:5; 22:6.
[208] Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, p. 149; Weithman, 'Augustine's political philosophy', pp. 246–247; Coleman, *A History of Political Thought*, pp. 294–295.
[209] Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:4; 19:1028.
[210] Augustine, *The City of God*, 5:17.
[211] Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine*, p. 80.

be a true city only after the destruction and recreation of the world – in the community of the saints.[212]

By turning the discussion from city to individual, Augustine proceeds to slice history into definite, individual slivers. Adjoined to his particular interpretation of time, i.e., that time is the soul's distension from God, a result of its fallen condition,[213] history is replaced with a private, individual narrative of the soul's liberation from the terrestrial city: a story of conflict between the earthly city and the heavenly one on the individual level.[214] Time itself is in the mind, i.e., a psychological process,[215] and it is caused by the private (but by procreation shared) sin of Adam and Eve. As a consequence of sin, time is healed by the individual's private and literal *volte-face* from the earthly city to the heavenly one, which will, upon joining the timeless community of saints and angels, make history meaningless.[216] History thus can be viewed by humans *sub specie saecularitatis* as simply an arena where the personal salvation or damnation history of countless individuals is played out[217] and significantly, as an arena without any cardinal direction. It is, of course, different in God's *sub specie aeternitatis* perception. But for humans, just as there is no communal salvation, there is no communal history. To seek signs in the history of any community makes as little sense as to talk of the citizenship of an individual with certainty (apart from saints, of course). The purposes of God are 'indecipherable beyond a certain a point', that point being the opacity of Scripture.[218] 'Punishment' and 'reward' reveal absolutely nothing: all men, as sinners, deserve chastisement, and God 'makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous'.[219] Even those who appear to us righteous and rewarded by God, as the excellent Romans were, may ultimately be damned; and yet true Christians and citizens of the heavenly city may receive similar blessings from God if He deems it right in His inscrutable providence.[220] Much as humans cannot be like God, they cannot comprehend His plans. Those thinkers who consider

---

[212] Augustine, *The City of God*, 20:17.
[213] Augustine, *Confessions,* 11:34–40; Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine,* pp. 40–41.
[214] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', p. 172.
[215] Fredriksen, 'The Confessions as Autobiography', p. 95.
[216] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', pp. 235–36.
[217] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', p. 236.
[218] Vessey, 'History of the Book: Augustine's *City of God* and Post-Roman Cultural Memory', p. 17; Rist, 'On the Nature and Worth of Christian Philosophy: Evidence from the *City of God*', p. 220. Augustine, of course, admits that Scripture contains the *ultimate* plan of God with history; but this cannot be encompassed by an imperfect human mind. It is interesting to note that precisely the work in which Augustine attempted to systematise scriptural exegesis, the *De doctrina Christina*, is left unfinished.
[219] Matthew 5. 45.
[220] Augustine, *The City of God*, 1:8; Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', p. 245.

themselves able to make sense of the world, history included, are proud and boastful, and reject the humility showed by Christ on the cross.

Augustine rejects the traditional Roman pagan and the Christian Eusebian view of history at the same time, and substitutes it with his own. 'The only difference between the most recent calamity, the Gothic sack of Rome, and those of the past tells in favour of Christianity: the Goths respected the churches as places of sanctuary, in a way which no invader had treated pagan temples.'[221] Significantly, although he recounts Gentile, Scriptural, and Christian history at length (Books 1–4 and 15–18, a little over a third of the full text, all deal with history), Augustine only recounts episodes, never a continuum. These episodes he evaluates on their own terms: he allows, for example, for different customs in marriage,[222] or personal weakness,[223] and insofar as he reads these stories typologically, he never takes them to refer to actual future historical events. The typological readings are always expounded in the framework of the opposition of the two cities, constantly channelling communal occurrences (e.g., the transition of kingship from Saul to David) into individual psychological interpretations (a shift from arrogance to humility).[224] Not even the establishment of the Church has a universal historical significance. Augustine explicitly believed that Jews and Gentiles alike reached salvation before the coming of Christ.[225] For them at that time the focus of hope was quite literally only a hope, and not yet certitude as for contemporary Christians; nevertheless if they were pleasing to God, they were saved irrespective of their customs and liturgies. Once more, through the example of Job, Augustine demonstrates that it is not membership of any terrestrial community that renders the individual eligible to salvation, but their own bearing and behaviour in the face of prosperity and adversity alike. Contrary to Orosius, who, as we will see, distorts history to prove (impossibly) that all excellent Romans were in secret Christians, Augustine, through Job, confirms that not even the knowledge of Christ is required for salvation.[226]

In short, Augustine uses the city of God as a standard to which he compares terrestrial cities only to see them fail in each and every respect. This stands in direct opposition with

---

[221] Marenborn, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibiniz,* p. 19.
[222] Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:16.
[223] Augustine, *The City of God*, 16:43.
[224] Augustine, *The City of God*, 17:4.
[225] Augustine, *The City of God*, 18:47.
[226] In his later works, such as the *De spiritu et littera*, Augustine even acknowledges (although with considerable difficulty) that even among contemporary pagans it is possible that some have not heard of Christ, but, having had 'the law written in their hearts' (Romans 2. 15) are capable of being just, virtuous, and saved.

Greek, Roman, and Eusebian Christian political thought, which derived their definition of the supernatural from the terrestrial by magnifying it. Novel as a political idea, Augustine's thought nonetheless only expands upon Johannine Christianity: 'My kingdom is not of this world.'[227] Citizens of the city of God are pilgrims in this world,[228] not only in the sense that they are born and they die, but that they reject their membership of the *civitas terrena* and make pilgrimage into the *civitas Dei*.[229]

---

[227] John 18. 36.
[228] Augustine, *The City of God*, 15:1.
[229] Coleman, *A History of Political Thought*, pp. 328–35.

II. Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem*

Composition, Idiosyncrasies, Textual History

Paulus Orosius[230] was a contemporary of St. Augustine of Hippo, and probably hailed from the province of Hispania.[231] The course of his life is almost unknown, and little can be discerned (with or without certainty) from the *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem* (henceforth referred to as LH). His two tracts on heresies, the *Consultatio sive commonitorium ad Augustinum de errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum* (henceforth: *Commonitorium*) and *Liber apologeticus* provide very few further clues about Orosius' life. We do not know where he was born, or when. The first piece of information about his life is his flight from his native land due to its occupation by barbarians (with whom Orosius came into conflict).[232] His travels took him to Africa, where he met with St. Augustine. According to Orosius, the bishop of Hippo, still working on the *City of God*, commissioned him to work on what was to become LH:

> Praeceperas mihi, uti aduersus uaniloquam prauitatem eorum, qui alieni a ciuitate Dei […] pagani uocantur […] praeceperas ergo, ut ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis grauia aut corrupta morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum saeua uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem, ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem.

> (You bade me speak out in opposition to the empty perversity of those who, aliens to the City of God, are called "pagans" […]. Although they do not inquire into the future, and either forget or do not know the past, yet defame present times as most unusually beset, as it were, by evils because there is belief in Christ and worship of God, and increasingly less worship of idols – accordingly you bade me set forth from all the records available of histories and annals whatever instances I have found recorded from

---

[230] The name 'Paulus' might be a mistake for 'P.' standing for 'presbyter', and only appears in Jordanes (Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose: Histoires contre les païens,* p.xiii).

[231] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 3; Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* pp. 135–36.

[232] LH 3/20; *Commonitorium* 1.

the past of the burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of fire or cruel strokes of lightning and storms of hail or even the miseries caused by parricides and shameful deeds, and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.)[233]

This is Orosius' mandate in writing LH. Although he appears to have believed that he was doing exactly what Augustine wished,[234] there are signs that the bishop disavowed Orosius' work due to a great number of reasons.[235] Augustine's displeasure came later, however, and in the meantime he responded to the *Commonitorium*, and sent Orosius to Jerome, living in Palestine, as a bearer of his letters, and extolling him as a diligent young man of keen mind.[236] The exact aim of Orosius' mission is unknown, although Hanson speculates that as a bearer of Augustine's tract *De natura et gratia* he was to warn against the spread of Pelagianism and possibly check its tide.[237] Taking up residence in proximity of Jerome, Orosius was summoned by the bishop of Jerusalem, John, to give an account about Pelagianism in Africa. A series of lengthy debates ensued in which Orosius and his supporters were unable to secure a condemnation of Pelagius from John.[238] LH was, in all appearance, finished in 416, considering the *terminus post quem* formed by passage 7/43/12, referring to a treaty between Honorius and Vallia regarding the marriage of Galla Placidia (Honorius' sister and the widow of Athaulf, Vallia's predecessor), which is the latest event datable with certainty.[239]

An enormous number of copies of Orosius' text survive: more than two hundred and seventy-five,[240] most of them copies from the 8th century onwards. The edition of Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet gives a thorough description and analysis of the manuscripts.[241] Nine of the MSS are from before the 8th century, with the *Laurentianus* manuscript hailing from the early 6th – that is, at most only a hundred years after LH's composition. As Arnaud-Lindet notes, MSS later than the 9th century are often unreliable, corrected into corruption by Carolingian

---

[233] LH 1/Preface/9–10. The Modern English renderings are exclusively from Deferrari's translation in *Paulus Orosius: The Seven Books of History Agains the Pagans*, which I will use throughout the dissertation.
[234] LH 3/4/4; 6/1/12; and especially 7/43/19.
[235] Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 7/27; 16/4; 18/2; 18/52; Rohrbacher 148.
[236] Hanson, *Iberian Fathers*, pp. 99–100; Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, p. 136.
[237] Hanson, *Iberian Fathers*, p. 101.
[238] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, pp. 3–4.
[239] LH 7/43/13; Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 39.
[240] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 697; Fear 25–26; Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose*, p. LXVII.
[241] Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose*, pp. LXVII–XCIX.

scribes.[242] However, these errors rarely change the text in significant ways, most problems being limited to the orthography of proper names and various spelling mistakes.[243] Some errors (often shared by families of MSS and serving as indicators of their history) result in simply ungrammatical sentences easily recognised, instead of altered readings.[244] Three primary editions of the LH text exist: those of Haverkamp, Zangemeister, and Arnaud-Lindet. Only the last is a critical edition by modern standards. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet also comments extensively on Zangemeister's edition, and her introduction to the textual history and transmission of LH is invaluable. However, as she points out,[245] Zangemeister's edition is, with a few additional corrections (such as that of Svennung and Kaczmarczyk), certainly the most popular working text. The differences between their established texts mainly lie in the fact that from the collection of MSS on which both she and Zangemeister based their editions, she on occasion prefers the idiosyncratic readings and/or spellings of a set of texts other than Zangemeister's. These instances are limited in number and pose no great difficulty.[246]

I chose Zangemeister's text as my basis, because it makes comparison between LH and OEH clearer, and furthermore this is the basis of Deferrari's translation (which however does not, unfortunately, number verses, following only a book/chapter numbering). It is the 1882 *CSEL* edition corrected by Max Bänzinger on the basis of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. lat. 829 (Arnaud-Lindet's MS *N*) and St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS Cod. Sang. 621 (MS *G*) among others.[247]

---

[242] Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose,* p. LXVIII.
[243] See the critical apparatus of Arnaud-Lindet's text *passim.*
[244] Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose,* p. LXXX.
[245] Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose,* p. XCVIII.
[246] Arnaud-Lindet, *Orose*, p. XCIX.
[247] http://www.attalus.org/latin/orosius.html

Previous evaluation of the Historiae adversus paganos

Scholarly scrutiny has not favoured Orosius. Fear cites Hobsbawn: 'No historian today cares a rap what [he] wrote, [or] thinks [his] views worth a minute's consideration.'[248] He is often quite forgotten among the Christian historiographers of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, where studies focus mostly on Jerome, Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, and Isidore.[249] Recent analyses are to be found in Rohrbacher's *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, Merrill's *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, Michael I. Allen's 'Universal History 300–1000' in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, Koch-Peter's *Ansichten des Orosius zur Geschichte seiner Zeit*, and Trompf's *Early Christian Historiography*.

Koch-Peters' voluminous analysis of LH is the only monograph written about Orosius, and its 1984 publication date makes it chronologically the first among my secondary sources. The *Ansichten des Orosius zur Geschichte seiner Zeit* established many of the points that the later analyses will reiterate. It was the first work which did not treat LH as a failure, but a text with its own agenda and target audience. Her evaluation of LH as propaganda, a criticism of LH's own age addressed at the *Stadtrömer,* is based upon an analysis of Orosius' use of the Theory of the Four Monarchies.[250] Orosius identifies Christianity with *Romanitas* and equates the history of Christianity with that of Rome, thus therefore it was impossible for him to envision an end of Rome. Instead, he argues that it will eventually assume the qualities of the City of God. Orosius attempts to downplay the significance of the increased success of the barbarian tribes and focuses on the progressive barbarisation of the Roman provinces - a process which can be reverted by self-healing through Christianity. Koch-Peters also notes that Orosius is full of contradictions, and easily bends his material to his immediate needs: for example, LH readily compares Rome to Babylon and equates the City with the Empire only to ignore these statements when they go against his central message.[251] She perceives a strong geographical

---

[248] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 25.
[249] For example, Euan Cameron's *Interpreting Christian History* mentions Orosius only in passing; the volume *Reflections on the Early Christian History of Religion – Erwägungen für frühchristliche Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Cilliers Breytenbach & Jörg Frey) does not write about him at all, nor the *Companion to Historiography* (ed. Michael Bently). Even the massive work *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (ed. John Marincola) mentions him as an author only twice, without any details.
[250] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, pp. 18–47.
[251] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, pp. 49–73.

demarcation in LH, with only the *West* ever possessing righteousness and power.[252] As she notes, even the only clearly Christian city, Constantinople, 'ist für ihn die *gloriosissimi nunc imperii sedes et totius caput Orientis* (3,13,2), Rom hingegen die Herrscherin über die Völker' (is for him the 'the seat of our most glorious empire and the chief city of the entire East,' whereas Rome is the ruler over the nations). [253] This geographical analysis will in many ways reappear in the research of Merrills.

At the same time, LH is 'mehr politisch als theologisch motiviert' (more politically than theologically motivate, going against Orosius' original mandate from Augustine.[254] The main concern of LH, according to Koch-Peters, is the fragile unity of the empire, especially the tenuous subordination of the East to the authority of the West, and the ever-increasing autonomy of the *latifundia* with their vast and oftentimes rebellious owners and slaves.[255] She sees Orosius' hardly successful attempts at covering up the blunders of the post-Theodosian governments (the collapse of the Rhine frontier and the subsequent seizure of the breadbasket areas of the Empire by barbarians) as a consequence of LH's central tenet: the Roman Empire is indispensable and irreplaceable by divine ordainment. 'Nam ubi est imperium nisi apud Romanum, quod tenet imperium?'[256] Hence the hostility of the barbarians has to be reframed and portrayed as harmless to Rome. Counterintuitively, the political success and unity of the Empire is no longer dependent on *actual* policies for averting the barbarian threat, but on divine providence. The barbarians are the agents of the selfsame divine providence for good or ill. Orosius desperately tries to assure his audience that it is all for the better.[257] Koch-Peters's work is more like a passage-by-passage commentary of Book 7 of LH than a full analysis of the entire work, which is a trait that is present in subsequent analyses as well.

Rohrbacher evaluates LH as an 'extremely ambitious'[258] and 'innovative attempt to place all of history into a coherent framework'[259], going far beyond the scope of Augustine's original request. Universal in space and time, Orosius redefines *Romanitas,* Christianity and humanity. According to Rohrbacher the central concern of LH is that the periods preceding the

---

[252] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, pp. 129–30.
[253] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, p. 143.
[254] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, p. 95.
[255] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, pp. 165–172.
[256] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, p. 211.
[257] Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, pp. 185–220.
[258] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* p. 139.
[259] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* p. 146.

advent of Christianity were substantially worse than the *tempora christiana*. He notes that Orosius negates the concept of just war, but interestingly claims that this is universally true about LH,[260] which does not hold up, as we will see, in the Seventh Book. As he writes,

> Orosius' thought may be distinguished from that of Eusebius by his emphasis on a different messianic sign. While Eusebius portrayed the military victory of Octavian at Actium over his rivals as comparable to the victory of God over demons, Orosius saw the peace prompting the closing of the gates of the temple of Janus as a sign of Christ's arrival. Orosius, as always, stresses the peacefulness of the victory of Christianity.[261]

Rohrbacher notes the numerological and figural correspondences in history posited by Orosius, as well as the ostensible existence of a divine plan which elected Rome as the last World Empire. In his analysis, LH argues that the barbarians shall be incorporated into Rome's new *oikumene*.[262] He also points out the inconsistencies in Orosius' handling of his data, and the contradictions of his several parallel systems of symbolism.[263]

In contrast, Merrills' analysis claims that Orosius followed his mandate from Augustine 'with some fidelity' and 'a sardonic humour'.[264] Orosius' optimistic outlook, according to him, rests on a total misreading of *De civitate dei*, and on a set of correspondences between biblical and secular history, although Merrills' description of these is far from exhaustive.[265] He notes Orosius' conformity to the sources known to him both in spatial and temporal boundaries, but claims that Creation and Incarnation are the central points of LH,[266] which I think is erroneous. Merrills goes on to provide a detailed analysis of the geographical aspects of LH, analysing the structure of the book around the four cardinal directions corresponding to the Four Monarchies.[267] Moving on to the ideological aspects of the text, Merrills writes:

> Orosius' failure to define adequately the complex relationship between the ideal Christian state and the contemporary Roman hegemony creates an enormous number of problems both for the historian and for his audience. Over the course of the *Historia*, Rome is presented partly as a flawed temporal state similar to that envisaged by

---

[260] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* pp. 141–142.
[261] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* p. 143.
[262] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* p. 147–48.
[263] Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity,* pp. 144–46.
[264] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 39–40.
[265] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 41–44.
[266] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 46–47.
[267] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 49–55.

Augustine, and partly in an idealized form more familiar from the Caesaropapist ideas of the Eusebian tradition. Orosius' presentation of the Christian empire fluctuates, often violently, between the two contrasting forms and in the resulting disorientation the position of Rome with respect to the earlier empires is often forgotten. [...] Orosius never fully addresses the complicated relationship between pre-Christian Rome and the divinely supported empire of Augustus and his successors.[268]

Merrills also claims that Orosius acknowledges that the *tempora christiana* were subject to fluctuations in prosperity, and that the military actions of the Roman Empire were a failure, which I will argue against.[269]

Allen states that Orosius 'followed Jerome and ignored [Augustine's] mistrust of equating God's hidden purposes with external circumstance'.[270] His analysis describes the Eusebian metanarrative of LH consistently, attributing this influence to Jerome, although acknowledging that ultimately the *Chronicle* is a Eusebian work, merely augmented by Jerome.[271] He actually writes of a Jeromian metanarrative only in a brief paragraph analysing Jerome's exegesis of the Book of Daniel – a work which is never explicitly mentioned by Orosius.[272] Allen, much like the previous scholars, pinpoints the key differences between the metanarrative proposed in *De civitate dei* and LH, the latter constructing a moral and providential reading of history, casting it as an educational process, and noting the existence of the typological correspondences built by Orosius. The short reading in 'Augustine and Orosius' mostly concerns itself with the *De civitate dei*, evaluating LH on the basis of its shortcomings in comparison with the compendious composition of the bishop of Hippo, writing that 'practical clarity and force of Orosius's engagement mostly overrode Augustine's subtle theological vision'.[273]

Finally, let us turn to Trompf's analysis, which pairs Orosius' LH with Sulpicius Severus' historical works, contrasting their metanarrative on sin and divine judgement, their 'retributive logic'.[274] As Trompf argues, Severus expanded the logic of Judges 2–3 to

---

[268] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 57–58.
[269] Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 59–61.
[270] Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', p. 26.
[271] Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', p. 26.
[272] Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', pp. 23–26.
[273] Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', p. 30.
[274] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 285.

encompass the entire Hebrew and Church history, creating a pessimistic outlook, where the basic sinfulness of the human existence will always demand divine vengeance – except in the few happy cases of saints, such as St Martin. Severus in his reading is actually terrified of the destruction of the world being hastened by mankind's sinfulness.[275] In contrast, Trompf calls Orosius 'a relative optimist',[276] because in LH the *tempora christiana* shows a marked increase in the leniency of God. LH simply rewrites pagan history from an opposing point of view, challenging the efficacy of the Roman religion in general and in aiding the imperialism of the Roman people in the narrow sense.[277] Orosius, according to Trompf, also brings into opposition the *ferocitas* of the past with the gentle behaviour of humans under the auspicies of Christianity. As Trompf argues, the description of the pagans' *ferocitas* gradually fades into an anthropological categorisation of peoples based upon their civility under Christianity, writing that 'for Orosius strangeness of cultural fashion and the utter vehemence of warriorhood have become a *stage* in humanity's whole journey, that is, the time of the ancestors (*maiorum tempore*) that constitutes conditions to which, as God providentially wills, there shall be no return'.[278] Trompf mentions in passing the contradictions inherent in the Orosian narrative, but claims, like Merrills, that the author never envisaged the *tempora christiana* without problems[279] – a curious statement, going against the direction of both LH and the Eusebian metanarrative. Trompf enumerates a threefold strategy on Orosius' part in explaining the superiority of the Christian age over the pagan past: a) deconstructing the Roman religion's system of *do ut des*, b) the accentuation of group ferocity, and c) proposing a Christian system of fitting rewards and punishments.[280] The first and the last one are especially interesting, because here Trompf finds himself in contradictions not unlike those in LH: for example, he mentions events that do not occur in the Orosian text (Theodosius' destruction of the lands of the Basternae),[281] or elides ones that do (the eventual disruption of Galla Palcidia's marriage).[282] His final evaluation of LH also contrasts it with *De civitate dei*, noting that 'in Orosius, we can fairly adjudge, there was rather too much providential reward on this side of eternity – too much consolation from history'.[283] Trompf's detailed discussion touches many of the points that I

---

[275] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, pp. 286–92.
[276] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 285.
[277] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, pp. 294–98.
[278] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 301.
[279] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 303.
[280] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, pp. 294–305.
[281] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 302.
[282] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 307; LH 7/43/12
[283] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 309.

will make, but it is somewhat haphazard and contradictory, trying to prove at the same time the inventiveness and creativity of LH, and its failure at historiography.

All analyses, as we have seen, treat LH in comparison with Augustine's ponderous work, noting its failed arguments. This is a direction which is almost impossible to avoid: after all, contrary to all of Orosius' assurances and creative twisting of data, the Roman Empire ended. One cannot help but feel that Augustine was right, if only because the events proved *him* right. Scholarly research therefore tends to try to find value of a different sort in LH: its political ideas, its novel take on geography, or simply the sheer quantity of data amassed by Orosius. The context of Orosius' Eusebian metanarrative and its internal functioning are rarely addressed, and never in a systematic manner. There are several reasons for this. Most of the material that is pressed into service by Orosius is found in the Seventh Book, which is also the focal point of LH, and has the greatest aggregation of arguments, strategies, and machinations on the author's part. The last book also is more relevant to contemporary historiographical research, as the imperial age of Rome is well-documented, and thus we can compare Orosius' data to that of other authors in order to receive a greater insight into Orosius' manipulation of his facts. I will take all these points into account, while I will also address a number of further issues: Orosius' appropriation of the genre of *historia*, and his manipulation of the Ciceronian categories of *fabula* and *argumentum* to buttress his metanarrative of history; salvation history in the *Historiae* and the conflict between free will and historical predetermination; Orosius' Christian mythopoeia; and the Christian *oikuemene* in LH.

Orosius' Ciceronian argumentative strategies

As the categories of *historia, fabula,* and *argumenta* were already defined by Cicero in *De inventione*, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Orosius was familiar with this opus of the great rhetor: he quotes several of his works on a number of occasions.[284] As the categories established by Cicero were repeated also by Quintilian[285] they were since their conception, part of the array of tools at the disposal of an orator or a historiographer. *Historia* for Cicero 'est

---

[284] For example, LH 1/8/8: *Pro Murena* 20.24 (Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 56); LH 2/6/13: *Pro Marcello* 4.11 (Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 84); LH 4/10/1: *In Pisonem* 19.43 (Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 176), among others.
[285] Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula*, p. 60.

gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota; quod genus: "Appius indixit Carthaginiensibus bellum,"' (is things done, far from the the memory of our age, of this kind 'Appius declared war on Carthage'). This implies factual evidence in contrast with the other two categories.[286] 'Argumentum est ficta res, quae tamen fieri potuit. Huiusmodi apud Terentium: "Nam is postquam excessit ex ephebis, [Sosia]"' (*Argumentum* is a fictional thing, which nonetheless could have taken place. Of this kind is Terence's: 'you see, Sosia, ever since he grew up from his coming of age…'), where the passage in *The Girl from Andros* is a brief philosophical discussion how a person's true character cannot be divined while under constraint.[287] *Fabula*, too, 'in qua nec verae nec veri similes res continentur, cuiusmodi est: "Angues ingentes alites, iuncti iugo..."' (in which no truth of the similitude of truth is contained, such as: 'Vast winged snakes, joined in yoke…'), is fiction, but in this case the falsehood is absolute.[288] *Historia* therefore is a past event which can be interrogated for causes and consequences; it must perforce be intelligible, unlike the incomprehensible non-truth of *fabula*. *Argumentum* is a parable in the New Testament sense, and therefore must contain absolute and timeless truths, which it narrates and proves at the same time. The discussion in *Andria* is a timeless discourse upon the (un)knowability of human character when limited by rules.

Orosius' *historia* employes all three categories, and uses them in a logical and consistent fashion. LH's apologetic strategy can therefore be analysed on the bases of these distinctions, especially since, as stated above, he expressly did not write an unbiased account of history, but a partisan work employing and supporting the Eusebian metanarrative.

LH writes about *historia* and its derivatives (*historiae, historiarum, historicus, histriographus,* etc.), at a total of 19 times (excepting the title).[289] The meaning of *historia* for Orosius is that of verifiable data, and its derivatives refer to objects or persons who concern themselves with such data. Although the data might seem convulted and bewildering, it must nonetheless be followed by Orosius to be able to expound its meaning correctly, as he argues in 3/2/9-14. The chronology of history must also be respected (otherwise, of course, Orosius' numerological correspondences would fall apart), although the author sometimes needs to branch off at certain points in order to explain cause and effect fully, as in the story of Cyrus, elaborated in LH in two parts (in 1/19/6-11 and 2/6/1-2/7/6), or the focal event of the sack of

---

[286] Bietenholz, *Historia and fabula*, p. 60; Elliott, *Ennius and the Architecture of the Annales*, 155–156.
[287] Terence, *Andria,* I/1.
[288] Cicero, *De inventione,* I/27
[289] LH 1/Praefatio/10; 1/1/5; 1/3/6; 1/8/1; 1/8/9; 2/2/4; 2/3/10; 2/6/1; 3/2/9; 3/7/3; 3/16/13; 4/13/6–8; 5/3/3–4; 6/6/6; 6/7/2; 7/2; 7/10/4; 7/35/12; 7/42/13.

Rome at the hands of the Goths in 410, the account of which is also bipartite (2/19/12-16 and 7/39/1-18). *Historia* with a single exception is also understood to corroborate the points Orosius is making. Interestingly, the only locus where LH denigrates historians is 1/8/9:

> quamquam huius temporis argumentum historiis fastisque reticentibus ipsa sibi terra Aegypti testis pronuntiat: quae tunc redacta in potestatem regiam restitutaque cultoribus suis, ex omni fructu suo usque ad nunc quintae partis incessabile uectigal exsoluit.

> (Although the histories and records hold back proof, the land of Egypt itself as a witness offers proof of that period, for at that time, being brought under the power of the king and restored to its own cultivators, it has from that day down to the present time unceasingly paid a tax of a fifth part of its entire harvest.)

As Fear notes it, 'this statement is simply false.'[290] Orosius is not afraid to falsify quantifiable data, such as the numbers of troops or the dates of certain events in order to press the resulting narrative into the service of his metanarratives, as we will see later. LH also understands simple eyewitness record as history, even at the cost of contradicting himself, as for example in 7/35/12, describing the conflicts of Theodosius and Arbogastes. The writings of historians can also be overruled, as in 5/3/4, where Orosius concludes that the many conflicting accounts about the destruction of Corinth in 146 BC demonstrate that 'quia parum credendum esse in ceteris euidenter ostendunt qui in his quoque, quae ipsi uidere, diuersi sunt' (what is falsely known is the knowledge of lies, because they clearly show that they must receive little credence in other matters, who, in those things which they themselves have seen, are contrary). By and large, however, Orosius tries to maintain the established category of *historia* as factual and intelligible data; at the same time, however, he appropriates the definition and claims that historical works and historiographers can only be trusted when they support his narrative.

This attitude toward historiography is, of course, concomitant with Orosius' general perception of history as subordinated to a specific design. Thus, whatever is 'irregular' is by definition wrong. History for Orosius is a chain where each link is a separarate *historia*, making up his own *historiae* – the concatenation of data which prove a particular interpretation of the present status of the world. It is, of course, Orosius' *historiae* which is correct – hence the reason why it is at the same time *adversus paganos*.

---

[290] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 56.

The use of *argumentum* and its related words (*arguo, coarguo,* etc.), also supports this. In all 16 cases *argumentum* is employed by Orosius in the sense of 'absolute proof.'[291] The most conspicuous case of the opposition between *historia* and *argumentum* is in 1/8/9, quoted above: here as LH argues the testimony of Egypt is indubitable and absolute, testifying to Orosius' narrative and logic, whereas historians purposefully try to hide the simple fact. In 2/1/1 LH writes:

> neminem iam esse hominum arbitror, quem latere possit, quia hominem in hoc mundo Deus fecerit. unde etiam peccante homine mundus arguitur ac propter nostram intemperantiam conprimendam terra haec, in qua uiuimus, defectu ceterorum animalium et sterilitate suorum fructuum castigatur.

> (Now I think that there is no one among men from whom it is possible to conceal that God made man in this world. Therefore also, when man sins the world is censured and, because of our failure to check the intemperance, this earth on which we live is punished by the disappearance of other living creatures and by the failure of our crops.)

Orosius first presents an axiom, followed by a suspicion that, adhering to the Eusebian logic, is proof at the same time. The barrenness of the earth is the result of men's sins, and man's sinfulness is proven by the catastrophes. In 6/1/7 Jesus reveals demons and chastises the ignorant at the same time,[292] which is brought into verbal parallel 6/1/26, where God's punishment of the Romans is likened to the righteous castigation of rebellious slaves by their masters.[293] *Argumentum* is thus employed by Orosius as invariably true law which is followed by the world, and is sinful to deviate from. The entirety of LH thus can be read as a rich,

---

[291] LH 1/8/9; 1/10/14; 2/1/1; 4/5/2; 4/6/37; 4/21/5; 5/5/16; 5/16/10; 6/1/7; 6/1626; 6/3/1; 6/5/7; 6/11/6; 7/1/1; 7/15/7; 7/37/8.

[292] 'Sub hoc imperatore, quem omnes fere gentes amore et timore permixto iuste honorarent, Deus uerus, qui superstitione sollicita ab ignorantibus colebatur, magnum illum intellegentiae suae fontem aperuit promptiusque per hominem docturus homines filium suum misit operantem uirtutes, quae praecellerent hominem, coarguentemque daemonas, quos aliqui deos putauissent, ut qui ipsi tamquam homini non credidissent, operibus tamquam Dei crederent.' (Under this emperor, whom all peoples with mingled love and fear justly honored, the true God, who was worshiped with scrupulous observances by those who did not know Him, opened the great fountainhead of His knowledge and, to teach men more quickly through a man, He sent His Son, performing miracles that surpassed the powers of man, refutingdemons whom some thought to be gods, that those who did not believe in Him as a man might believe in His works as of a God.)

[293] 'Nec igitur mirum est, si in magna familia inueniuntur aliqui serui, qui consuetudine lasciuiaque seductorum adsuefacti patientia domini sui ad contemptum ipsius abutantur: unde et merito Deus uel ingratos uel incredulos uel etiam contumaces uariis correptionibus arguit.' (So it is not to be wondered at if, in a large household, some servants are found who, having become accustomed to the loose society of their seducers, abuse the patience of their master to the point of being contemptuous of him. Therefore, even rightly does God reprove the ungrateful, the unbelieving, and even the contumacious with various kinds of reproofs.)

abundant, varied, and prolonged *argumentum*, based on a *historia* superior than the ones ignorant and deluded Romans are used to.

Finally, Orosius' *historia* is contracted seven times with *fabula* or *fabulae*, which he invariably understands as idle tales, containing neither factual no spiritual truth.[294] These *fabulae* were created by men to cover truth and lead their fellow humans astray. Such is the case in 7/26/3, where Orosius claims that the Romans say 'nunc euacuauit Maximianus noster omnem scaenam fabulae tuae nostraeque religionis antiquitatem columna inexpugnabilis fulsit' (but now our Maximianus has cleared away the entire stage setting of your [Orosius'] play and has shone forth as the unshakable prop of our ancient religion.). The tables are quickly turned by LH, however, and it is shown that in fact those who accuse Orosius with fabricating tales are themselves subject to lying fables. In 1/10/19 men go even so far as inventing 'ridiculam Phaethontis fabulam' (the ridiculous story of Phaeton), just so that they do not have to face the truth that God alone moved the Sun in order to dry out the Red Sea so that the Hebrews may cross it. Orosius qualifies any alternative explanations of history as *fabula*, or even simply as lies.[295]

Orosius' positioning himself as the sole source of veritable *historia* gives him free rein in the assembly and interpretation of the data constituting his *historiae*. Whatever concordances and connections he discovers (e.g., between the Crossing of the Red Sea and the unusual blaze plaguing the Ethiopians), they are there because God ordered them to be so. In this way, Orosius is not hypothesising about history; he expounds and elucidates the secret connections which are hidden from the eyes of the pagans by their delusions and bad sources. As a historiographer, Orosius does not merely chronicle the events of the past and of his days: he fashions them into an *argumentum* that points at the contrast of the sinfulness of the Romans and God's timeless plan of salvation history. This *argumentum*, as LH claims, is borne out by the events of the past. Yet Orosius' basic aim – i.e., to demonstrate that Romans were miserable before the advent of

---

[294] LH 1/10/19; 1/12/5–6; 2/18/5; 2/19/4; 3/14/8; 6/1767; 7/26/3.

[295] For example: LH 7/22/2: 'mentita est iniquitas sibi, prauo in perniciem suam circumuenta iudicio, pestilentiam communis casus esse accidentemque ex morbis mortem naturae finem esse non poenam,' (Injustice deceived itself, being cheated to its own destruction by the poor judgment that the pestilence was of common occurrence and that the death which resulted from the diseases was a natural end and not a punishment); LH 7/36/12: 'periclitaremur sub tantorum miraculorum relatu quasi praesumpta mentiendi inpudentia, nisi adhuc uocem nostram conscientia eorum, qui interfuere, praecurreret,' (In telling such great miracles, we would run the risk, as it were, of presuming to lie impudently, did not the testimony of those who were present anticipate our words thus far).

Christianity, and their conditions have continuously improved since – inevitably came into conflict with his data.

> Praeceperas mihi, uti aduersus uaniloquam prauitatem eorum, qui alieni a ciuitate Dei
> […] pagani vocantur. […] praeceperas ergo, ut ex omnibus qui haberi ad praesens
> possunt historiarum atque annalium fastis, quaecumque aut bellis grauia aut corrupta
> morbis aut fame tristia aut terrarum motibus terribilia aut inundationibus aquarum
> insolita aut eruptionibus ignium metuenda aut ictibus fulminum plagisque grandinum
> saeua uel etiam parricidiis flagitiisque misera per transacta retro saecula repperissem,
> ordinato breuiter uoluminis textu explicarem.

> (You bade me speak out in opposition to the empty perversity of those who, aliens to
> the City of God, are called "pagans" […] You bade me set forth from all the records
> available of histories and annals whatever instances I have found recorded from the past
> of the burdens of war or ravages of disease or sorrows of famine or horrors of
> earthquakes or of unusual floods or dreadful outbreaks of fire or cruel strokes of
> lightning and storms of hail or even the miseries caused by parricides and shameful
> deeds, and unfold them systematically and briefly in the context of this book.)[296]

LH thus is a specific narrative: a chronological listing of the sufferings of mankind. This chronological enumeration does not aim to be universal,[297] although it was treated as such by almost all of its epigones, translators, re-workers, etc. (including Bede).[298] Orosius states his intentions in the title and the *prologus*. The full title of the work, *Historiae adversus paganos (libri septem)* is conventionally translated to English as *History against the pagans (in seven books)*. However, *historiae* is the plural of *historia*, making the whole title into *Seven books of histories against the pagans*. The title implies a selection of episodes rather than a full account, circumscribing the material included in LH. Orosius presents an anthology, as it were, of the catastrophes of the world and the terror of human existence, supporting his apology against the pagans. The *prologus* simply elaborates on the title, making it abundabtly clear what can be expected of the text.

---

[296] LH 1/Praefatio/9–10.

[297] Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 44; Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 294; Fear, *Seven Books of History*, pp. 24–25; Allen, 'Augustine and Orosius', p. 30.

[298] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 25.

LH thus is an openly apologetic and argumentative work. The selection of miseries employed by Orosius serve to illustrate the Eusebian idea of history.[299] History follows a course laid out by God, and all attempts to stray from it are sinful, and have been, are, and shall be followed by instant retribution.[300] Virtues in LH are reduced to the foregoing of free will in favour of submission to God's plan, and thus, since God and his plan can only be good, obedience is followed by instantaneous rewards.[301] In this sense, history becomes a process of fulfilment: the course laid out by God is under His rigorous control, and all human beings, participating in history, are divided into two:[302] the sheep and the goats of Matthew 25. 31–46. The choice of any agent in history is twofold: salvation (compliance with God) and damnation (deviation from the Plan). The event which prompted Augustine and Orosius to write the *City of God* and LH respectively, is also to be understood in this relation. The Gothic capture of Rome in 410 is a due warning and punishment for Rome rebelling against Christianity and God.

History for Orosius is therefore a moral one, a striking difference from Augustine. 'Morality', however, is qualified: murder, arson, abuse, genocide, and *Schadenfreude* are all acceptable if committed under the aegis of Christianity (or in the case of the Old Testament, under the aegis of God), with Orosius providing many examples of this. LH appropriates the right to define ethical behaviour: whatever furthers God's agenda or punishes those who oppose it is permitted by God, and therefore *per definitionem* is good and right. Just as in Eusebius and Lactantius, welfare (individually and communally) and eusocial behaviour (in nations and churches) are proof of divine approval; whereas misery and discord are the direct vengeance of God for sins, or on occasion, even for the failure to stop others from sinning.[303] What in the enemies of God is counted as sin therefore is acceptable, even laudable, in the case of Christians or those pagans whom God elects to carry out his vengeance (for example, the Goths and the Burgundians).[304] Orosius' logic is entirely mechanical. Whatever crime is not avenged by God (however contrived the definition of 'revenge' may be, as is in many places in LH) must have been sanctioned by Him; therefore it is not crime, and its perpetrator is divinely sanctioned in the action. Thus, perforce, the 'victim' must have had some hidden sin, which is punished by God. Logically, Rome's pre-election exonerates the Empire from its sins, although other states

---

[299] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 6.
[300] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 12; LH 2/3/7.
[301] LH 2/3/7, 6/22;
[302] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, pp. 6–16.
[303] LH 7/22/5–6.
[304] LH 7/39.

(Assyria, Macedon, and Carthage) are destroyed by God for the same acts. Of course, individuals and sometimes even entire communities within the Empire may be chastened with various afflictions or outright extermination by God;[305] however, Rome has been ordained to be eternal by the Creator, and therefore is just that.

LH depicts history as a sort of educational process for mankind by the stern instruction of God, in the spirit of Proverbs 13:24: 'He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.'[306] If only mankind could understand the intention of God (whether we fail to do so by ignorance or malevolence matters little), and could curtail its passions (that is, convert to Nicene Christianity), history would at once reach its end, and its fulfilment would be instantaneous. Orosius shared the era's general eschatological expectations of the immediacy of the Second Coming.[307] Christianity is the institutionalised oracle and agent of God's plan, and all who oppose it are punished.[308] The Catholic Church has been, is, and will be the salvation of mankind, and more particularly, of Rome. The Roman Empire, concordantly with the mainstream Christian ideology of the era is depicted by Orosius as a framework eventually destined to be perfected and fulfilled by the Church,[309] and in fact the destiny of humankind is to be united in the Chrisitian *oikumene* within Rome, under the rule of the divinely appointed emperors.

This Christian imperial ideology is based in Orosius upon the appropriation of the 'Theory of the Four Monarchies', and his application of it is novel and traditional at the same time. He makes no biblical reference, even though he was certainly aware of the Book of Daniel. He treats the theory as common knowledge.[310] Orosius interprets the new, Christian Rome as the fourth *and* everlasting empire, preceded by Assyria, Macedon, and Carthage (east, north, and south).[311] In his calculations, Old Rome was burned away when

---

[305] LH 7/9.

[306] 'Sein [God's] Zorn wie seine Milde und seine Geduld sind nicht nur darum Ausdruck seiner Gerechtigkeit, weil sie zur rechten Zeit walten, um die Weltordnung aufrechtzuerhalten. Die göttliche Gerechtigkeit is auch pädagogisch, auf Adäquation gerichtet,' (His wrath, just a his mercy and his patience are not only the expressions of his justice, for he chooses the correct time in order to maintain the order of the world. The divine justice is also educational, aiming to [improve mankind's] adequacy,) (Funkenstein, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung*, p. 26).

[307] Landes, 'The Birth of Heresy', p. 38.

[308] LH Book 7, *passim*; for example, Domitian's death is attributed to his attempted extirpation of Christians: 7/10/3–7 see also 7/4/12, 7/7/11, 7/8/5, 7/29/3ff, 7/35/20–23.

[309] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 693.

[310] LH 2/1/4–6.

[311] LH 2/1–2: 7/2.

[S]eptingentesimo conditionis suae anno quattuordecim uicos eius incertum unde consurgens flamma consumpsit, nec umquam, ut ait Liuius, maiore incendio uastata est; adeo, ut post aliquot annos Caesar Augustus ad reparationem eorum, quae tunc exusta erant, magnam uim pecuniae ex aerario publico largitus sit.

(For in the seven hundredth year of its foundation, a fire of uncertain origin destroyed fourteen of its districts, and, as Livy says, never was the City damaged by a greater conflagration, so much so that some years later Caesar Augustus contributed a large sum of money from the public treasury for the restoration of the buildings which had then been burned.)[312]

The restoration of Rome by Augustus is immediately followed and mirrored by the miraculous peace surrounding the birth of Christ.[313] Orosius postulates that the Roman Empire will eventually transcend its nature as *civitas terrena* and become *civitas Dei* as he understood the term;[314] in fact, it is already well on its way to the transformation, but for some recalcitrant pagans.

The parallelism between the four empires is the main organising principle of the work, except for the obvious fact that Rome has survived and will continue to do so, unlike the preceding three. The special distinction and promise given by Orosius on the basis on Nabuchadnezzar's dream is not his invention. The existence and popularity of a contemporary secular take on the theory of a series of world empires culminating in Rome lays a solid foundation for Orosius' particularly mundane interpretation of Christian salvation. Orosius is able to appropriate both the Christian and pagan interpretations of the dream and its exegesis. Rome is not destroyed by the rock which is Christ: LH simply does not mention the rolling boulder. The numerology concocted by Orosius makes it clear that Rome has survived where others have not, and suggests that Rome has successfully taken all hurdles. On the other hand, LH makes clear that Rome's election is due to a special favour, grace, and even love of God bestowed upon the City. In 6/22/8 Orosius writes:

[N]ec dubium, quin omnium cognitioni fidei inspectionique pateat, quia Dominus noster Iesus Christus hanc urbem nutu suo auctam defensamque in hunc rerum apicem

---

[312] LH 7/2/11.
[313] LH 7/2/16.
[314] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 37, Mommsen, *St Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress*, pp. 346ff; Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 698.

prouexerit, cuius potissime uoluit esse cum uenit, dicendus utique ciuis Romanus census professione Romani.

(It is undoubtedly clear for the understanding of all, from their faith and investigation, that our Lord Jesus Christ brought forward this City to this pinnacle of power, prosperous and protected by His will; of this City, when he came, He especially wished to be called a Roman citizen by the declaration of the Roman census list.)

This assertion simply supplants Jews as the Chosen People with the Romans.[315] The former three empires were predetermined to fall, whereas Rome possessed some merit, which made God to elect it as the vessel of fulfilling history.[316] Now we can appreciate the paradox facing Orosius: on the one hand, he must show that history before the coming of Christ was merely a series of miseries; on the other, he still must argue that Rome, with all its despicable sins, was better than the others; in fact, so much better that God himself was anxious to be a Roman citizen.

Although the paradox might seem irresolvable to a modern historian, Orosius' concept of historiography was lax enough to make him simply not address this question. Rome was destined to become a world empire from its beginnings beyond all doubt. Christianity is forcefully argued to be the cause of the leniency of God towards Rome,[317] and Orosius postulates that the peace and unity of the Empire allegedly achieved by Octavian enabled the spread of the faith[318] (a thoroughly Eusebian idea[319]), but an explanation as to why God bore an especial love towards Rome is missing.

Nevertheless, these are the basic assumptions around which Orosius ordered his text and built its structure. It is quite obvious that his apologetic work cannot, in any sense, be considered a historical account. For the sake of clarity, henceforth I will refer to 'past events, especially when considered as an aggregate' as *history*, whereas to 'a record or account, often chronological in approach, of past events, developments, etc.' as *historiae*.

---

[315] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 316.
[316] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 40.
[317] LH 2/3/6–7, 7/15/7ff, 7/32/13, 7/35/6ff.
[318] LH 5/2, 7/2/16.
[319] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 693.

In every book of Orosius' *historiae*, Rome has a central importance; it is the measure by which all other events are gauged. Instead of writing a 'universal history', the Spanish priest wrote an episodic and Eusebian narrative about the four empires of the world. Of these empires, two stand out singularly: Assyria/Babylon and Rome. The other two 'potestate temporis non iure hereditatis admissi' (came as […] accepted by the power of time, not by the law of inheritance). [320] The first book, which deals with the rise and fall of Assyria/Babylon, takes the references of the Book of Revelation[321] as its basis, and casts Babylon into an antetype of Rome, numerologically and morally. The events recounted about Babylon are emphatically drawn into parallel with incidents in Roman history.[322] The rise and fall of the Babylonian empire is contrasted with the beginning and endurance of Rome, even at the expense of obvious falsification of dates and forced comparisons (for example, the accession of Augustus is placed on Epiphany 6/20/1).[323]

> Babylon itaque eo anno sub Arbato praefecto dehonorata, quo Roma sub Proca rege, ut proprie dixerim, seminata est. Babylon nouissime eo tempore a Cyro rege subuersa, quo primum Roma a Tarquiniorum regum dominatione liberata est. siquidem sub una eademque conuenientia temporum illa cecidit, ista surrexit; illa tunc primum alienorum perpessa dominatum, haec tunc primum etiam suorum aspernata fastidium, illa tunc quasi moriens dimisit hereditatem, haec uero pubescens tunc se agnouit heredem; tunc orientis occidit et ortum est occidentis imperium.

> (Thus, Babylon was dishonored when Arbatus was prefect in that year when, as I have properly said, the seeds of Rome were sown under King Procas. Babylon was finally overthrown by King Cyrus at that time when Rome was first freed from the domination of the Tarquinian kings. Indeed, at one and the same accord of time, the one fell, the other arose; the one, at the time, first endured the domination of foreigners; the other, at that time, also first rejected the haughtiness of her own princes; the one, at that time like a person at the door of death, left an inheritance; but the other, then attaining maturity recognized itself as the heir; at that time the power of the East fell, that of the West rose.)[324]

---

[320] LH 2/1/6.
[321] Revelations 14.8; 16.19; 18.2–21.
[322] 1/6, 1/16, 2/2, 2/3, 7/2.
[323] For an inspired comparison, see 2/3/4; *Encyclopedia* p. 626.
[324] LH 2/2/9–10.

The contrasting of the past and Christian present of Rome is one of the organising principles of LH. A second one is a 'sub-plot': every incident recounted (wars, catastrophes, and their like) in the *historiae* must be shown to be positively opposed by either a more lenient version of it (for example, in the case of the Gallic siege of Rome in 390–389 BC and Alaric's capture of the City in 410 AD),[325] or by the cessation of its occurrence (e.g., the slumber of the Etna since the advent of Christianity).[326] A third motif is the combination of the previous two. Since Orosius construes history as an instructive and corrective process, each empire's history is also the story of the punishments meted out on it.[327] Fourth, LH also attempts to show (often through the manipulation of its sources) that the mildness of God is due to the presence and prayers of Christians in the Empire[328] and the perfection they already effected upon it,[329] following the Eusebian doctrine of moral progress.

Fifth, Orosius could not ignore the threat the barbarian invasion posed. In this case, his method of integrating barbarians into his *historiae* was twofold. When it fitted his agenda, barbarians, especially the Goths, became scourges of God and heretics, tools to punish recalcitrant Rome;[330] in other cases, rather illogically, they become one of the many sufferers of Rome's continuous wrongdoing,[331] or the subjects of Christian compassion.[332] Sometimes these two cases were clumsily intertwined, as in the story of the siege of Rome (principally 7/39), where the Goths are portrayed *at the same time* a) as ferocious and heretical barbarians through whom divine vengeance is exacted upon Rome; and b) as fellow Christians who simply wish to take what is wrongly reserved from them. This bipolarity is apparent in Rome's relation with all other peoples as well: in Book 5, Chapter 1 some of the provinces, along with their formerly independent peoples, are personified and made to express their suffering from Roman imperialism. However, elsewhere they are treated as mere tools in God's hand to punish the Romans via insurrections and attacks. Some, such as the Gauls,[333] are predetermined to evil,

---

[325] LH 2/19.

[326] LH 2/14.

[327] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, p. 294

[328] LH passim, but especially 7/39.

[329] LH 7/28; Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, p. 34; Hanning, *The Vision of History*, pp. 21–22.

[330] A creative interpretation of the two events can be found in LH, 2/19/14–16, even claiming that in the Gothic assault 'God was more angry and men less so.' For further examples, see LH 1/6/4, 3/20/11, 5/1/13, 7/22/7, 7/35/19, 7/37–39

[331] LH 7/33/19

[332] LH 7/34/8

[333] LH 2/19/1–11; 3/6/1–2; 3/21/1–7; etc.

and denied of free will.[334] This is reinforced by another method frequently employed by Orosius: the ruler vicariously stands for the people, redeeming or condemning them with his or her self. Thus, for example, the persecution of Christian Goths under Athanaric (7/32/9) is simply an instance of the wickedness and heresy of the Goths (7/33/19).[335]

The inconsistent use of these argumentative strategies was, apparently, not considered to be so by Orosius. He seems to have favoured opportunistic 'pagan-bashing' over a consistent description and interpretation of history. It could be said that Orosius, instead of methodologically collecting and collating the past and present tribulations of humankind, was forcing the episodes he collected into a grand and elaborate structure, buttressing his special Eusebian interpretation of history. LH does not conform to its ostensible historiographical models;[336] instead, the work reads more like a hagiography. Every event has been and will be prefigured. All actors are types and antitypes of future characters, and all events were, are, and will be simply iterations of the salvation history of Rome.

These five major argumentative principles (the comparison of the rise and fall of Babylon and Rome; the leniency of God in Rome's punishment; history as the unfolding of punishment; God's already present mercy; the barbarians as scourges of God) and Orosius' self-assertive tone create a definitive framework wherein every episode recounted in LH snaps into place, contributing to the *telos* of history. Orosius assumes the role of an omniscient narrator. Stating that Rome was predestined to rule the world in the Catholic *oikumene*, just as the various peoples were doomed to play their transient roles in this fulfilment, amounts to ostentation of knowledge of past, present, and future history, although such knowledge is

---

[334] Significantly, Orosius cannot seem to decide whether war is righteous or sinful. In many cases, wars launched by Rome are seen as sign of Roman wickedness, as are campaigns started by other states and rulers (Ninus: 1/4/1–3; Philip: 3/12/1; Alexander: 3/18/8; Carthage: 4/6; Radagaisus: 7/374ff). On the other hand, if wars are understood to be punishments from God (as in the case of barbarian invasions), it can hardly be said that they are bad, even if the motives of their leaders are evil. Can wars instigated by Rome not be said to have been the righteous punishment on, say, Carthage, or precisely those provinces that are said in 5/2 to suffer from Roman expansionism? Orosius comes dangerously close to depicting God as actually encouraging a vicious circle of violence – Rome punishing Carthage with war, Carthage then violently punishing Rome for the first war, whereupon Rome, again, executing God's vengeance upon Carthage for *their* retribution, and so on (unreasoning violence is actually named to be the cause of the Third Punic War in 4/23/8). LH singularly fails at vindicating violence: whereas natural disasters can be appreciated as corrective measures by God (nature, most importantly, lacking free will), the engendering of punitive acts by human agents, which yet earns them their damnation, raises serious questions concerning the much-stressed mercy of the Lord.

[335] Whether Athanric was an Arian Christian or not is an open question: as a heathen, he might have persecuted Arian Goths – whose heresy Orosius here conveniently omits to mention; as an Arian, he might have moved against the minority of Catholic Goths. This persecution, logically, is not counted among the "typological" listing of the Ten Persecutions, equalled by Orosius with the Ten Plagues in 7/27.

[336] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 24; Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 698.

clearly denied even by Christ and the Apostles.[337] LH also presents a simple materialistic scheme of reward-punishment. As the result of sin or virtue, it is the physical welfare and security of the people which is increased or reduced respectively – fully in line with the Eusebian explanation of history.

As a further problem, Orosius virtually denies individuality, since rulers vicariously stand for all their peoples, and vice versa; grace or vengeance are effected on 'evil and good […] righteous and unrighteous alike'.[338] The vicarious reward-punishment is most apparent in the crucial episode of the near-introduction of Christianity into Rome during Tiberius' reign.[339]

> [A]t postquam passus est Dominus Christus atque a mortuis resurrexit et discipulos suos ad praedicandum dimisit, Pilatus, praeses Palaestinae prouinciae, ad Tiberium imperatorem atque ad senatum rettulit de passione et resurrectione Christi consequentibusque uirtutibus, quae uel per ipsum palam factae fuerant uel per discipulos ipsius in nomine eius fiebant, et de eo, quod certatim crescente plurimorum fide deus crederetur. Tiberius cum suffragio magni fauoris rettulit ad senatum, ut Christus deus haberetur. Senatus indignatione motus, cur non sibi prius secundum morem delatum esset, ut de suscipiendo cultu prius ipse decerneret, consecrationem Christi recusauit edictoque constituit, exterminandos esse urbe Christianos; praecipue cum et Seianus praefectus Tiberii suscipiendae religioni obstinatissime contradiceret. Tiberius tamen edicto accusatoribus Christianorum mortem comminatus est. Itaque paulatim immutata est illa Tiberii Caesaris laudatissima modestia in poenam contradictoris senatus; nam regi, quaecumque uoluntate faciebat, uoluptas erat, atque ex mansuetissimo principe saeuissima bestia exarsit. Nam plurimos senatorum proscripsit et ad mortem coegit; uiginti sibi patricios uiros consilii causa legerat: horum uix duos incolumes reliquit, ceteros diuersis causis necauit; Seianum praefectum suum res nouas molientem interfecit; filios suos Drusum et Germanicum, quorum Drusus naturalis, Germanicus adoptiuus erat, manifestis ueneni signis perdidit; filios Germanici filii sui interfecit. Referre singillatim facta eius horret pudetque; tanta libidinis et crudelitatis rabie efferbuit, ut, qui spreuerant Christo rege saluari, rege Caesare punirentur.

---

[337] Matthew 24. 36–42; 25. 13; Acts 1. 7.
[338] Matthew 5. 45.
[339] LH 7/4

(After the Lord Christ had suffered and had risen from the dead and had sent out His disciples to preach, Pilate, the governor of the province of Palestine, reported to the emperor, Tiberius, and to the Senate about the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and the subsequent miracles which had been performed in public by Him Himself or were being performed in His name by His disciples, and about the fact that He was believed to be a god by the ever-increasing multitude in the faith. Tiberius, with an approval of great popularity, proposed to the Senate that Christ be held a god. The Senate, roused with indignation because the matter had not, according to custom, been first referred to it, in order that it itself might be the first to decide upon the acceptance of a cult, refused to deify Christ, and by an edict decided that Christians were to be banished from the City, especially because Sejanus, the prefect of Tiberius, was most obstinately opposed to the acceptance of this religion. Nevertheless, Tiberius by an edict threatened the accusers of the Christians with death. Then, gradually, that most laudable moderation of Tiberius Caesar changed to a desire to punish the Senate for its opposition, for the emperor had a passion to do whatever he wished, and from a most mild ruler, he burst forth as a most cruel beast. For he proscribed a great many senators and forced them to death; he had selected twenty noblemen to be his counselors; of these he left scarcely two unharmed and killed the rest on various grounds; he killed his prefect, Sejanus, as he was attempting a revolution; his sons, Drusus and Germanicus, of whom Drusus was his natural son and Germanicus adopted, he destroyed very evidently by poison; he killed the sons of Germanicus, his son by adoption. It is a horror and a shame to relate his deeds one by one; he grew violent with such madness of lust and cruelty that those who had hoped to be saved by Christ the King were punished by Caesar the King.)[340]

However, even merits (or lack thereof) dwarf in the face of God's apparently biased leanings. Rome was no more virtuous than any of the other empires (a cornerstone of Orosius' argument), but it is nevertheless designed by God to be, through the Roman citizenship of Christ (claimed

---

[340] LH 7/4/5–10.

by Orosius in 7/3/4),[341] the ultimate good. Other states and peoples are consigned to damnation: Assyria, Macedon, Carthage all fell because of their sins *and* God's plan.[342]

This also includes Israel, despised by Orosius.[343] Their sin, of course, is that they murdered Christ; God *en bloc* punishes them by bereaving them of the Promised Land and scattering them over the world, where they are continually harassed. At the same time, the Jews who simply did nothing against the murder of Christ (or were indeed ignorant of it) are logically no better or worse than those 20,000 Romans who in 7/4/11–12 are in the theatre at the moment of Christ's death, and who are killed by God in a massive earthquake. The sole difference between the community of the Romans and Jews lies in their predestined fate by God. Israel is the discarded vessel of the Old Testament, and Rome is the new Christian *oikumene*. It is only the inscrutable and arbitrary will of God which raises a kingdom above all others or casts it into ruins; the Romans therefore, says Orosius, had better be careful not to get on the wrong side of God. The guidance to this is Christianity, which God in His mercy expounded as the only *modus vivendi* acceptable to Him.

LH therefore presents a problematic item of Christian historiography, which is only highlighted by the obvious failure of his vision: Rome did, in the end, fall. The return of imperial insignia to Constantinople by Odoacer in 476 dashed all hopes of a Christian *and* Roman (in the cultural and political sense) world-empire for a long time.

---

[341] "Postquam redemptor mundi, Dominus Iesus Christus, uenit in terras et Caesaris censu ciuis Romanus adscriptus est…" (After the Redeemer of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, came on earth and was enrolled in Caesar's census as a Roman citizen…)

[342] Augustine's writings also show a concern with the timing of Christ's birth, for example in *De diversis quaestionibus*, Chapter 44, "*quare tanto post venit Dominus Iesus Christus,et non in principio peccati hominis*? ('why the Lord Jesus Christ arrived so much later after the sinning of mankind, and not earlier?')".

[343] LH 7/33/18.

Salvation history in LH

LH's salvation history is hinted at on occasion by Orosius in the first six books, but it begins to fully unfold in Book Seven. This corresponds to the theory of six (plus one) world ages, put forward by Augustine in *De catechizandis rudibus,*[344] based on the passage in 2Peter 3. 8: '⁸ But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.' By extension this *locus* was taken to be concordant with the six days of Creation in Genesis, creating a framework wherein the six days correspond to six millennia in human history. Augustine describes the first six ages thus: the first aeon ran from Adam to Noah; the second, from Noah to Abraham; the third, from Abraham to David; the fourth to the captivity in Babylon; and the fifth until the birth of Christ. The sixth and last age is counted from the advent of Jesus until the end of time, after which the eternal Sabbath, the last day will take place outside time, in an eternal rest.

Orosius, however, uses another configuration. Book One, the first age, takes place from Ninus until the conquest of Assyria by the Medes, i.e., the collapse of the first empire and the founding of Rome. The second age and book detail the establishment of the republic in Rome, contrasted to the chaos as the former republics in Greece descend into the Persian, Theban, and Peloponnesian wars; it closes with the nigh-destruction of Rome at the hand the Celts in 396 BC. Next, Book Three takes us through the rise of the second empire, Macedon, under Philip and Alexander, down to the fall of the post-Alexandrian Seleucid kingdoms; in Italy the progress of unification under Rome is told. Book Four details Rome's wars with Carthage and ends with the destruction of the latter, signalling the end of the third empire. Now we move on to purely Roman history, and the Fifth Book follows the development of the Roman world empire, up until the quelling of Spartacus' revolt, the first events in the civil wars of Marius and Sulla, and attacks on the empire – i.e, the death rattles of Old Rome. The Sixth Book details the civil wars of the Late Republic and the *triumviri*, taking us down to the reign of Augustus, and the founding of New Rome. The final tome opens with the birth of Christ, and continues until the alleged submission of all invading barbarians to Honorius in 416.

LH creatively recasts Augustine's system to suit Orosius' own agenda. From the very beginning, he coordinates world history with the growth of Rome and the theory of the Four

---

[344] Augustine, *De catechizandis*, §64–66.

Monarchies. The advent and closure of each new age is ordered around focal points of Roman history, which are shown to be numerologically bound together and possessing mystic significance. One of the key points that Orosius is trying to impress on us that before the peace of Octavian and the birth of Christ human history was nothing but a series of misery and wretchedness. However, after these two events the condition of the world was instantly improved: salvation beings with Christ and New Rome.

Salvation, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, when subject to rational scrutiny, is a composite of the three issues. The questions to be asked are

(1) Who needs to be saved, and from what predicament?

(2) By whom are they saved, and how?

(3) What is the state of being saved?[345]

Orosius's answers to these queries are very specific. In the 19 out of the 20 cases he writes about *salus*, he explicitly means physical safety and/or well-being,[346] the remaining one being unspecified 'salvation' (which nonetheless is only proven to be true by miracles).[347] Physical safety (and it social dimension, peace and freedom) is more than once connected with the functioning and the stability of the state, as for example in 6/1/8,[348] 6/17/10,[349] and 7/5/4.[350]

---

[345] *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, p. 1125.

[346] LH 1/8/13; 1/8/14; 1/10/8–15; 2/19/13; 3/23/25; 4/4/1; 5/10/9; 5/15/15; 5/22/14; 6/1/8–13; 6/17/10; 6/18/15; 6/19/5; 7/1/11; 7/3/1–2; 7/4/10–12; 7/5/4; 7/6/2; 7/35/16; and 7/39/9–14.

[347] LH 7/6/2: 'exordio regni eius Petrus, apostolus Domini Iesu Christi, Romam uenit et salutarem cunctis credentibus fidem fideli uerbo docuit potentissimisque uirtutibus approbauit; atque exim Christiani Romae esse coeperunt.' (In the beginning of his rule, Peter, the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, came to Rome and taught the saving faith to all believers with words of faith and attested it by most mighty miracles. And henceforth, Christians began to be in Rome.)

[348] 'deinde ut in magno silentio ac pace latissima inoffense et celeriter noui nominis gloria et adnuntiatae salutis uelox fama percurreret uel etiam ut discipulis eius per diuersas gentes euntibus ultroque per cunctos salutis dona offerentibus obeundi ac disserendi quippe Romanis ciuibus inter ciues Romanos esset tuta libertas.' ([God] also [did this] that the glory of the new name and the swift report of the announced salvation might spread in the midst of the great silence and widespread peace quickly and without hindrance, and also that His disciples, as they went through different nations and voluntarily offered to all the gifts of salvation, might have safety and liberty among Roman citizens in speaking and conversing as Roman citizens.)

[349] Writing about tyrants, who do not share their power, being removed from their arrogated positions, LH continues: 'sed ad tam salubrem humilitatis doctrinam magistro opus est. itaque opportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominus Christus.' (But for so healthy a doctrine of humility there was need of a master. Thus opportunely, when the affairs of Augustus Caesar had been arranged, the Lord Christ was born.)

[350] 'serui rebelles et fugitiui gladiatores perterruere Romam […]. in diebus autem salutis, hoc est temporibus Christianis, conuellere quietem non potest uel Caesar infestus.' (Rebellious slaves and fugitive gladiators terrorized Rome […]. But in the days of salvation, that is, in Christian times, not even an inimical Caesar can break the peace.).

Thus question (3), "what is the state of being saved", is clearly understood by Orosius in a mundane, terrestrial sense to be the antithesis of the main topic of LH: misery. This is in line with a development of late Antique Christian thought about salvation, rooted in Ciceronian ideology. Since for Cicero salvation 'meant order and well-being in the home and the state, it had […] the sense of usefulness (*utilitas*)**.** Directing an Oration to Caesar, Cicero could thus ask who has so little reflected on his own and the common salvation as not to see that your salvation includes his own, and that the life of all depends on your life.' [351]

As Graeco-Roman politico-philosophical ideas about empire, history and welfare were employed by Augustus to create an ideology for the imperial state on world-scale, 'the public salvation (*salus publica*) became the world's salvation (*salus mundi*), the security of the worldwide *orbis Romana*. The fate of the emperor thus embraced the salvation of the human race.'[352] However, starting with Eusebius the *Pax Romana* was equalled with the *Pax Christiana*, an identification which Orosius also makes.[353] This facilitated the transition of soteriology (the salvation from sins and death offered by Jesus) into salutology (the preservation and maximization of welfare), 'especially since the Roman ideal of *salus* had made its way into ecclesiology already by the time of Cyprian.'[354] Thus for Orosius the idea of salvation, instead of focusing on eternal life in the next world, had already been supplanted by the civil and materialistic salutology for this *civitas terrena*.

As for question (1), "who needs to be saved, and from what predicament," LH's reply leaves no room for doubt: it is the Romans who have to be saved from corporeal peril and death. The predicament of damnation in Orosius' reading is what the three empires preceding Rome suffered: prolonged suffering (by wars, cruel rulers, natural catastrophes and epidemics), physical destruction and oblivion. Significantly, LH mentions Hell only twice: in 3/5/1 it is simply an underground void[355] and 4/16/7 it is bodily death.[356] Salvation can also be contrasted to being damned or condemned (L. *damno* and its derivatives), which Orosius uses on 23

---

[351] *Encyclopedia of Christianity,* p. 830.
[352] *Encyclopedia of Christianity,* p. 830.
[353] LH 7/5/4.
[354] *Encyclopedia of Christianity,* p. 830.
[355] 'repente siquidem medio urbis terra dissiluit, uastoque praeruptu hiantia subito inferna patuerunt.' (For suddenly in the middle of the City, the earth burst asunder, and immediately by a vast open chasm the gaping vitals of the earth were exposed.)
[356] 'Romani ad spem uitae quasi ab inferis respirare ausi dictatorem Decimum Iunium creant.' (The Romans, daring to breath again, brought back from the lowest depths to hope of life, created Decimus Junius dictator.).

occasions,[357] all of which detail physical death (such as the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in 1/5/9-11), loss of soldiers (e.g., in the war between Vesozes and the Egyptians, 1/14/2), condemnation to death or other punishment (e.g., Hasdrubal after the Second Punic War, 4/9/15), or generally speaking loss of wealth (5/1/1).

Query (2), "by whom are they saved, and how," presents problems. As shown above, soteriology for Orosius was intimately connected to public salutology to the extent that the two are virtually inseparable; therefore the answer to query (2) must logically contain the agents of salvation both physical and spiritual. Curiously, in most cases it is humans who effect salvation: from the 19 instances, only 6 are connected to God and/or Christianity,[358] true to LH's usual depiction of God retroactively condemning or affirming human deeds. It is difficult to gauge the role of Christ in Orosius' salvation history: although in Book 7 he periodically reiterates that He is the True God, and that the welfare and salvation of the Empire depends upon Him, Jesus simply *post factum* hallows the peace already created by Octavian and establishes the Church,[359] and probably will on some indefinite temporal plane judge the virtuous and the wicked. It is notable, however, that Orosius never mentions the Day of Judgement. Christ in LH is largely inactive, and no mention of his teachings, or even of the Gospel, is made. All the stranger, then, that in 3/8/8 Orosius warns his readers:

> [P]acem istam totius mundi et tranquillissimam serenitatem non magnitudine Caesaris sed potestate filii Dei, qui in diebus Caesaris apparuit, exstitisse nec unius urbis imperatori sed creatori orbis uniuersi orbem ipsum generali cognitione paruisse, qui, sicut sol oriens diem luce perfundit, ita adueniens misericorditer extenta mundum pace uestierit.

---

[357] LH 1/5/9–11; 1/14/2; 1/20/3; 2/8/6; 2/13/11; 3/9/5; 3/10/3; 4/1/12; 4/2/8; 4/6/12; 4/6/27; 4/9/15; 4/20/9; 5/1/1; 5/4/7; 5/5/10; 5/16/8; 5/16/23; 5/17/4; 5/22/14; curiously, no entry from book six; and 7/5/8–9; 7/13/2; 7/22/4.

[358] These are 1/8/14; 7/1/1; 7/3/1; 7/4/10; 7/5/4; 7/6/2. A possible seventh mention can also be found in 7/39/9–14, but this presents a problematic case. Orosius in chapter 39 forcefully argues that the Gothic siege was in fact Rome's salvation, the Goths being God's tools. The passage references saving and salvation six times, in the context of powerful biblical images, such as Matthew 13. 25 and 24. 31; Rev. 11. 15; and Amos 9. 9 (Fear¸ *Seven Books of History*, pp. 402–3). However, salvation is again understood in the sense of physical safety within the churches' precincts, which is augmented by the Goths' refusal to attack them: 'quanto copiosius adgregantur Romani confugientes, tanto auidius circumfunduntur barbari defensores' (the more thickly the Romans in their flight came together, the more eagerly the barbarians surrounded them as their defenders). This sort of salvation is contrasted with death by sword and burning: 'ipsa uel incredulitate uel inoboedientia praeiudicata, ad exterminium atque incendium remanserunt' (but the others, already judged for their very unbelief and disobedience, were left for extinction and burning). At this point Orosius also departs from his usual depiction of barbarians as blind and insensible tools of God, describing them instead as defending civilians and restraining themselves in a true Christian spirit.

[359] LH 7/1/2

([T]his peace and most tranquil serenity of the whole world existed, not by the greatness of Caesar, but by the power of the Son of God who appeared in the days of Caesar, and that the world itself, according to general knowledge obeyed, not the ruler of one city, but the Creator of the whole world, who like the rising sun pervades the day with light, and thus by His coming mercifully clothed the world with prolonged peace.)

It is his argument however in Book 6, Chapter 22, that Augustus' peace was chosen to be the date of the birth of Christ precisely because it existed. The *magnitudino*, 'greatness', of Caesar gave the right to Rome to be elected as God's chosen vessel.

Orosius therefore can be said to make, unusually for a Christian writer and especially for a disciple of Augustine, no distinction between human and salvation history. Although in Augustine's view the history of salvation 'liberates man from the tyranny of secular (or imperial) history',[360] Orosius subsumes salvation within human history. As the deeds of Octavian, Constantine, and Theodosius are retroactively vindicated by God, human history – contradicting LH's assertion - is allowed to take its own course. God only, as it were, overseeing, but not actively controlling it, having decided its fate down to the last detail at the moment of creation. Significantly, Orosius is willing to attribute punishments to God, but rarely their agency, plainly contradicting such biblical statements as Isaiah 41. 25,[361] 46. 8–11,[362] and Acts 4. 28.[363] The role of Jesus Christ as Son of God is reduced essentially to that of an ambassador, very much courting Arianism. His resurrection, the central doctrine of Christian faith, is mentioned in passing only once,[364] *before* it actually took place, and not at its chronological locus.

Orosius, however, claims to write not only about faith in God, but also about His mercy: 'verumtamen pace et gratia omnipotentis Dei dixerim, de cuius misericordia et in cuius fiducia haec loquor' (Nevertheless, by the amity and grace of the omnipotent God, I should say, by

---

[360] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 35.

[361] [describing Cyrus] 'I stirred up one from the north, and he has come, from the rising of the sun he was summoned by name. He shall trampleb on rulers as on mortar, as the potter treads clay.'

[362] 'Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfill my intention," calling a bird of prey from the east, the man for my purpose from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have planned, and I will do it.'

[363] '[t]o do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

[364] LH 7/4/5.

whose mercy and in whose trust I speak these words).[365] The two words consistently employed by LH to describe 'mercy' and 'grace' are *misericordia* and *gratia*, as in the above quote. They both had special and un-Augustinian connotations for Orosius. The most important difference in their meaning lies in their attribution to either God or humans. *Misericordia*, when humans are its agents, means 'pity, commiseration', occasionally 'lenience'.[366] When attributed to God, however, in nine out of eleven occasions it refers to God's provision for Roman peace and power and its maintenance.[367] The most notable passages in this case are 2/3/10 and 7/37/11. The first contrasts Babylon's demise with Rome's survival. Orosius asserts that those who doubt 'eum sane rogare solum Deum, qui et tunc occulta iustitia permisit, ut fierent, et nunc aperta misericordia praestat, ut non sint' (need to ask the One Sole God, Who, through his hidden justice, once allowed these things [Rome's siege and the treachery of Attalus] to come to pass, but now has revealed His mercy and vouches that they shall be no more).[368] That God planned these incidents, and now plans them no more, although they would be deserved (a theme reiterated in 7/22/9 and 7/34/5) signifies that he has other things in store for Rome. Orosius here builds a verbal connection between the promise made by God to Noah after the withdrawal of the Deluge. Chapter 7/31, discussing the terror which Radagaisus unleashed upon Rome and its subsequent obliteration, comments:

> [Q]uamobrem iustus dispensator humani generis Deus perire paganum hostem uoluit et Christianum praeualere permisit, ut pagani blasphemantesque Romani et illo confunderentur perdito et hoc punirentur immisso; maxime cum imperatoris Honorii admiranda in rege continentia et sanctissima fides non parum diuinae misericordiae mereretur.

> (Therefore, God, the just steward of the human race, wished that the pagan enemy perish and permitted the Christian enemy to prevail, in order that the pagan and blaspheming Romans might be thrown into confusion by the ruination of the one and punished by the admission of the other, especially since the continence of the emperor, Honorius, so

---

[365] LH 5/11/6.

[366] LH 2/11/9; 2/14/10; 3/1/25; 3/17/7; 4/6/3; 4/6/37; 5/5/1; 5/5/5; 5/16/6; 5/19/22; 7/37/16.

[367] These passages being LH 1/17/3; 2/3/10; 3/8/8; 5/11/6; 7/22/9; 7/30/6; 7/34/5; 7/37/11; and 7/14/8. The other two passages speak of an undefined *fructus misericordiarum* perverted by the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (1/5/11), and God's mercy shown to the Egyptians through Joseph's agency (1/8/7).

[368] LH 2/3/10.

remarkable in a king, and his most holy faith merited divine mercy in no small measure.)[369]

Plainly, by *misericordia* in this passage Honorius' triumphs and welfare are understood, coordinated with that of Rome, demonstrating Orosius' material, mundane conceptualisation of salvation. The situation is similar to that of *gratia*. God's grace manifests itself in all instances as peace and well-being: all seven references to it refer to worldly peace and/or *salus*.[370] The other 15 instances use the word in various senses, such as 'gift',[371] 'talent',[372] 'for someone's sake',[373] 'offer',[374] 'favour/benevolence',[375] and on one occasion as 'pardon'.[376] As the word for Orosius has these primary meanings, it is not surprising that this is how he applied it with reference to God. In contrast to Augustine's sophisticated theory of spiritual grace as the prevenient, operational, and cooperational love of God, engaged in a complex interplay of human free will,[377] Orosius reduces mercy and grace to their most mundane meanings.

In conclusion, it can be said that Orosius did not view salvation history as something separate from ordinary human history; therefore he logically did not assign it a special place in his *historiae*. Rather, the episodic narrative presented by him is his own story of *salus* history, leading up to the Eusebian fulfilment of established theocracy. Orosius understood salvation as the material fulfilment of Rome's ambitions, perfected and steered into the right course by Christianity; consequently, under the aegis and guidance of Christians, Rome will avoid the punishments which would otherwise be due to her. Once the linear progress of the growth of a Christian Roman Empire will have been achieved, history, rendered meaningless, will cease to exist, the *civitas Dei* having been created upon earth.

---

[369] LH 7/37/11.
[370] LH 5/11/6, 7/1/4, 7/3/3, 7/6/6, 7/9/2, 7/37/8, and 7/43/19.
[371] LH 2/13/2.
[372] LH 2/15/7.
[373] LH 2/19/5; 5/5/9; 6/3/1; 6/18/8.
[374] LH 1/17/3.
[375] LH 5/8/4; 6/18/8.
[376] LH 7/9/7.
[377] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp. 333–36.

Mythopoesis in LH – Orosius' new Christian past for Rome

The demonstration that Romans were miserable before the advent of Christianity, and their conditions have continuously improved since its arrival unavoidably ran headlong into serious obstacles. The vast expanse of time between the birth of Christ and the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of Rome is the age of the emperors, who, according to Orosius' logic, cannot have ruled so great an empire without divine approval. A great many of them even persecuted Christianity, and yet apparently had not been the worse for it.

Orosius' attempt for explanation is innovative. In order to maintain the union of *Romanitas* and Christianity, he takes the best rulers of imperial Rome and claims that they were secretly Christian all the time. Rulers such as Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian, Marcus Aurelius, all become in LH manifestations of the Eusebian archetype of Constantine: the good prince, the vicegerent of God, who immediately reaps the rewards of good conduct, thereby promoting certainly the *salus* of their subjects. These characters are, in the new Orosian myth of Christian Rome, mere iterations and variations of this archetype: their 'actions' are as predictable as the prosperity they enjoy. The *historia* in Book 7 of LH becomes increasingly subject to the mythical metanarrative of Orosius, and the data is progressively distorted in order to serve his apologetic and didactic needs. The subordination of accurate information to the metanarrative's logic becomes greater the closer we draw to the closure of the book. Since the last chapters deal with events in the target audience's living memory, here Orosius is especially careful with his information, and fashions his stories as it suits his needs – sometimes even at the expense of his own consistency, as we will see below. History for Orosius is the mythic clash of Religion and Death:

> [U]t merito hac scrutatione claruerit regnasse mortem auidam sanguinis, dum ignoratur religio quae prohiberet a sanguine; ista inlucescente, illam constupuisse; illam concludi, cum ista iam praeualet; illam penitus nullam futuram, cum haec sola regnabit.

> (So through this scrutiny it became clear, and rightly so, that Death, greedy for blood, had reigned when there was no knowledge of the Religion that keeps bloodshed at bay. For when Religion spreads forth its light, Death is confounded; Death is imprisoned,

when Religion is strong; indeed in the profoundest sense Death will not exist when Religion alone reigns.)[378]

The advent of the universal reign of Religion brooks no delay; and Orosius' work is an *argumentum* which seeks to chide Romans into submissiveness to Christianity. In this cosmic conflict everything that is good perforce belongs to Religion; therefore the most venerated figures of the Roman Empire are appropriated and recast by Orosius into archetypal figures lacking any historical dimension. They are merely vessels used by God to futher his plan, without identity or free will. Orosius' mythicization of the Roman emperors leaves them as completely interchangeable names. Honorius' hollow shell is indistinguishable from that of, say, Vespasian. Their circumstances are somewhat different, for the similarly cosmic and archetypal villains (usurpers, heretics, and evil emperors) conspire following different routes to retard the advent and advancement of Christianity. They are, of course, summarily punished and obliterated. Let us see how Orosius' Eusebian mythopoesis works in practice.

The first *princeps*, Augustus is not only portrayed as an active catalyst of change in world history, appointed and vindicated by God, but Orosius also writes of him that

Sub hoc imperatore, quem omnes fere gentes amore et timore permixto iuste honorarent, Deus uerus, qui superstitione sollicita ab ignorantibus colebatur, magnum illum intellegentiae suae fontem aperuit.

(Under this emperor, whom all peoples with mingled love and fear justly honored, the true God, who was worshiped with scrupulous observances by those who did not know Him, opened the great fountainhead of His knowledge.)[379]

Furthermore, after a brief account of Christ's works, LH adds that 'quod ideo commemorandum putaui, quia hic sextus libellus usque ad Caesarem Augustum, de quo haec dicuntur, extenditur' (so I have thought it necessary to recall this, because this sixth book extends to the period of Caesar Augustus, regarding whom these remarks are made),[380] transforming his brief narrative into an ambiguous Christianisation of Octavian, to whom the passage 'promptiusque per hominem docturus homines' ([God] teach[ing] men more quickly through a man)[381] apparently

---

[378] LH 1/Praefatio/14.
[379] LH 6/1/7.
[380] LH 6/1/9.
[381] LH 6/1/7.

refers. Due to the inconsistent logic of Orosius, discussed above, it is impossible to determine his views upon the mutual exclusivity or cooperation of divine and human agency in history; it is certain, however, that Augustus here is depicted as conscious of Christ and Christian doctrine, and his role therein. This is reinforced, later on, by statements such as 'eodemque tempore hic, ad quem rerum omnium summa concesserat, dominum se hominum appellari non passus est, immo non ausus, quo uerus dominus totius generis humani inter homines natus est' (At the same time, this man to whom universal supremacy was conceded, did not permit himself to be called 'lord of men,' rather dared not, when the true Lord of the whole human race was born among men.)[382] - apparently, Augustus had knowledge of the birth of the Christ. Some years later, when Gaius fails to make obeisance to God in the Temple at Jerusalem, Orosius says that it was 'prauo usus iudicio' (in an error of judgment) that Augustus praised the deed.[383]

Tiberius, too, in Book 7, Chapter 4 is depicted as acknowledging Christian truth, and promoting the true religion, as we have seen. 'Tiberius cum suffragio magni fauoris rettulit ad senatum, ut Christus deus haberetur … Tiberius tamen edicto accusatoribus Christianorum mortem comminatus est.' (Tiberius, with an approval of great popularity, proposed to the Senate that Christ be held a god. … Nevertheless, Tiberius by an edict threatened the accusers of the Christians with death.)[384] Tiberius acknowledges Christianity to be a superior form of religion, and his 'error' lies in that he wishes to enforce his deduction upon the obstinate Romans (although Orosius amply demonstrates that forced conversion was, to him, by no means a bad thing). This story was apparently first published by Tertullian,[385] but is improbable, and most likely an early piece of Christian *fabula*,[386] especially in light of the brutal depiction of Tiberius by other authors, such as Suetonius.[387] Orosius, however, seizes upon this story to ascribe the original modesty of Tiberius (described by Suetonius as a charade)[388] to Christian conviction, subliminating it to *historia*. This he does at the expense of chronological correctness, as Jesus

---

[382] LH 6/22/5.
[383] LH 7/3/5.
[384] LH 7/4/6–10.
[385] *Apologeticus,* V. 2: 'Tiberius ergo, cuius tempore nomen Christianum in saeculum introivit, adnuntiatum sibi ex Syria Palaestina, quod illic veritatem ipsius divinitatis revelaverat, detulit ad senatum cum praerogativa suffragii sui. Senatus, quia non ipse probaverat, respuit; Caesar in sententia mansit, comminatus periculum accusatoribus Christianorum.' (Accordingly Tiberius, in whose time the Christian name first made its appearance in the world, laid before the senate tidings from Syria Palaestina which had revealed to him the truth of the divinity there manifested, and supported the motion by his own vote to begin with. The senate rejected it because it had not itself given its approval. Caesar held to his own opinion and threatened danger to the accusers of the Christians.) Jossa, *Jews of Christians?,* p. 124.
[386] Jossa, *Jews of Christians?,* p. 126.
[387] Suetonius *Divus Tiberius* 36. 1.
[388] Suetonius *Divus Tiberius* 33. 1., 42ff.

was not crucified until the last years of the emperor's reign, whereas Tiberius withdrew to Capri in 27AD the latest, relegating power to Sejanus and giving himself up to licentiousness. Orosius, on the other hand, writes of him:

> Ipse autem Tiberius plurima imperii sui parte cum magna et graui modestia reipublicae praefuit, adeo ut quibusdam praesidibus augenda prouinciis tributa suadentibus scripserit boni pastoris esse tondere pecus, non deglubere.

> (But Tiberius himself, during most of his regime, ruled the state with great and serious moderation, so much so that he wrote to certain governors who were trying to persuade him to increase the tribute of the provinces that 'it is the part of a good shepherd to shear his flock, not to flay it.')[389]

This is an allusion to the parable of the Good Shepherd in John 10. 11, Matthew 18. 12 and Luke 15. 4.[390] Furthermore, Tiberius 'hic per semet ipsum nulla bella gessit, sed ne per legatos quidem aliqua grauia' (by himself, carried on no wars, nor even by his lieutenants any serious ones,),[391] a statement designed to downplay the in fact very real wars instigated by him.[392] 'Itaque paulatim immutata est illa Tiberii Caesaris laudatissima modestia in poenam' (Then, gradually, that most laudable of Tiberius Caesar moderation changed to a desire to punish), and even in the midst of his deeds causing horror and shame did, according to LH, practice charity in the case of the victims of the earthquake following Christ's death: 'sane Asiae ciuitates illo terrae motu dirutas tributo dimisso propria etiam liberalitate donauit' (indeed, the many cities of Asia which had been destroyed by the earthquake mentioned above, he released from their tribute and rewarded from his own funds as well).[393] This earthquake, however, happened a full fifteen years earlier than the Crucifixion,[394] and in any case the freedom from taxation lasted only for three years.[395] LH further mythicizes Tiberius' character by positing that the uncomprehending and malicious Romans were the cause of Tiberius' madness, which was their just desert. Even in his frenzy, the emperor retains in LH some vestige of understanding: immediately after the Crucifixion: 'per speciem sacramenti' (under pretext of military

---

[389] LH 7/4/4.
[390] Fear, Seven Books of History p. 325.
[391] LH 7/4/2.
[392] Fear, *Seven Books of History* p. 325.
[393] LH 7/4/10,
[394] Fear, *Seven Books of History* p. 328.
[395] Tacitus 4.13.

service)[396] he deports Jews from the City, which is claimed by Orosius to have been divine punishment for the Israelites' murder of Christ. Yet in face of all this, 'ambiguis signis ueneni obiit' (died under ambiguous indications of poisoning),[397] hinting at Caligula as the culprit, and at the same time dissuading any suspicion that Tiberius' death could have been divine punishment.

Although the depiction and Christianisation of Tiberius in not without errors of logic and chronology, Orosius' mythopoesis can clearly be seen. Orosius cannot have allowed the universal peace, which he associates with the nativity and life of Christ,[398] to be disturbed by an insane tyrant or unreasonable wars.[399] Thus the account of the madness of Tiberius had to be postponed until the last possible date, after the Ascension of Jesus. This also constrained the depiction of the emperor: if there was peace during the life of the Saviour, Tiberius must have been a good and moderate ruler, aware of his role in the greater scheme of things. His aggressive stance in adopting Christianity is well justified, and the unreasoning malice of the Senate in his opposition is justly punished. Orosius notably elides the numerous instances of Tiberius' evil conduct against the everyman,[400] and instead concentrates on his campaign against the Senate. Even in his frenzy, however, Tiberius lags behind divine justice: God kills in an earthquake the men attending the gladiatorial show which was held at the same time as the execution of Christ.[401]

LH does not depict Tiberius as unambiguously good, but its careful, if illogical arrangement of *historiae* supports the creation of Orosian myth: Tiberius is initially described as a good Christian monarch, who, when hindered by his subjects, visits God's revenge on them. At the same time, due to a personal corruption – hubris – he also undergoes punishment. Nevertheless, he retains some good in him, which the recalcitrant Romans again pay back with

---

[396] LH 7/4/17.
[397] LH 7/4/1.
[398] LH 7/3/9ff.
[399] Fear, *Seven Books of History* p. 325.
[400] Suetonius, 'Divus Tiberius', 57ff.
[401] 7/4/11–12: 'huius tamen imperii anno duodecimo noua et incredibilis clades apud Fidenatium urbem accidit: amphitheatri cauea populo gladiatorium munus spectante conlapsa est et plus quam uiginti milia hominum occidit. dignum sane posteris tantae correptionis exemplum, tunc ad spectandas hominum mortes auidos homines conuenisse, quando pro salute hominum prouidenda Deus homo esse uoluisset.' (But in the twelfth year of his reign, a strange and incredible destruction took place at the city of Fidenae. While the people were watching a gladiatorial combat, the seats of the amphitheater collapsed and killed more than twenty thousand persons. This, indeed, was a worthy warning of so great a reproach, that at that time men had come together to view the deaths of men when God had willed to become man to procure the salvation of man.)

evil. His fate after death is left undecided. Tiberius, had it not been for the Senate's thwarting of his purposes, might have gone down in history as a second Augustus.

The next characters drawn into Orosius' modified Eusebian myth are Vespasian and Titus. In crushing the first Jewish revolution, LH asseverates, they were doing merely God's wishes:

> [Titus] diu deliberauit utrum tamquam incitamentum hostium incenderet an in testimonium uictoriae reseruaret. Sed Ecclesia Dei iam per totum orbem uberrime germinante, hoc tam quam effetum ac uacuum nullique usui bono commodum arbitrio Dei auferendum fuit.

> (He deliberated a long time as to whether he should set it on fire as a source of incitement to the enemy or whether he should save it as a proof of his victory. Since the Church of God was flourishing very abundantly throughout the whole world, this, in the judgment of God, was to be removed as something exhausted and empty and as fit for no good to anyone..)[402]

This Titus consciously ('itaque Titus') immediately effects. Furthermore, at the close of their successful campaign, he and Vespasian celebrate a triumph, 'patrem et filium uno triumphali curru uectos gloriosissimam ab his, qui Patrem et Filium offenderant, uictoriam reportasse' (father and son riding in one triumphal chariot, bringing back a most glorious victory over those who had offended the Father and the Son.),[403] transforming the emperor and his son not only into crusaders, taking action against the enemies of God, but mirroring God and Christ in a decidedly Diocletian image. The two caesars consequently enjoy peace and prosperity during their reigns; vanquishing all their enemies,

> [P]acem totius orbis pronuntiauerunt, et Ianum geminum obseratis cohiberi claustris sexto demum ipsi post urbem conditam censuerunt. iure enim idem honos ultioni passionis Domini inpensus est, qui etiam natiuitati fuerat adtributus.

> ([they] immediately proclaimed peace for the whole world and decreed that double-faced Janus be confined by the bolting of the gates for the sixth time since the founding of the City.

---

[402] LH 7/9/5.
[403] LH 7/9/8.

> For rightly was the same honor paid to the avenging of the Lord's Passion as had been bestowed upon His Nativity.)[404]

Again, Orosius does not address the question whether it is God who simply bends reality to his will, or the rulers ordain the otherwise still pagan populace to honour Christ. In accordance with the Eusebian view of history, the decimation of Jews is interpreted as their just punishment, even as in the case of Tiberius; providentially the acts of Titus and Vespasian can also be claimed to conform to the divine plan. But actually claiming that they honoured, in any way whatsoever, God and Christ can only make sense if we understand that Orosius is trying to draw a parallel with the reign of Augustus,[405] incorporating the felicitous reign of the two rulers into his new Roman mythology.

Trajan was a native of Hispania, and thus a compatriot of Orosius, which is important, because LH treats any events and characters related to his home province with marked bias.[406] Trajan is something of a hero to Orosius, despite his negative actions. In chapter twelve of book seven he is described as a cruel persecutor of Christians. However, he 'errore deceptus' (made an error in judgment),[407] and as soon as he is informed by the appointed leader of the persecution that Christians are harmless, he desists. Nevertheless, because he *did* persecute the Church, natural disasters follow in Orosius' narrative, the first being that the Golden House, erected by Nero, spontaneously burns down 'ut intellegeretur missa etiam ab alio persecutio in ipsius potissime monumentis, a quo primum exorta esset, atque in ipso auctore puniri' (so that it was understood that the persecution, though started by another, was punished most severely on the buildings of him by whom it was first started and on the very author of it.).[408] After this, a series of earthquakes, the combustion of the Pantheon and the rebellion of the Jews follow. However, as Fear points out, the dates of these calamities are modified by Orosius, so that they happen after, rather than before the persecution,[409] which is especially striking in comparison with Jerome's *Chronicon*, Orosius' chief source, which also places the burning of the Domus Aurea before the anti-Christian decrees.[410]

---

[404] LH 7/9/9.
[405] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 339.
[406] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 343.
[407] LH 7/12/3.
[408] LH 7/12/4.
[409] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 343.
[410] *Anno mundi* 2120–2130.

Orosius manipulates the dates and the sequence of the events in order to blame and subsequently exonerate his compatriot and hero. Trajan did start a persecution, but he was not its ultimate instigator; and although there were plenty of catastrophes following Nero's impious behaviour,[411] the calamities listed by Orosius seem to be a late punishment for *that* persecution, perhaps added by God as an afterthought. Most importantly, Trajan also deals with the rebellion of the Jews, pacifying them forcefully, always a good mark in Orosius' anti-Semitic eyes. The fullness of God's vengeance, however, is executed on the Jews by Hadrian.

Orosius claims nothing less than that Hadrian was taught by Christians,[412] which made him to decree that Christians should enjoy *habeas corpus*. Thanks to this, he was 'idemque continuo pater patriae in senatu ultra morem maiorum appellatur' (in the Senate was immediately called Father of His Country, contrary to the practice of the forefathers.).[413] He also 'Iudaeos sane [...] ultima caede perdomuit, ultusque est Christianos [...] cur sibi aduersum Romanos non adsentarentur, excruciabant' (Indeed, he overcame the Jews in a final slaughter, [...] thus avenging the Christians whom the Jews [...] were torturing because they would not join them against the Romans).[414] Hadrian displays the same kind of consciousness that Orosius attributes to his previous Christianised emperors, but in his case, the logical conundrum is partially solved: if Hadrian was indeed educated by Christians, it is easy to see how he would have knowledge of God's plans. This narrative, too, is Orosius' own invention, and does not appear in Eusebius and Jerome at all, the latter contrariwise mentioning in *anno mundi* 2141 that Hadrian was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, his pederasty (*AM* 2145), and his building of a temple for Rome and Venus (*AM* 2147). Orosius, however, suppresses this information, dragging Hadrian, too, into his lauded circle of ostensibly Christian emperors, and drawing a parallel between him and Augustus. According to LH, Hadrian was named *pater patriae* without precedent – a fact obviously untrue, as Octavian was awarded this title in 2 BC, and subsequently many emperors after him,[415] but previously even Cicero was honoured with

---

[411] LH 7/7/11–12.

[412] LH 7/13/2: 'Hic per Quadratum discipulum apostolorum et Aristidem Atheniensem, uirum fide sapientiaque plenum, et per Serenum Granium legatum libris de Christiana religione conpositis instructus atque eruditus.' (He, being a learned man, instructed in the Christian religion from books composed by Quadratus, a disciple of the Apostles, by Aristides of Athens, a man full of faith and wisdom, and by Serenus Granius, the legate.)

[413] LH 7/13/3.

[414] LH 7/13/4.

[415] Fear, *Seven Books of History,* p. 345.

it.[416] Orosius, however, creatively uses the episode, which in real life centred around Vibia Sabina being named *augusta*, to establish a connection between favouring Christianity and being a responsible and successful ruler. The culmination of Hadrian's career is the rebuilding of Jerusalem (and banning Jews from it),[417] a story laden with the symbolism of Christian supersessionism and Roman imperialism: the Christian-educated emperor establishes the New Jerusalem, and denies its citizenship from the enemies of God. Similarly, although no punishment inflicted upon unbelievers occurs, Antoninus Pius, the next emperor, also educated by Christians, proves to be a protector of the faith and truly a *pater patriae*. 'Huius tamen temporibus Valentinus haeresiarches et Cerdo magister Marcionis Romam uenerunt' (now in his time, Valentinus, the heresiarch, and Cerdo, the teacher of Marcion, came to Rome.),[418] and tries to seduce the populace to heresy; however, thanks to a book assembled by Justin, Antoninus favours orthodox Christians, and Rome remains untainted.

Orosius' depiction of Marcus Aurelius is unequivocally positive, although the emperor abolished the *habeas corpus* edict of Trajan, and allowed a full-scale persecution of Christians, as potential insurgents within the Empire.[419] Personally, Marcus Aurelius could not comprehend the 'contrariness' of Christians,[420] mentioning them in his *Meditations* contemptuously. Orosius nevertheless manages to turn the emperor, universally popular in Roman memory, into an erring Christian hero: he claims that after the rain miracle Marcus personally wrote a letter to the Senate, assigning the supernatural phenomenon to the Christian God.[421] He is 'grauissimus ac modestissimus' (grave and discreet),[422] admits that Christ aided him in his wars,[423] and waives taxes, even ordering that every forged document dealing with taxation be heaped together in the forum and burnt, and lightens oppressive Roman laws.[424] The persecution instigated by him is left unexplained by Orosius, but not unpunished by God:

---

[416] Stevenson 'The "Divinity" of Caesar and the Title *Parens Patriae*', p. 257–268; Chen, *God as father in Luke-Acts*, p. 47.

[417] LH 7/13/5: 'Praecepitque, ne cui Iudaeo introeundi Hierosolymam esset licentia, Christianis tantum ciuitate permissa: quam ipse in optimum statum murorum exstructione reparauit et Aeliam uocari de praenomine suo praecepit.' (He gave orders that no Jew should be permitted to enter Jerusalem, that the city be open only to Christians; and he restored the city to high prosperity by rebuilding the walls, giving orders that it be called Aelia after his own first name.)

[418] LH 7/14/2.

[419] *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 'Marcus Aurelius', § His dealings with the Christians.

[420] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 11.3.

[421] Doing this in the face of such obviously contrary evidence as its depiction on Marcus' column.

[422] LH 7/15/7.

[423] LH 7/15/11

[424] LH 7/14/12.

a plague kills many of the citizens of the Empire, and the Marcomanni attack the frontiers of the empire. Nevertheless, upon the prayers of Christian soldiers, God sends opportune rain to the thirsting Roman soldiers, showing inexplicable favour to Marcus Aurelius.

Furthermore, although Philip and Philip II were, following the custom of the imperial cult, deified upon their deaths,[425] and celebrated the millennium of the foundation of Rome with the *ludi saeculares,*[426] which involved precisely the sacrifices to pagan gods and theatre games[427] that Orosius vituperates, he calmly claims:

> Hic primus imperatorum omnium Christianus fuit […] Ita magnificis ludis augustissimus omnium praeteritorum hic natalis annus a Christiano imperatore celebratus est. Nec dubium est, quin Philippus huius tantae deuotionis gratiam et honorem ad Christum et Ecclesiam reportarit, quando uel ascensum fuisse in Capitolium immolatasque ex more hostias nullus auctor ostendit.

> (He was the first of all the emperors to be a Christian […] the thousandth year after the founding of Rome' was fulfilled. Thus the most majestic of all past years, this anniversary year was celebrated with magnificent games by a Christian emperor. There is no doubt but that Philip obtained the favor of such devotion as this for Christ and the Church, since no author shows that there was any procession to the Capitol nor any sacrifice of victims according to custom.)[428]

To sum up, Orosius successfully pressed pagan emperors popular among Romans into the service of his new Christian Roman mythology. Good emperors, according to this, must have been good either because they were actually, if not explicitly, Christians (as in the case of Hadrian); or possessed some measure of knowledge of God's historical design (e.g., Augustus and Vespasian); or, even if they were enemies of the faith, some excuse for their behaviour can always be found, and they always changed for the better due to Christian teaching (e.g., Trajan and Marcus Aurelius). The outright lie about the two Philips had to be constructed so as not to miss investing the numerologically important 1000th anniversary of Rome with Christian meaning. Orosius consciously selected those rulers whom the Romans universally

---

[425] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 353.
[426] *Epitome de Cesaribus* 28.
[427] Galinsky 'Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century', p. 301.
[428] LH 7/20/2–3.

acknowledged to have been good emperors; he tirelessly lists the evils that befell Rome under the reign of bad, i.e., pagan rulers, marshalling the contrast to support his Eusebian *do ut des* idea. The punishments and deaths of bad emperors LH sometimes seemingly delights in recounting in visceral detail,[429] reminiscent of Lactantius' *De mortibus persecutorum* as well as the countless plagues, earthquakes, insurrections and civil wars that attack Rome as God's vengeance due to the sins of the rulers. In a particularly nasty case, during the reign of Gallienus, after the emperor put an end to the persecution of Christians, God nevertheless decides to punish even bystanders:

> Sed non conpensat iniuriae ultionisque mensuram unius impii quamuis perpetua et super modum abominanda captiuitas contra tot milia excruciata sanctorum, iustorumque sanguis ad Deum clamans in eadem sese terra, ubi fusus est, uindicari rogat. Non enim de solo constitutore praecepti iusto supplicium iudicio flagitabatur sed etiam exsecutores delatores accusatores spectatores ac iudices, postremo omnes qui iniustissimae crudelitati uel tacita uoluntate adsentabantur - quia Deus secretorum cognitor est - quorum maxima per omnes prouincias pars hominum uersabatur, eadem ultionis plaga corripi iustum erat. Soluuntur repente undique permissu Dei ad hoc circumpositae relictaeque gentes laxatisque habenis in omnes Romanorum fines inuehuntur.

> (But the captivity of one wicked person, although perpetual and abominable beyond measure, did not compensate for the measure of the injury and vengeance against so many thousands of tortures of the saints, and the blood of the just cried out to God asking that it be vindicated in the same land where it had been shed. For not on the author alone of the order was punishment in a righteous judgment demanded, but it was just that also the performers of the judgment, the informers, the accusers, the spectators, and the judges, finally, all who assented to this most unjust cruelty even by tacit consent, for God knows all secrets, the largest part of whom were scattered through the provinces, be struck by the same blow of vengeance.)[430]

Aurelian, too, although he is described as a skilled emperor and military commander, even destroying Orosius' hated Goths,[431] cannot escape God's vengeance. When he orders the

---

[429] LH 7/8/8 about the torture and execution of Vitellius; 7/10/7 Domitian; 7/22/4 Valerian; etc.
[430] LH 7/22/5–6.
[431] LH 7/23/1.

persecution of Christians, he is killed by God's thunderbolt.[432] Orosius does not waste much ink on short-lived emperors following Aurelian's reign, merely noting their bloody wars and deaths in a brief chapter, because his narrative is quickly moving on to a focal chapter: the reign of Diocletian, the persecution of the Christians initiated by him and his subsequent destruction, which is followed by the glorious Christian Revolution of Constantine. Orosius' rhetoric here follows the maxim that it is always the darkest just before dawn: LH builds a crescendo of misery before the final victory of Christianity.

Diocletian, unlike Christian rulers, was chosen by the army, and this statement by Orosius will characterise his description as a bloodthirsty failure of an emperor. He kills usurpers and pretenders by his own hands, and dispatches Maximinus to annihilate the Bagaudae, but cannot hold onto his rule:

> Igitur per omnes Romani imperii fines subitarum turbationum fragores concrepuerunt, Carausio in Britanniis rebellante, Achilleo in Aegypto, cum et Africam Quinquegentiani infestarent, Narseus etiam rex Persarum orientem bello premeret.

> (Thus, throughout the confines of the Roman Empire, the roars of sudden strife sounded, Carausius leading a rebellion in the British provinces and Achilleus in Egypt, while the Quinquegentiani disturbed Africa, and Narseus also, king of the Persians, pressed the East with war.)[433]

The safety of the empire is threatened from all cardinal directions, which, as we have seen, bear a special significance to Orosius. It is with great difficulty only, and strategic coordination that the tetrarchs (newly created by Diocletian) suppress the dangers, but ever new foes loom: the Carpi, the Basternae, and the Sarmatians all assail Rome.[434] Diocletian and Maximian initiate a persecution of Christianity, and immediately a massive earthquake in Syria kills thousands of people.[435]

At this point, Orosius hammers home what he considers to be his greatest and most devastating *argumentum*. Mimicking the pagan detractors of Christianity, he says:

---

[432] LH 7/23/6.
[433] LH 7/25/3.
[434] LH 7/25/12.
[435] LH 7/25/14.

[P]er annos decem euersae sunt ecclesiae uestrae ut etiam tu fateris; dilacerati cruciatibus, exinaniti mortibus toto orbe Christiani. Tenemus euidens testimonium tuum, nullam superiorem persecutionem adeo uel grauem uel diuturnam fuisse. Et tamen ecce inter tranquillissima temporum bona ipsorum quoque imperatorum, qui ista fecerunt, inusitata felicitas: nulla domi fames, nulla pestilentia, nullum foris bellum nisi uoluntarium, quo exerceri uires non periclitari queant; res praeterea humano generi hucusque incognita: multorum simul regum patiens consortium et magna concordia potestasque communis, alias numquam, nunc in commune prospiciens. Deinde etiam, quod absque ulla hactenus mortalium notitia est, imperatores illi maximi quippe et persecutores, honore deposito et adsumpta quiete, priuati, quod beatissimum homines et summum bonum uitae bonae iudicant, et hoc tunc uelut praemii loco auctores persecutionis adepti sunt, quando accensa persecutio medio sui tempore toto orbe saeuiebat. An etiam hanc beatitudinem illis temporibus poenaliter accidisse adseris et nos hinc quoque terrere moliris?

 (For ten years your churches have been overthrown, as even you confess; Christians over the whole world have been wracked with tortures and wiped out by deaths. We possess your own testimony that no earlier persecution ever was so severe or so long lasting. And yet behold, in the midst of the blessings of those most tranquil times, the blessings of the very emperors who accomplished them, there was an unusual happiness; there was no famine at home, no pestilence; no war abroad except voluntary, by which their forces could be exercised not endangered; furthermore, there was a condition of affairs hitherto unknown to the human race: the enduring association of many rulers at the same time and a great harmony and a joint power now looking to the common good which never took place before. Then also, something that never came to the notice of the human race before, for those very great emperors and persecutors laid aside their office and took on a life of rest as private citizens, which men judge the most blessed and highest good of life, and this the authors of persecution then assumed as a reward at a time when a persecution was stirred up and, in the middle of its course, was raging in the whole world. Or do you claim that this blessing also took place in those times as a punishment and do you strive to frighten us on this ground also?)[436]

Orosius' repartee tries to silence this impious lie through a mixture of condescension and a typological reading of the Bible and church history – or rather, his special version of

---

[436] LH 7/26/4–8.

ecclesiastical *historiae*. Chapter 27 expounds a typological concatenation between the Ten Plagues of Egypt and the Ten Persecutions (by his special count[437]). A long list of miseries which punished both Romans and their emperors who started the persecutions follows, with on occasion extremely contrived arguments: for example, likening the plague of frogs to the aggression of Domitian's henchmen, or the visitation of the flies to the rebellions of the Jewish diaspora under Trajan.[438] LH's final punishment on the Romans is the destruction of their idols, 'quae primitus facta in primis amabant' ([they] made originally, [and] they especially loved.).[439] But it does not stop there: eternal damnation awaits the pagan Romans along with their king, the Antichrist. Meanwhile, 'lenta illa paganorum poena sed certa' (the slow but certain punishment of the pagans) is that their very *imperium* is taken away from them, and through Constantine was given to a Christian.[440] What is more, as Orosius will prove, the very concept of *Romanitas* was expropriated from the pagans, and given to the Christians, who, precisely because they are favoured by God, simply do a better job of being Roman. As Orosius goes on to show, the pagans' tirade about the peace and welfare under the Tetrarchy is simply false: Maximian and his son, Maxentius, as well as Galerius, mutually destroy each other through treachery (both their own and that of their troops).[441] Galerius, who according to Orosius, intensified the persecution began by Diocletian, succumbs to a sickness where his breast rotted away and his intestines dissolved, coughing up worms.

> A quodam medico constantiam ex desperatione sumente increpitus, iram Dei esse poenam suam atque ideo a medicis non posse curari, edictis late missis Christianos de exiliis reuocauit. Ipse autem cruciatus non sustinens uim uitae suae adtulit.

> (When he was rebuked by a physician assuming courage out of despair, saying that his punishment was the anger of God and so he could not be cured by physicians. He then sent edicts far and wide and recalled the Christians from their exiles. He himself, however, unable to endure his torment, took his own life by violence.)[442]

---

[437] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 364.
[438] LH 7/27/5–6.
[439] LH 7/27/13.
[440] LH 7/28/3.
[441] LH 7/28/5–10.
[442] LH 7/28/13.

Constantine, meanwhile, inherited the title *augustus* from his mild and benevolent father.[443] The 'usurpers' of Orosius are deposed by God: Maxentius, the final enemy of Constantine, is defeated and killed at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (where, interestingly, LH makes no mention of the Christian legend of the *hoptasia*).[444] Maximian, 'persecutionis Christianorum incentor exsecutorque infestissimus' (the instigator of the persecution of the Christians and its most cruel executor) is killed by another pretender, Licinius; and Licinius himself is finally defeated by Constantine, and ordered to be killed. 'Quamuis omnibus iam ministris nefariae persecutionis extinctis hunc quoque in quantum exerere potuit persecutorem digna punitio flagitaret' (Although all the agents of that abominable persecution had now been put out of existence, this man, also a persecutor to the full extent of his power, was visited with a worthy punishment).[445] The actual *catharsis* of the Empire is complete. The unprecedented persecution, as Orosius shows, embroiled the whole Empire in massive civil wars, lasting for years, which lead to the cruel and unusal deaths of all the aggressors involved – who, *per definitionem*, are also pretenders and usurpers, because by the Eusebian logic they cannot be anything else. Their deaths are proof positive of their error.[446]

Orosius' next step in completing his Christian *historiae* and *argumentum* is to show that since the reign of Constantine and the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire the similar acts of vengeance by God have decreased. While previously, as we have seen, God indiscriminately punished all Romans for any harm that came to Christians, since Constantine it is due to the orthodox Christianity of the emperors, and the presence of Christians in the City, that Rome is spared of the due punishments for the sins of her pagan populace.[447]

Orosius' narrative of Constantine is nowhere near as unctuous and warmly glorifying as that of Eusebius, as LH's central heroes are Theodosius and Honorius. Nonetheless, Orosius portrayed Constantine in the Eusebian vein. Since he was Christian, he was successful in his wars for the throne (Orosius elides that Licinius was occasionally favourable towards Christianity and instrumental in the Edict or Milan), and died 'dispositam bene rempublicam

---

[443] LH 7/25/15–26/1
[444] LH 7/28/14–16.
[445] LH 7/28/21.
[446] It might be noted that Orosius tacitly ignores the fate of the mastermind behind the persecution, Diocletian.
[447] LH 7/28/1

filiis tradens' (leaving the state in very good order for his sons).[448] LH stresses the importance of founding Constantinople and the transference of the imperial capital to the only city free from idolatry, and that the new city instantaneously received the prosperity that Rome possessed only after many centuries of suffering.[449] Orosius makes no mention of several known cases of Constantine sacrificing to the Roman gods or his dedication of several temples to them, especially in the early period of his reign.[450] The emperor in LH is portrayed as an impeccable Nicene Christian, and a tool of God's vengeance, who devised punishments for blasphemers.[451] Uncharacteristically, however, Orosius mentions, somewhat puzzled, that for reasons hidden, Constantine murdered his own son and nephew; although his wording implies that these persons were engaged in blasphemy, and their deaths were due punishment.[452]

The success of Constantine's reign proves however to be transient. Since Satan – who does not appear elsewhere in LH – has failed to mislead Romans through the worship of idols, now *he* devises the Arian heresy and disposes so that Arius and his followers should become confidants of the emperor Constantius.[453] According to Orosius Arianism 'in Deo deos quaerit' (sought gods in God), i.e., is polytheism re-invented; and so Constantius is a devil-worshipper, who promptly starts a persecution and engages in civil war with his brothers.[454] Constantine II is killed by Constans, who in turn is killed by a usurper, Magnentius. After much fighting and

---

[448] LH 7/28/31.

[449] LH 7/28/27: 'quae sola expers idolorum ad hoc breuissimo tempore condita a Christiano imperatore prouecta est, ut sola Romae, tot saeculis miseriisque prouectae, forma et potentia merito possit aequari.' (This city, Constantinople, alone free of idols, in a very short time after its founding by a Christian emperor was raised to such a point that it alone could worthily be equal to Rome in beauty and power, which had been raised to her position after so many centuries and miseries.)

[450] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 372;

[451] LH 7/28/26.

[452] LH 7/28/26: 'Sed inter haec latent causae, cur uindicem gladium et destinatam in impios punitionem Constantinus imperator etiam in proprios egit affectus. Nam Crispum filium suum et Licinium sororis filium interfecit.' (But in the midst of these events, there were unknown reasons why the emperor, Constantine, turned the sword of vengeance and the punishment destined for the impious against even his close relatives. For he killed his own son, Crispus, and his sister's son, Licinius.)

[453] LH 7/29/2–3: 'Interea maligna semper aduersus Deum uerum diaboli insectatio, quae ab initio mundi usque ad nunc a sincero fidei religionisque tramite offusis errorum nebulis lubrica hominum corda perturbat, postquam Christianis imperatoribus summam regiae potestatis in meliora uertentibus Ecclesiam Christi zelo idololatriae persequi destitit, aliud machinamentum, quo per eosdem Christianos imperatores Christi Ecclesiam uexaret, inuenit. Fit igitur Arrio, noui erroris auctori, ceterisque discipulis ipsius ad familliaritatem Constantii imperatoris promptus aditus et facilis uia.' (Meanwhile, the ever-malignant struggle of the devil against the true God, which, from the beginning of the world down to the present day, has been disturbing the uncertain hearts of men away from the true path of religious faith by spreading clouds of error, after it ceased to persecute the Church of Christ with idolatrous zeal when the Christian emperors turned their sovereign power to better things, discovered another scheme by which to harass the Church of Christ through these same Christian emperors. Thus Arius, the author of a new heresy, and his disciples had ready access and an easy way to an intimate acquaintance with the emperor, Constantius.)

[454] LH 7/29/4–5.

death, eventually Julian, the future apostate is appointed as western *augustus*, only to betray his cousin. Constantius, 'ita ille qui discissa pace et unitate fidei catholicae Christianos aduersum Christianos armans ciuili, ut ita dicam, bello Ecclesiae membra dilacerauerat' (who had torn asunder the peace and the unity of the Catholic faith, arming Christians against Christians in civil war, so to speak, dismembered the Church), dies while marching on Julian.[455] A new and subtle development in LH at this point is the equation of the unity of the Church with that of the Empire, and the statement that the populace of the Empire consisted of Christians. This lays the foundation of the harsh and gloating criticism of Julian.

The Apostate's initial falsehood in not openly persecuting Christians but simply rather ousting them from public offices through legislation. 'Sed tamen, sicut a maioribus nostris compertum habemus, omnes ubique propemodum praecepti condiciones amplexati officium quam fidem deserere maluerunt' (However, as we have learned from our elders, almost all everywhere respected the conditions of the order and preferred to give up their positions rather than their faith.).[456] Here Orosius clearly contradicts his source Jerome who asserts the opposite.[457] Julian later swears to propitiate the gods with the blood of the Christians if they give him triumph over the Parthians. Naturally, he dies in despair and alone in the desert.[458] The Apostate in LH is an antitype of what a Christian emperor ought to be: he hijacks societal and divine *do ut des* and reorients them to serve the demons posing as Roman gods.[459] Julian employs, as it were, an anti-Eusebian ideology: should he triumph, this would happen because of his divine sanction; therefore it will also be necessary to eliminate those enemies who imperil the selfsame godly appointment.

Valentinian is a Nicene Christian hero in LH, who during Julian's campaign against Christian officials relinquished his post as commander of the emperor's bodyguard. It is logical to Orosius that he, 'qui pro nomine Christi amiserat tribunatum, retribuente Christo in locum persecutoris sui accepit imperium' (he who for the name of Christ had lost the tribuneship, as a reward from Christ received the power in the place of his own persecutor).[460] Valentinian is therefore successful in his military campaigns against pretenders and the Saxons.[461] LH

---

[455] LH 7/29/18.
[456] LH 7/30/3.
[457] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 376.
[458] LH 7/30/6.
[459] LH 4/21/5.
[460] LH 7/32/3.
[461] LH 7/32/3–10.

supresses the information that Valentinian's brother, Valens, whom he raised to the rank of *augustus*, made the same sacrifice during the persecution. Valens was an Arian, 'in saeuissimam haeresim declinauit' (fell into that most violent heresy).[462] Although he does not dare act against Nicene Christianity while his brother is alive, when Valentinian dies of apoplexy and he assumes the purple, Valens immediately passes legislation that compels monks to join the army.[463] At once, civil war seizes the empire, with Africa seceding, only to be returned to order by the *comes* Theodosius, the father of Orosius' personal hero, Theodosius the Great. Valens, envious of the *comes*' success, orders his execution, which he, newly baptised to Christianity, peacefully accepts. Valens' persecution is 'paruo tempore postea' (a short time after) punished by the Huns, who, long hidden behind inaccessible mountains, attack the Goths, who in their turn fly across the Danube. Valens foolishly admits them, and they envelope everything with murder, arson, and pillage.[464]

Although Orosius refuses to admit, the catastrophic management of the Goths' situation in 376 marked the beginning of the downfall of Rome, and led directly to the events of 410, and the eventual collapse of the Western Empire. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, the Goths' intentions were peaceful, and they would have been quite prepared to settle as *foederati* to serve as protection against their assailants, the Huns, behind the security of the Danube.[465] The theft of the provisions Rome sent as humanitarian aid by the *duces* Lupicinus and Maximus caused famine among the suffering Goths, who rose in arms to forage.

Orosius correctly continues the narrative with Valens' campaign against the Goths, who have in the course of two years penetrated far into Thrace. 'Egressus de Antiochia cum ultima infelicis belli sorte traheretur' ([Valens], when, as he came out of Antioch, he was being

---

[462] LH 7/32/6.

[463] LH 7/33/1.

[464] LH 7/33/3/10–11: 'Siquidem gens Hunorum, diu inaccessis seclusa montibus, repentina rabie percita exarsit in Gothos eosque passim conturbatos ab antiquis sedibus expulit. Gothi transito Danuuio fugientes, a Valente sine ulla foederis pactione suscepti ne arma quidem, quo tutius barbaris crederetur, tradidere Romanis. Deinde propter intolerabilem auaritiam Maximi ducis fame et iniuriis adacti in arma surgentes, uicto Valentis exercitu per Thraciam sese, miscentes simul omnia caedibus incendiis rapinisque, fuderunt.' (For the race of Huns, shut off for a long time by inaccessible mountains, stirred up by a sudden rage burst out against the Goths and drove them in widespread disorder from their old homes. The Goths, fleeing across the Danube, were received by Valens without the negotiation of any treaty and they did not even give over their arms to the Romans, by which trust could be placed in the barbarians with greater safety. Then, on account of the intolerable avarice of the general, Maximus, driven by famine and injuries to rise in rebellion, they conquered the army of Valens and poured forth over all Thrace, mingling everything with slaughter, fire, and rapine.)

[465] Ammianus Marcellinus 31/4/6–15.

dragged to his doom in an unfortunate war).[466] Although Valens repents in the last minute, discontinuing his persecution, it does not save him, nor his army: in the Battle of Adrianople in 378 the Roman host is eradicated, and Valens himself burned to death in a house while fleeing. LH makes it clear that this was divine ordainment: 'quo magis testimonium punitionis eius et diuinae indignationis terribili posteris esset exemplo, etiam communi caruit sepultura' ([so] that the testimony of his punishment and of divine wrath might be a terrible example to posterity, he was even deprived of a common burial.)[467]

In line with Orosius' Eusebian metanarrative, LH analyses at length the causes and consequences of Valens' defeat and death. Orosius' main argument is that although many perished and provinces were destroyed because of Valens' sins (a splendid example of vicarious representation), ultimately it was all for the greater good, because it was an enemy of the Church who was punished. LH also claims that whoever raises their hand against the Nicene Church, on whatever pretext, will immediately incur the wrath of God, for 'unus Deus unam fidem tradidit, unam ecclesiam toto orbe diffudit: hanc aspicit, hanc diligit, hanc defendit' (The one God handed down one faith and diffused one Church over the world. This Church He beholds; this Church He loves; this Church He defends).[468] Orosius' characteristic circular reasoning is again at work: Valens was destroyed because he was Arian; and the supreme demonstration of the falseness of Arianism is the death of Valens.[469] The emperor's most despicable sin was that when the Goths requested bishops from him to teach them Christianity, he sent them Arian teachers (Ulfilas) out of sheer malice. Therefore, in a true Old Testament manner, 'itaque iusto iudicio Dei ipsi eum uiuum incenderunt, qui propter eum etiam mortui uitio erroris arsuri sunt' (and so, by the just judgment of God, the very men burned him alive who, because of him, will also burn when dead for the vice of error).[470]

Meanwhile Gratian, co-emperor of the Gallic provinces and Nicene Christian, successfully halts the Alemannic invasion from the north, 'fretus Christi potentia' (relying on

---

[466] LH 7/33/12.
[467] LH 7/33/15.
[468] LH 7/33/17.
[469] LH 7/33/17: 'consolentur se gentiles, in quantum uolunt, Iudaeorum haereticorumque suppliciis, tantum et unum Deum esse et eundem personarum acceptorem non esse uel ex hac potissimum Valentis extincti probatione fateantur.' (Let the gentiles takes as much consolation as they please in the punishment of the Jews and heretics, but let them confess that there is One, Sole God Who is not made up of separate persons – the greatest proof of which is the demise of Valens.)
[470] LH 7/33/19.

the power of Christ).[471] Orosius compares him to Nerva: in acting 'diuina prouisione consuluit' (by divine foresight),[472] both emperors chose two Spaniards to help them in saving the republic. Nerva elected Trajan, and like him, Gratian elevated Theodosius to the rank of *augustus*. However, while Theodosius is Trajan's peer in virtues, 'in fidei sacramento religionisque cultu sine ulla comparatione praecessit' (in loyalty to the faith and in reverence for religion, he surpassed him beyond any comparison).[473] In this Orosius perceives a formative difference: according to him, because of his persecution of the Church, Trajan was not granted an heir. Contrariwise, Theodosius is rewarded with 'glorious progeny' who have unified the two halves of the Empire and maintain their rule still.[474]

Theodosius, the object of Orosius' unrestrained adoration, is immediately described as surpassing even Alexander the Great in daring to attack the Scythian tribes (i.e., the Alans, Goths, and Huns). Naturally, he is victorius, and his next step is the pacification of the Goths, whose king, Athanaric (the selfsame who persecuted Christians, which at this point Orosius does not mention) enters into a treaty with Rome to settle as *foederati*. Although Athanaric dies shortly after his arrival to Constantinople, the Goths, 'aspicientes uirtutem benignitatemque Theodosii Romano sese imperio dediderunt' (beholding the bravery and kindness of Theodosius, gave themselves over to Roman rule).[475] Orosius falsifies the data to meet his agenda: Athanaric fled to Constantinople from dissent among the Goths, and the treaty was signed well over a year after his decease.[476]

Further enhancing the glory of Theodosius, the Persians seek peace with him voluntarily, and Orosius asserts that the tranquillity held even in his own day.[477] Gratian is killed by the usurper Maximus (treated by Orosius very leniently due to his Spanish origins and Nicene creed),[478] whom Theodosius 'ineffabili iudicio Dei' (by the ineffable judgment of God)[479] subdues without bloodshed, thereupon becoming sole ruler of the Empire. Orosius suppresses the fact that Theodosius, following the Battle of Thessalonica, gave orders to utterly

---

[471] LH 7/33/8.
[472] LH 7/11/1.
[473] LH 7/34/3.
[474] LH 7/34/4.
[475] LH 7/34/7.
[476] Fear 386.
[477] LH 7/34/8.
[478] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 387–8.
[479] LH 7/35/3.

destroy the lands of the Basternae.[480] The peaceful resolution of the conflict is for Orosius proof positive of the improvement of Rome since the advent of Christianity, and to buttress this claim he even adds that this was manifestly divine ordainment because Honorius enjoys the same gift down to the present.[481] The unity and serenity of the Empire is the same as the oneness of the Church, Faith, and God; and through the power of his belief in God, Thedosius obtains victory against all his enemies, at one time even securing the switching of allegiance of the usurper's chief general, after which a miraculous whirlwind hurls back the enemy's spears into their ranks, goring them by the thousands.[482] Orosius makes light of the death of 10,000 Gothic soldiers who formed Theodosius' vanguard: 'quos utique perdidisse lucrum et uinci uincere fuit' (to have lost these was surely a gain and their defeat a victory),[483] even claiming that 'ubi nec pugna grauem caedem nec uictoria cruentam exegerit ultionem' (the battle did not exact heavy slaughter and the victory bloody revenge).[484] With the restoration of the peace of the Empire accomplished, Theodosius dies at peace.

Theodosius is the central hero of Orosius for many reasons. While Constantine discouraged pagan cults, but did not ban them, Theodosius in 391 prohibited paganism in all forms, and demolished the Alexandrian temple of the snake-god Serapis – although interestingly LH makes no mention of this.[485] As a compatriot of Orosius, hailing from Hispania, which, as LH makes out, suffered the most from Roman rule,[486] his career is analogous to that of Christianity: after long abuse at the hands of the Empire, Theodosius, like Christianity, will be the one to drag back Rome from final ruin, and not only restore its former glory, but aggrandize it. Theodosius also establishes a dynasty of rulers which, as Orosius would have us believe, will ensure the security and welfare of the empire.

His succession, however, is not without problems. Although Christ provides special protection to his two underage sons, Honorius and Arcadius,[487] the African *comes* Gildo – a pagan – rebels. Gildo is vanquished miraculously by his own brother: the victory is won, again, without any bloodshed, but by the general Mascezil continuously fasting, holding vigil, and

---

[480] Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography,* p. 302.
[481] LH 7/35/9.
[482] LH 7/35/16–18; Koch-Peters, *Ansichten des Orosius*, p. 94.
[483] LH 7/35/19.
[484] LH 7/35/20.
[485] Marenborn, *Pagans and Philosophers*, p. 19.
[486] LH 5/1/6.
[487] LH 7/36/3.

attending Mass, and at the intercession of St. Ambrose.[488] However, Mascezil soon became arrogant, and desecrated a church, whereupon he was promptly killed, much to the derision of those who suffered at his hands.[489]

The last seven chapters of LH take us to the climax of Orosius' metanarrative and storytelling: we are presented with the immediate precursors of Rome's occupation in 410 by Alaric, and its aftermath. Orosius, through much distortion and subtle rearrangement, describes the events as one of purification and hallowing of Rome, and as the total destruction of her enemies and the perfection of the Christian world empire. Whatever ill betided Rome, it was due either to the obstinacy of pagans (against which Orosius is writing), or the Goths; LH openly celebrates the destruction of both.

The Gothic Sack of Rome

The centrepiece of Orosius' argument concerning the Sack of Rome in 410 is that it was God's merciful act towards the City: a chastening long due, but much ameliorated by the mercy of Christ. Firstly, God disposes that from the two kings of the Goths, Radagaisus and Alaric. The former, a bloodthirsty pagan 'qui … inexsaturabili crudelitate ipsam caedem amaret in caede' (whose insatiable cruelty loved slaughter for it own sake),[490] and who vowed to sacrifice all Romans to his gods, is vanquished by Rome, along with his massive army of 200,000 Goths, without any bloodshed. LH makes it clear that this was a miracle of divine grace, despite the Roman blasphemy of considering the revival of paganism in the face of Radagaisus' initial successes:[491]

> quandoquidem in pagani et idololatrae manus incidisse, non solum paganis residuis de instaurando cultu idolorum esset indubitata persuasio sed etiam Christianis periculosa confusio, cum et hi terrerentur praeiudicio et illi confirmarentur exemplo. Quamobrem iustus dispensator humani generis Deus perire paganum hostem uoluit et Christianum praeualere permisit, ut pagani blasphemantesque Romani et illo confunderentur perdito

---

[488] LH 7/36/7–10.
[489] LH 7/36/13.
[490] LH 7/37/9.
[491] LH 7/37/6–7.

et hoc punirentur immisso; maxime cum imperatoris Honorii admiranda in rege continentia et sanctissima fides non parum diuinae misericordiae mereretur.

(for if the pagans had fallen into the hands of a pagan and an idolater, not only would the remaining pagans undoubtedly have been persuaded to restore the worship of idols, but the Christians also would have been dangerously confused, since the latter would be terrified by the warning and the former encouraged by the precedents. Therefore, God, the just steward of the human race, wished that the pagan enemy perish and permitted the Christian enemy to prevail, in order that the pagan and blaspheming Romans might be thrown into confusion by the ruination of the one and punished by the admission of the other, especially since the continence of the emperor, Honorius, so remarkable in a king, and his most holy faith merited divine mercy in no small measure.)[492]

The divine mercy is understood by Orosius to have been the fact that Alaric, the leader of the army of Goths which did eventually capture Rome, was a Christian (his Arianism carefully elided), and thus allowed a space of time for the City to repent, before exacting God's vengeance.[493] The City is elevated now into the crucible wherein the fate of the entire world will be distilled: Radagaisus imperilled the entire Empire and Christendom; God marshalled even the leaders of the Huns and Goths in Rome's defense, and directly intervening in the conflict 'conterritum diuinitus Radagaisum in Faesulanos montes' (He forced Radagaisus, struck with divine terror, into the mountains of Fiesole).[494] After the victory, a new usurper rises, Stilicho, the Vandal 'comes, qui ut unum puerum purpura indueret, totius generis humani sanguinem dedidit' (who, that he might clothe one boy with the purple, gave the blood of the entire human race).[495] The machinations of Stilicho outrage the Goths, Alans, Sueves, Vandals, and the Burgundians, who were 'pro pace optima et quibuscumque sedibus suppliciter ac simpliciter orantem' (begged for peace and suppliantly and simply for some place in which to settle).[496] He is killed, however, by his own troops, averting the catastrophe of the Church.[497]

---

[492] LH 7/37/10–11.
[493] LH 7/37/17.
[494] LH 7/37/12–13.
[495] LH 7/38/5.
[496] LH 7/38/2.
[497] LH 7/38/6.

Alaric, roused by the Romans spurning his entreaties of peace, attacks the City. In the course of the attack, his first order to his troops was to leave the basilicas of St Peter and Paul unharmed, and refrain from murder.[498] The Gothic soldiers (suddenly 'Christians', not Arians) even protected the treasures of the basilicas with drawn swords, while they were carried openly, as in a parade, by Christians on the streets.[499] This parade is interpreted by Orosius as the sieve which separated pagans from Christians: whoever joined was a Christian in truth and saved, while the pagans burned to death in the conflagration of the City.[500] The churches are respected by the Goths as sanctuaries, and many pagans also flee there, professing to be Christians to save their skins.[501] God sends a thunderbolt to burn up the idols and edifices of the forum, which is beyond human power to achieve.[502] As Orosius states, an external observer would say 'nihil factum, sicut etiam ipsi fatentur, arbitrabitur, nisi aliquantis adhuc existentibus ex incendio ruinis forte doceatur' (he will think that nothing took place, as even they themselves confess, unless by chance he is informed by the ruins of the fire still remaining). Although Theodosius' daughter, Placidia (the sister of Honorius and Arcadius) was captured and forced to marry Athaulf, Alaric's kinsman, this was divine ordainment, because she could use her influence on the barbarians.[503] Then the attackers withdrew after three days.[504] This is all we learn from LH about the event which actually prompted its composition, and even this brief account, two thirds of which is taken up by the anecdote of the parade, has to be assembled from information carefully doled out over the entire length of the work. Orosius does not mention Alaric's previous sieges of Rome which were entirely due to Honorius' rash dealing with the Goths, nor the fact that in the burning of the City many chuches were destroyed and looted.[505]

Orosius' attempt to play down the significance of the capture is clear: and his claims of its insignificance only make sense in the face of the metanarrative he proposes with his entire book. Since the conflagration of Rome purged her of paganism, the sack was clearly a good thing, and the miracle of the parade and the Goths' respect for the basilicas reinforced the faith of the believers. In any event the incident was brought about by the cruelty of the pagan Romans and the heathen barbarians they took into their service; but now the sack also brought about the

---

[498] LH 7/38/1.
[499] LH 7/39/3–10.
[500] LH 7/39/11–14.
[501] LH 1/8/14.
[502] LH 3/14/14–15 and 7/39/18.
[503] LH 7/40/2.
[504] LH 7/39/15.
[505] Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 455–70.

union of the Roman imperial and the Gothic royal family, which result lays the foundation of Orosius' argument that in the Christian *oikumene* the barbarians who had hitherto imperilled Roman Christianity are finally joining its ranks, governed by the Roman Christian Placidia (although we know for a fact that she was kidnapped before the sack in 410 and married only three years later, and against the will of Honorius[506]).

The rest of LH – three chapters – deals with the long list of unsuccessful attempts at usurpation, whose failures were quickly put down: 'ducum optima Honorius imperator religione et felicitate meruit et magna Constantius comes industria et celeritate confecit' (Honorius, the emperor was worthy of the victory […] because of his high religious feeling and success; Count Constantius overcame them by industry and quickness.).[507] Athaulf, assuming kingship of the Goths after Alaric's death, quickly realizes that there is no hope in overcoming Rome: therefore he became a keen partisan of peace, employing his hosts in the defense of the Empire, although he previously wanted to obliterate even *Romania* itself and replace it with *Gothia*.[508] Of course, he was made to see reason by Galla Placidia, 'feminae sane ingenio acerrimae et religione satis probae' (a woman, indeed, of a very keen mind and very good religiously).[509]

---

[506] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 404; Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire,* p. 582.
[507] LH 7/42/15.
[508] LH 7/43/3–6.
[509] LH 7/43/7.

Christian oikuemene

The gathering of all the nations in an *oikumene* was not a novel idea – indeed, the very notion of a world empire presupposes this. The establishment of a Christian *oikumene* as a political entity was, on the other hand, first introduced shortly before LH was written, by Christian authors such as Themistius and Labanus.[510] Orosius considered the barbarian nations inhuman,[511] or second-class people at the best,[512] and LH's narrative portions dealing with the period before the second half of the fourth century treated them so without difficulty.[513] However, seeing their success in carving out independent kingdoms from erstwhile Roman territories from 370 on, Orosius had to address the issue, especially since the gradual incorporation of *Christianitas* into *Romanitas* (and not the other way round, as urged by Augustine) meant that 'the moral barrier separating civilization and barbarism stood its ground'.[514] Orosius' three strategies in solving the theological and moral conundra are the following (note that he freely switches back and forth between them as it suits his immediate argument):

- Depicting barbarians as noble savages whose sole wish is to subdue themselves to Rome and Christianity;[515]

- Portraying barbarians almost like natural forces in the command of God, bereft of free will, executing His vengeance;[516]

- Presenting the Germanic tribes who have been accepted by Rome as *foederati* merely as expendable soldiers in the service of Roman glory, whose lives are worth nothing.[517]

Even before the description of the Sack of Rome Orosius was hinting at the civilizing force Christianity exerts upon barbarians. While describing the reign of Valentinian, he mentions that

---

[510] Jones, *The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe*, p. 380.

[511] LH 7/38/1: 'Interea comes Stilico, Vandalorum inbellis auarae perfidae et dolosae gentis genere editus…' (Meanwhile Count Stilicho, offspring of that effete, greedy, treacherous, and sorrow-bringing race, the Vandals…).

[512] LH 7/42/1–2: 'Constantio comiti huius belli summa commissa est. 2 sensit tunc demum respublica et quam utilitatem in Romano tandem duce receperit et quam eatenus perniciem per longa tempora barbaris comitibus subiecta tolerarit.' (To Constantius, the Count, was entrusted the highest command in this war. The state, then, at last realized what advantage it received in finally having a Roman general and to what extent it had endured destruction over the long periods of subjection to the barbarian counts.)

[513] For example: LH 7/18/7; 7/28/29.

[514] Jones, *The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe*, p. 380.

[515] For example: LH 7/32/11–13; 7/33/10–19; 7/34/8; 7/38/2–3; 7/41/4–9; the noble savagery of the Indians and Scythians, mentioned in passing in 1/4/2–6 is also part of this strategy.

[516] For example: LH 7/22/3; 7/37/2–16.

[517] LH 7/35/19.

the Burgundians settled in this time on the shores of the Rhine, adding that by now they have assumed ownership of Gallia. He adds:

> [P]rouidentia Dei Christiani omnes modo facti catholica fide nostrisque clericis, quibus oboedirent, receptis blande mansuete innocenterque uiuant, non quasi cum subiectis Gallis sed uere cum fratribus Christianis

> (By the providence of God they have all now become Christians, accepting the Catholic faith and our clergy whom they obey, they live kindly, gentle, and harmless lives, not, as it were, with the Gauls as their subjects, but really as their Christian brothers.)[518]

This naïve portrayal of the peaceful co-existence of Roman and barbarian, with the leadership of the former intact, is the only way Orosius is able to explain why Honorius gave up the Gallic provinces.[519] Elsewhere LH asserts that God's purpose in sending the barbarians into Rome was 'quod uulgo per orientem et occidentem ecclesiae Christi Hunis Suebis Vandalis et Burgundionibus diuersisque innumeris credentium populis replentur' (that throughout the East and the West the churches of Christ were replete with Huns, Suebi, Vandals, and Burgundians, and with innumerable and different peoples of believers).[520] The suffering caused by this augmentation of the Church is temporary and a small price in any case, as Christians should be ready to die at any time.[521]

The most conspicuous of the barbarians in LH is clearly the tribe of the Goths. The closing chapters of the seventh book revolve around their dealings with Rome. During the persecution of Athanaric (369-372) they powerlessly flee to Roman soil, to be received in fraternity by the Romans.[522] In the space of less than fifty years, the tables have been completely turned. Even with Orosius' retouching, it is apparent that during the ineffective reign of Honorius the Goths were the real masters. It is difficult not to notice how Orosius strains to play down the significance of Athaulf's designs. Although LH incessantly lauds Honorius' piety, there can be no doubt that, had it not been for General Constantius' strategic thinking, Athaulf could have fulfilled his designs.[523] It is due to God's special mercy that after the death

---

[518] LH 7/32/13.
[519] Fear, *Seven Books of History*, p. 380.
[520] LH 7/41/8.
[521] LH 7/41/9. Interestingly, this is the only locus where Orosius comes close to saying that we should prefer the afterlife over this world.
[522] LH 7/32/9.
[523] Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 583.

of Athaulf, Segeric, his heir, remains peaceful.[524] When he, in turn, is succeeded by Vallia, the Goths scheme to overturn Roman power, but the king chooses to remain tranquil, realising that the previous catastrophes that visited his people were the results of their sins.[525] LH closes with this happy note about the Goths: finally they have reached the spiritual and intellectual level required to obey Orosius' Eusebian God. The other barbarians did likewise:

> forent mandantes imperatori Honorio : 'tu cum omnibus pacem habe omniumque obsides accipe; nos nobis confligimus, nobis perimus, tibi uincimus, immortali uero quaestu reipublicae tuae, si utrique pereamus.'

> (sending the following message to the emperor, Honorius: 'Be at peace with us all, and receive hostages of all; we are in conflict with one another; we perish to the loss of one another; we conquer for you, but with immortal gain for your state, if we should both perish')[526]

Thus the unity and safety of the Empire is forevermore ensured by the incorporation of the barbarians into its Christian *oikumene*. As Orosius claims in his closing lines, he has clearly demonstrated that the *tempora Christiana* are superior to all previous epochs: all wars are ended, all usurpers have been put down, all barbarians have either been destroyed or pacified, without any bloodshed.[527]

Conclusions about historiography in LH

Orosius' skilfull writing and his novel handling of the data available to him, compounded with his apologetic intentions, gave rise to an entirely new genre. While Graeco-Roman historiography was the precursor of the Eusebian world view, Orosius' innovation lies in the fact that he took his present time to be the *telos* of human history theretofore, and carefully ordered his material to reflect this. Whatsoever did not fit this ideological framework is falsehood, blasphemy, or heresy. Orosius denies secularity. All human action must be interpreted in the light of True Religion, Christianity. God's revelation is absolute truth, and

---

[524] LH 7/43/9.
[525] LH 7/43/12.
[526] LH 7/43/14.
[527] LH 7/43/17–18.

only Christians possess it. Cultural relativism was inconceivable for Orosius both as a Roman and a Christian for personal and ideological grounds.

LH's vision of history is a dreary series of miseries, nevertheless filled with secret signs about the coming felicity of the world. This terrestrial prosperity is conditional upon unwavering obedience to God, yet at the same time is divinely predestined. The reign of Augustus, the first instance of an emperor of one of the Four Monarchies being obedient to God, is a precondition of the coming of Christ – at the same time therefore foreordained and not. Orosius shows that the *tempora christiana* are much better than the previous, calamity-filled ages of the world. The improvement is twofold: under latently (according to Orosius) or openly Christian emperors God has either chosen to withhold and ameliorate many punishments otherwise due to disobedient Romans, or he showers the obedient Romans (i.e., Christians) with manifold blessings. The final promise of LH is that as soon as all humans will finally obey God, whose will is transmitted and made intelligible to humans through the will and exempla of the Christian emperors, the final Christian world empire-*oikumene* would at once be established, and death and history would cease to exist.

Orosius' conviction about such an interpretation of history might have also come from his personal relationships, as his obsequious deference towards Augustine and his servile apology for any faults in his works shows in the *Praefatio* and the closing chapter of LH:

> [Q]uamquam ego in utramuis partem parum de explicito mouear, rectene an secus egerim: tu enim iam isto iudicio laborasti, utrumne hoc, quod praeciperes, possem; ego autem solius oboedientiae, si tamen eam uoluntate conatuque decoraui, testimonio contentus sum.

> (However, I am not completely convinced as to the result, whether I have done well or otherwise. Indeed, you have already labored at this decision, whether I was equal to this task which you bade me, yet I am content with the evidence of obedience alone, if at least I have distinguished it by my will and my effort.)[528]

> [I]ta iam ego certo et solo, quem concupiscere debui, oboedientiae meae fructu fruor; de qualitate autem opusculorum tu uideris qui praecepisti, tibi adiudicanda si edas, per te iudicata si deleas.

---

[528] LH 1/Praefatio/1–2.

(So now I enjoy the certain and only reward of my obedience, which I ought to have desired; but as for the quality of my books, you who bade me write them shall see; if you publish them, they shall be approved by you; if you destroy them, they shall be condemned by you.)[529]

For Orosius, a person's obedience alone is simply enough to ensure felicity; quality or beauty is an extra achievement. Obedience mechanically draws its rewards with itself, and anything beyond that is *gratia*. Of course, in the case of LH there was no question about its quality or publication; and although Augustine wrote the entire *De civitate Dei* against the Eusebian metanarrative, we do not know whether any of his later books was specifically directed against Orosius' work. Despite Augustine's misgivings, LH offered a much more popular metanarrative of history than *De civitate Dei*. Although the latter, too, was often pressed into the service of political power, it was the former which profoundly influenced Christian thinking. 'Orosius' impact upon Christian historiography was not merely structural; it established the role that space and time together might play within the elucidation of the Christian *Weltbild*.'[530] LH's responses to the crisis of historical perception caused by the upheavals of the *Spätkaiserzeit* and the Migration Period conformed to millennia-old traditions, and went on to inform historiographical thinking for further centuries. His voluminous data and its careful structuring left no ambiguity about the divine principles dictating the course of history. Orosius' demonstration of the Eusebian metanarrative, the moral perception of history, and its theocratic concept of terrestrial power constituted an ideal testimony for the legitimacy of any ruler – indeed, it would be interesting to know whether the regime of Honorius, Orosius' perfect Christian emperor, used the text to any such purpose.

Many of LH's failures nonetheless became apparent very shortly. Its conclusions were mistaken, such as the felicity of the rule of Honorius. The gradual loss of the Empire's western lands speeded up in the last decade of the emperor's reign, and upon his death without an heir a new civil war started. Heresy, too, was rampant. Pelagianism was widespread in the former Empire even a century later,[531] Nestorianism was in its heyday, and monophysitism was on the rise.[532] Erroneous, too, were the foundations of Orosius' numerological proofs: the Christian-Roman appropriation of the Theory of the Four Monarchies. Orosius' divine foreordainment of

---

[529] LH 7/43/20
[530] Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 99.
[531] Rees, *Pelagius,* p. 98–126.
[532] Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, p. 69.

the Christian *oikumene* collapsed with the erosion of the Western Empire's political structure. At the same time, the metanarrative proved to be transposable, because the Germanic successor states all claimed to be Rome's heirs, and because the Church carried on its Roman legacy. Therefore it could be claimed that God's providential design continued. Orosius, in this reading, was not mistaken, merely too optimistic. His promised *oikumene* was not yet here, hindered as it is by the non-Christian elements in the post-Roman world, and the many sins and crimes of its leaders. In fact, the Orosian worldview offers an explanation in any circumstances: fallible creatures as humans are, a reason for castigation can always be found, if one believes in the Eusebian metanarrative and searches hard enough – much like Orosius himself did.

Catastrophes force humans to make a choice about their beliefs: to hold on to them, or reevaluate them. Orosius' instinctive decision was not to re-examine the age-old moral interpretation of history, but to appropriate it exclusively to Nicene Christianity. LH does not attempt to depict the world faithfully. It predicates it and aims to transform its *vaticinia ex eventu* into actual prophecies by persuading its readers about the absoluteness of the truth it contains, and to convince them to act upon it. In the next chapters, we will investigate how successful Orosius was in Ango-Saxon Britain, centuries after Rome fell.

III. Bede

Overview of the scholarly evalution of HEGA

The Venerable Bede's influence on the intellectual foundations of the Middle Ages was equal to that of Orosius.[533] Both appear in Dante's *Paradiso* among the saints in heaven,[534] and their works formed, together with Jerome, Eusebius, Gregory of Tours, and Isidore of Seville, the basis and model for all medieval historiography.[535] In addition, Bede's reputation as a quasi-Church Father also rested on many of his biblical commentaries and exegetical and scientific writings, some of which were ground-breaking, such as *De temporum ratione*. Bede's intellectual output is all the more formidable considering how he had never set foot outside Northumbria, but made use of a vast social network of sources and correspondents.[536]

The manuscripts of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (HEGA) are numerous in England and on the Continent, with over 166 complete or once-complete items known and extant.[537] It has an Old English translation (OEHE), and provided the raw data for indeed all later English histories, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, William of Malmesbury, and Geoffrey of Monmouth.[538] The textual transmission of HEGA is 'almost as problem-free as a modern book'.[539] The ease of access, which manifested not only in the plenitude of manuscripts, but also in Bede's elegant and clear-cut Latin, has inspired decades of scholarly study. HEGA has been analysed in nearly all its aspects and data-mined for an abundance of subjects: Church politics, power structures, the creation of the 'English nation', and the reception of Classical learning in England, wordplay, and even dating *Beowulf*.[540]

---

[533] Whitelock, *After Bede*, pp. 37–49.
[534] Dante Canto X.
[535] Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, pp. 117–34.
[536] Reynold & Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, p. 89.
[537] Westgard, *Dissemination and Reception of Bede's 'Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum',* pp. 135–39.
[538] Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, pp. 131–32.
[539] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 236.
[540] For an analysis of Church Politics, see Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 235–328; on power structure and social hierarchy, see Foot's 'The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', pp. 25–49. Bede's creation of the idea of the English nation has been well analysed, and the results are well summarized by Wormald in 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', pp. 99–129, and Speed's 'Bede's Creation of a Nation in his *Ecclesiastical History*', pp. 139–54. Grey's 'Historiography and Biography from the Period of Gildas to Gerald of Wales', pp. 323–350, details the Classical antecedents of Bede's writing. For wordplay and an analysis of Bede's poetic language, confer with Martins's 'Bede's Structural Use of Wordplay as a Way to Truth', pp. 27–46; and for the dating of Beowulf, see Riley's 'Bede, Beowulf and the Law: Some Evidence for Dating the Poem', pp. 4–5.

Curiously, the metanarrative employed by Bede is an under-researched subject of study, as well as the question whether he had an overarching paradigm to his view of history. The closest any study has come to investigating the Bedan metanarrative is Goffart's *Narrators of Barbarian History,* Higham's 'Message and Discourse' in *Re-reading Bede*, Hanning's '*Bede's* Historia ecclesiastica' in *The Vision of History in Early Britain*, and Barnard's 'Bede and Eusebius as Church Historians'.

Goffart mostly concerns himself with the political and ecclesiastical issues left untold in HEGA, and it presents Bede's work as highly moralistic in composition. According to him, HEGA can essentially be seen as an extended hagiography of Gregory the Great, the true father of the English (and Northumbrian) Church, in opposition to Bishop Wilfrid. As Goffart argues, much like Orosius composed his work as an apology against pagan detractors, Bede wrote HEGA to demonstrate that the Gregorian mission was divinely ordained and successful, and that the present peace and prosperity of the English Church was only due to Gregory the Great, and no other.[541] Bede carefully edited the selection of his evidence, and inflated symbolic issues out of all proportion, such as the Easter controversy. 'Mobilizing the past for the uses of the present,'[542] Bede retrofitted his ecclesiastical history to persuade his contemporary audience on certain issues.[543] It may be inferred then that Bede was writing teleologically: he either understood history as running in a foreordained course, deviation from which was perilous, or selected and arranged his material so as to leave no alternative to his view (depicting Bede as calculating and biased). We must note, however, that Goffart tended to view his subjects in isolation from traditions and philosophies,[544] which is a particularly erroneous course in the case of an author as steeped in the patristics as Bede was.[545]

Higham sees 'a muscular and active Christian God, deeply involved in the affairs of man in general and Englishmen in particular,' as the central character of HEGA, 'whose thoughtful potency substitutes for the sense of causation to be found in modern historical narratives.'[546] Higham states that Bede knew Eusebius' *Church History* well, and that his work is apologetical, but also explanative (almost exegetical and hermeneutical): it expounds the

---

[541] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 296–307.
[542] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 326.
[543] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 307–28.
[544] Gunn, *A Study of Bede's Historiae*, p. 118.
[545] Brown, *A Companion to Bede,* pp. 117–18.
[546] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* p. 148.

providential plan for the Anglo-Saxons and deduces God's motivation behind His actions. According to Higham, the two main narrative strands, the continuing conquest of Britain and the conversion of the English, are the 'unfolding of divine providence.'[547] The *do ut des* of Eusebius and Orosius is also present: Higham writes of a divine 'rewards culture'[548] instantiated on the numerous saints and pious kings. The obverse also appears: God mercilessly wreaks vengeance upon his enemies (i.e., those who oppose his plan).[549] Overall, Bede urged his audience, through the example of a handful of illustrious ecclesiastical personages, to be ever ready for the impending millennium, which, now that the grand work of converting the Anglo-Saxons has been completed, is very near.[550] To Higham, then, HEGA is a manual: by clarifying the existence of a divine plan, describing its salient details, and demonstrating its operation on both its beneficiaries and enemies, it strives to prepare the reader for imminent judgement.

Barnard's analysis compares the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Eusebius and Bede side by side. Barnard makes much the same points about Eusebius' work and metanarrative as Chapter 1 of the present dissertation. In short, it describes the *Ecclesiastical History* as a tendentiously theocratic apology, which claims that the Christian Roman Empire was divinely foreordained, and Constantine, without actually being identified with the Son, is nonetheless the vicegerent of God. History is merely the playing out of God's plan for the final triumph of the union of the Church and Rome, whose enemies have been, are being, and shall be actively destroyed by divine providence, removing all hindrances from the path of Christianity triumphant.[551] Barnard's evaluation of Bede, although in the same vein, is much more lenient. He writes:

> Bede lived and worked in a period of relative political stability … He tended to project this outward political stability into his account of the Church in his own times. Himself a man of peace Bede suppressed the harsh facts of internal quarrels and so portrayed the growth of the English Church as a direct continuation of the Roman mission, much as he stressed the unity of the small Kingdoms in the one, great English nation.[552]

According to Barnard, Bede gives a much less distorted picture of the events than Eusebius, partly due simply to less stress on the Church in his lifetime. This also makes him less radical

---

[547] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* pp. 148–150.
[548] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* p. 151.
[549] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* pp. 151–164.
[550] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* pp. 180–183.
[551] Barnard, *Studies in Church History and Patristics*, pp. 358–364.
[552] Barnard, *Studies in Church History and Patristics*, p. 370.

in his sentiments: for example, he finds something good to say even about Wilfrid, 'for whom apparently he had little sympathy.'[553]

Finally, Hanning argues that Bede followed Gildas, his main source in the pre-Anglo-Saxon history of Britain, in the construction of a thoroughly Eusebian narrative, where 'Christian salvation and national prosperity are two aspects of the same providential process in history.'[554] In his view, Bede's Christian vision is a social one, Oswald being its most illustrious example, a veritable new Constantine.[555] 'National, ecclesiastical, and personal *salus* are complementary, concurrent goals of the historical process,'[556] and this process cannot be halted by British stubbornness: it inexorably moves to the Anglo-Saxons, who spread *salus* eventually on the Continent as well, succeeding the Apostles and their own apostle, Gregory the Great.

To sum up the conclusions common to the four analyses: HEGA is a moralistic, apologetic work, with the clear aim to demonstrate the existence and working of providential plan with the Anglo-Saxons, and the continuing operation thereof. Bede carefully selected his material so as to maximise this effect, both for argument and instruction. Finally, God is an active character in HEGA, continuously adjusting reality to the benefit of his saints and the detriment of his enemies.

---

[553] Barnard, *Studies in Church History and Patristics*, p. 369.
[554] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 82.
[555] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, pp. 85–87.
[556] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 87.

The Ecclesiastical History of the English

Bede himself clearly laid out his intention with HEGA: he wrote his work 'ad instructionem posteritatis' (to the instruction of our after comers),[557] that is, the edification of the readers.[558] The entirety of the text is a parable whose audience is not only the addressee, King Ceolfwulf, but all posterity. Bede is recording the bad about his protagonists as well as the good.[559] He did not write HEGA with a figurative understanding of history,[560] unlike, Eusebius and Orosius did, as we have seen. To the Venerable, history could not merely be reduced to archetypes, even if many of his characters were likened to biblical ones.

This is especially important because Bede was writing specifically an *ecclesiastical,* but at the same time *national* history. The concept of *historia* was well-established for Bede: he followed the example of the famous patristic authors.[561] Ecclesiastical history had its precedent in Eusebius; but previously to Bede no narrative of a national church had been composed.[562] Although it is difficult to pinpoint the reason why Bede eschewed figural interpretation of the past in HEGA while he uses it liberally in his other works,[563] it is not unreasonable to suppose that the qualitative difference originates in the purpose of HEGA. Orosius was writing a universal meta-history: LH, as we have seen, collapses all human (and divine) action into a great algorithm and provides *exempla* and *argumenta* of it. Bede, on the other hand, has a story of struggle and growth to tell, in which he notes biblical parallels, but the story itself is a new one. For Orosius, history was almost finished; for Bede, the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church was a new beginning.

Bede was certainly inspired by Eusebius and Orosius in his work, and of course by Gildas.[564] Their historical metanarratives are very similar in many aspects. HEGA is a string of

---

[557] HEGA 1/Preface. All English translations come from J. E. King's rendering in the bilingual Loeb Classical Library edition of HEGA.

[558] Plummer, *Venerabilis Bede Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum* p. xxii; Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 75

[559] Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede', p. 657.

[560] Furry, *From Past to Present*, pp. 74–104.

[561] Gunn, *A Study of Bede's Historiae*, pp. 115–46.

[562] Although in the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours the ecclesiastical material outweighs the secular by a great deal, and Clovis is depicted as a new Constantine in the Eusebian vein, it is the lack of 'uniformity of purpose or execution' in Gregory's work which makes Bede the first to compose an entirely national ecclesiastical history (Hanning¸ *The Vision of History*, p. 69).

[563] Furry *From Past to Present*, pp. 141–43.

[564] Mayr-Hartig, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 42; Barnard, *Studies in Church History and Patristics*, pp. 354–58; Gunn, *A Study of Bede's Historiae*, p. 118 Hanning¸ *The Vision of History*, p. 67.)

loosely interconnected anecdotes and episodes, focusing on particular moments where the working of divine judgement and providence could be seen. Bede, as we know from *De temporum ratione*, was thinking in the same six world-age system as Orosius (and Augustine),[565] but unlike Eusebius and HL, HEGA takes place entirely in the sixth, the last aeon of the world. This, and the fact that it is an *English* church history, severely limits the scope of its metanarrative. Whereas Orosius goes to great lengths to detail the various correspondences between the ages, customs, and habits of various peoples to support his ideology of history, Bede has only his immediate past to work with. His scope is correspondingly smaller and takes the orderliness and unity of the Church on the Continent as given. For Bede the Catholic Church is a timeless and unchanging structure, into which the English Church will *eventually* mature.[566] Consequently, the Bedan metanarrative is a subset of the Eusebian one: its starting and ending points are firmly set in the divine plan envisioned by the bishop of Caesarea, which is taken as absolute truth: 'the Church's arrival in Britain instantiates [Christ's] reign in Bede's own time and place.'[567]

Just as Eusebius 'saw a close parallel between the victory of Christian monotheism and the growth of the Roman monarchy,'[568] and Orosius drew a direct correspondence between Christianity and the prosperity of the emperors, with Bede kings rise as a result of divine favour. The Anglo-Saxon communities become kingdoms only through the process of Christianisation and being drawn into the Roman fold. Similarly, although the Britons had two kings (Lucius, the first Christian king, and Vortigern, the last), after their succession by the English they no longer possess monarchies. Significantly, we do not learn anything about non-Christian communities. The history of the Anglo-Saxons before their beginning of participation in the divine plan simply does not exist. History for Bede, as with the Classical authors, is the affairs of kingdoms. Indeed, kingdoms are only formed in the process of Christianisation; previously, there had been only tribes and peoples, leaders and generals.[569]

---

[565] *De temporum ratione*, Ch. 66; On the Nature of Things and Times 28; Furry, *From Past to Present*, pp. 105–48.

[566] Interestingly, the early fights of the Church *outside Britain* are left untold by Bede; the persecution of Diocletian is mentioned only to give context to the martyrdom of St Alban. This reinforces the local arena of HEGA, where the spectacle of a new covenant with the Anglo-Saxons is played out against the backdrop of the immutable Roman Church.

[567] Furry, *From Past to Present*, p. 84.

[568] Mommsen, *St Augustine and Christian Idea of Progress*, p. 361.

[569] The cases of the first Anglo-Saxon kings we encounter illustrate this impressively: Aelle is immediately pronounced by Gregory the Great as divinely ordained (his name echoing *alleluia*). Aethelberht 'et antea fama ad

In the case of the Eusebian metanarrative, Church history supersedes mundane history through the indissoluble unity of Church and State. Bede's England, however, is superior to the native British kingdoms (where the Roman union failed) in that it springs upon the arena of history almost fully-formed: instead of a temporal conjoining, the England predicated by Bede is Christian from the moment of its birth. This is eloquently demonstrated by Gregory's explanation of the significance of Deiran names, where Gregory puns on equating *Angli* with *angeli*, *Aelle* with *alleluia,* and *Deira* with *de ira dei*.[570] Therefore the only English history that Bede could have possibly written as a Christian is an ecclesiastical one (unlike Jordanes). The Venerable charted the course of the Anglo-Saxon state(s) and Church from the moment of its birth in Gregory's heart to its maturation in Bede's own days.

Consequently, HEGA is also as triumphant as the works of its predecessors. Bede's narrative is saturated with more than fifty miraculous acts of God, and he himself asserts on several occasions that he had chosen only the most notable ones. These miracles, on the other hand, do not serve the same purpose as in Orosius; they are not arguments against pagan detractors of Christianity. As Rosenthal notes, 'Bede knew that his own audience was no longer living in the days of battle-line Christianity.'[571] (The same, of course, was true for Orosius as well.) The function of miracles in HEGA is closer to Eusebius' view: they signify an outpouring of divine grace, which was already in place from the germination of faith in England, but reached its greatest extent in the maturity of Christianity. Significantly, unlike Orosius, Bede does not fabricate miracles where there was none, and is preoccupied with giving the sources of his stories, and not merely interpret events as miracles.

Bede's argumentation therefore is not defensive, but constructive and corroborative. The well-analysed invention of the *gens Anglorum* in HEGA is achieved through the unifying power of the correct faith and orthodox Church, in spite of the various kingdoms subduing

---

eum Christianae religionis peruenerat, utpote qui et uxorem habebat Christianam de gente Francorum regia, uocabulo Bercta' (the bruit of the Christian religion had come also before unto him, as the which had married a Christian woman of the royal family of the Franks, named Bertha.) (HEGA 1/25) An interesting exception can be found in the case of *rex* Ceawlin, who is listed as the second possessor of *imperium*, between Aelle and Aethelberht (HEGA 2/5). Bede does not tell us anything about the exploits of Ceawlin, and the use of *imperium* in this particular passage has been hotly debated for decades, much like the composition of the list; see Wormald and Baxter, *The Times of Bede*, pp. 116–17.

[570] HEGA 2/1.

[571] Rosenthal, 'Bede's use of miracles', p. 330.

greater or lesser parts of Britain.[572] Although the concept of Englishness existed before Bede,[573] the oneness of the Englishmen is introduced in HEGA by no other than Gregory, who exclusively refers in his letters to *Angli.* Although Gregory's perception of the various Anglo-Saxon tribes as a unified people is likely to have been the result of a misunderstanding,[574] the concept was taken up with enthusiasm by Bede and popularized by him. Indeed, in Gregory's first letter to an Englishman, Aethelberht, he immediately calls him as *rex Anglorum:* in Bede's reading, the founder of the English Church invented the very concept of 'England.'[575] It is remarkable that an external, unprecedented, and alien perception of the various Germanic tribes was so thoroughly internalised by Bede; but his model of Anglo-Saxon unity was the oneness of the Roman Catholic Church. Similarly, he treated the 'Britons' as one *gens*[576] because of their unity in heresy: their opposition gathers them into an anti-Church.[577] This is elaborated into a grand picture of the Britons as the recalcitrant Jews who are superseded by the gentile but Christian Anglo-Saxons.[578]

Gregory seems to have been Bede's personal hero, as Constantine was to Eusebius, and Theodosius to Orosius. Furthermore, the episodes which constitute the majority of HEGA are clustered around illustrious individuals in whom Bede saw sure examples of individual and communal salvation.[579] Notably, however, they are *examples* of salvation, not its procurers: in Bede vicarious punishment or reward never appears. Bede notes Anglo-Saxon antagonists just as carefully as occasional Briton protagonists for Christianity (Aidan as a prime example). Supreme laudation is due to Gregory for his personal qualities, and his sedulous work towards the salvation of the English nation.[580] Likewise, Anglo-Saxon worthies are given detailed backgrounds and their goodness is supported by the stories of miracles. To Bede, communal salvation is only possible through the individual salvation of each member of the community.

---

[572] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* pp. 59–73; Molyneaux 'The Old English Bede: English ideology or Christian instruction?', pp. 1–3.
[573] Wormald and Baxter, *The Times of Bede*, p. 119.
[574] Richter, 'Bede's *Angli*: Angles or English?', pp. 99–105.
[575] HEGA 1/23.
[576] 'gens perfida' in HEGA 2/2.
[577] The forceful enmity of the two political and ecclesiastical communities can be seen very clearly in the Christian Briton Caedwalla's plan to obliterate all of the by then likewise Christian, but orthodox *gens anglorum* from Britain (HEGA 2/20).
[578] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 78
[579] Gunn, *A Study of Bede's Historiae*, p. 127.
[580] HEGA 2/1.

In this, the remarkable unity of the Anglo-Saxon Church reflects the harmony of the orthodox Roman Catholic Church. In Gregory's concept the Britons also are second to the English, subject to them, in the same manner that the English are subject to Rome. But whereas the English subjection is filial relationship towards the respected parents, the subjugation of the Britons is altogether more visceral: their subduing is that of a defeated army in a battle for the ultimate prize, namely salvation.

Salvation and grace: the English supersession of the Britons

The troubles of the Northumbrian Church contemporary with the composition of HEGA and Bede's last years, described in the oft-cited *Epistula ad Egbertum,* might have served as the prod which goaded Bede into historiography. However, they are neither the *ultima ratio* of composition, nor the sole target of Bede's discourse, as Goffart argues.[581] It would be quite beyond the scope of this work to chart the manifold layers of HEGA. While Bede certainly has carefully selected his sources and what he ultimately included in his work, the blandly political and calculating picture of him is not convincing. Bede often waxes passionate about God's plan, his vituperation of the Britons, his personal heroes and villains; it is evident that he was not merely composing a narrative alternative to Wilfrid and his circle. What we see in HEGA instead is described by Goffart thus:

> a compact, unfolding, and concluded story: the Britons, who lost God's favor by their sins, compounded their guilt by denying the Gospels to the English, God's righteous scourge upon them; first the emissaries of Gregory the Great, then the Irish brought to the English the priceless seed of God's Word, which they prudently tended into vigorous growth; and the grateful converts repaid not only Rome, by missions to the continental heathen, but also their Irish benefactors by winning them to the Roman Easter.[582]

The central choice in the Bedan metanarrative is the decision about how to celebrate Easter,[583] not some contemporary political agenda. Using the correct Paschal calculation is so central a

---

[581] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 307–328.
[582] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 250.
[583] Wormald and Baxter , *The Times of Bede*, 210–211; Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 78; Rowley, *The Old English Version,* pp. 86–92.

theme to Bede that its importance has no parallels in any of historiographical works he used as sources. The gravity of the question agrees with the importance of salvation that Bede illustrates on every possible occasion.[584] The incorrect celebration of Easter, as demonstrated by Wilfrid (of all people!), is an opposition to the divine plan on par with the obstinacy of the Jews, and their niggardly desire to keep God for themselves. But they even fail at that: they miscalculate, and do not follow the Mosaic Law in their reckoning, which places them even beneath the Jews in the terms of Bedan salvation history, for they profess themselves to be Christians. Their perverse zeal for form and precedence had already caused the Britons' downfall once, at the famous incident with Augustine.[585] Even in Bede's own time the Britons are *not* ignorant, but perversely obstinate, and that is why they are sinful, 'For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.'[586]

Bede does not explicitly connect the charge of Pelagianism with the Easter question in HEGA, although heresy is clearly implied by the text. We know from elsewhere, however, that he interpreted the Easter *computus* in terms of Pelagianism versus Catholic Orthodoxy.[587] In Ceolfrith's letter to Naitan, it is clearly expounded:

> Qui ergo plenitudinem lunae paschalis ante aequinoctium prouenire posse contenderit, talis in mysteriorum celebratione maximorum a sanctarum quidem scripturarum doctrina discordat; concordat autem eis, qui sine praeueniente gratia Christi se saluari posse confidunt; qui etsi uera lux tenebras mundi moriendo ac resurgendo numquam uicisset, perfectam se habere posse iustitiam dogmatizare praesumunt.

> (And he therefore that contendeth that the full Paschal moon may come before the equaliy of day and night, is at variance with the teaching Holy Scripture in the celebration of the greatest mysteries, while he agreeth with them which trust that they can be saved without the preventing grace of Christ: which presume to teach that man might have perfect righteousness, though the true Light had never overcome the darkness of the world by dying and rising again.)[588]

---

[584] Rowley *The Old English Version,* pp. 88.
[585] HEGA 2/2.
[586] 2 Corinthians 3. 6.
[587] Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time,* pp. 274–275.
[588] HEGA 5/21

In *De temporum ratione* the significance is expounded at an even greater length.[589] By the denial of the necessity of Christ's grace for salvation the Britons, to Bede's mind, are attacking the very foundation of the Church Catholic. In contrast, the metanarrative of Anglo-Saxon salvation is consistently framed in terms of the selfsame grace. Gregory's declaration of the divine plan is verbalised as *gratia* and *misericordia:*

> 'Heu, proh dolor!' inquit, 'quod tam lucidi uultus homines tenebrarum auctor possidet, tantaque gratia frontispicii mentem ab interna gratia uacuam gestat;'

> ('Alas!' quoth he, 'it is a piteous case, that the author of darkness possesseth such right beautied people and that men of such a gracious outward shew do bear a mind void of inward grace.')

> and

> 'Bene' inquit, 'Deiri; de ira eruti, et ad misericordiam Christi uocati.'

> ('Marry!' quoth he, 'well are they called Deirans, being plucked from the ire of God and called to the mercy of Christ.')[590]

The genesis of the Anglo-Saxon Church rests on God's grace, which the Britons not only sinfully withheld from the English, but by their practices expressly deny even in Bede's day. Faith to Bede equals grace: baptism is constantly referred to as 'the grace of faith,'[591] as are miracles.[592] Some of the Britons convert to the Catholic Easter 'by the gift of God,'[593] and the monks of Iona likewise accept the canonical computus 'with a new shining as it were of the grace of ecclesiastical fellowship and peace' and convert 'to the grace of unity.'[594] But it was also their failure to act upon God's bidding and enact prevenient grace in the truest Augustinian sense[595] that directly results in the usurpation of their lands: by scheming to let the English not be converted to Christ, they themselves are cast out of divine grace. Had they introduced the Anglo-Saxons to the unity of the Church, peace indubitably would have immediately resulted

---

[589] *De temporum ratione*, pp. 142–44 and 149–55.
[590] HEGA 2/1. The letters included in HEGA from Gregory mention *grace* a total of 9 times.
[591] HEGA 3/1, 3/3, 3/24, 5/7, 5/10, 5/22
[592] HEGA 4/13, 4/14, 4/24 (the word *grace* employed no less that 4 times in the story of Caedmon), 4/29, 4/30, 4/31, 4/32
[593] HEGA 5/15
[594] HEGA 5/22.
[595] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction,* p. 335.

– indeed, English history is proof positive that it did, but with the exclusion of the Britons. Now, however, the Britons are locked in an endless cycle of conversion and sinful perdition,[596] almost like pagans; English history on the other hand progresses linearly into fulfilment.

Thus it is fitting punishment that, just as Israel was destroyed and forced to relocate, the same should befall the Britons – their refusal in fact effected their penalty. The idea of divine punishment of the natives might have come from Gildas,[597] but it was Bede who took it to its logical conclusion, and placed it against the background of the Eusebian metanarrative. It is constantly restated in many passages, and, in an extremely sophisticated stroke of rhetorical skill, Bede reformulates the story on a smaller scale immediately preceding the Synod of Whitby: Alchfrith re-donates Ripon to Wilfrid for the following reason:

> huius doctrinam omnibus Scottorum traditionibus iure praeferendam sciebat; unde ei etiam donauerat monasterium XL familiarum in loco, qui dicitur Inhrypum. Quem uidelicet locum paulo ante eis, qui Scottos sequebantur, in possessionem monasterii dederat. Sed quia illi postmodum data sibi optione magis loco cedere, quam suam mutare consuetudinem uolebant, dedit eum illi, qui dignam loco et doctrinam haberet, et uitam.

> (he knew that Wilfrid's teaching was rightly to be chosen rather than all the traditions of the Scots: wherefore also he had granted him a monastery of 40 households in the place which is called Inhrypum [Ripon] which place indeed a little before he had given to those which followed the Scots, to have in possession for a monastery. But because afterwards, when choice was offered to them, they preferred to depart and yield up the place rather than to change their accustomed manner, it was given by the prince to him whose life and teaching he held to be worthy thereof.)[598]

The Bedan metanarrative rests on grace, and in HEGA this grace reaches the Anglo-Saxon soul via the mediation of Rome. In a poignant and semiotically pregnant scene the blind Anglo-Saxon person cannot be healed by the prayers of British monks, only to have his sight immediately restored by the intercession of Augustine.[599]

---

[596] Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking,* p. 51.
[597] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 70.
[598] HEGA 3/25.
[599] HEGA 2/2.

Quod cum aduersarii, inuiti licet, concederent, adlatus est quidam de genere Anglorum, oculorum luce priuatus; qui cum oblatus Brettonum sacerdotibus nil curationis uel sanationis horum ministerio perciperet, tandem Augustinus, iusta necessitate conpulsus, flectit genua sua ad Patrem Domini nostri Iesu Christi, deprecans, ut uisum caeco, quem amiserat, restitueret, et per inluminationem unius hominis corporalem, in plurimorum corde fidelium spiritalis gratiam lucis accenderet. Nec mora, inluminatur caecus, ac uerus summae lucis praeco ab omnibus praedicatur Augustinus.

(To this, when his adversaries granted, though unwillingly, there was presented a certain man of English birth which had lost the sight of his eyes who being offered to the British priests, when by their ministry he was not holpen nor could be cured, at length Augustine, compelled by just necessity, fell on his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesu Christ, beseeching him that he would restore to the blind man the sight which he had lost, and that by the bodily lighting of one man he would enkindle the grace of spiritual light in the hearts of many faithful. And forthwith the blind man's eyes were lightened, and Augustine is declared by all as a true herald of heavenly light.)[600]

But the Britons later refuse to acknowledge the higher power of Augustine, and do not submit to him, even though the missionary warns them that if they do not join the unity of the Church, their lot will be death, which prophecy is promptly fulfilled. According to Hanning, this episode weaves together the individual healing of the afflicted man with the social salvation of the English as members of the 'new, universal Christians.'[601]

Elements of the Augustinian metanarrative

It should seem obvious now that the Bedan historical metanarrative is a Eusebian one. Largely it indeed is, but I have noted previously subtle differences that are not entirely concordant with a purely Eusebian perception of history. Bede is by far not consistent in using the *do ut des* schema. The best examples to this would be the Mercian king Aethelred and the Northumbrian king Ecgfrid. The former attacked Kent in Bede's own lifetime (676), and

---

[600] HEGA 2/2.
[601] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 81.

destroyed and looted churches and monasteries, even laying waste to the episcopal seat of Rochester.[602] No punishment is ever meted out on Aethelred; he is even mentioned among the 'domini piissimi' (most godly lords).[603] We learn later that he forsook his throne for monastic life and became an abbot.[604] Bede does not laud him apart from the above title, but neither does he tell the story of his abdication and taking the tonsure. Aethelred's misdeed, for all we know, went unpunished. Ecgfrid on the other hand began as a good Christian: it was in fact he who donated land to the foundation of Jarrow, Bede's monastery.[605] He was a reasonable person, willing to forsake war at the persuasion of Bishop Theodore.[606] Yet his attack upon the Irish, a 'gens innoxia' (harmless people),[607] in which he destroys churches and abbeys, is swiftly revenged. The Irish pray to God to avenge them, and although Bede disapproves,[608] when next year Ecgfrid attacks the Picts (again unjustly), his army is destroyed in an ambush and he is killed. As Bede writes, this event was the beginning of the slow decline of Northumbria: the Picts and Britons recovered their liberty, which they managed to keep to the time of his writing.

In Ecgfrid's case the moral lesson seems evident: even with beginnings as promising as that of the Northumbrian kingdom, it might take just one mistake and God's plan *can* be halted. The divine mandate for the Anglo-Saxons *can* be withdrawn. Aethelred, too was able to change his ways, although we must note that in his case Bede does not claim that he gained the kingdom of heaven. No miracles are attached to Aethelred's name, but he is among the many in HEGA who at divine warnings changed their ways. God's grace and salvation is an option that can always be chosen, even at the very brink of death, but once accepted, has to be continuously striven for.

The operation of divine grace is nowhere as mechanical in HEGA as with Orosius. In LH, as we have seen, characters are Christians for all time – except the apostates, but subsequently it is revealed about them that they had never been real Christians in the first place. God's plan is fixed, and even He himself is bound by it – a concept strangely similar to the pagan concept of Fate. Contrariwise, in HEGA the divine design may alter, even though its

---

[602] HEGA 4/12
[603] HEGA 4/17
[604] HEGA 5/19 and 5/24.
[605] HEGA 4/18.
[606] HEGA 4/21.
[607] HEGA 4/24.
[608] HEGA 4/24: 'et quamuis maledici regnum Dei possidere non possint.' (those who curse cannot possess the kingdom of God.)

telos remains constant: the Day of Judgment. The end of time is never mentioned in HEGA, but Bede's *De die iudicii*[609] and *De temporum ratione*[610] give detailed descriptions. The fate of the soul will be determined entirely on the basis of its past deeds, without referral to its terrestrial status or wealth.[611] In the vision recounted in Chapter 12 of Book 5, even repentance on the deathbed is enough to reach eventual salvation, which is an extremely Augustinian concept, fully in line with the person's only choice being reduced to accepting God's grace.[612] All secrets will be revealed to all, due to God's infinite knowledge, which appears in HEGA in the form of heavenly warnings, most conspicuously in the story of Coenred's thane, who receives a vision of two books, one containing all his sins and another one all his good works.[613] Bede, then, did not consider power, welfare, or popular opinion to be indicative of the sanctity or baseness of an individual.[614] The visions also signify a porous but firm separation of the two worlds: instead of the earth blending into heaven, the acts of God time and again aggressively penetrate the boundaries of the terrestrial city, signalling the presence of a higher reality.[615]

Most importantly, as shown by the story of the forewarned thane and the Britons who eventually convert, there is ample room for choice and personal development in Bede's world-view. Similarly, there is room for lapse, even definitive ones: the peril of the Britons' mistaken choices is never far from the Anglo-Saxons. Although the sanctity and rightness of Rome and the Church Catholic is fixed, and cannot be questioned, the same is not true about the English. We meet dissolute monks,[616] an artificer brother whose damnation Bede is certain of,[617] and naturally, Ecgfrid, among others. Miracles sometimes happen to undeserving people,[618] and the price of actively spreading Christianity among the pagan Frisians and Saxons is often death.[619] The felicity of human life does not reflect the merit of the individual in the eyes of God. Bede leaves room for ambiguity and choices. As he observed, the outcome of the sudden surge in

---

[609] *De die iudicii* 22–26
[610] *De temporum ratione* 243–246.
[611] *De die iudicii* 24; Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, p. 127.
[612] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, p. 332.
[613] HEGA 5/13.
[614] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 136.
[615] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* pp. 138–140.
[616] HEGA 4/25
[617] HEGA 5/14
[618] For example in HEGA 3/13 an Irishman 'erga curam perpetuae suae saluationis nihil omnino studii et industriae gerens' (one that used no diligence and labour at all for the care of his own everlasting salvation) is healed by relics of Oswald on the brink of death; and in 4/16: the disobedient young monk recalled to life by bishop John.
[619] HEGA 5/10. Interestingly, we never hear of Irish or British martyrs in HEGA, although it is not likely that the early Anglo-Saxons would have been any more tolerant of Christianity than their continental relatives.

monasticism among the Anglo-Saxon may be uncertain, and the letter to Ecgbert implies that Bede was unsure of its sincerity.[620] However biased the Venerable's views regarding the Britons might have been, Bede did record historical events which went against Eusebian logic with sincerity.

Thus, although the metanarrative of HEGA is for the most part Eusebian, Bede did not quite see the world as black-and-white as Orosius did, nor was he as confident in the immutability of the divine plan concerning the English. The doubt did not concern God's part, naturally, but rather that the Anglo-Saxons themselves may endanger their own salvation. By depicting the Anglo-Saxons as a new people of a new covenant (ousting the Britons), Bede implied that this entitlement came with a vast responsibility and trust, which the English would do well to uphold.

Bede's world was vastly different from that of Orosius. Bede never lived in an established and immensely powerful theocracy (for that matter, this existed in his life only in the Byzantine Empire, which to him seems to have been a closed book). England was removed from the spatial and temporal centre of Christianity by vast distances. Bede literally lived on the edge of his world, merely two miles south of Hadrian's Wall.[621] To Bede Paradise is not a perfect England, but rather Heaven.[622] English Christianity is derivative: had it not been for Gregory's zeal, the English would surely have gone to perdition due to the Britons' reluctance to convert them. Bede's God has given a chance to the Anglo-Saxons to accept salvation, but England's path is remarkably and acknowledgedly dissimilar from Roman destiny. Apart from Gregory's etymological reasoning, there are no biblical or inspired pagan prophecies or numerological correspondences signalling the inevitable triumph of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. God's grace does single out the English: it is open to all to gain or to lose. Time and again it is impressed on us by Bede that the Britons have lost their home due to their heresy, and by the very purpose statement of HEGA it is implied that this could easily be the fate of the English. The entire basis of the Bedan metanarrative is a much more toned-down reality. The despondent passage on the ebbing and falling away of Anglo-Saxon dominion[623] may even echo that famous

---

[620] HEGA 5/23; Rowley, *The Old English Version,* pp. 73–74.

[621] Blair, *The World of Bede*, pp. 8–9.

[622] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 139.

[623] HEGA 4/26: 'ex quo tempore spes coepit et uirtus regni Anglorum "fluere ac retro sublapsa referri."' (And after this time the hope and prowess of the dominion of the English 'began to ebb and slide away backwards.' [quoting *Aeneid* l. 2169])

English melancholy whose supreme expression will be, some centuries later, *Beowulf* and the Old English elegies.

Finally, we turn to the question whether the toning down of most of the elements of the Eusebian metanarrative makes HEGA Augustinian. The answer is mixed. Whereas Bede, as we have seen, strongly focuses on the importance of grace in individual life, God's prevenient grace in HEGA applies very strongly to the Anglo-Saxon community *en bloc* at the same time. This goes against the grain of Augustine's ideas about the terrestrial and celestial cities. In *De civitate Dei* even the Church is described as an institution of the earthly city, in which the chaff and the wheat shall be separated at Judgement Day. Certainly, Bede never goes as far as writing that simply being Anglo-Saxon (or Roman, for that matter) and Catholic gives surety of salvation, but the entire conversion narrative implies this: once the English Church matures fully, it would become indistinguishable from the already perfect Roman Church.

Interestingly, grace, possibly one of the most central experiences and teachings of Augustine,[624] which is characteristically omnipresent in a person's life, can, according to Bede, be lost, as demonstrated by the Britons' fate. While Bede does not deny that they can and do convert, it almost seems that the Britons are subject to a hereditary heresy which makes it nigh impossible to convert to true faith as a community. Their depiction thus is closer to that of the Goths in Orosius. Tainted by heresy (in the Goths' case, Arianism), they are unable to repent and thus reach redemption. Their role is also reminiscent in some respects to that of the Goths. Adomnán and Aidan are 'useful' Britons who can be pressed into the service of Bede's agenda, but otherwise the entire people is collectively damned. Although no such connection is made by Bede, it almost seems that in HEGA the earthly city of the Britons is set into opposition of the city of God represented by the Church of Rome. To the latter the Anglo-Saxons are striving to arrive, while the former is consigned to slavery and perdition.

Bede believed that kings – at least, good kings – are appointed by God. The Preface, which addresses Ceolwulf as 'te regendis diuina praefecit auctoritas' (you are appointed to rule by divine authority),[625] makes it quite clear. This strongly anti-Augustinian notion is reinforced by the 'active and muscular God'[626] who actively punishes and rewards humans, although in HEGA God does not make pre-emptive strikes – unlike in Orosius and Eusebius. According to

---

[624] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, p. 356.
[625] HEGA, Prefatio.
[626] Higham, *Re-reading Bede,* p.148.

Bede, God is able and willing to adjust his plan about the prosperity of Britain quite easily, and indeed this is his concern which moved him to composing HEGA: to instruct the English how to avoid the wrath and vengeance of God.

Whereas the existence of a non-committed divine plan can be reconciled with the Augustinian flat view of history, the Eusebian touch is retained by the exclusiveness of God's design and its manifestation in terrestrial welfare. While Bede lauds asceticism and encourages it as a means of attaining salvation,[627] material prosperity can be the sign of God's favour,[628] and its abuse is sin, exactly as in the case of the Britons, whose peacetime hedonism results in their divine punishment. Prosperity is not as clear an indicator of righteousness in HEGA as in Orosius, but thraldom and misery certainly *are* lucid signs of God's displeasure. The South Saxons had been suffering drought and famine up for three years before their conversion by Wilfrid, when rain began to fall.[629] This is the clear opposite of Augustine's opinion, derived from the example of Job, that terrestrial happiness is not indicative of God's love or favour.

In the final analysis, although much more restrained than Orosius in the employment of the Eusebian metanarrative, Bede nevertheless subscribed to many of its central ideas regarding the history and power of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. We have seen that the immutable perfection of Rome, looming large in the background of HEGA's narrative, serves as a backdrop, against which the story of English conversion and progress is painted. Bede also used many Augustinian elements in his metanarrative, focusing on private salvation and the constant fight for an individual's soul between good and evil. The resulting mixed perception of history is very much the child of its time: the physical remoteness of Britain, its meagre political significance, and the ambiguous success of the Continental mission did not lend themselves to a boisterous triumphalist reading like that of Orosius. Bede also viewed the developments of his own lifetime with some disillusionment, and his uncertainty about the future is evident.[630]

Within a hundred years of his death, the England he knew was being industriously destroyed by the Viking raids. To Bede this could not have seemed anything but divine vengeance, and the Anglo-Saxons' loss of the very same divine favour the Venerable worked hard to retain.

---

[627] For example: HEGA 5/12.
[628] For example: HEGA 4/16.
[629] HEGA 4/13.
[630] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 160–173;

IV. The First Viking Age and the Alfredian Reform

The events of the years following Bede's death show that his advice was taken to heart: a considerable unification of the Anglo-Saxon tribes was achieved under Aethelbald and Offa, with Mercia completely dominating the southern kingdoms. Although Aethelbald was reprimanded in a long letter by Boniface for his sins, including oppression of the Church,[631] the kingdom prospered. Offa constructed his famous dyke as defence against the Welsh, an achievement on par with that of the Roman Emperor Severus, and even managed to convince Pope Hadrian to establish an archbishopric at Lichfield, while also reforming and standardizing currency.[632]

However, the peace enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Church lasted no more than 60 years. In 793, Vikings sacked Lindisfarne, the sacred monastery of Cuthbert. In the following year, Jarrow was plundered, and in 795 the Vikings looted Iona. In three summers, the most respected centres of Anglo-Saxon Christianity lay destroyed, and much worse was to come. Sporadic attacks through three decades eventually developed into a full-scale war, and from 830 onward *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports great slaughters for every year with dull repetition. In 851 the Norsemen wintered over in England, on the Isle of Thanet, the very same location which was first converted by Augustine. Fourteen years later the Great Army conquered Kent, came to an agreement with East Anglia to serve as their basis of operation (only to kill King Edmund and subjugate the kingdom two years later), and by 866 they gained York, along with most of eastern Northumbria. The attack moreover coincided with an attack on Strathclyde from the West and might have been part of a greater stratagem to subject northern Britain completely.[633] At any rate, by the end of the 860s a *de facto* Viking kingdom comprising east and much of northern Britain was established, and in 870 the first attack on Wessex was made by the Great Army. In a series of conflicts around Reading, Aethelred king and his younger brother, Alfred, were soundly defeated. 873 saw the destruction of Mercia, and in 876 the army of Halfdan settled permanently in Northumbria instead of foraging. Meanwhile

---

[631] Boniface, Chapter 32.

[632] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 52–54; Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 111–117; Stanton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 259.

[633] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 70; Stanton , *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 247.

in 875 Alfred began a series of small victories, striking from Somerset, which culminated in the decisive victory at Edington three years later. The Danish king Guthrum was baptized together with his generals, his army withdrew behind Watling Street, and the kingdom of Danelaw was established.

The Viking conquest in England 'almost entirely destroyed the old basis of political organization in England.'[634] The material destruction of the Church in the harried and eventually occupied territories was close to 'near obliteration.'[635] The Anglo-Saxon society of the last three hundred years east of Watling Street ceased to exist. Although we have no way of knowing the exact extent of ruination, extant sources unanimously describe widespread destruction, with the places of Christian worship being to the Vikings 'little more than unprotected storehouses of treasure.'[636] Archaeological excavations show that many previously prosperous monasteries and churches did not survive the late 9th century, or dwindled into poverty:[637] even the archbishopric of York was impoverished,[638] with no known Viking Age church or cathedral,[639] even though the city itself prospered. Canterbury was sacked three times in fifty years.[640] Monasteries were especially targeted by Vikings not only due to their vulnerability, but at least in some cases due to hatred of Christianity and resistance to forced commerce.[641] Very little art has survived the depredations,[642] scholarly output was almost reduced to zero, and no hagiography is extant from the period 800-950.[643]

A standard literary and academic touchstone in the evaluation of the effects of the First Viking Age is King Alfred's preface to his translation of Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis.* Contemplating the past of the kingdom Alfred finds a stark difference between the wealth and wisdom of the past, and the poverty and lack of knowledge of the present.[644] As he writes, whereas previously there had been both material and spiritual prosperity, due to sloth the

---

[634] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 75.
[635] Stanton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 263–269.
[636] Richards, *Viking Age England,* p. 274.
[637] Higham, 'Danelaw', p. 139; J. Blair 'Monastic Sites', p. 326; Lapidge, 'Monasiticism', p. 328; J. Blair 'Parochial Organisation', p. 365.
[638] Richards, *Viking Age England,* p. 278.
[639] Hall, 'York 700–1050', p. 127.
[640] Kelly, 'Canterbury', p. 86.
[641] Carver 'Exploring, Explaining, Imagining Anglo-Saxon Archaeology', p. 40.
[642] Webster 'Bone and Ivory Carving', p. 72; Gameson, 'Anglo-Saxon Art, Chronology', p. 36.
[643] Love, 'Hagiography',p. 231; Lapidge, 'Schools', p. 422.
[644] Alfred, *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's* Pastoral Care, p. 10; Shippey, 'Wealth and Wisdom in King Alfred's *Preface* to the *Old English Pastoral Care*', p. 352; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, p. 5.

willingness to acquire knowledge disappeared; and the Viking destruction rid the country of its riches as well. Now there is some measure of wealth again, but the knowledge and drive to learn are still lacking. Alfred himself says that there is almost no-one in the country who can read or translate Latin – that is, possesses a *passive* knowledge of the language.[645]

This description of the state of England, especially regarding intellectual life, has often been criticised by scholars as exaggeration or pure nonsense.[646] On the other hand, modern research and its results have demonstrated that several decades of almost constant warfare impoverished the country enormously both financially and spiritually, and caused a widespread disruption of society and life, as we have seen above. Most importantly for the present discussion, an extremely sharp decline can be detected in the quality of manuscripts surviving from the period. 'Alfred's statement receives striking confirmation from a series of original charters issued at Canterbury in the 860s, which reveal that the principal scribe there was an old man nearly blind, who could scarcely see to correct the appalling grammatical errors he committed.'[647] Moreover, on the basis of available evidence it can be concluded that the production of high-grade books ceased in England sometime around 850, and that the major works of Anglo-Latin authors only survived because they were taken to the Continent before that date.[648] The findings of Lapidge corroborate the short narrative of Alfred. The sudden decay of learning is evident from the problems of the Canterbury documents – but so is the slow increase of wealth and means at the disposal of bishops in peace who, nonetheless, neglect their duty.[649]

The increase of security and wealth did not bring optimism back. Fighting never stopped during Alfred's life, with fresh invaders coming in every few years with whom the Danelaw Danes often made alliance, notably during a massive invasion in 892, when over 300 transport ships landed in Kent, and the army they carried could be subdued only after four years'

---

[645] Alfred, King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care, p. 9: '[S]wa claene hio waes oþfeallenu on angelcynne þaet swiþe feawa waeron behionan humbre þe hiora þeninga cuþen understondan on englisc oþþe furþum an aerendgewrit of laedene on English areccean ond ic wene þaette noht monige begiondan humbre naeren.' (So low was it decayed on Angelcyn that very few there were this side of the Humber who could understand their service in English, or even recount a Latin letter in English, and I suppose there were not many beyond the Humber.) In Chapters IV and V of the dissertation, unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Old English are mine.
[646] Davis. 'Alfred the Great', p. 109–82; Kirby, *The Making of Early England*, p. 213; Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*, p. 281.
[647] Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899*, p. 25.
[648] Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899*, p. 417–25.
[649] Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899*, p. 438–39.

prolonged fighting.[650] Much of the material resources had to be devoted to the development of the burghal system, which even so was completed only after Alfred's death.[651]

The Viking threat seems to have effectively negated rivalry between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms,[652] especially due to the wise policies of Alfred employed in dealing with political entities which he, for want of a better word, liberated.[653] Alfred created new titles for himself, *rex Angul-Saxonum* and *Anglorum Saxonum rex*, employing the selfsame terms Bede used, with the same implications of ethnic, territorial, and religious unity in opposition of the Danes.[654]

A new, but important development of religious unity was the inclusion of Britons in the Anglo-Saxon Church and polity. Asser, himself a Welsh monk, tells us that he was made bishop of Exeter by Alfred;[655] moreover, Kentec, a Cornish bishop, subjected himself to Canterbury sometime between 833 and 870, and Cornwall was regularly visited by English clergy to oversee their religious practices.[656] Welshmen are known to have frequently allied themselves with English against the Danes, perhaps even supplying levies to Alfred's army,[657] and Welsh rulers were under Wessex's overlordship.[658]

The military and political legacy of Alfred was continued by his successor, Edward, who successfully reconquered large portions of Southern England and Northumbria to the English crown.[659] Alfred's programme of cultural restoration did not survive him however, as no original work is extant from the reign of Edward,[660] and only a few charters have come down to us from the late episcopacy of Plegmund, who died in 923.[661]

---

[650] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 79–80; Stanton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 265–66; Richards, *Viking Age England*, p. 53.
[651] Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*, pp. 94–96; Keynes, 'Burghal Hidage', p. 79; Rowley, *The Old English Version*, p. 42.
[652] Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*, pp. 105–06; Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', p. 40.
[653] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 78.
[654] Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*, pp. 107–08.
[655] Asser, *The Life of King Alfred,* p. 30.
[656] Snyder, *The Britons*, p. 173.
[657] Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, p. 95–96.
[658] Pratt 109; Asser 29.
[659] Miller,'Edward the Elder', p. 167.
[660] Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899*, pp. 12–16; Higham, 'Edward the Elder's Reputation: An Introduction', p. 2.
[661] Keynes, 'Plegmund', p. 379.

Alfred's cultural programme and the Alfredian translation strategies

The political rejuvenation of Anglo-Saxon England was accompanied due to the personal tastes of Alfred with cultural reinvigoration. Alfred besides indulging himself also had very practical motivations, and the undertaking of several major translations (Gregory's *Cura pastoralis* and *Dialogorum*, the *Paris Psalter*, Bede's HEGA, Orosius' LH, Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* and Augustine's *Soliloquia*) of such volume is proof of an impressive impetus and willpower, and demonstrates a very real need. As Alfred claims, the Anglo-Saxons had survived (if only just), and now in the respite they must recover physically and intellectually. Judging from its immediate effects, the programme was largely successful, even if it lapsed following Alfred's death, as it laid the groundwork of the Benedictine Reform under Edgar.[662]

Alfred clearly stated that the goal of his programme was to restore the *former* status of prosperity in England, and he equated these happier times with the presence of learned men in England. His surprising and novel conclusion is that the ills that befell England are not due to divine vengeance, but the decay of learning. As Frantzen notes, the king brought the logic further: the ancients, according to Alfred, prospered only due to their excellence in *both* warfare and wisdom.[663] It is this golden age which Alfred seeks to restore. Having already established military superiority by stabilizing the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, cultural reinvigoration must be started.[664]

As envisioned by Alfred, this would be a top-down process. Although the translations of 'those most necessary books' are prepared for all, firstly the king aims that the bishops should read and know them, and from the episcopacy it would percolate to their priests and finally to laymen.[665] Alfred's aim thus was to transform the perceptions of his entire contemporary society by using the translations, creating 'a common national, religious, and cultural identity

---

[662] Schreiber, "*Searoðonca Hord*: Alfred's Translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*", p. 198.

[663] Frantzen, *King Alfred,* pp. 27–28; Fulk & Cain, *A History of Old English Literature,* p. 49.

[664] Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue', pp. 38–39.

[665] 'ond to ælcum biscepstole on minum rice wille ane onsendan … Ond ic bebiode on Godes naman ðæt nan mon ðone æstel from ðære bec ne do, ne ða boc from ðæm mynstre: uncuð hu longe ðær swæ gelærede biscepas sien, swæ swæ nu, Gode ðonc, welhwær siendon. Forðy ic wolde ðætte hie ealneg æt ðære stowe wæren, buton se biscep hie mid him habban wille, oððe hio hwær to læne sie, oððe hwa oðre bi write' (and I want to send one to each episcopal seat in my kingdom … and I command in God's name that no man take the *aestel* hence, nor the book from the minster: it is uncertain how long there may be such learned bishops as, thanks be to God, now there are nearly everywhere; therefore I will them always to remain in their place, unless the bishop wish to take them with him, or they be lent out anywhere, or any one make a copy from them); Frantzen, *King Alfred,* p. 29.

in the face of the emerging pan-Scandinavian empire.'[666] At the same time, the translations were 'the first attempt to buy into the authority of the Latin tradition in the medieval West and the first challenge to that authority.'[667]

The translations were either prepared by Alfred's own hands or the translators of the so-called Alfredian circle, to whom the renderings of Bede and Orosius are attributed. The currently recognised four pieces of the Alfredian corpus (*The Pastoral Care, Boethius, The Soliloquies of Augustine* and the *Prose Psalms*) show enough similarities of translation techniques and lexis to point at a single mind coordinating their translation.[668] Precisely because the source texts are so different (a manual, two philosophical dialogues, and poetry), the shared linguistic and stylistic features across diverse genres, as described in Bately's *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, are indicative of one translator-author. The same characteristics of translation have been evinced in OEHE[669] and OEH,[670] well enough to allow them to be considered as part of the Alfredian Circle, or at least, as Rowley suggests, to have been 'in dialogue with it.'[671]

The Circle's policy of translation is difficult to ascertain, due to 'the scarcity of explicit translation theory in Anglo-Saxon England itself.'[672] From the extant material evidence, however, it at least can be concluded that the Alfredian practice of translation was an entirely pragmatic and rather liberal one: the final works are extremely reader-oriented texts, following most likely Gregory the Great's advice in employing sense-for-sense translation instead of literal ones.[673] The translators aimed for dynamic equivalence. According to Nida and Taber, dynamic equivalence is

> defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor
> language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source
> language. This response can never be identical, for the cultural and historical settings
> are too different, but there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the
> translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose. It would be wrong to think,

---

[666] Fulk & Cain, *A History of Old English Literature,* pp. 49–50.

[667] Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue', p. 46.

[668] Bately, *Alfred as Author and Translator,* pp. 113–41.

[669] See Rowley, *The Old English Version*, pp. 37–46 for a thorough review of the literature on this much-disputed question, and her caveats in engaging with it. It must be noted that Rowley suggests that OEHE was not part of the Alfredian Circle, although she argues that it was nevertheless 'in dialogue with it.'

[670] Bately, *The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign*, pp. 9–14.

[671] Rowley, *The Old English Version*, p. 46.

[672] Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue'*,* p. 35.

[673] Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue'*,* p. 38.

however, that the response of the receptors in the second language is merely in terms of comprehension of the information, for communication is not merely informative. It must also be expressive and imperative if it is to serve the principal purposes of communications such as those found in the Bible. That is to say, a translation of the Bible must not only provide information which people can understand but must present the message in such a way that people can feel its relevance (the expressive element in communication) and can then respond to it in action (the imperative function).[674]

Dynamic equivalence in a translation must conserve the original text's informative function, that is, it needs to provide the same factual data. Equivalence of expressive function would mean that the translation evokes the same poetic images and niceties as the source text – an almost impossible task, as Nida and Taber note.[675] The imperative function, on the other hand, can quite clearly be maintained: 'the renderings must be sufficiently clear that one can understand not merely what they must have meant to people in ancient times but also how they can be applied in the present-day context.' [676] Responding to the issue of accuracy (an entirely subjective concept in the case of translations), they write:

> [P]ersons may insist that by its very nature a dynamic equivalent translation is a less "accurate" translation, for it departs further from the forms of the original. To argue in this manner, however, is to use "accurate" in a strictly formal sense, whereas accuracy can only be rightly determined by judging the extent to which the response of the receptor is substantially equivalent to the response of the original receptors. In other words, does the dynamic equivalent translation succeed more completely in evoking in the receptors responses which are substantially equivalent to those experienced by the original receptors?
>
> If "accuracy" is to be judged in this light, then certainly the dynamic equivalent translation is not only more meaningful *to* the receptors but also more accurate.

The framework of dynamic equivalence is suitable to studying the transformation of the original Latin texts into Old English. Indeed, Stenton in his article bewailing the non-existence of

---

[674] Nida & Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, p. 24.
[675] Nida & Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, pp. 24–26,
[676] Nida & Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, p. 26.

translation studies researching Anglo-Saxon texts recommends it as a starting point.[677] It is also eminently applicable in the case of the present dissertation, as my analysis will not base its evalutation on word-for-word comparisons. Due to sheer size, that is quite beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I will look at the presence, omission, or alteration in the translations of key passages from the originals: *loci* which form the basis of their metanarratives. The transference of the metanarrative operates on the macro-textual level: 'macro-textual analysis of the source text lays the basis for a subsequent overall assessment of the degree of equivalence achieved by the translator in the completed translation, i.e., it determines what factors give the source text its special "flavour."'[678]

Scholars of the Alfredian translations have established that the translators felt free to manipulate the original texts according to their own interpretation in order to communicate their own message.[679] In terms of dynamic equivalence, this means that they often supplanted the informative content of the source texts, while conserving their expressive and imperative functions. The resulting difference has often been taken to signify that Alfred's translation practice (and by extension, that of his followers') whether concerning words, expressions, structures, etc., was haphazard.[680] The key passage in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*', which is the closest Alfred ever approached describing his translational practice, is often carelessly read, and quoted not in its entirety: 'hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete' (sometimes word by word, sometimes sense for sense). The second half, however, reads 'ond swæ ic hie andgitfullicost areccean meahte, ic hie on Englisc awende' (and as I most comprehensibly am able to recount, I translate them to English). This shows that he and his followers were careful in the manipulation of the texts in order that they should reflect their interpretation and be understandable at the same time.

---

[677] Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue', p. 38.

[678] Careless, 'Rediscovering Text Analysis in Translator Training', p. 4.

[679] Frantzen, *King Alfred*, p. 41; Discenza, 'Alfredian Texts', p. 32; Stanton, 'The (M)other Tongue', p. 38.

[680] Alfred, *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, p. 10: 'ða ic ða gemunde hu sio lar lædengeðiodes ær ðissum afeallen wæs giond angelcynn, ond ðeah monige cuðon englisc gewrit arædan. ða ongan ic ongemang oðrum mislicum ond manigfealdum bisgum ðisses kynerices ða boc wendan on englisc ðe is genemned on læden pastoralis, ond on englisc hierdeboc, hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete, swæ swæ ic hie geliornode æt plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe, ond æt assere minum biscepe, ond æt grimbolde minum mæssepreoste, ond æt iohanne minum mæssepreoste; siððan ic hie ða geliornod hæfde, swæ swæ ic hie forstod ond swæ ic hie andgitfullicost areccean meahte, ic hie on Englisc awende.'
(Then I recalled how the knowledge of Latin language was previously fallen throughout the English, but that many could read English writing. Then I began among the other various and manifold business of this kingdom to turn to English the book in Latin called *Pastoralis*, and in English Herdbook, sometimes word by word, sometimes sense for sense, as I have learned it from Plegmund, my archbishop, and from Asser, my bishop, and from Grimbold, my mass-priest, and from Iohannes, my mass-priest. Since I have learned these, as I understand these and as I most comprehensibly am able to recount, I translate them to English.)

For this reason, my analysis of the translations will, for the most part, function on the macro-textual level, and analyse the dynamic equivalence or difference of the texts on the basis of the nature of key passages. I will descend to the level of verbal analysis only in the question of *grace* and *salvation*, whose connotations and specific uses have been well documented in both Latin and Old English, making a comparison possible. Naturally, grace and salvation are also central concepts of any metanarrative, thus a close look of their uses is also necessary.

My macro-textual comparison will rest on what Bately and Frantzen have established as the three key Alfredian strategies of translation: 'toning down', omission, and interpolation. 'Toning down', as Bately terms it, is 'a softening of the hard line on sins taken in the source-texts. The condemnation expressed in the Latin source-texts of such things as wealth, power, fame, and luxurious living is no longer absolute.'[681] Although I agree with Bately's observation, I think this is not some sort of laxity on the translators' part: rather the urgency and immediacy of the original texts is distanced from the contemporary reader, displaced by an alternative perception of the world. As I will show, the world is no longer perceived as absolutely monochromatic as in the original works written using the Eusebian metanarrative. Rather, it is acknowledged that it is difficult to avoid sins, and fallible humans require God's forgiveness.[682] As we will see, this 'toning down' comes with a certain amount of secularization: the world is not seen as merely the arena of the eternal fight between God and Satan (as in Orosius, and to a lesser degree, Bede); instead, there is room for a neutral perception of human actions, without a necessary metaphysical reading of them.

Omission is intermittent in the four confirmed Alfredian texts and OEHE, and comes nowhere close to the vast quantities of elided material in OEH. Alfred, when it suited his needs, freely excluded passages from the translations.[683] Untranslatability, as for example in the case of Augustine's puns in the Latin original, was one factor in elision. Another important reason behind omission was the goal to reconfigure the overarching meaning of certain passages, or even the entire works: for example, in the case of *De consolatione*, the speech of Fortune is partly left out, party attributed to *Boethius'* Wisdom, to support the partly rewritten message of the work.[684]

---

[681] Bately, 'Alfred as Author and Translator', p. 134.
[682] Bately, 'Alfred as Author and Translator*', pp. 135–36, quoting *Boethius* 35.250–54 and 36.212–16; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, p. 52.
[683] O'Neill, 'The Prose Translation of Psalms 1–50', p. 259.
[684] Frantzen, *King Alfred*, p. 51.

Interpolation is much more common than omission. Alfred used it extensively; for example, in the case of *Soliloquies*, an entire third book was pastiched together from a wide variety of sources[685] in addition to a verbose preface, which have no known antecedents. In the case of *Boethius*, we again have a lengthy introduction, recounting the circumstances of Boethius' incarceration in a markedly different light than *De consolatione* itself; moreover, that Old English text positively abounds in explanations of Roman and Greek mythology, and various elaborations on Latin passages.[686] In three target texts (*Boethius*, *Pastoral Care* and *Soliloquies)*, these result in major transformations of the original works' ideological messages. The *Pastoral Care* is subjected to the same 'toning down' as mentioned earlier; *Boethius* becomes a 'thoroughly Christian work [whose] reflections on government, wealth, power and fame differ sharply from the attitudes of Boethius.'[687] The *Soliloquies* is brought into close connection with *Boethius* and undergoes toning down likewise. The *Prose Psalms* are each given an introduction, in which Alfred states his own, very personal interpretations, occasionally pointing out leitmotifs.[688] The translators in some notable cases even changed the speaker,[689] and subordinated the wording of the rendering in order to reflect his own perceptions.[690] These translations, too, include numerous clarifications.

All four texts of the Alfredian canon are thus substantially recast in a mould corresponding to the king's intentions towards his audience, and mirror his appreciation of the lack of classical knowledge among the target group. Alfred uses, in classical terms, the Jeromian concept of translation. The wording of the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*' closely mirrors Jerome's foreword to his own translation of the Books of Esther and Job: 'haec autem translatio nullum de veteribus sequitur interpretem, sed ex ipso hebraico arabicoque sermone et interdum syro, nunc verba, nunc sensus, nunc simul utrumque resonavit' (this translation follows none of the earlier translators, but has echoed at one time the words, at another the meaning, at another both at the same time of the Hebrew and Arabic, and occasionally the Syriac [O'Brien's translation]).[691] As Rita Copeland writes, 'through Jerome the Middle Ages inherits the formula "non verbum pro verbo" as a model of textual fidelity rather than of

---

[685] Szarmach, 'Augustine's *Soliloquia* in Old English', p. 250–54.
[686] Frantzen, *King Alfred*, pp. 48–49.
[687] Frantzen, *King Alfred,* p. 49.
[688] Frantzen *King Alfred,* p. 95; O'Neill 22–27.
[689] E.g., in the case of Psalm 21/22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."
[690] O'Neill, 'The Prose Translation of Psalms 1–50', pp. 45–53.
[691] Quoted in O'Brien, *Reversing Babel*, p. 43.

difference, as a theory of direct conservation of textual meaning without the impediment of linguistic multiplicity.'[692] The meanings imposed upon the works, much as in the case of Jerome, were frequently the personal, subjective interpretations of the translator.

I will show that manipulation of the source texts by the Anglo-Saxon translators in the case of Bede and Orosius is concordant with the three translation strategies characteristically employed by Alfred, and that their application is not random, but serves to create new visions of history. Most importantly, OEHE and OEH never claim to be translations. The omissions and additions, along with the toning down typical of Alfredian texts, construct a logic quite different from the originals of Orosius and Bede, transforming the Old English texts into works communicating altogether different messages.[693] Appropriating the authority of the original texts, that is, the expressive and imperative functions of the texts, besides, of course, their status as patristic writings, was the Alfredian method of giving weight to the new (perhaps unconscious) reinterpretation of ancient works. Conversely, at the same time it also served to preserve the source texts' *wisdom* and *lar*, aiming to elicit the same intellectual and emotional response they originally evoked: consolation, hope, and an explanation of the seeming chaos of the world.

---

[692] Copeland , 'The fortunes of "non verbum pro verbo"', p. 29.

[693] Compellingly, the same is very much in the case of *Boethius*, in which, as Anne Payne describes, "Alfred understood Boethius well but knowingly rejected certain of his major premises and constructed a work in which he expressed his own beliefs on a Boethian skeleton." Quoted in McC. Gatch, 'King Alfred's version of Augustine's *Soliloquia*', p. 204.

V. The Old English translation of Bede

Textual history and the overview of the scholarly evaluation of OEHE

The Old English translation of Bede has survived in five manuscript families, for which several textual traditions have been proposed.[694] The oldest extant manuscript, MS T (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 10, s. x^1) can be dated to 890–920.[695] It has come down to us in six manuscripts containing important differences, such as the inclusion of the Preface and the chapter headings (only in MSS Cambridge, University Library, Kk 3.18, s. xi^2 [henceforth: Ca] and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 41, s. xi^1 B [henceforth: B]), the positioning of Chapters 17–18 in Book 3 (varying between MSS), and the existence of the envoi (again, MSS Ca and B).[696] Manuscripts Ca and B are thus the fullest extant versions. They are the work of three translators[697] who sometimes overwrote the choices of their peers.[698] The exemplar used by the scribes cannot be identified, although Lapidge has proposed that they might have followed a copy given to Abbot Albinus of Canterbury; but as the exemplar is lost, it cannot be proven.[699] None of these translators was (contrary to Aelfric's claim[700]) Alfred himself,[701] but someone who subscribed to the Alfredian ideal of learned kingship.[702] Although the different scribe-translators might have had divergent agenda, the unified work nevertheless has a single, unified historical metanarrative, which can be compared with that of HEGA. OEHE also employs the Alfredian strategies of toning down, elision, and addition.

Editors have considered the discrepancy between the Old English translation and the Latin originals as errors caused by the translators' inability to understand their source text; hence, they mainly saw their task in re-editing OEHE to conform as closely to HEGA as possible, erasing the native alterations to the text.[703] The first edition of the Anglo-Saxon work was created by Abraham Wheelock in 1643 on the basis of MS Ca, and the 'definitive' one by

---

[694] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* pp. 51–91.
[695] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 16; Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 68.
[696] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 31.
[697] Rowley, *The Old English Version*, pp. 38–39; Wallis, *The Old English Bede,* pp. 8–19. Lemke disagrees: see *The Old English Translation,* p. 132–35.
[698] Rowley, *The Old English Version*, p. 91.
[699] Lapidge, 'The Latin Exemplar of the Old English Bede', pp. 235–46.
[700] Aelfric, *Sermones Catholici*, p. 118.
[701] Wallis, *The Old English Bede,* p. 8–11.
[702] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* pp. 125–32.
[703] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 3; Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 41.

Thomas Miller based upon MS T appeared in a series of four books, published between 1890 and 1898. A year later two theretofore unpublished manuscripts (O and B) appeared in Jacob Schipper's edition. No newer and/or critical edition of the text exists, and although both Miller and Schipper attached generous amounts of notes (mostly on scribal and linguistic subjects) to their works, any study of HEGA is hindered by these outdated versions. The present discussion will take Miller's edition as its basis, the only significant divergence being that whereas Miller 'restored' the translation of *Libellus responsionum* to the first book, Chapter 16, I follow the manuscript evidence of MSS Ca and B in placing it at the end of the third book[704] – a significant scribal alteration.

The editors' opinion concerning the deficiencies of OEHE influenced students of the Old English text forcefully. For a century, scholarly consensus held that the Anglo-Saxon translation was a failure, and the most interesting thing about it (if any) was how and why it had failed.[705] Studies before the 1990s almost exclusively focussed on the inability of the translator to grasp Bede's genius and the resulting mangling of a work centuries ahead of its time,[706] and the often clumsily Latinate syntax of his English, along with diverse scribal errors.[707] Some studies, focusing on the 'nationalism' of Bede have treated OEHE as a literal translation, using its existence, rather than its content, as proof of their arguments.[708] Almost exclusively only linguistic studies found anything of worth in OEHE. With the demise of the great generation of Anglo-Saxonists, such as Malone, Whitelock, and Tolkien, interest in OEHE declined.

The century-old ill-regard of the Old English Bede has, however, recently begun to change. Since 2011, two comprehensive studies have been published on the text. The pioneering work of Rowley broke the ice in 2011 as the first work which considered OEHE not as a faulty derivative or carbon copy of HEGA, but as a text on its own right, with its own purposes and agenda that may have differed considerably from that of Bede. It is also the first analysis to contextualise the omissions and additions in OEHE, noting the entirely different system of concordances within the source text and the translation. Lemke's *The Old English Translation*

---

[704] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 51.

[705] Whitelock, *Old English Bede*, pp. 244–245; Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 124.

[706] Whitelock, *Old English Bede*, p. 74; St-Jacques, '*"Hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete?"'* pp. 85–104.

[707] Grant, *The B Text of the Old English Bede*, pp. 225–393.

[708] For example Cowdrey, 'Bede and the "English People"', pp. 501–23; Foot, 'The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', pp. 25–49.

of Bede's 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' in its Historical and Cultural Context appeared in 2015, and besides the titular analysis, it is a thorough description of the material evidence for OEHE, with forays into interpreting the ideological relationship of the original and the translation. The two works sum up the changes effected in the translation very well, and their analysis of the textual alterations can serve the basis of discussing OEHE's metanarrative.

A new Anglo-Saxon metanarrative: removed from Rome and orthodoxy

It has been shown that during the 8th and 9th centuries 'Bede's reading of salvation history provided a meaningful model for interpreting the Scandinavian invasions.'[709] Alcuin's letter to Higbald clearly shows this. The sack of Lindisfarne 'non equidem casu contigit, sed magni cuiuslibet meriti indicium est' (truly this happened not by chance, but it is a sign that it was greatly merited by someone), and contains a great deal of advice how the stricken survivors should immediately bring back their behaviour into Christian order,[710] and we have similar texts penned later by Wulfstan.[711] In light of this, one would expect that the metanarrative of OEHE will conform closely to the semi-Eusebian one of HEGA, or even perhaps bringing it into closer conformity with that of Orosius, who was, after all, able to argue for the invulnerability of Rome even in the face of her destruction. The Anglo-Saxon text, however, breaks this pattern:

> It would seem safe to assume that the OEHE disseminated Bede's formulation of salvation history into later Anglo-Saxon England, but it did not. Although Bede's Old English translators were working after more than a century of Scandinavian invasions and significant demographic change on the island, and although the OEHE was translated and transmitted between the reign of Alfred and the archiepiscopacy of Wulfstan, it treats this theme differently. The OEHE draws no parallels with the ninth-century invasions. By eschewing this popular contemporary reading of history, the OEHE separates itself ideologically from many other Old English texts.[712]

As we have seen above, however, by foregoing the motive of divine vengeance behind the Viking invasions OEHE actually comes very close to the Alfredian interpretation of the

---

[709] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 75.
[710] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, p. 57.
[711] Keynes, 'Vikings', p. 480; Orchard, 'Wulfstan', p. 515.
[712] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 75; see also Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 290.

reasons for foreign aggression. In his contexts, the fact that OEHE would strive to avoid drawing, or even implying, parallels between the history of the Britons and the English is also understandable considering the plight of England during the time of its composition. The divine un-election of the Britons resulted in the loss of their former lands, and following Bede's logic, the same situation now would be the ineluctable fate of the English – not a particularly encouraging thought to a people by and large in the same situation as the Britons had been following the victory of Badon Hill. Moreover, since in the Bedan text the Britons' pre-eminent sin was their heresy, and their failure to evangelize the invading Anglo-Saxon, the logic of HEGA would dictate that the subjects of Alfred had also been heretical and niggardly about Christianity – a charge manifestly untrue according to HEGA itself.

Bede's edifying agenda is clearly retained by the translation in the foreword of OEHE:

Forþon þis gewrit oððe hit god sagacþ be godum mannum, 7 se ðe hit gehireþ, he onhyreþ þam, oððe hit yfel sagaþ be yfelum mannum, 7 se ðe hit gehyreð, he flyhð þæt 7 onscunaþ. Forþon hit is god godne to herianne 7 yfelne to leanne, þæt se geðro se þe hit gehyre. Gif se oðer nolde, hu wurþ he elles gelæred? For þinre ðearfe 7 for þinre ðeode ic þis awrat;

(For this text says either good about good people, and who listens to it, obeys it; or it says evil about evil people, and who listens to it, shuns it. For it is good to praise the good and reproach the evil so that those who listen to it may prosper. But if the listener does not want it, how else he may become instructed? I have written this to the need of you and your people.)[713]

The transmission of knowledge figures pre-eminently in Alfred's agenda, and just as in the Foreword, the wisdom of the ancients is shown to be the sure way towards peace and prosperity. However, in order to maintain the Bedan agenda and meet the altered needs of an audience in a profoundly different situation than HEGA's original, the original text had to be adapted. Let us turn to see how the alterations function and change the metanarrative of OEHE.

It is the first three books in the translation which are subject to the greatest number of omissions and additions. The most significant change in the text is the translators'

---

[713] OEHE, Praefatio/1.

decision to remove all mentions of Pelagianism from OEHE. The elision of Pelagianism breaks the rhythmic pattern of the Britons' failure to hold on to Christianity, and also deletes their seeming 'taintedness' with the poison of heresy. Remarkably, the translators even slightly rearranged the chronology of Bede's account of the Arian heresy (which stated that despite its condemnation it managed to infect the Britons) [714] so as to give an entirely different reading. The altered text states that Constantine, a Britain-born emperor vanquished Arianism *despite* its having spread to all the corners of the world – a great contribution from the Britons' part to Christianity and a powerful potential argument for the legitimacy of their views.[715] The deletion of the story of Germanus' double visit and military campaign against heathen invaders also removes the suggestion that the Britons are entirely helpless and weak. These changes in the first book recast the Britons' Christianity as orthodox, who were ready to uncompromisingly sacrifice even their lives to their true faith as the retained story of St. Alban shows.

The translators were apparently disinterested in the Roman history of Britain. They abbreviated the story of the Roman occupation of the isle, and they dismantled Bede's double dating system (AUC and AD). Such elisions are in line with the omissions of Antique and Roman material in Old English literature.[716] Here they serve to move the focus of the text after a necessary exposé to the events concerning the current inhabitants of Britain.[717] In light of this, the story of St. Alban is likely retained because it is the supreme example of martyrdom in both HEGA and OEHE. Although solitary martyrs are created later from the two Hewalds,[718] their deaths and the subsequent miracles lack the social dimension of Alban's martyrdom. Not only is the trial and execution a public spectacle, already attended by miracles and effecting conversions (even that of his would-be executioners) but it contains the key passage:

> Tum iudex: 'Cuius,' inquit, 'familiae uel generis es?' Albanus respondit: 'Quid ad te pertinet, qua sim stirpe genitus? sed si ueritatem religionis audire desideras, Christianum iam me esse, Christianisque officiis uacare cognosce.'

---

[714] HEGA 1/8.

[715] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 320.

[716] Shaw, 'The Old English *Phoenix*', pp. 156–157.

[717] Anlezark, 'The Anglo-Saxon world view', pp. 70–73. This focality is further enhanced by entirely removing Adomnán's 'On Holy Places' in OEHE 5/15.

[718] HEGA 5/10; OEHE 5/10.

(Then the judge asked, "Of what family or race are you?"—"What does it concern you," answered Alban, "of what stock I am? If you desire to hear the truth of my religion, be it known to you, that I am now a Christian, and free to fulfil Christian duties.)[719]

Da cwæþ he se ealdorman 7 se dema him to ´Saga me hwylces hiredes 7 hwylces cynnes ðu si.' And þa andswarede him Scs Albanus : Hwæt limpeð þæs to þe of hwylcum wyrtruman ic acenned si? Ac gif þu wylle gehyran þæt soð minre æfestnysse, þonne wite þu me cristene beon: 7 ic cristenum þenungum ðeowian wylle.'

(Then said he the alderman and the judge to him, 'Tell me of what family or race are you.' And then St. Albanus answered to him: "What does it concern you of what root I am begotten? If you want to hear the truth of my religion, then know that I am Christian, and want to serve Christian duties.')[720]

Alban's self-identification as Christian, subverting and transcending ethnic boundaries at the same time, can be read as a supreme example of the new, religion-based group identity that Alfred sought to create and promote, and which the charge of Pelagianism would disrupt.

By cutting Pelagianism and the related armed conflicts, from the Battle of Badon Hill, where the English are thoroughly vanquished by the Britons, OEHE immediately moves to the story of the Anglo-Saxon conversion. In HEGA Bede spent a great deal of ink on detailing the conflicts suffered by the Britons, but carefully elides the warfare that we know to have surrounded the establishment of the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms,[721] stressing the contrast between the sins and misery of the natives and the ostensible orderliness of the invaders. OEHE rectifies this imbalance and deconstructs Bede's biased narrative in one fell swoop. This is a notable alteration, for it makes the Britons lose Britain to the Anglo-Saxon invaders not due to their un-election by God, and the subsequent transfer of the divine plan to the English – a change of profound significance. Although the Anglo-Saxon *invasion* is still God's punishment for the Britons' (hazily defined) sins, the *conquest* is not. In OEHE, 'the coming of Christianity figuratively appeases and calms Britain, after the island had been exposed to conflict and a decline of Christian norms following the withdrawal of imperial Rome.'[722]

---

[719] HEGA 1/7.
[720] OEHE 1/7.
[721] Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England,* pp. 25–49.
[722] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* p. 295.

The translation removes Bede's unequivocal statement in 1/22 that the supreme sin of the Britons was that they did not evangelize the invaders. At the same time, elsewhere the Britons' failure to convert the English is consistently maintained throughout OEHE.[723] While in HEGA this argument was slightly forced (they would have preached heresy, after all, as Bede notes with compunction about Aidan), in OEHE the full soteriological and political force of the choice is felt: the Christian Britons denied salvation to the Anglo-Saxons, of course – but even more importantly, through this they refused their own salvation. However, it is cast in a different light than by Bede, as we will see.

In OEHE only two descriptions of the Easter controversy are retained: one at the Synod of Hertford[724] and the other at the discussion of Aidan's practices.[725] Bede's other detailed expositions of the problem are very much abbreviated,[726] and the account of the entire Synod of Whitby is cut with its strong focus on orthodox liturgy and heavy with the implications of Celtic heresy. Furthermore, only a one-sentence summary of Ceolfrith's letter to Nechtan is given.[727] It is clear that the translators did not consider the issue of *theoretical* orthodoxy important, and instead focused on practical unity.

This deconstructs HEGA's already only semi-Eusebian logic even further. The Britons in the Old English translation are not claimed to have been *permanently* supplanted by the Anglo-Saxons because of their obstinacy in heresy. The translators retained cowardice and discord as the causes of the Britons' failure to resist the *initial* Germanic onslaught,[728] but under Ambrosius Aurelianus they nevertheless manage to pay back the English in kind. By this alteration the Britons' history is rendered non-cyclic, linear. The crux of this new British narrative is the meeting at Augustine's oak, where the Britons, much like in HEGA, are shown

---

[723] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* pp. 339–40.

[724] OEHE 2/17.

[725] OEHE 3/14. This passage was interpolated/restored into the text by the third scribe/translator: Rowley 91.

[726] Compare HEGA 2/2: 'Non enim paschae diem dominicum suo tempore sed a quarta decima usque ad uicesimam lunam obseruabant, quae conputatio LXXXIIII annorum circulo continetur; sed et alia plurima unitati ecclesiasticae contraria faciebant.' (For they did not keep Easter Sunday at the proper time, but from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon; which computation is contained in a cycle of eighty-four years. Besides this they did many other things which were opposed to the unity of the Church), and OEHE 2/2: 'heo . . . ne woldon riht Eastran healdan in heora tid; ge eac monig oðer þing þære ciriclican annisse heo ungelice 7 wiðerword hæfdon'. (They did not want to keep Easter in its proper time, and moreover had many things that were contrary and unlike to the unity of the Church).

[727] OEHE 5/19: 'sende him cræftige wyrhtan stænene cyricean to timbrianne: sende him eac stafas 7 gewrit be gehealde rihtra Eastrana 7 be Godes þeow sceare, eac oþrum rihtum Godes cyricean.' (He sent him skilled workers to build a stone church, sending also letters and writings about holding the correct Easter and about the tonsure of God's servants, as well as other rules of God's Church.)

[728] OEHE 1/12.

to be irrationally disrespectful towards Augustine – but now their foolishness is all the more poignant because the Roman apostle is literally just as Catholic as they are.[729] The Britons' decision to contend the power of Rome is thus rendered political. It is out of mistaken policy, and a contrived argument invented for the scenario, that they reject the peace offered by Rome and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Moreover, the Britons' refusal in OEHE is not altogether unfounded: they *were* abandoned by Rome to the joint Pictish-Irish depredations.[730] The omissions construct a story where the Britons would have plausible suspicions about a Roman ambassador suddenly appearing among them, demanding that they voluntarily subject themselves once more – and who is aided and abetted by the hated and treacherous invaders.

What the Britons here fail to realize is that peace can only be achieved by the selfsame unity that was proposed by their own martyr, St. Alban; and that the instrument of this unity is Roman authority mediated by the Church. Political unity is seen by Bede and OEHE as a corollary to Christianity: the Faith pacifies the warring kingdoms and chieftains. It is this central message of peace and common identity which the Britons refuse, and thus logically receive war and isolation at the hands of the Anglo-Saxons.

Anglo-Saxon historical self-perception in OEHE

However, the erasure of Bede's divine plan shows the English in OEHE in a much more sombre light than HEGA did. As Rowley writes, 'because OEHE follows its source more closely in the sections related to the Britons in Book V, it could be seen as participating in Bede's logic of salvation history, though to a significantly lesser degree.'[731] Whereas the account of HEGA justifies Hengest and Horsa's breaking tryst with the sins of the Britons (and the Anglo-Saxons consequently becoming God's tools just like the Goths are in Orosius), the logic of OEHE does not support this. The English mercenaries here are simply treacherous and rapacious barbarians, and although Christianity shall pacify them, until their conversion they are just as prone to irrational violence as the obstinate Britons are. This is shown by the verbal parallelism built exclusively in OEHE between the genocides committed by Cadwallon (king

---

[729] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 83.
[730] OEHE 1/11.
[731] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 92.

of Gwynedd)[732] and Caedwalla (Wessex).[733] Both atrocities are described by the translators with the interpolation 'troiscan wæle' (Trojan slaughter), and both are crimes committed by not-yet-Catholics (Cadwallon was a Christian Briton, whereas Caedwalla is pagan). Cadwallon is in league with Penda of Mercia, a pagan Anglo-Saxon king, whose son eventually converts and pacifies the Midlands. Cadwallon himself is slain by the Catholic Oswald of Northumbria. Caedwalla, on the other hand, is a pagan, and swears to donate a quarter of the loot and the island to God if he conquers the Isle of Wight. He succeeds, completely exterminating the inhabitants of the isle, and in Bede even the mass murder is shown to lead to the conversion of the two Vectian princes who escape the genocide.[734] This account is retained in OEHE but connecting it with the expression of *troiscan wæle* to the tyranny of Cadwallon disrupts, according to Rowley, 'the connection between destruction, displacement and salvation.'[735] By equating the God-sanctioned act of Caedwalla (in Bede's terms) with the barbarous and bestial cruelty of Cadwallon,[736] the translators further deconstruct the divine mission of the English. Caedwalla – a unanimously positive character in Bede's work – is repositioned to the same rank as Aethelred and Ecgfrid, whose ambiguous portrayal in HEGA are one of the most important points in distancing Bede from Orosius and Eusebius. Furthermore, Cadwallon is described in both histories as a Christian only in name, possessing none of its virtues – a description which echoes closely Alfred's statement in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*' that 'þone naman anne we lufodon ðætte we cristne wæren, swiðe feawe þa þeawas' (we loved the name only that we were Christians, and loved very little the customs).

OEHE subverts and secularizes the metanarrative of HEGA. By the removal of the overarching divine plan concerning Britain, and the idea of the Anglo-Saxon election, the translators move the cause of English success from theology to politics and warfare. This secularization interestingly coincides with the secularization of aesthetics and the feudal land-holding system due to the Vikings and their conquest.[737] It also is concomitant with Alfred's non-Eusebian interpretation of the Scandinavian attacks. Instead of the decisions of a vengeful Eusebian divine puppeteer, or a Bedan biased judge, in OEHE the fate of the nations of Britain seem to be defined by their bravery and political astuteness. This is even true about the Romans:

---

[732] OEHE 3/1.
[733] OEHE 4/18
[734] HEGA 4/16.
[735] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 97.
[736] HEGA 2/20
[737] Carver, 'Exploring, Explaining, Imagining Anglo-Saxon Archaeology', p. 40.

the translator suppresses the multiple and warring dynasties of the emperors, essentially depicting a single unbroken Caesarean lineage down to contemporary times.[738]

Further into OEHE, the omission of half of the papal epistles,[739] and the deletion of the accounts of pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon paganism render 'the Gregorian mission a smooth enterprise […] probably responding to contemporary political reasons.' Although the relapses of the English kingdoms are included in the narrative, the redactions serve to depict the Anglo-Saxons as naturally inclined towards Christianity, even in the face of individual apostasy and pagan brutality. The obverse of this, of course, is that it diminishes the glory of the fight surrounding the conversion of England. The apostasies, much like the isolationism of the Britons, are better read as political choices. On the one hand, to accept Roman overlordship, or on the other one, to submit to endless factionalism which leads to protracted warfare. By moving Gregory's *Libellus responsionum* from the end of the first book to that of the third so that it coincides with the arrival of Bishop Theodore, the translators created a renewed and reinforced sense of the legitimacy of political Romanness.[740] By laying down the rules of political marriages (such as that of Edwin and Aethelburh, or Oswald and Cyneburh, etc.) within the framework of Church authority, the *Libellus* supersedes heretofore existing tribal customs, cementing the alliance of Rome and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. In both HEGA and OEHE, it is preeminently by political marriage that peace between the warring kingdoms is brokered,[741] and thus their subjection to Roman rules is a partial subjugation of sovereignty. The most common medium for royal conversion is also marriage, which immediately solidifies Christianity's hold on the kingdom, drawing it into the fold of peaceful co-existence by the Roman rules. The ending of HEGA in Book V describes,[742] and is followed closely by OEHE,[743] that 'religious unity coincides with political peace among these people: the Picts and English live under treaty in 'the Catholic peace and truth of the Church universal,' while the Irish in Britain are, at least, 'no longer devising plots … to increase their territories.'[744] The obstinacy of the Britons has lead to their seclusion from the peace enjoyed even by their kin, even though division in liturgy and theology no longer obstructs them.

---

[738] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* pp. 262–63.
[739] Seven out of the fourteen apostolic exhortations are retained; the redaction is most conspicuous in the first book, where only four out of the eight letters remain.
[740] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 115.
[741] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* pp. 114–33.
[742] HEGA 5/24.
[743] OEHE 5/23.
[744] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 85.

The stubbornness of the Britons, no longer divinely motivated or foreordained, can be read in an Augustinian manner as the wrong exercise of free will. Time and again the Britons are offered a chance for unity, which they refuse. This shows that they are the inverse of the Anglo-Saxons, who take their first chance at joining the international community of Christianity. As the final description of the state of Britain shows, internal peace among the English was fully achieved by their conscious choices in marriage and politics. Those Britons who opt for unity, such as Aidan, are saints; OEHE even strikes out Bede's caveat against Aidan's theoretical error.[745] OEHE's secular metanarrative becomes a story of the reconstruction of disrupted political unity: whereas Britannia had been abandoned by the Romans, and for a while succumbed to foreign invasions, Rome has returned through the Anglo-Saxons, and offers a place in her community once more, almost like Augustine's prevenient grace. '*Butan geþeodnesse ealra godes cyricena*' (outside the community of all of God's churches) is the title Rowley gives to her chapter discussing the Britons' errors in OEHE,[746] citing Chapter 20 of Book V. Based on her analysis and what we have seen above, without the spiritual 'poison' of Pelagianism and heresy, the Britons' sin – while still wrong, of course, and described as *fyrenfullan* (sinful)[747] – loses its significant place in the historical metanarrative. It is rather pride and sluggishness, and their pride in their sluggishness,[748] which set the Britons apart from the unity of the Church, and results in their loss of Britannia. Additions in significant loci[749] also enhance the Britons' foolishness in their refusal to submit to the authority of Rome and St Peter.

Although the secularization of the metanarrative might give the impression that the translators almost created a 'terrestrial city' out of the Roman, Briton, and Anglo-Saxon communities, busy with their terrestrial policies, pursuing peace for its own sake, this is not the case. The 'active and muscular God'[750] is still present in OEHE, and his actions are paradoxically all the more significant with the disappearance of the divine plan. Unlike in

---

[745] OEHE 3/3.

[746] Rowley, *The Old English Version,* p. 83.

[747] OEHE 1/11.

[748] OEHE: 'swa gen to dæge Bretta þeaw is, þæt heo Ongolcynnes geleafan 7 æfæstnisse for noht habbað, ne him in ængum þingum ma gemænsumigan willað þon hæðnum monnum.' (So it is to this day the custom of the Britons, that they the faith and piety of the English set at nought, and have no more dealings with them in anything than with heathen men.)

[749] OEHE 5/20.

[750] Higham, *Re-reading Bede*, p. 22.

HEGA, God is no longer the immediate mover of the events;[751] therefore His miracles are the results of special individual merits and grace (which is still available to the Britons as well). Without special election, the achievements of Anglo-Saxon saints, especially of the warrior-kings and *brytenwaldan* Edwin,[752] Oswald,[753] and Oswy[754] mark that human effort can and will be augmented by divine providence. It also shows to the contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience that God has not forsaken them; rather it is they who do not merit glorious intervention from God's part. But they may do so, if they follow the examples set out in OEHE: convert, uphold and transmit Christianity, and choose their policies wisely.[755]

The translators recast the image of the king in HEGA in Alfredian terms, specifically in the likeness of Alfred's educational role. OEHE acknowledges that kings may be appointed to their positions by God, but with a twist which bolsters the significance of the above-mentioned *brytenwalda*. As Bede's Preface writes about Ceolwulf: 'forðon þe God to cyninge geceas, þe gedafenað þinre þeode to læranne,' (for God chose you as king, and it is fitting that you teach your people). This is an interesting elision and interpolation at the same time, because what Bede actually writes is this:

> quod ipsum tu quoque uigilantissime deprehendens, historiam memoratam in notitiam tibi simul et eis, quibus te regendis diuina praefecit auctoritas, ob generalis curam salutis latius propalari desideras';

> (and as you have carefully marked this, you are desirous that the said history should be more fully made known to yourself, and to those over whom the Divine Authority has appointed you governor, from your great regard to the common good).[756]

In the Old English version, one of the primary duties of divinely elected kings is teaching, much like in the vision of Alfred. They have to do this personally, and it can be inferred that the

---

[751] It must be noted that OEHE 1/14 reads "*Þæt cuð is þæt þæt mid Drihtnes mihte gestihtad wæs, þæt yfell wræc come ofer þa wiðcorenan swa on þam ende þara wisena sweotolice ætywed is*," translated by Thomas Miller as "That is plain that it was arranged/ordained by God's might, that dire vengeance came over the gainsayers as is plainly revealed on the manner of the end." Clearly this is a counterargument to the deconstruction of the divine plan described by me. However, this is the only instance where Bede's description of God as the director of the *adventus saxonum* is retained, which robs the passage of some of its power; but more importantly, '*stiht-*' carries not only the meaning 'rule, dispose, ordain', but also 'instigate, incite' (Bosworth-Toller 920), which, if employed here, would also considerably tone down the directness of God's intervention.

[752] vision, check chapter

[753] any amount of miracles, check chapter

[754] HEGA 2/24 miraculous victory over Penda

[755] Lemke, *The Old English Translation,* pp. 295–97.

[756] HEGA Preface/1.

translators meant that kings must educate their subjects not only via cultural projects (as stated in the *Preface to the Pastoral Care*), but also through the examples of their lives, like Edwin and Oswald did. Much less responsibility is laid on HEGA's Ceolwulf, where it is assumed that people will automatically be aware of and internalize the exempla laid out by Bede. Kings in OEHE are responsible for the salvation of their subjects through their efficacy in the transmission of wisdom, a grave task in what is, after all, the Religion of the Book. This also explains the centrality of Gregory, which OEHE retains in spite of cutting much of Rome-related material, and also gives a further rationale for moving the *Libellus responsionum* to the end of the third book: the Anglo-Saxons, including kings, ought to imitate Gregory of all people.

The translators' choice to include the visions of the otherworld in Book V enhance Bede's original position on the importance of free will. Besides the didactic function, which has already been pointed out in HEGA, the visions firmly anchor the process of narration in *this* world. Although detailing a *possible* fate in the afterlife, the visions are proof positive that the choices we make in the present life determine our fate in the next. But the visions' call to repentance is in the case of OEHE to a broad audience: as the Britons here are depicted as not inherently evil, the door of Roman Christianity is always open to them. The visions underline the individual's ability to choose, to correctly exercise their free will, which, as we have seen, is the greatest error of the Britons in OEHE. The call for repentance and orthodoxy comes to the Anglo-Saxons in the form of supernatural phenomena. The miracles and visions forcefully draw the reader's attention to the existence of the heavenly city, toward which we should all be striving. However, the effect almost seems to render OEHE into an account of two *parallel* histories: one of secular history, and the other of salvation; and the former is not necessarily dependent on the latter. This is close to the Augustinian perception.

Salvation history conforms quite closely to Bede's original ideas. As in HEGA, the translators also posit that the surest way to redemption and the heavenly city is through the emulation of the virtuous saints and the abjuration of the example of the criminal villains of British history. Miracles in this world are proofs of sainthood, but not exclusively, and it is assumed about many characters, notably bishops and priests, who are worthy examples based on their good lives. Prosperity, on the other hand, is not evidence of divine favour. As we have seen in the case of Caedwalla, OEHE goes even further than Bede to subvert this Eusebian notion.

Salvation history in OEHE

The questions defining salvation history (who will be saved, and from what predicament? how, and by whom? and what is the state of being saved?) are answered by OEHE in the same vein as by Bede, if more inclusively and in a toned-down manner. The subjects of salvation in the Old English text are expanded to include the Britons, and their predicament is the same as that of the Anglo-Saxons. Politically, without Christianity, they are racked by internal conflict and external attacks, and prone to irrational behaviour; spiritually, non-Christians will receive the same punishments which are vividly described in the visions of the fifth book. Importantly, however, with the deconstruction of Bede's divine plan, communal salvation is further toned down, and the Old English text moves the focus on the individual.[757]

The manner of salvation is a mixture of prevenient grace and the correct exercise of free will, and thus has three actors: God, the mediators of grace (converters), and the acceptors thereof (convertees). Prevenient grace in OEHE is presented somewhat similarly as in HEGA. God works through human actors; but while in Bede this sometimes seems to overwrite human free will (as in the case of the Alleluia victory of St. Germanus[758] or the *adventus Saxonum* itself), in the Old English version God motivates his agents instead of directly controlling them. These divinely inspired agents (such as Gregory, Augustine, but also Britons like Aidan) mediate the faith, which allows the convertees to overcome the power of evil and gain (re)union with God. In the case of miracles at the intercession of saints, God dispenses physical and spiritual grace at the same time: healing[759] and redemption. Both outpourings of grace can be prevenient; for example, Bishop John (just as in Bede) reanimates an arrogant and disobedient priest who promptly repents, and is healed; at the same time, his incorrect baptism is realized by the bishop, is rectified, and the priest is re-baptized.[760] As in HEGA, God nonetheless

---

[757] OEHE 5/12–14.

[758] HEGA 1/20.

[759] For example, in relation to Oswald: OEHE 3/2 and 3/9; in relation to Aethelburga 4/7; in relation to Cuthberht: 4/31–32; Bishop John: 5/2–6; etc.

[760] OEHE 5/6.

requires the active choice of the convertee, as shown by the examples of the thegn's vision of two books[761] and Heaven and Hell.[762]

Finally, the state of being saved in HEGA is also very similar to Bede's understanding of it, if also significantly toned down in some aspects. Terrestrially, political unity and thus peace is certainly an effect of Christianity, but it is not automatically perceived as a *desideratum* in itself. This may echo Augustine's distinction between the earthly and heavenly cities: those who simply strove for prosperity, glory, and did so virtuously, 'have received their reward in full.'[763] True believers, however, merit not only access into Heaven, but also miracles at their intercession, although not necessarily material prosperity or longevity. Heaven in HEGA is described in the same terms as in OEHE:

> Þa geseah ic beforan unc micle maran gyfe leohtes 7 beorhtnesse þonne ic ær geseah, on þere ic eac swylce þa swetestan stefne gehyrde Godes lof singendra. Swylce eac of þære stowe swa micel swetnes wundurlices swæcces onsended wæs, þætte seo swetnes, þe ic ær byrigde 7 me micel þuhte, in þa wiðmetenesse þæs æftran leohtes 7 beorhtnesse wæs lytel 7 medmycel gesewen.[764]

> (Then I saw before us a much greater grace of light and brightness that I had seen earlier, and I also heard likewise the sweetest voices singing God´s praise. Also such an odour of great sweetness that place emitted, that the sweetness which I had tasted earlier and considered great, in comparison with the subsequent light and brightness was seen as small.)

Interestingly, whereas in HEGA the visionary merely hears *uocem cantantium* (singing voices) the translators add that they were specifically praising God. Whereas Bede's original heaven could be read as simply a place of the greatest pleasure, with this small addition the same delight is redirected by HEGA towards God, its source.

How can the dynamic equivalence of HEGA and OEHE measured? Seemingly OEHE retains all functions of Bede's original text. It presents very nearly the same information as the Venerable did, but moves the text's focus elsewhere through omissions and the restructuring of

---

[761] OEHE 5/13
[762] OEHE 5/12
[763] Augustine 5:15.
[764] OEHE 5/12

data. The discard of Antique Rome-related information, several of the papal letters, and Adomnán's 'Book of Holy Places' in Book V reframes OEHE's narrative geographically and politically, presenting Bede's data in different light, constructing a slightly altered background of its metanarrative. The translation's evaluation of the Britons, of course, is radically different from that of Bede, and is based on carefully selected and fed information. Thus while the majority of HEGA's informational function is kept and maintained, it is given a different spin.

The expressive function is difficult to gauge. The Latinate syntax of the translation might seem clumsy to the modern eye, but given that the text was most likely read out and listened to, it might have presented no difficulty to its audience. OEHE retaines biblical quotes in the original Latin, adding subsequent Old English translations. It cuts Bede's many poems in praise of his heroes and saint, but keeps Caedmon's hymn – without Bede's Latin rendition. Without knowing any Anglo-Saxon theory of literary aesthetics, it is impossible to know what the Old English audience would have expected of a translation in terms of poetic equivalence. The only thing that can be said with certainty about OEHE's poetic effect is that it is somewhat lessened by the omission of Bede's poems and occasional allusions to Vergil.

The imperative function, conversely, is fully retained in the translation. At the very beginning of the Old English text, Bede's intention to present exemplary characters to be followed or shunned is expressed in clear terms, and the episodes recounted by OEHE propagate this function. The translation urges the audience to examine their deeds and exercise of free will in the same way as Bede did, and to the same end: to ensure their salvation. The call to correct one's life and bring it into harmony with the Bedan heroes, priests, abbesses, warrior kings, visionaries, and teachers, is as forceful in HEGA, perhaps even more so, due to the translation's deconstruction of Bede's Eusebian predetermination of the Briton's faith. OEHE's imperative embraces all of the inhabitants of Britannia, and by its inclusiveness reaffirms the universality of both Christianity and salvation. God's love and the love of God is open to all and the translation convincingly argues that it is the only wholesome way to live.

Bede's original and the translation therefore are, in some ways, dynamically equivalent. As to whether the inequivalences make OEHE a successful translation, this is an open question. As I argue, OEHE was likely among the titles Alfred deemed most necessary for all men to know, and the motivation for the translation was at least partially the *wisdom* and *lar* it offered as a remedy against crisis and catastrophe. Without any evidence to its reception, it cannot be

known whether OEHE auspiciously offered its instruction and comfort to the Anglo-Saxon audience. Yet I think that OEHE being 'in dialogue' with the confirmed Alfredian texts[765] and its partial Augustinian metanarrative make it a successful translation by Alfred's expectations as laid out in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care'*.

In the last analysis, the Old English translation reorients, alters, and tones down Bede's semi-Eusebian perception of history. Omission of the key elements which form the basis of Bede's secular salvation history serve to draw its historical metanarrative closer to an Augustinian perception, and constitute a vision of England that is different in important aspects from that of Bede. HEGA had already moved away from the Eusebian narrative that secular prosperity is indicative of divine approval, and OEHE takes this change even further. It reinterprets the relationships of the peoples in Britannia, adapting to the changes caused by the Viking wars, and modified the Bedan text accordingly. The translators also discard the triumphalist logic of HEGA, as that would have made the heathen Vikings appear to have divine concession. For them, it is only individual good life which leads surely to salvation. That the individual's fate in the afterlife is decided on the basis of their exemplary conduct instead of their Bedan identities (Briton vs. Anglo-Saxon, Christian vs. pagan, orthodox vs. heretical) is reinforced by the elision and toning down of several focal points of the Latin text. Where Bede is divisive and allows the Britons salvation only grudgingly and against his own logic, the Old English text calls for their unity and condemns them not on the basis of trumped-up charges, but actual errors. The general image of Britain as painted by OEHE therefore is not a sharp division in black-and-white, a life-and-death struggle between the good Anglo-Saxons and the evil, obstinate, and scheming Britons. The moral reading of history which is characteristic of Eusebian historiography is replaced by a narration which focuses on individual merits or sins.

It must be noted that the Old English translators were just as selective in the handling of their material as Orosius or Bede were. The omission of the papal letters, which served for Bede as the foundation of his authority (whether deliberate or not), support the same metanarrative as the small but significant additions to the text. Although OEHE at a cursory glance seems less biased than the original, we can see that the translators nevertheless remained prejudiced, if significantly less so. Both Bede and the Old English authors wished to bring home a message, predicating how the world ought to be viewed and describing what they thought to be the surest way to navigate the universe. Both texts interpret history morally, albeit not to the same extent,

---

[765] Rowley, *The Old English Version*, p. 46.

and on the basis of different sets of morals. These instances of Anglo-Saxon historiography are a far cry from the neutral, uncommitted, and uninterpretative Augustinian view. OEHE also takes the hierarchies of the world for granted and divinely sanctioned, if not exactly in the same vein as Bede did, depicting a social system which is at odds with Augustine's denial of the righteousness of any terrestrial power.

At the same time the fact that the Old English translators reworked their source text so freely is notable. Late Antique and medieval historiography was dominated by Eusebianism. For centuries to come, the basis of writing history was the paradigm that there is a humanely intelligible divine plan behind history, and thus the fall of Rome and the establishment of the Germanic successor states was not by mere chance, but foreordained by God. The partial divergence of OEHE from this tradition is significant in itself, but even more so when viewed together with the next subject of our discussion: the Old English translation of Orosius.

VI. The Old English Orosius

Description of the MSS

Unfortunately, the non-linguistic analysis of OEH is neglected area of study. Apart from the writings of Janet Bately and Dorothy Whitelock, most articles or books choose to treat one specific aspect, while ignoring the rest. Bately's 1980 edition is the first and only critical one,[766] and so far no all-encompassing analysis of OEH has appeared. This chapter does not attempt either to treat the text fully. I will concentrate on the particular metanarrative of universal and Roman history which appears in OEH, its concept of salvation, and the newly-developed Germanic and Christian supersessionism.

The provenance and physical description of the OEH MSS is set out by Bately.[767] The four principal MSS are (1) British Library, Additional 47967 (naming conventions of this MS vary: either Lauderdale or Tollemache manuscript); (2) British Library, Cotton Tiberus B. i.; (3) Bodleian Library, Eng. Hist. e. 49 (30481); and (4) the Vatican City, Reg. Lat. 497, f. 71 fragment. A number of manuscripts seem to have been lost to us, based on inventories and registries. OEH has been proven to have been known on the Continent, and influenced French historiography even in the 13th century.[768]

The Lauderdale MS, occasionally supplemented by Cotton Tiberius B, is the one most widely used combination in the editions of the text.[769] Lauderdale is the work of a single scribe, tentatively identified by Malcolm Parkes as also responsible for the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Parker MS.[770] Its paleography indicates that it originates from Winchester, but as Bately writes, 'nothing is known of this MS before its appearance in the library of the Duke of Lauderdale at the end of the seventeenth century.'[771] Manuscript Cotton Tiberius B, together with OEH, also contains the verse *Menologium*, the *Gnomic Verses*, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* C, and is

---

[766] Other, non-critical editions of the text (or various selections of it) are Henry Sweet's full edition (1883) and his extracts (1893); Hugo Schilling's *König Ælfred's angelsachsise Bearbeitung der Weltgeschihte des Orosius* (1886); Daines Barrington's edition and translation (1773); and Bosworth's *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of the Compendious History of the World by Orosius* (1869).

[767] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, pp. xxiii–xxxix

[768] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, pp. xxvii; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, '1214 – Literature and History in the Late Fedual Age', p. 78.

[769] This is the arrangement used by Sweet's *King Alfred's Orosius*

[770] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, p. xxiii.

[771] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, p. xxiv.

associated with Abingdon.[772] Written in four hands, of unknown origins, it was acquired in 1621 by Robert Cotton. Bately postulates further lost manuscripts,[773] but their existence remains hypothetical. The Lauderdale and the Cotton MSS are the only full copies of the translation, while the others are fragmentary. The Bodleian MS is merely two leaves, containing Chapters 3–5 and 7–9 of Book 3; while the Vatican City MS is only 26 lines from Book 4, Chapter 11, with approximately 13 lines missing from the end.[774]

Bately's edition is based on manuscripts Lauderdale and Cotton Tiberius B, whose dialectological analysis remains inconclusive, as they show a mixture of early and late West Saxon and Mercian (or possibly Northumbrian) lexical, morphological, and syntactical features.[775] The Lauderdale MS is dated by Ker to the 10th century, whereas the Cotton MS to the middle of the eleventh.[776] Thus the linguistic differences are substantial, with the Cotton manuscript being predominantly late West Saxon, with occasional idiosyncratic scribal practices. Based on these features, Bately concludes that the Lauderdale and Cotton manuscripts are those 'which quite possibly ultimately reflect the translator's own usage.'[777]

The texts are all based on Orosius' LH. However, as Bately also points out, the text of LH as established by Haverkamp,[778] or Zangemeister in *CSEL* vol. V cannot be viewed as completely accurate. There is some proof that the translator worked from an edition which differed from our current texts,[779] but these are mainly orthographical differences and/or mistakes, not influencing the structure or coherence of LH, making a detailed comparison of the two possible on the textual level.

---

[772] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, p. xlix.
[773] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, pp. xxvi–xxxi.
[774] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, pp. xxvi.
[775] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, pp. xxxix–xxx.
[776] Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, p. 165.
[777] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, p lv.
[778] Migne's *Patrologia Latina* vol. 31, 0663–1174B
[779] Bately, *The Old English Orosius*, p. lvi.

Translation strategies in OEH

There is a long history of dismissing OEH as a failed or unusually unintelligent work, botched by its translator who lacked even the most elementary grasp of Latin; and also there is a tendency to ignore most of the work and instead focus on arbitrarily interesting or valuable parts, such as the voyage of Wulfstan and Ohthere.[780] Such attitudes, however, do not do justice either to the work or to take into account its socio-cultural context. Sweet's 1883 edition, for example, highlights the 'lacunae' and insertions of the Old English translation by arranging the text on facing pages with its Latin 'original', making OEH appear as a mish-mash of passages. In my opinion it is a mistaken approach to treat OEH as a work inferior to its Latin 'original': neglecting the totality of the work (while favouring a few select passages), serves only to cloud our judgement and give us an altogether distorted picture of its author/translator and audience. Although the Old English translation is based on LH, its omissions, additions, and paraphrases stand apart from what can truly be evaluated as 'mistakes' or 'misunderstandings'.[781]

There is little chance that King Alfred himself executed the translation; nonetheless, it was done by someone familiar with and adhering to Alfred's aims and strategies of translation, possibly even at the behest of the king.[782] I will show that manipulation of the source text by the Anglo-Saxon translator is concordant with the three translation strategies characteristically employed by Alfred, and that their application is not random, but serves to create an almost completely new work. Most importantly, OEH never claims to be a translation. Were it not for the 'cwæþ Orosius' (said Orosius) insertions, it would be difficult to establish the source of

---

[780] Solely geographical considerations: Kemp Malone 'On King Alfred's Geographical Treatise' and 'King Alfred's North'; Laborde, 'King Alfred's System of Geographical Description in His Version of Orosius'; Linderski: 'Alfred the Great and the Tradition of Ancient Geography'; Whitaker, 'Ohthere's Account Reconsidered'; Stokoe, 'On Ohthere's Steorbord'. Only linguistic features: Kirkman, 'Proper Names in the Old English Orosius'; Davis: 'Alfred and Guthrum's Frontier'; Loyn: 'The Term Ealdorman in the Translations Prepared at the Time of King Alfred'. Minor episodes: Nearing: 'Local Caesar Traditions in Britain' and 'The Legend of Julius Caesar's British Conquest'; Tyler: 'Trojans in Anglo-Saxon England'. A further excellent example would be the attempts of Hungarian ethnologists to uncover details of the lifestyle of Finno-Ugric hunter-gatherer peoples, and thus learn something about Hungarians from the recountal of Ohthere.However, in concentrating solely on the more accessible parts of the text (it is rare to see anything but Book I translated), they miss the explicit references to Hungarians elsewhere in OEH: http://finnugor.elte.hu/tortenelem/Forrasok/orosius.htm. Depreciatory comments about the contents of OEH are unfortunately frequent among the above works.

[781] Such an obvious mistake would be the inconsistent use of the title *caser* (indiscriminately applied to any Roman ruler, whether of augustan or caesarian rank, after Iulius Caesar), e.g., 140/16 and 146/21; or the absolute confusion about the number of consuls, e.g., 50/12, 97/12, 99/19, 101/2–3, etc.

[782] Bately, *The Old English Orosius,* pp. lxxiii–lxxxi; Discenza, 'Alfredian Texts', p. 31.

OEH, since many of the omissions, as we shall see, concern the core material and/or arguments of LH. The omissions and additions construct a logic quite different from Orosius' original, essentially transforming the Old English text into a new book.[783]

The titles given to the late 19th–early 20th century editions of OEH hint at the 'real nature' of text as perceived by its editors: 'Anglo-Saxon version' and 'angelsachsische Bearbeitung' are perhaps the closest to what the text actually is. OEH is clearly not an abridgement,[784] and I do not agree with Bately's description of the text as a 'paraphrase.'[785] The editorial and translational policies which the author of OEH followed produced a text different enough to be treated as a separate work.

We do not know why the Old English scholar chose precisely this piece to translate, where there were other world *historiae* available: Jerome and Eusebius all featured in Anglo-Saxon libraries.[786] It has been suggested that OEH was to be a *historia* of Antiquity in the Alfredian programme, the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* picking up the thread of history where OEH ended.[787] This would, indeed, make either of the two aforementioned *historiae* unfitting: Eusebius charts history only until 323 or 324, whereas Jerome until 379. It is also possible that due to the Viking ravages these manuscripts had simply become unavailable. Furthermore, Orosius' work is, like that of Bede, in prose, which makes it a more ideal textbook than the simple lists (however comprehensive) provided by Eusebius and Jerome. As Hanning points out, these simple lists could not convey moral truth,[788] which, as we shall see, will be important.

The books 'þa þe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne' (that are most necessary for all men to know) according to Bately in 'The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign', were selected by the king on two grounds. Firstly, just as in the case of the *Old English*

---

[783] Compellingly, the same is very much the case with *Boethius*, in which, as Anne Payne describes it "Alfred understood Boethius well but knowingly rejected certain of his major premises and constructed a work in which he expressed his own beliefs on a Boethian skeleton" (quoted in McC. Gatch, 'King Alfred's version of Augustine's *Soliloquia*', p. 204).

[784] Luebering, *English Literature from the Old English Period through the Renaissance*, p. 31. Bosworth's 1869 edition writes: "omitting what he deemed of little importance" (p. vii), "the substance of the best books" (p. viii), "transfer the substance of it …; but in doing this, he often *imitated* rather than translated … abridged what appeared to him less important, and passed over what was not to his purpose" (p. 15).

[785] Bately, *The Old English Orosius,* p. xciii.

[786] Ogilvy, *Books Known to the English,* pp. 137 and 172.

[787] Harris, 'The Alfredian "World History" and Anglo-Saxon Identity', p. 482–510.

[788] Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 75.

Bede, they were to provide reading material for his subjects so that they may acquire *wisdōm* and *lār*. The texts were to demonstrate that unless the intended audience follows the 'wisdom of the ancients,' they shall be ruined. Secondly, these works had to conform to the tastes and needs of the Anglo-Saxons.[789] From these two notions, I will only deal with the first one. The way the Old English translator transformed Orosius' work clearly demonstrates what their priorities were. The text in many cases unambiguously states what effect it intends to reach with its audience, calling out to the reader in direct discourse. The toning down, systematic omissions, and rewritings of Orosius' moral passages are also clear indications of where the translator's sentiments lay. *Wisdōm* and *lār* are therefore clearly worded concepts in the Anglo-Saxon work.

Concerning the second notion, the tastes and needs of the Anglo-Saxons are, in my opinion, impossible for us to gauge. Any aesthetic or utilitarian principle that we might perceive in the course of an analysis need not reflect the *actual* needs and tastes of Alfred's fellow countrymen. The king's intention with the text could as readily have been to change these as to conform to them. None of the texts of the Alfredian corpus provide any insights into this, and the education proposed in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*' might employ either attitude, or their mixture. Although some insertions in OEH can be viewed as an effort to provide the target audience with interesting episodes, these instances are too rare to form the basis of any conclusion. For instance, the repeated *additional* descriptions of dividing armies into two or three troops[790] might conform to contemporary military practice,[791] but contrast sharply with the omission of such episodes as Orosius' description of the beast of battle feasting upon corpses, which in the extant corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature is a popular and ever-present topic. Assessing the Anglo-Saxon 'taste' thus is inconclusive. In any case, such an analysis also falls outside the scope of investigating the alternation of the historical metanarrative between LH and OEH. Therefore I will not attempt to analyse Bately's second 'condition'.

We can assume that OEH was created with the above goals and notions in mind. The questions, therefore, that I will be investigating will be the following ones: how does OEH impart *wisdōm* and *lār* in its very specific transformation as contrasted to its Latin original? What is OEH's concept of salvation? And how does this reflect the Anglo-Saxon perception of

---

[789] Bately 'Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign', pp. 9–14.
[790] For example, 44/31–34; 64/18–22; 94/13–17.
[791] Asser, *Annals of the Reign of King Alfred,* pp. 15, 16, 22.

past and historical metanarrative particular in its context, especially in comparison with the Old English translation of Bede?

Before presenting my analysis, however, it must be said that OEH presents little material to work with. The omissions of the translations are vast; only one fifth of the source text was retained, with the fifth and sixth books of LH drastically reduced, and presented in Book V of OEH. Orosius' detailed account of the conquest of Italy and Rome's wars with Carthage are laconically told with the barest minimum of information. This results in a changed narrative structure: whereas LH depicted human history as primarily *Roman* history after the foundation of Rome, OEH makes a spirited attempt in evening out the amount of information presented from around the world. Book I, as in Orosius, deals with geography, with the famous (and extensive) addition about the voyages of Wulfstan and Ohthere – an interpolation which already at the very beginning universalises the narrative. Like in LH, it also recounts the history of Assyria/Babylon from its foundation until its destruction, and episodes from Greek history; it does so in 14 chapters instead of Orosius' 21. Book II, 19 chapters in LH, is reduced to 8 in the Old English translation. It opens with Orosius' excursus on the Four Monarchies, tells the story of the early history of Rome until its Gallic siege, and the Persian War. Book III is reduced from 23 chapters to 11 (and with sizeable cuts within the chapters themselves: for example, Ch. 23 of LH consist of 68 paragraphs, while Ch. 11 of OEH of 15), describing the rise and fall of the Alexandrian Empire. The Fourth Book deletes Orosius' preface to the book, and tells the story of the Carthagian Wars (i.e., the story of the Third Monarchy), in 13 chapters instead of Orosius' 23. Book V, therefore, subsumes LH's Books 5 and 6, their 46 chapters summed up, with extensive cuts, in 15 chapters. Essentially the entirety of Book 5 is summed up in Chapter 2, with the pithy statement 'ic sceal eac nyde þara manegra gewinna geswigian þe on þam eastlandum gewordan, his me sceal aþreotan for Romana gewinnum' (I must of necessity pass over the many wars that took place in the east, and I shall grow weary of the Roman wars). Book V focuses on the exemplary character and deeds of Scipio, subsequently briefly recounting the Numantine war, and moving on the story of the ruination of the Republic, the dictatorships of Marius and Sulla, and the actions of Julius Caesar and Octavian. Finally, Book VI follows in its structure Orosius' Seventh Book quite closely, with 38 chapters for LH's 43. However, much material from the chapters (each dealing with an emperor or a closely connected group of emperors) is cut, as is, importantly, the entire narrative of the events *after* the Gothic siege of Rome. We shall see how these changes present an altered view of history,

and how the translators carefully recast the retained passages explaining Orosius' original metanarrative into something entirely different.

The Anglo-Saxon interpretation of Roman history

OEH subverts the grand structure of LH with the three Alfredian strategies. It tones down the vituperative and triumphant excursus, excludes the Orosian prophecies entirely, and inserts several passages which directly contradict Orosius' message. First of all, the translator carefully dismantles the Orosian image of Rome as the world's appointed saviour and the earthly manifestation of God's eternal realm – as we shall see, no mention of Rome's election is ever made in OEH. Secondly, the Orosian Roman self-depiction (wayward and contrary to the true faith, but nevertheless superior to all other nations) is repeatedly negated in OEH by newly-introduced descriptions of the Romans' cowardice. Thirdly, OEH nullifies Orosius' myth of hidden Christianity among the 'good' Roman emperors, modelled on Octavian. The translator removes all embellishments of the clearly pagan emperors, along with Orosius' assumption that their worldly prosperity was bound up with their secret Christianity. Instead, OEH carefully notes the failures of each emperor and the divine vengeance related to it. These punishments (sometimes exaggerated), however, are only mentioned when the emperors' sins are against the Christian community of the Empire, and otherwise they merit no comment. Orosius' Augustan archetype is further rendered non-existent by leaving out LH's careful notes of the emperors' sequence after Octavian.

Chronologically, the very first manipulation is the omission of the *Prologus* and the first chapter of Book 1. Although not directly bound up with either the geographical or the *historiae* parts of the work, these chapters state Orosius' manifesto in unmistakeable terms.

> Ista [religion] inlucescente, illam [death] constupuisse; illam concludi, cum ista iam praeualet; illam penitus nullam futuram, cum haec sola regnabit. […] dicturus igitur ab orbe condito usque ad urbem conditam, dehinc usque ad Caesaris principatum natiuitatemque Christi ex quo sub potestate urbis orbis mansit imperium, uel etiam usque ad dies nostros, in quantum ad cognitionem uocare suffecero, conflictationes generis humani et ueluti per diuersas partes ardentem malis mundum face cupiditatis incensum e specula ostentaturus necessarium reor.

(For when Religion spreads forth its light, death is confounded; death is imprisoned, when Religion is strong; indeed, in the profoundest sense death will not exist when Religion alone reigns . . . I shall, therefore, in as far as I am able to call events to mind, give an account of the quarrels of mankind from the foundation of the world to the foundation of the City, then move down to the rule of Caesar and the birth of Christ from which time all the globe has remained in the City's power, and then continue down to our own days, and in doing so will reveal, as if from a watchtower, the diverse parts of the world ablaze with evil after being fired with the torch of lust.)[792]

In late-ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England, barely surviving decades of conflicts and impoverishment, the untruth of Orosius' optimistic statements cannot have gone unperceived. The prophecy of Orosius that Rome will eventually unite the whole world in a theocratic *oikumene* came to naught. It was very obvious that even without Rome, the world was not tending toward a universal *pax Christiana*. The successful Viking invasion, even if checked for the moment and Guthrum baptised, could have raised serious questions about this. Orosius' teleological rhetoric, therefore, had to be scrapped. When it is retained, it is either marked with the *cwæþ Orosius* tag, or converted into direct discourse, marked by the text directly addressing the audience as 'you' or 'we.' These techniques serve to isolate these dictums from the rest of the text, and emphasise that they are Orosius' personal opinion. Nonetheless, the contents of these opinions are also greatly modified, characteristically toning down the sense of Roman election and glory, stressing instead the ineffable mercy of God not only towards Romans, but to all peoples. OEH brings into focus the decay of Rome, and the cowardice of its inhabitants. Notable examples are 1/16 and 30/24–31/21;[793] 2/2/6 and 37/22–38/30; 2/8–14 and 44/12–

---

[792] LH 1/preface/14–15.

[793] The translator questions the Romans' military might, and clearly pronounces that any measure of peace is and was achieved not as a result of Roman victories, but due to Christianity. The Goths, unlike the Amazons, harass the Romans no longer because of the grace of God. Orosius, on the other hand, praises Roman courage and the faith of the Romans ('Romana uirtute […] fide Romanorum') bringing about this change.

17;[794] 3/3/1–3 and 56/4-13;[795] 3/14/8–10 and 65/25–30;[796] 4/5/10–13 and 88/8–13.[797] (For the Old English passages and their translations, see Appendix A.)

LH describes history as a providential process of correction. Orosius, although keen on emphasising the evils present in the pre-Christian world, in order to make his logic work (with some difficulty, as in the case of Tiberius), must also stress the rewards God showers upon those who deserve it, such as Constantine. Indeed, as we have seen, LH's entire new Christian mythology rests on the *do ut des* rule. Orosius also claims that on some level all the good successors of Octavian were Christian – hence their and their subjects' success and prosperity. If only Rome were Christian enough, LH argues, she would experience unlimited power and serenity – indeed, the last enemy, Death would be destroyed. OEH, however, decidedly forgoes this system. The occasional comments preserved from Orosius (tagged again as 'cwæþ Orosius' or with direct addresses) state that Christianity has made the world a better place only in the sense that it is not as cruel as it used to be. The world's situation is neither good nor bad, not developing into LH's promised *civitias Dei* upon earth, and especially not due to Rome's special role. For example, in the closing section of the last chapter of Book 6, ushering in the last age with the birth of Christ, Orosius draws a careful parallel between Augustus and Christ: both are agents of salvation on their respective levels.

> [H]aec est prima illa clarissimaque professio, quae Caesarem omnium principem Romanosque rerum dominos singillatim cunctorum hominum edita adscriptione signauit, in qua se et ipse, qui cunctos homines fecit, inueniri hominem adscribique inter homines uoluit.

---

[794] LH (somewhat uncharacteristically) mentions that Roman citizens are concerned about the age and *possible* decay of Rome. In contrast, OEH stresses Rome's decay, and that the City is defended not by any might of arms, but simply by God because of its Christian inhabitants.

[795] LH depicts Arcadius and the Christian inhabitants of Constantinople as actively praying to God to avert the earthquake, which happens after some time. In contrast, the translator inserted a reference about prophecies concerning the destruction of the city, which simply did not happen. OEH also puts the arrogant Greeks and the humble Christians side by side, unlike Orosius, who draws no moral conclusion from the incident.

[796] LH simply contrasts the past and the present; OEH, on the other hand, confidently shames the Romans by stating that they are not as valiant as their elders, and love to hear about misery, but cannot endure it. A similar comparison is made by the translator in 67/3–10.

[797] Orosius cynically asks Romans about what shameful things their writers must have left out of their accounts, with educational intent. Contrariwise, the translator accuses the Romans of lying partly out of affection, but more importantly, for the fear of the Senate, suggesting that were they not cowards, the Romans would actually write and hear about such scandals.

(This census in which He Who made all men wished to be listed as a man numbered among man was the first and clearest statement which marked out Caesar as the lord of all and the Romans as the masters of the world, both individually and as a people.)[798]

However, in the OEH account, the census (partially misunderstood) is given an altogether new significance:

Sum wæs ærest þæt he bebead ofer ealne middangeard þæt ælc mægþ ymb geares ryne togædre come, þæt ælc mon þy gearor wiste hwær he gesibbe hæfde. Þæt tacnade þæt on his dagum sceolde beon geboren se se þe us ealle to anum mæggemote gelaþaþ; þæt bið on þæm toweardan life.

(The first [token] was that he commanded that throughout the *middle-earth* every *kindred* come together *for one year's duration*, so that everyone would know clearly where their kindred were. That *betokened* that in his lifetime one should be born who *leads* us all to a meeting on kindred, which will be in the life to come.)[799]

The most important difference is that the chronology of OEH is awry: LH explicitly states that Jesus was born during the census, whereas the translator writes 'on his dagum sceolde' (was to [be born] in his days), implying some unspecified *future* point during Octavian's lifetime. Moreover, it is not Augustus who leads mankind to universal unity, but Christ. Unity, *mæggemote*, is placed onto the transcendental plane, rather than any terrestrial empire. Orosius understands Augustus' achievements as conditionally sanctioned and augmented; to the already perfected mundane welfare God adds spiritual well-being: 'quando et Deus homo uideri et esse dignatus est' (God deemed it right to be seen as, and become, a man),[800] and 'quod penitus numquam ab orbe condito atque ab exordio generis humani in hunc modum ne Babylonio quidem uel Macedonico, ut non dicam minori cuiquam regno concessum fuit' (never since the beginning of the world or the human race had anyone been granted to do this, not even Babylon or Macedon, not to mention any of the lesser kingdoms).[801] LH also states 'cuius aduentui praedestinatam fuisse imperii Romani pacem' (the peace of the Roman

---

[798] LH 6/22/6

[799] OEH 131/7–11. The Modern English translations, unless noted with italics, follow the text as published by Malcolm R. Godden, in *The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius.* The sections with italics are my translations – alas, Godden paid little attention to either literal or dynamic equivalence in his rendering.

[800] LH 6/22/6.

[801] LH 6/22/7.

Empire was preordained for His [Christ's] coming).[802] OEH, however, construes the deeds of Octavian, as with the census, typologically: 'he bebead þæt eall moncynn ane sibbe hæfde 7 an gafol guldon. Þæt tacnade þæt we ealle sculon ænne geleafan habban 7 ænne willan godra weorca' (he commanded that the whole of mankind should have one and the same *peace* and pay the same tax. That *betokened* that we must all have the same faith and the same *will* for good deeds).[803] The same typological thinking is demonstrated in another passage:

> Þridde wæs þæt he bebead þæt ælc þara þe on elðeodignesse wære, come to his agnum earde & to his fæder oeþle, ge þeowe ge frige, & se þe þæt nolde, he bebead þæt mon þa ealle sloge; þara wæron vi m, þa hie gegaderad wæron. Þæt tacnade þæt us eallum is beboden þæt we sculon cuman of þisse worolde to ures fæder oeðle, þæt is heofonrice; & se þe þæt nele, he wyrþ aworpen & ofslagen.

> (The third [token] was that he commanded that everyone, whether slave or free man, who was in *foreign countries*, should return to his own *land and to his father's* native land, and whoever refused should be killed: there were 6,000 of them gathered together. That *betokened* that we are all required to pass from this world to our father's native land, that is to the kingdom of heaven; and whoever refuses will be cast out and slain.)[804]

In fact, the whole of Book 5, Chapter 14 of OEH is about typological interpretation: in 26 lines we have six instances of 'betokening.' A golden ring around the sun and a well of oil flowing on the day Augustus enters Rome is 'sweotole getacnad' (clearly betokened). Through the ring it is *getacnad* that during his reign will mankind's light be born, and the oil *getacnede* grace, *miltsunge,* for all mankind. Octavian himself made many *tacen* (signs, tokens) which later came to pass, although he 'unwitende dyde on Godes bisene' (did them unwittingly in figuration of God).[805] Also, in OEH it is not Augustus who creates universal peace (contrary to LH 6/22/6),[806] but 'þa wearð geboren se þe þa sibbe brohte eallre worolde, þæt is ure Dryhten Hælende Crist' (*Then* was born he who brought peace to the whole the world, our *Lord the Healing* Christ).[807] Furthermore, in LH Augustus 'domini appellationem ut homo declinauit'

---

[802] LH 7/1/11.
[803] OEH 131/12–14.
[804] OEH 131/15–21.
[805] OEH 130/25–131/6. See Appendix A.
[806] *igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam uerissimamque pacem ordinatione dei caesar conposuit.* (Now at that time, namely in the year when Caesar, through God's degree, had established the most secure and stable peace on earth.)
[807] OEH 132/15–16.

(rejected being called 'master' on the grounds that he was only a man),[808] enhancing, in Orosius' eyes, his alleged humility. On the other hand, the translator writes:

> Agustus þa eaðmetto wiþ God geheold þe he angunnen hæfde, þæt wæs þæt he fleah & forbead þæt hiene mon god hete, swa nan cyning nolde þe ær him wæs, ac woldon þæt mon to him gebæde & him ofrede.

> (Augustus preserved the humility towards God that he had started with: that is, he *declined* being called a god and refused to allow it, as no king before him was willing to do, *who on the contrary wanted to be prayed and sacrificed to*.)[809]

Continuing this, in Book 3, Chapter 5, OEH adds a small anecdote, which has no antecedent in the 'corresponding' chapter of LH, 3/8):

> Ac heo for þæm wæs þe Crist on þæm dahum geboren wæs, þe sibb is heofonwara & eorðwara. Þæt eac Octavianus sweotole getacnade, þa þa Romane him woldon ofrian swa heora gewuna wæs & sædon þæt sio sibb of his mihte wære; ac he ægðer fleah ge þa dæd ge þa sægene & eac self sæde seo dæd nis nære, ne eac beon ne mehte nanes eorðlices monnes, þætte ealre worolde swelce sibbe bringan mehte, þætte twa þeode ær habban ne mehton, ne, ðætte læsse wæs, twa gemægþa.

> (But it came about because Christ was born in those times, who is *the peace of the people of heaven and the people of earth*. *This was plainly betokened by Octavianus*, who, when the Romans wanted to make offerings to him, as their custom was and said that the peace was due to his power. He *shunned* both the *sacrifice* and the words, and he himself said that it was not his doing, and could not be due to any earthly person, to bring to the whole world such peace, which just two nations couldn't even achieve before, nor even two *tribes*.)[810]

The peace and the universal rule of the Roman Empire was therefore construed by the Old English translator merely as mirroring the peace of heavens, and not *vice versa*, as Orosius suggested. What is the wisdom to be gained from this different vision of history? LH, although virtually depriving men of free will, claims that God fits his designs to the conditions of human

---

[808] LH 6/22/4.
[809] OEH 133/30–134/2.
[810] OEH 59/20–27.

history. It is the peace of Augustus' rule which created the right conditions for the manifestation of God. Logically, had the peace come earlier or later, Christ would have been born appropriately. OEH, on the other hand, clearly states that the events leading up to the birth of Christ were merely *tokens*, foreshadowing what was to come entirely by God's discretion.

Significantly, the translation changes events during the reign of Augustus: in Chapter 13 the emperor closes Janus' doors. However, in Chapter 15 (in 736 AUC), a Hispanian rebellion forces Augustus to open the doors and wage war. Many nations gather against Octavian, and his generals stabilise the situation only after a long time and (perhaps understood negatively) without the emperor himself. Later, Augustus sends Varrus with three legions to Germania: all are slain, except for the consul, who is executed by the emperor. Finally the Germans seek peace of their own accord, and Augustus forgives them their hatred.

> Æfter þæm eall þeos worold geceas Agustuses frið & his sibbe; & eallum monnum nanuht swa god ne þuhte swa hie to his hyldo become, & þæt hie his underþeowas wurden: ne ferþan þætte ænigum folce his ægenu æ gelicade to healdenne, buton on þa wisan þe him Agustus bebead.

> (Then the whole world opted for the protection and peace of Augustus, and everyone thought that there was nothing so desireable as to come under his favor and be his subject. No nation wanted to keep its own law but rather to follow the model that Augustus laid down for them.)[811]

OEH depicts here, as elsewhere, the Romans either passively or on the defensive: universal peace in not achieved by aggressive expansion (which Orosius says is sanctioned by God), but through the cooperation of humankind – but most importantly the Germanic peoples. This joint effort is unprecedented: 'þa wurdon Ianes dura fæste betyned 7 his loca rustega, swa hie næfre ær wæron' (Then the doors of Janus were closed *firmly* and its locks rusted, as it had never before). This occurence adumbrates the unity of mankind *on þæm toweardan life* (in the world to come), and it is only *later* that Christ was born. There is a specific post-Roman, post-imperial, and post-Orosian moral here: progress is achieved not by force or violence, but peaceful coexistence. Contrasted to God's power and mercy all human power is insignificant. As the translator noted, Christ is *eaðmodegra help & ofermodigra fiell* (Christ is help for the humble

---

[811] OEH 1328/8–11.

and destruction for the arrogant).[812] In many cases the translator speaks disparagingly of the military strength of Rome, and states that while their former victories might have been attributable to their armed might,[813] since they have converted to Christianity all their war efforts resulted in no victory at all. This OEH connects, as we have seen, to both the decay of Roman power, and to the weakness of Romans themselves.[814]

OEH's depiction of a Roman Empire united by peace rather than by force is reiterated in the account of the dealings of the Goths with Rome. For example, in Book 1, Chapter 10, writing about the Amazons and their alleged conquest of the world,[815] OEH (following LH 1/16) compares the Amazonian invasion with that of the Goths, writing that after besieging Rome and killing but a few of its men,

> Nu lustlice sibbsumes friðes & sumne dæl landes æt eow biddende sindon, to þon þæt hie eow on fultume beon moten, & hit ær þiosan genog æmettig læg & genog weste, & ge his nane not ne hæfdon.

> (*Now* instead they are gladly seeking a tranquil peace from you and a bit of land, so that they can be of assistance to you, and the land hitherto has lain empty enough and uncultivated, and you had no use for it.)[816]

Concerning Theodosius (AD 347–395) and his policy of Goths, OEH writes: 'raþe þæs þe Gotan angeaton hu god Theodosius wæs, ægþer ge hie, ge ealle þa þeoda þe on Sciþþium wæron, gecuron his frið' (as soon as the Goths realised how good Theodosius was, both they and all the peoples who were in Scythia, chose his *peace*).[817] Peace achieved through amicable agreement is better, in the translator's opinion, than Orosius' peace by military conquest.

This view corrects the logic of LH. Whereas the Latin text is a positive reinforcement of military conquest, in the first chapter of Book 5 Orosius personifies the African, Italian, and Hispanian provinces, and makes them to tell of the misery suffered at the hands of their Roman

---

[812] OEH 56/10–11.
[813] OEH 102/34. See Appendix A.
[814] OEH 113/1–10. See Appendix A. This insertion has no antecedent at all in LH. The translator put words in Orosius' mouth which completely contradict the Hispanian priest's statements, for example 7/42, where he attributes the weakness of the Roman armies only to their dilution with pagan barbarians, and describes the victories of the purged legions in great detail.
[815] OEH 30/24–31/21.
[816] OEH 31/7–10.
[817] OEH 153/25–27.

conquerors, which subverts his own argument: 'I need not ask what the countless nations of divers peoples, previously long free, but then conquered in war, . . . scattered far apart into slavery, would have preferred for themselves at that time, what they thought of the Romans.'[818] Now Rome, were she not chosen by God, should suffer the same at the hands of the Goths, but instead they merely have to pay tribute which 'is the price of peace,'[819] and are 'born into, and grow old, in that peace of which they [Roman ancestors] had only a first taste after the rule of Caesar [Augustus] and the birth of Christ.'[820] Concerning this peace, OEH, characteristically, tones down Orosius' enthusiasm, and states that it is *uneaðe* (uneasily) bought and 'þæt wæs siþþan Crist geboren wæs þæt we wæron of ælcum þeowdome aliesde & of ælcum ege, gif we him fulgongan willaþ' (That came about after Christ was born, when we were released from all *slavery* and fear, if we are willing to follow Him.)[821] Peace, therefore, is secured only with difficulty either by money or arms: it is rather unity in faith that will bring together *all* peoples. The archenemies of the Romans, the Persians, too, prefer having Romans as their overlords to fighting; but even more importantly, all peoples are pleased by the prospect of being united under one rule:

> Æfter þæm þe Perse frið genaman wið Romanum siþþan gelicade eallum folcum þæt hie Romanum underþieded wære, & hiora æ to behealdanne & swa swiþe þone frið lufedon þæt him leofre wæs þæt hie Romanisce cyningas hæfden þonne of heora agnum cynne.

> (After that the Persians made peace with the Romans, all nations preferred to be subject to the Romans, and to observe their law, and they loved that peace so much that they would rather have Roman kings than peope from their own kindred.)[822]

This can be construed even as implying that other peoples, unlike Romans, *do* understand that peace springs from faith, not armed conquest, and that they also realise that it is the next world we should strive towards. The translator writes:

---

[818] 'non requiro de innumeris diuersarum gentium populis diu ante liberis, tunc bello uictis, patria abductis, pretio uenditis, seruitute dispersis, quid tunc sibi maluerint, quid de Romanis opinati sint, quid de temporibus iudicarint.'
[819] LH 5/1/11 'tributum pretium pacis est.'
[820] LH 5/1/12 'in otio autem, quod illi post imperium Caesaris natiuitatemque Christi tenuiter gustauerunt, nos nascimur et senescimus.'
[821] OEH 113/30–114/3.
[822] OEH 59/14–18.

[O]n þæm wæs sweotole getacnod þæt nan eorþlic man ne mehte swelce lufe & swelce sibbe ofer eallne middangeard gedon swelce þa wæs, ac heo for þæm wæs þe Crist on þæm dagum geboren wæs, þe sibb is heofonwara & eorðwara.

(From that it was clear that no earthly person could bring about such love and peace over the whole middle-earth as there was then, but it came about because Christ was born in those *days, who is the peace of the people of heaven and the people of earth.*)[823]

Contrary to Orosius' claim that Christ 'in ipso imperio Caesaris inluxisse' (shone [His] light on Caesar's realm,)[824] the translator claims that the Saviour came to bring peace to all of the world. Moreover, Rome was previously saved from certain catastrophes only so that through them others 'may come to Christianity and the true belief,'[825] and will eventually fade away, as indeed is already diminishing.

As we have seen, the Old English text subverts Orosius' ideology of Roman-centred history and Roman election with care, and follows its own, specific ideas about the *telos* of the turmoils of the world. Its ideology is very close to that of Augustine, who both in his sermon titled *De excidio urbis Romae*[826] and in *The City of God* argued that

the sack [of Rome] was not an utter disaster; everything earthly and human must perish, so that no pagan god can protect Rome for ever; yet even Christian Rome is earthy and perishable, for God sends or permits worldly disasters in order to encourage mankind to contemplate the eternal.[827]

OEH stresses human virtue in the face of adversity, and contrasts it with the cowardice and weakness of the Romans, thereby correcting LH's erroneous argumentation. Orosius had to falsify data and twist his account in order to make it seem that the Romans are invincible. By acknowledging that everyone may be defeated, and that it is at God's sole inscrutable discretion who the temporary winner shall be, OEH successfully tackles the pagan detractors' argumentation that the recent military disasters are the signs of Christ's weakness. Indeed, while 'Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos* shows how difficult Augustine's readers in Carthage

---

[823] OEH 59/18–21.
[824] LH 3/8/.
[825] OEH 103/30–104/8. See Appendix A.
[826] *CCL* 46.249–62.
[827] Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine,* XXIV, p. 72.

found it to credit his very explicit rejection of the prevailing assumption that right belief in God ensures felicity on earth,'[828] the Anglo-Saxon translator fully embraced this notion.[829] Augustine rejected that any polity could be perfect, or live up to the expectations of those holding Eusebian-Orosian views.[830] The state is no longer 'directly concerned with promoting the good life for its citizens or the highest values of morality and civilization,'[831] as these come from God alone, and are attainable through Christianity. The Old English translator and rewriter of LH fully adopted these notions.

The translator also struck out the old notion of Semitic historiography where rulers represent their peoples vicariously and their behaviour reflects that of the entire nation, for good or ill. As in the case of the Romans, Persians, Greeks, and the Goths, their kings can be good or bad, irrespective of the moral excellence or depravity of their subjects. Neither are the changes of fortune (whether they be natural catastrophes, personal disasters, wars, etc.) given an overly moral significance. Although God's anger and vengeance is referred to, as it is constantly tempered by mercy, the full picture shows them as tests: 'ægþær wæs swiðe gesiene, ge Godes wracu, þa he þæt folc costigan let, ge eft his mildsung, þa he hie fordon ne let, swa hit Gaius geþoht hæfde' (God's vengeance was evident here, when he allowed the people to be *tested*, and his *mercy*, when he did not allow them to be destroyed, as Gaius had intended).[832] Remarkably, in this passage it is not the Romans at all who suffer God's wrath, but fish die instead of them.

Similarly, OEH omits all instances where the Romans as a people suffer because of the persecution of the Christians.[833] In the translator's views, no-one should suffer because of another's deeds; free will is supreme, and each individual will be judged on their own merits. When any people or group suffers divine punishment, it is because its members committed

---

[828] Barnes *From Eusebius to Augustine*, XXIV, p. 75.

[829] For example, in a remarkable transformation of LH, OEH (148/25–29) claims that even though Galerius stopped the persecution of Christians, he nonetheless died of the sickness that God had previously caused as punishment. In LH, the emperor commits suicide: 7/28/13.

[830] Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* p. 423.

[831] Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine,* p. 425.

[832] OEH 136/8–11.

[833] The single instance where this *does* happen is OEH 144/12–18, the brief account of Gallus Hostilianus' reign, where the Romans are visited by a plague which relents after they cease the persecution of Christians. There, however, no sole instigator of the persecution is named by the text, and it can be understood that the Romans themselves collectively took actions against the Christians.

some atrocity together, or by common consent. Mercy, on the other hand, can be earned by a few individuals for the full group, provided that they are willing to repent.

This perception of free will as the single most powerful actor in history is completely irreconcilable with the mechanistic Eusebian-Orosian perception. In the (historical) works of both Antique authors truly voluntary human actions are almost non-existent. People are frequently irrationally stirred up to evil by demons posing as pagan gods,[834] and their submission to the demons automatically draws on God's terminal punishment. Eusebius and Orosius also left little choice to their fellows to actually repent, and in LH we never receive any explanation as to why anyone actually *converted*. Paganism and pagans equal evil, and consequently Christianity and Christians equal good. We have seen that in Orosius, those very few pagans who could actually be called good are claimed to have been (much like Rome) secretly chosen by God, or were actually Christians in their hearts. This implied Christianity is nowhere to be found in the Old English text, where individual merits are emphasised (or at least mentioned), even in the case of otherwise objectionable rulers.[835] The union of the Church and State, as envisioned by Eusebius[836] and advocated/exemplified by Orosius, which would have ensured the permanent goodness of the Empire, the destruction of death, and the foundation of the Last Kingdom is also completely lost in the Anglo-Saxon work. Indeed, the Roman state is slowly dismantled by the Germanic invaders, and it seems that the universality of the Faith is on the increase *as a result*.

While Orosius accuses the recalcitrant pagans by actually bringing divine wrath upon the community, OEH simply wishes to convince them that Christ's mercy is omnipresent and abundant. Indeed, it is actively being fulfilled whether the last few heathen Romans like it or not: salvation, as we shall see in the next chapter, is being wrought by God upon the face of the earth by diverse means.

---

[834] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, pp. 97–110. LH: 3/4/4–6; 4/6/4; 4/13/12; 4/21/6; 6/1/7.

[835] For example OEH 141/25–29: *Æfter þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wæs DCCCC <wintra> & XXX, feng Lucius Antonius to rice, & hit hæfde XIII ger. He wæs swiþe yfel monn ealra þeawa, buton þæt he wæs cene, & oft feaht anwig & fela þara senatorum he het ofslean þe þær betste wæron.* (930 years after the city of Rome was built, Lucius Antonius seized the kingdom, and had it for 13 years. He was very evil with all servants, but he was very brave, and often fought duels, and ordered that many of the best senators be slain.)

[836] Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 111.

Salvation history and OEH

The Old English translation of LH provides us with interesting answers to the three questions which define salvation.[837] As we have seen, OEH consistently subverts LH's explicitly Rome-oriented, materialistic concept of history, power, and destiny. The translation alters, omits, substitutes, or conspicuously marks the passages which construct the ideological framework of Orosius' narrative. Consequently, it is to be expected that salvation history, as depicted by LH, was not left untouched. However, as it was also shown, the translator was not content with simply dismantling LH's (failed) ideology and argumentation, but was instead building one of his own. Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the work of the Anglo-Saxon scholar, we must ask those three questions regarding salvation about OEH as well.

Before I begin the analysis, it must be noted that the vocabulary which OEH employs in this case is limited. From Bosworth-Toller's fourteen items for rendering 'salvation', 'freeing', and 'redemption' (or their verbal forms),[838] it employs only five: *alisedness* (verbal form: *alisan*),[839] *gener* (verbal form: *generian*),[840] *bycgan*,[841] *ahreddan*,[842] and *freogan.*[843] The general meaning of the first is 'release', and it is used in that sense throughout. *Gener* is used in the meaning of 'protection'. *Bycgan,* more generally 'to buy', is appropriately employed to describe the tribute Rome has to render to the Goths and thus secure their safety. *Ahreddan* means 'to save one's life' in both its occurences. The freeing of slaves is translated exclusively with *freogan*, and the verb is used only in this sense. It is lastly *alisan* which is the most clearly brought into connection with Christ's salvation, occurring in the *loci*. The two relevant passages read:

> Ac siþþan Crist geboren wæs, þe ealles middangeardes is sibb & frið, nales þæt an þæt men hie mehten aliesan mid feo of þeowdome, ac eac þeoda him betweonum buton þeowdome gesibbsume wæron.

---

[837] "Who will be saved, and from what predicament? How, and by whom? And what is the state of being saved?" *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, p. 1125.
[838] 'a-lísedness', '(ge)ner', 'bycgan', 'hæl', 'halor', 'hals', 'hálwendnes', 'freogan', and 'hredd-'
[839] OEH 28/28; 31/18; 37/18; 114/3.
[840] OEH 33/22; 48/18.
[841] OEH 83/5.
[842] OEH 1/9; 24/23.
[843] OEH 87/18–20; 102/2–7.

(But since Christ was born, who is the peace and tranquillity of all middle-earth, not only may men release themselves from slavery by wealth, but also peoples between themselves have been peaceful without slavery.)[844]

and

[Þ]æt wæs siþþan Crist geboren wæs þæt we wæron of ælcum þeowdome aliesde & of ælcum ege, gif we him fulgongan willaþ.

(That was since the birth of Christ that we would be loosened of all slavery and fear, if we are willing to follow him.) [845]

As we can see, the subjects in both sentences are *men* and *we*, indicating the totality of mankind, their predicament being servitude and war. In contrast to Roman exclusiveness, OEH states that anyone striving to follow Christ shall partake of the peace of this world and the next. While this supports what we have seen above, the *loci* are too few and disparate to enable us to draw any substantial conclusions from them.

Although the analysis of verbs offers little evidence, the study of two nouns frequently associated with salvation in OEH, *mildsung* and *mildheortness,*[846] yields much more results. Although *mildheortness* and *mildsung* cover the meaning of Latin *misericordia* and *clementia,*[847] curiously the Latin and the Old English words are used in the same sense at the same place only thrice in the entirety of both works. The first one is in the story of Alexander granting, as an empty act of 'mercy,' burial to Darius among his ancestors. However, the Old English, with some naiveté, does interpret it as an act of grace: 'he þa Alexander him anum deadum lytle mildheortnesse gedyde' (Alexander to him alone showed a little mercy).[848] LH only wryly remarks: 'hunc mortuum inani misericordia referri in sepulchra maiorum sepelirique praecepit' (in an empty gesture of pity, Alexander ordered that the dead king be taken to, and buried in, the tomb of his ancestors).[849] The second and third instances are when both Orosius and the translator refer to Tiberius and Constantius, as *mansuetissimus* (LH 7/47) or *summae mansuetudinis* (LH 7/25/15), and *milde* (OEH 134/13) or *se mildesta* (OEH 148/7) respectively.

---

[844] OEH 31/16–19.
[845] OEH 114/2–3.
[846] They are defined by Bosworth-Toller as "mercy, pity, compassion, a shewing of mercy, pardon, indulgence, clemency." http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/022894 and http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/022872.
[847] Ronald, *The Saxon Savior*, p. 86.
[848] OEH 70/11.
[849] LH 3/17/7.

This already indicates that OEH and LH employ very different concepts of mercy, but in order to appreciate just how vast the divergence is, a close reading of OEH's text is necessary. Furthermore, both nouns are conspicuously central in the translator's depiction of the Gothic siege of Rome in 410 AD, and their application stands in stark contrast with LH's concepts grace and mercy.

Mild- is in all cases connected to the idea of sympathy, leniency, or forgiveness.[850] The very first appearance of the expression is in the list of chapter headings: Book 6, Chapter 37 is titled 'Hu God gedyde Romanum his mildsunge' (how God effected his mercy/grace upon the Romans). On the next occasion, *mildelice* (an adjective) is used to describe Tenelaus, welcoming Danaus, exiled from his kingdom for his evil deeds, and giving him a second chance, repaid ill by Danaus. There are other cases of 'pardon', such as 87/17, where the Vulsinii and the Etruscans grant freedom to their slaves, or 135/26, which describes the Jewish embassy of Philo to Caligula, asking for forgiveness. The most important *loci* for the present discussion are those which, similarly to the chapter heading, concern God's mercy.

The first instance which refers to divine clemency is 38/10, a passage which compares the fate of the two cities of Babylon and Rome. The preceding sentences paint a picture of grace very different from that of Orosius: in 38/6–10 OEH writes:

> [H]it þeh God for heora cristendome ne geþafode, naþer ne for heora caseras ne for heora selfra, ac he nugiet ricsiende sindon ægþer ge mid hiera cristendome ge mid hiora anwalde ge mid hiera caserum.

> (God would not allow this [the near-betrayal of Rome by Attalus] because of their Christian faith, *not because of their caesars, not because of themselves. But they still are reigning with both their Christianity, their power and their caesars*.)

This passage explicitly denies that it is by any Roman 'specialness' that Rome survived, but rather by its faith, what is more, by its *constancy* in faith: *ge mid hiera cristendome*. Whereas Orosius bewails the unbelief of his fellow-citizens, OEH asserts that they are still strong in their faith. LH writes: 'illius clementiae esse, quod uiuimus, quod autem misere uiuimus, intemperantiae nostrae' ([we] might learn that it is through His clemency that we are

---

[850] OEH 8/10; 27/7; 38/10; 38/29; 39/16; 70/11; 82/26; 87/17; 128/4; 132/20; 131/4; 134/13; 134/20; 135/26; 136/8; 148/7; 156/12; and 156/14.

alive and that our life is wretched through our own excesses).[851] The two authors had diametrically opposing views on the nature of God's mercy. In Orosius' opinion, it is unconditionally given to Romans, who ungratefully abuse it. The Old English translator, however, consistently claims that God's mildness is due to Christianity: 'hwelc mildsung siþþan wæs, siþþan se cristendom wæs; & hu monigfeald wolbærnes ðære worulde ær þæm wæs' (what mercy there has been since Christianity exists, and how diverse pestilences there had been in the world before).[852]

It is to Christian faith again that peace is ascribed in the closing passages of Book V of the translation:

> Nu ic wille eac forþ gesecgan hwelc mildsung 7 hwelc geþwærness siþþan se cristendom wæs, gelicost þæm þe monna heortan awende wurden, for þon þe þa ærran þing agoldene wæron.

> (Now I want also to show what mercy and *peacefulness* there was after Christianity was established, as if people's hearts had been changed because the earlier sins had been paid for.)[853]

This is in stark contrast with Orosius' darksome closing words about persecution and vengeance.[854] Although in the Old English passage the chronological implications of this short passage cannot be ascertained (i.e., whether the change of heart happened first, or the establishment of peace), the connection here drawn between mercy, peace, and divine pardon reinforces the pattern consistently employed by OEH. *Alisan* and *mild-* together present a

---

[851] LH 2/3/5.

[852] OEH 38/11–13.

[853] OEH 132/19–23.

[854] LH 6/22/9–11: 'Quamobrem quia ad id temporis peruentum est, quo et Dominus Christus hunc mundum primum aduentu suo inlustrauit regnumque Caesari tranquillissimum dedit, hunc quoque sextum libellum hoc fine concluserim: ut germinantia tempora Christiana magisque inter reprimentum manus crescentia et quae adhuc in prouectu posita horum ipsorum, quibus haec respondere cogimur, insectatione mordentur, septimo libello, si tamen adiuuante Domino suffecero, conprehendam, ut, quoniam ab initio et peccare homines et puniri propter peccata non tacui, nunc quoque, quae persecutiones Christianorum actae sint et quae ultiones secutae sint, absque eo quod omnes ad peccandum generaliter proni sunt atque ideo singillatim corripiuntur, expediam.' (Now, therefore, as we have arrived at that time when the Lord Christ first enlightedned the world with His coming and gave Caesar a kingdom entirely at peace, I shall make this the end of my sixth book. In the seventh, if, with God's aid, I am equal to the task, I shall deal with the times the Christian faith germinated, the time when it grew all the more amid the hands of those who would have stopped it, and how, after having advanced to its present position, it is still gnawed at by the abuse of those against whom we are forced to make this reply. And since from the beginning of this work I have not passed over in silence the fact that men sin and are punished for those sins, now too I shall expound what persecutions were inflicted on Christians, what vengeance followed them, and from this that all men are are as a whole predisposed to sin and so are chastised individually.)

picture of OEH's salvation ideology which focuses on exoneration and release from sins (and from servitude to sin).

Orosius, in agreement with his Roman-centred ideology, sees the Romans (specifically, Roman Christians) set apart from the others by their destiny to rule the world. OEH, on the other hand, perceives the world as united by a common misery, faith, and salvation, which manifests itself in God's punishment and subsequent mercy upon sinful mankind, which is dependent on the believers' faith. This is confirmed by many of the *cwæð Orosius* statements, most strikingly for example in Book 2, Chapter 1:

> Ic wene, cwæð Orosius, þæt nan wis mon ne sie, buton he genoh geare wite þætte God þone ærestan monn ryhtne 7 godne gesceop 7 eal monncynn mid him. Ond for þon þe he þæt god forlet þe him geseald wæs, 7 wyrse geceas, hit God siþþan longsumlice wrecende wæs, ærest on him selfum, 7 siþþan on his bearnum gind ealne þisne middangeard mid monigfealdum brocum 7 gewinnum, ge eac þas eorþan, þe ealle cwice wyhta bi libbað, ealle hiere wæstmbæro he gelytlade. Nu we witan þæt ure Dryhten us gesceop; we witon eac þæt he ure reccend is, & us mid ryhtlicran lufan lufað þonne ænig mon.

> (*I believe, says Orosius, that there is no wise man who does not know well enough* that God created the first human being right and *good*, and all mankind through him. Because that man abandonded *the good* which was given to him and chose a worse course, God punished the offense over a long period, first against the man himself, and *afterwards against his children over all this middle-earth with many sufferings and wars*; *and even the earth, which enlivens all living things, was reduced in its fecundity.* Now we know that our Lord created us, we know also that he is our ruler and loves us more truly than any human being does.)[855]

This is an important rewriting of the corresponding passage in LH (2/1/1–3), which talks only about punishment and God's foreordainment of history, subsequently quickly turning to Rome's election to be the last empire. Orosius makes no mention of man's prelapsarian state at all. OEH, on the other hand, focuses on it, and contrasts it with the present and past miseries of life, and the promise of God's love, ensuring us in the following lines that He watches over

---

[855] OEH 35/28–36/7:

smaller kingdoms and powers as well as the four major ones.[856] The answer to question (1) concerning salvation, 'who needs to be saved, and from what predicament?'[857] can be answered thus: the entirety of mankind must be saved from continuous warring and servitude, which is the result of the original sin.

As the obverse of Orosius' vengeance-centred narrative, OEH displaces God's ire from the centre, and replaces it with grace. Significantly, from the 41 occurences of *wrec-* and its variants and derivatives,[858] only 15 refer to God's vengeance.[859] These instances of divine vengeance are exclusively concerned with arrogance: for instance, that of Sodom or Gomorrah, the Pharaoh, the Romans trying to propitiate their gods with human sacrifice, or the Senate vetoing Tiberius' recommendation of Christianity. Another manifestation of arrogance is the persecution of Christianity, which is avenged by God. However, all passages concerning persecution suggest that God immediately relented if the Romans ceased their sin; and in the case of Marcus Aurelianus, it is made verbally explicit:

> Æfter þæm him becom on þæt Deniscre gewinn mid eallum Germanium. Þa on þæm dæge þe hie gefeohtan sceoldon, him com on swa micel hæte 7 swa micel þurst þæt hie him heora feores ne wendan. Þa bædon hie þa cristnan men þæt hi heora an sume wisan gehulpen, 7 ongeaton þæt hit wæs Godes wracu. Þa abædon hie æt þæm ælmihtegum Gode þæt hit swa swiþe rinde þæt hie hæfdon wæter genog onufan þære dune 7 þæt þær wæs swa micæl þunor þæt he ofslog feala þusend monna gemong þæm gefeohte. Þa æfter þæm ealle Romane wurdon cristnum monnum swa holde þæt hie on monegum templum awriten þæt ælc cristen mon hæfde friþ 7 sibbe, 7 eac þæt ælc þara moste cristendome onfon se þe wolde.

> (After that they had the Danish war, involving all the peoples of Germania. On the day that they were due to join battle the Romans suffered such intense heat and thirst that they did not expect to survive. Then they asked the Christians to help them somehow,

---

[856] OEH 36/9–11 'Nu he þara læssena rica reccend is, hu micle swiþor wene we þæt he ofer þa maran sie, þe on swa unmetlican onwealdum ricsedon.'

[857] *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity,* p. 1125.

[858] For the full list of derivatives, see OEH, p. 405. The loci are the following: 23/5; 26/27; 29/22; 29/26; 31/29; 32/6; 35/4;36/1; 41/17; 46/27; 43/10; 44/36; 46/4; 54/31; 62/26; 73/26; 82/4; 88/1; 88/27; 90/16; 92/16; 98/15; 104/22; 114/21; 123/3; 134/7; 134/25; 134/29; 134/31; 135/22; 136/8; 141/14; 144/14; 144/16; 145/1; 148/25; 156/13.

[859] OEH 23/5; 26/27; 36/1; 88/1; 88/27; 98/15; 134/25; 134/29, 134/31; 135/22; 141/14; 144/14; 144/16; 145/1; 148/25; 156/13.

realizing that this was God's vengeance. So they prayed to the Almighty God and as a result it rained so much that they had ample water on top of the hill, and there came such fierce thunder that it killed many thousands of men in the midst of the battle. After that the Romans were all so favourable to the Christians that they wrote it up in many temples that every Christian should have protection and peace, and that everyone who wished could adopt Christianity.)[860]

God's vengeance therefore is contingent upon arrogance, but can be exonerated and thus averted. In the biblically established cases of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Pharaoh of Egypt, and the original sin the sufferers' fault lay in their incorrect exercise of free will; but God has given mankind a chance for redemption at least in the case of the Fall. In 88/23 and 98/15 LH follows Orosius' argument that God's vengeance did little to worsen the situation of the Romans who in their miserable plight (*not* due to divine ire) resorted to human sacrifice; it served rather as a warning (and a light one at that: in 98/15–20, God merely caused the Roman army to desert upon seeing a few thousand of their comrades die fighting the Gauls. Two years later, the Romans successfully killed and captured 300,000 Gauls.) Evil choices also motivate the Senate's resistence against Tiberius' introduction of Christianity, and the emperors' subsequent persecution thereof. It can be said, then, that God's vengeance in OEH is truly educational, not simply mechanical and arbitrary punishment. It is also less frequent than mercy.

The second question is 'by whom are they saved, and how?' Once more, the Anglo-Saxon reply is different from that of Orosius. It is through faith and good works, and not by any other human action that one reaches salvation. The OEH denies humanely intelligible historical determinism: God certainly possesses foreknowledge, but humans are unable to make sense of history, as His designs are hidden in his *diegelnessa* (mysteries or secret counsel). [861] Rome, although depicted as the most eminent of the four empires, differs from them not through her pre-election, but only on account of her belief and Christian kings who reform the Empire:

[H]iora anwalda endas wæron swiþe ungelice; for þon þe Babylonie mid monigfealdum unryhtum & firenlustum mid heora cyninge buton ælcre hreowe libbende wæran, þæt hie hit na gebetan noldan, ær þon hie God mid þæm mæstan bismere geeaðmedde, þa

---

[860] OEH 141/10–24.
[861] OEH 38/2.

he hie ægðres benam ge heora cyninges ge heora anwaldes; ac Romane mid hiora cristnan cyninge Gode þeowiende wæron, þætte he him for þæm ægþres geuþe, ge hiora cyninges ge heora anwaldes.[862]

(But the ways that their power came to an end were very unlike, *for the Babylonians lived in manifold unrighteousness and sin, without repentance, with their kings, and they wanted not amend [themselves]*, until God humbled them with the utmost disgrace, depriving *them their kings and powers*. But the Romans were serving God along with their Christian kings, *so He preserved them both: their kings and their powers*.)

Christian rulers in fact transform Rome from a tyrannical empire, subjugating and exploiting provinces without remorse,[863] into a Christian state irrespective of any nationality, as it will be discussed shortly. Rome will be saved not as Rome, ruling over the rest of the world, but as part of the supranational Christian community. Its terrestrial pre-eminence, impossible to maintain and crumbling with age, will inevitably fade away – it did fade away – and instead of its recovery, this new Christian *oikumene* will strive toward the world to come.

OEH's answer is manifold to the third question, 'what is the state of being saved?' As we have seen, the state of redemption is exoneration, forgiving of sins and thus being able to be at peace: 'nu ic wille eac forþ gesecgan hwelc mildsung 7 hwelc geþwærnes siþþan wæs siþþan se cristendom wæs, gelicost þæm þe monna heortan awende wurden, forþon þe þa ærran þing agoldene wæron' (Now I want also to show what mercy and *peacefulness* there was after Christianity was established, as if people's hearts had been changed because the earlier sins had been paid for).[864]

There is one particular aspect of the universality of salvation, however, which, if we wish to fully understand OEH's interpretation of *mildsung*, must also be analysed. It covers all three questions needed to define salvation. The Anglo-Saxon translator, in his amplification of salvation to include all peoples of the world allotted a special place and consideration to one of the barbarian peoples: the Goths.

A new *oikumene*: the special role of the Goths in OEH's metanarrative

---

[862] OEH 38/17–22.
[863] OEH 113/11–29.
[864] OEH 132/19–23.

As stated previously, one of the focal points of Orosius was the Gothic siege of Rome in 410 AD. His strategy against the event, which was perceived by contemporaries as catastrophic, was to play down its significance and the ravages it caused. In the course of the *historiae*, the siege is routinely compared to other calamites (the most significant being the Gallic siege of the City in 390 BC),[865] and found wanting in seriousness. The siege was 'magis illa urbis inruptio indignatione Dei acta quam hostis fortitudine probaretur' (brought about by God's displeasure rather than the enemy's valour),[866] and is reduced to a string of anecdotes about holy virgins and relics escorted by the Goths to the safety of the churches. After three days of this, the barbarians withdrew, God destroys the most famous buildings of the City for good measure, but life went on as ever. The trivialisation of the siege entailed that of the Gothic (and any other barbarian) threat as well. The Goths, are either ferocious tools of God, deprived utterly of free will, or cannon fodder in the Roman army,[867] only occasionally depicted as Christian humans, who will be subject to the Romans in the new Christian *oikuemene*.

OEH, however, gives a special significance to Goths, far beyond their role as Orosius' punching bag. They are given a prominent place in Book 1, Chapter 10, where they are described as 'þe him fore andredan ge Pirrus se reþa creca cyning, ge se mæra Alexander, ge Iulius se casere' (whom Pyrrhus the fierce king of the Greeks, *nor* Alexander, *or* Iulius the mighty *Caesar* were afraid to meet in battle). [868] This establishes the Goths as a remarkable people, on par with the greatest rulers (and their armies) in history. Their appearance is always connected to something remarkable in OEH, and they are consistently depicted in a better light than in the Latin original. For example, Alaric is called the Romans' *ealdormon*, instead of Attalus as in the original text. Attalus conspired to seize the rule of Rome (with Alaric's support), but was unsuccessful. OEH, however, subsumes Attalus and Alaric in this instance into one character, who 'hiere onwaldes hie beniman woldon, 7 heo hwæðere onwealg on hiere onwalde þurhwunade' (wanted to take its power from [Rome], *and* it remained undiminished in power after that).[869] It would be difficult to entirely delete in this particular passage (the comparison of the fates of Babylon and Rome) the Gothic involvement in the hardships of Rome, but the translator attempts to smuggle in a little vindication: if Alaric was indeed Rome's

---

[865] LH 2/19.
[866] LH 7/39/2.
[867] LH 7/35/19 "And so the civil war was ended by the deaths of these two men, apart from the 10,0000 Goths who, it is said were Theodosius's advance guard and were completely wiped out by Arbogastes. But to lose them was a gain and their defeat was a victory."
[868] OEH 31/26–7.
[869] OEH 37/34–38/2

alderman, he might not have been entirely wrong in his attempt to seize power; indeed, it ought to have been Rome's lot, had God not taken mercy on the City. The almost verbatim reiteration of Alaric being 'hiere agen ealdormonn 7 Gotona cyning' ([the Romans'] own governor and king of the Goths) two lines later, and that statement that God did not allow the coup to transpire solely because of the Romans' faith further supports this interpretation.[870]

Furthermore, OEH suppresses in this locus Orosius' reference to the siege of 410 AD and the tribute Rome has to pay to Goths, further improving the Goths' depiction in this particular passage. A similar reworking of the actual narrative as presented by LH is also discernible in the last chapter of Book 2, in the account of the Gallic siege of 390 BC, which, as we have seen, is closely connected by Orosius to the events of 410. Recounting the story gives Orosius opportunity to present a list-like elaboration and comparison of the destruction caused by Gauls and Goths. LH describes the burning of the City by the Goths, and concludes that it was practically non-existent when compared with the total ruination of Rome by the Gauls,[871] even going as far as saying that during the Gothic siege

[Q]uippe cum supra humanas uires esset, incendere aeneas trabes et subruere magnarum moles structurarum, ictu fulminum forum cum imaginibus uanis, quae superstitione miserabili uel deum uel hominem mentiuntur, abiectum est, horumque omnium abominamentorum, quod inmissa per hostem flamma non adiit, missus e caelo ignis euertit.

(God was more enraged than the men involved, for He Himself carried out what the Goths could not have done … for since it is beyond human powers to burn up bronze beams and overturn the mass of great edifices, the forum with its empty idols … was cast down by a thunderbolt, and all those abominations which the enemy's fire did not reach were overturned by fire sent from heaven.)[872]

The Anglo-Saxon translator, however, hijacking again the logic of Orosius, expressly writes that the Goths 'þurh Godes ege þæt hie naþer ne þa burg ne bærndon . . . ac swiþor micle wæron wilniende þæt hie gemong him mid sibbe sittan mosten' (out of *their fear* of God neither

---

[870] OEH 38/4–9.
[871] LH 2/19/12ff.
[872] LH 2/19/15.

burnt [the City] … but much preferred to be able to *settle down* among them in peace).[873] He therefore transposes the attempted destruction of the forum from the Goths to the *Gauls*:

> Ðær wæs gesiene Godes irre, þa hiora ærenan beamas 7 hiora anlicnessa, þa hie ne mehton from Galliscum fyre forbærnede weorþan; ac hi hefenisc fyr æt ðæm ilcan cyrre forbærnde.
>
> (God's anger was visible when their bronze beams and statues which could not be destoryed by Gaulish fire, were destroyed *at that same time consumed* by fire from heaven.)[874]

The Goths are consistently given a better reputation by the translator, one of a fierce but restrained people, who throughout the work are depicted as yearning for peace, salvation, and unproblematic co-existence with the Romans. They, however, deny these from the 'barbarians,' even to the extent of purposefully sending heretics to mislead them.[875] But the Goths cannot be deceived: although Valens makes a belated attempt to recall the Arian bishops,[876] they attack the emperor and burn him in a house: 'þær wæs swiþe ryht dom geendad þæt hie þone woroldlice forbærndon þe hie þohte bærnan on ecnesse' (that was a very just judgement, that the Goths burned to death in this world *him* who intended them to burn in eternity) [877] The Goths execute their own justice here, which stands in stark opposition to Orosius' interpretation of the events, where the Goths are mere tools of Divine Wrath, unwittingly executing God's punishment.

The history of the travails of the Goths is continued in Chapter 37. The translator renders Orosius' verbose account of the troubles after Arcadius' and Honorius' accession in a brief episode, which again concentrates on the relationship of Goths and Romans, to the exclusion

---

[873] OEH 52/29–33.

[874] OEH 52/34–53/3. Additionally, the translator removed a point of pride from the Orosian narrative. LH states that it was *humanely* impossible to overturn what Roman hands had erected, and divine might was necessary for their destruction. OEH, on the other hand, notes that it was the *Gallic* fire which was too weak to burn the buildings.

[875] OEH 152/27–153/12. See Appendix A.

[876] If this is indeed what OEH 153/12–13 refers to: 'het þeh sendon æfter, þær he ænigne libbendne wiste, þeh he þæt to late dyde & him siþþan het gearian' (but he sent for them wherever he knew any to be still living, though he did it *late* and ordered them henceforth to be honoured). This extremely convoluted passage is taken by Bately to be an attempt to translate LH 7/33/12 'sera peccati maximi paenitentia stimulatus episcopos ceterosque sanctos reuocari de exiliis imperauit' (he finally felt the need to repent for his great sins and ordered that the bishops and all of the rest of the saints be recalled from exile). It does indeed seem to be an approximation of it, but if so, the translator badly misunderstood the Latin text, making its meaning quite tangential to the original sense.

[877] OEH 153/16–17.

of the attempted coup of Gildo and Mascezil, the wars with Alans, Huns, Sueves and Vandals, and the confusion of Roman politics. The guardianship of Rufinus and Stilicho over Arcadius and Honorius is stated, leading to Stilicho's plotting to seize the throne. OEH, however, adds extra bits of information not found in LH: Stilicho crosses the Alps and *for þæm feondscipe* (because of the hostile intention)[878] allows the Goths in Italy. The motivation behind this was apparently that he thought that the Goths would quickly overcome the Romans, and afterwards would do as he wished. Stilicho's plans come to naught. In the next paragraph, OEH seems to posit a causal but unexplained relationship between Stilicho's deeds and the fact that Alaric became Christian and Radagaisus remained pagan. Radagaisus' depiction is wholly deprecative: the translator adds that he 'dæghwamlice wæs blotende diofolgildum mid monslihtum, 7 simle him wæs leofast þæt þa wæron Romanisce' (sacrificed daily to his pagan gods with slaughtered humans, and he always preferred those to be Romans).[879] The brief record of events presented here is extremely garbled and bears no resemblance to the account of Orosius. In LH, Radagaisus with his army of 200,000 Goths is hunted into the mountains around Fiesole, to be starved until they yielded. This is only alluded to in the Anglo-Saxon text, which instead concentrates on the behaviour of the Romans. Orosius makes Radagaisus into an example of what happens to heathens; OEH, on the other hand, chides the Romans for considering the re-establishment of paganism because of their fear of Radagaisus. The text actually writes that because of this, and Radagaisus' sacrificing

> [G]e sædon þæt þa hæðnan tida wæron beteran þonne þa cristnan, 7 eac þæt eow selfum wære betere þæt ge eowerne cristendom forleten, 7 to þæm hæðeniscan þeawum fenge, þe eowre ieldran ær beeodon.
>
> (you [the Romans] *said* that the heathen times were better than the Christian ones, and also that you would be better off to abandon your Christian faith and take up the heathen ways which your ancestors practiced.)[880]

OEH pictures the Romans considering as apostasy because of the fear and, more importantly, the *example* of Radagaisus. It was not wholly out of terror that some Romans were tempted: Radagaisus' apparent success is stressed by the translator, and contrasted with his subsequent downfall. The Romans are presented here in a doubly negative light: they are a double-dealing,

---

[878] OEH 155/22.
[879] OEH 155/27–29.
[880] OEH 156/4–6.

treacherous folk, who try to cheat their allies(?), and who change their beliefs according to which seems to be the most auspicious. This is especially striking the light of how OEH describes Roman military power and the empire as decaying with age.

The Goths, however, are again depicted in a much better manner than in the Latin text. Alaric becomes Christian, and Radagaisus the pagan with his host of 200,000 is made captive. Contrariwise, in the Latin text, although it is God (*diuinitus*)[881] who drives Radagaisus into the mountains, it is the Roman army which beleaguers the Gothic host, eventually driving them into starvation and submission. In OEH we read of no army, but simply that 'ge hiene gebundenne hæfdon, & hiene siþþan atugon swa swa ge woldon, & ealne his fultum. Þæt wæs, swa swa ge selfe sædon, II C M, swa eower nan ne wearð gewundod' (you have made him captive and dragged him afterward wherever you wanted, and all his force; that was, as you yourselves aid, two hundred thousand).[882] The Anglo-Saxon version also suppresses the consequence of the shameful fate of Radagaisus' army: whereas Orosius states that there were so many Gothic prisoners that everywhere herds of men were bought for a single gold coin, just like the poorest sort of cattle; this is simply omitted in the translation.[883] That this most demeaning statement was left out is consistent with OEH's strategy of the Goths' depiction as a dignified and valiant people. Nor does the text specify the nationality of Radagaisus' *fultum* (aid) making it possible to accept the broader interpretation of the word as 'allies', instead of simply 'army'. The pagan prince, tempting and threatening Rome at the same time, is placed into sharp contrast with the Christianity of Alaric, whose full glory, and the consistent and progressive promotion of Goths as the agents and objects of mercy in OEH culminates in the very last chapter, the centrepiece of the work. But more importantly, while in the Latin version God mobilises massive forces, including the Huns, *precisely* to show forth the glory of Christianity and the Roman military and to avoid *any* doubt awakening in the Christian Romans about the correctness of their metanarrative, in OEH this simply does not happen. God does not intervene; the resolution of the conflict between Radagaisus and the Romans is not described; and the Christian Romans are seriously tempted to apostasy by Radagaisus' example.

---

[881] LH 7/37/13.
[882] OEH 156/8–10.
[883] LH 7/37/16 'tanta uero multitudo captiuorum Gothorum fuisse fertur, ut uilissimorum pecudum modo singulis aureis passim greges hominum uenderentur.'

The heading of Book 6, Chapter 39 is 'Hu God gedyde Romanum his mildsunge' (How God *effected* his mercy *upon* the Romans).[884] It is well worth quoting this chapter in its entirety:

> Æfter þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wæs M wintra 7 C 7 IIII 7 siextegum, God gedyde his miltsunge on Romanum, þa þa he hiora misdæda wrecan let, þæt hit þeh dyde Alrica se cristena cyning 7 se mildesta. 7 he mid swa lytle niþe abræc Romeburg, þæt he bebead þæt mon nænne mon ne sloge, 7 eac þæt man nanuht ne wanade ne ne yfelade þæs þe on þæm ciricum wære. 7 sona þæs on þæm þriddan dæge hie aforan ut of þære byrig hiora agnum willan, swa þær ne wearð nan hus hiora willum forbærned. Þær genom Hettulf, Alrican mæg, Onorius swostor þæs cyninges, 7 siþþan wið hine geþingade, 7 hi him to wife nam. Siþþan sæton þa Gotan þær on lande, sume be þæs caseres willan, sume his unwillan; sume hi foron on Ispanie, 7 þær gesæton, sume on Affrice.

> (1164 years after *the city of* Rome was built, God *effected* his mercy upon the Romans, *namely* he allowed their misdeeds to be *avenged*, *but* it was done by Alaric, the *most merciful and* Christian king. He took *the city of* Rome with so little violence that he gave orders that none should be killed, and that none *should injure or harm those who were* in the churches. A*nd shortly* on the third day they left the city of their own will, leaving not a house deliberately burned. *Then* Alaric's *nephew*, *Hettulf*, took possession of sister of Honorius the king, and afterwards negotiated with him, and married her. *Since then* the Goths settled in that land, some *by the emperor's will*, some against his will; some went to Spain, and settled there, and some to Africa.)[885]

These are the closing words of the translation as well, giving it an especial significance.[886] As the description of the sack of Rome is missing (which, at any rate, in LH is a mere assembly of episodes), and OEH's account of the event states that no fighting, looting, or destruction took place, God's mercy apparently consisted of the Goths finally reaching Rome and capturing it. This is reinforced by the careful wording of the following incidents. Honorius is called *cyning* instead of *caser*, demoting him to be on par with Alaric, who is nevertheless bolstered as *the* Christian and most merciful king, qualities which Honorius apparently does not possess. Although we are (at another *locus*) assured that the Roman caesars (presumably

---

[884] The chapter headings are entirely an innovation of the Anglo-Saxon text; I am tempted to think that they were added following the model of the *Old English Bede*.

[885] OEH 156/11–23.

[886] Orosius describes in several chapters the events up until 416.

meaning Honorius) still possess power,[887] this power is here shared involuntarily with the Goths. Although the Goths are rather willing to share *their* power with the Romans – they have repeatedly helped the Empire, asked politely for lands and Catholic baptism, and even now would not marry a Roman princess against the will of the family – this does not apply to the Romans. They are not even willing to see that the siege, and Alaric's subsequent withdrawal was, in fact, a *mildsung*.[888]

This is where the special Gothic history of OEH becomes intermingled with its unique salvation history. The key word, as said before, is *mild* and *mildsung*. It is because the cataclysmic event of 410 is reinterpreted as a *fulfilment* of God's *mildsung* that the concepts of mercy, grace, and forgiveness it denotes are applied to the Goths in the central-final chapter of the translation. The ennoblement of mankind, both through typological prefigurations of God's mercy and the very real peace is here, at a stroke, breaking into reality and radically transforming it, *against the will of the Romans*. We have also seen that the promise of Christian *oikumene* is, in OEH, not a result of the election and perfection of Rome and her Empire, but rather of all nations gathering in the faith, in expectation of eternal life. It is especially significant in light of this that the last chapters of OEH consistently reiterate the theme of the gross negligence of the Romans in refusing to spread Christianity, and their deliberate malice in promoting heresies instead. This treatment casts the Romans in a light unfamiliar and altogether unexpected: as nay-sayers to progress (in a specifically spiritual sense) and Christian love, usurpers of the Faith, whereas Orosius' ferocious and recalcitrant Goths become the catalysts of change, and the fulfilment of God's *miltsung*.

What we see here is, not altogether surprisingly, a version of Germanic supersessionism, and an extreme one at that. Goths become, seemingly, the representatives of all Gentiles saving Rome.[889] As Israel was superseded by Rome, so Rome will be superseded by the Germanic nations. To claim, however, that Rome was actively trying to stop, or at least hinder, this supersession, is novel, and it draws a fascinating parallel with Bede's treatment of Celtic natives of England, and the charges of Pelagianism he makes. Although the translator did not go as far

---

[887] OEH 38/6–10

[888] OEH 37/22–24 and 38/38/10–13.

[889] The Goths also are by far the most frequently mentioned enemy of the Christian Romans: in the entire work, they are named 21 times, whereas other arch-enemies, such as the Persians and mentioned as fighting against Rome only six times. Their frequent mentions (1/10; 1/26; 13/10; 30/33; 31/4; 37/33; 38/2; 52/23; 52/28; 52/34; 77/4; 145/7; 145/16; 145/23; 151/27–28; 153/5; 153/14; 153/25; 154/30; 155/21–24) in nine clusters also show the Goths' importance, contrasted to for example the Puns, who, although according to Orosius were the most dangerous foe of the Romans, are mentioned by OEH only in the fourth book.

as Bede did in singling out either the English or the Goths as a chosen nation, his rhetoric is explicitly counter-Orosian and, to a certain extent, anti-Roman as well. Possibly, the Anglo-Saxon author recognised Orosius' faulty logic or simply realised that after the fall of the Western Roman Empire any such discourse could not be in any way justified. The negation of a world empire headed by Rome was obvious in the face of contemporary, late 9th or early 10th century, Christian *oikumene* in which Rome was simply *primus inter pares*.

Conclusions about OEH's historical metanarrative

As the Roman idea of *salus* and Orosius' imaginary *oikumene* withered away with the Western Roman Empire, slowly a very much transformed, specifically Christian and Germanic salvation ideology and history took its place in some of the successor states, and occasionally in the 'national' churches as well.[890] This 'school' of historiography was an organic development on Roman ideology, and indeed, as we have seen with Bede, the authors saw themselves as following the footsteps of the Classical writers and the Fathers.[891] Much of what they wrote was based on classical sources, but the various Christian perceptions of history, state, and salvation were formative influences upon the new works. Boundaries between *Romanitas* and 'barbarism' became blurred, and 'barbarian' eventually came to mean 'heathen': instead of a cultural or national distinction, a religious contrast was the point of departure.[892] In some cases, as for example with Isidore of Seville, the roles even become reversed. The Romans are 'closely associated with paganism and heresy,' whereas the Goths are inheritors of the Christian kingdom.[893] Remarkably, this coincides with the Carolingians' and the Anglo-Saxons' discovery/fabrication of their Gothic roots, as evidenced by the introduction of Geat in royal genealogies, and as the consistent translation of Bede's *Iuti* as *Geatas* shows.[894] In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Alfred is claimed to have descended from this Geat via mythical ancestors shared by other Germanic nations: Scyld, Scef, Beaw, and Heremod.[895]

---

[890] Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', p. 40; Pizarro, 'Ethnic and national history ca. 500–1000', pp. 57–62. Notable, but also isolated, examples on the Continent are Frechulf, Isidore of Seville and Fredegar.
[891] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History,* pp. 3–19.
[892] Jones, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe' 387–88.
[893] Pizarro, 'Ethnic and national history ca. 500–1000', p. 58.
[894] Frank, 'Germanic Legend in Old English Literature', pp. 88–89.
[895] Manuscript A and B, 855 AD.

This new historiographical 'school' resulted in the emergence of a novel form of Christian supersessionism: each particular 'nation' viewed itself as a new heir of Old Testament Israel, the gentile vessel of the New Covenant promised by Christ and the apostles.[896] As I have demonstrated, this is tangible in HEGA,[897] and it is especially obvious in the case of OEH.

The radical transformation of LH's salvation history implies an enormous shift in the perception of history (at least in the Alfredian coterie) between the writing of Orosius' *historiarum* and their 'translation.' The changes in theology and the perception of free will lead to a reinterpretation of history wholly distinct from the Eusebian model, with a clear predilection towards a more Augustinian form of understanding. As we have seen, OEH no longer boasts, as Eusebius and Orosius did, of having knowledge of God's will and his plans, shifting its narrative to a typological model instead of a providential one. That is not to say in any sense that the translator would have denied God's active agency in human salvation history, as numerous passages in the translation attest.[898] Rather, instead of attempting to interrogate the inscrutable causation of historical events, this historiographical ideology concentrates on the only secure things in a Christian's life: God's love for penitent sinners, and the promise of eternal life for the ones steadfast in their faith.

Together the deconstruction of Roman history and the creation of a new, Germanic salvation ideology demonstrate a new development in Anglo-Saxon historiography. It is also something exceedingly rare (although not unprecedented) in Continental history-writing. As we have seen, the Bedan metanarrative was founded on a particular form of Christian successionism: he depicted the native Christian Celts as heretics, unworthy of the love and election of God, occasionally even rejoicing over their slaughter; whereas the Anglo-Saxon are the new Chosen People, with a special Covenant from Christ. Bede, however, was staunchly

---

[896] At the incident of healing the servant of the Capernaum centurion, Matthew 8. 5–13 (especially 'Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'); and Luke 7. 1–9. See also Romans 9. 6–8: 'For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants; but "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants.'; Philippians 3. 2–3 'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,'; and Romans 3. 21–28; Ephesians 3. 6; Galatians 6. 16, etc.

[897] Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede', pp. 216–19; Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum', pp. 20–24.

[898] OEH 36/5; 37/22ff.; 38/10ff; 44/10ff; 103/30ff; etc.

Rome-oriented, and nothing would have been further from him than claiming that the Germanic peoples are in any way superior to Rome. Contrariwise, Isidore of Seville and Fredegar have evinced despise and antagonism towards the former Empire.[899] The Old English translation of LH is difficult to reconcile with both 'schools': it does not preach the superiority of any nation (unlike Bede and Isidore), and follows a very specific agenda both in its recountal of the events of the world and in the morality it teaches (unlike Fredegar, whose work is episodic and fragmented).[900] In this sense, the closest kindred of OEH is the Anglo-Saxon translation of Bede. As discussed above, OEHE, while maintaining Bede's pro-English outlook, at the same time removes the Northumbrian priest's obsession with the ostensible heresy of the Celts and his constant reference to Roman authority. Thus, Anglo-Saxon election was presented by OEHE not as replacing those of the Celts, but simply as a special grace of God to invite the Anglo-Saxons into the community of the Catholic Church. Much like OEH with the Romans, the translator of Bede condemned the Celts on other grounds: due to their weakness, cowardice and hedonism. In contrast, both Anglo-Saxon authors acknowledged the roles both the Celts and the Romans had in the conversion of the Germanic invaders. Overall, in both Old English translations we see a less grand, more down-to-earth account and picture presented of history and salvation than in their original counterparts.

OEH, however, operates not only with omission, as OEHE does, but reworks the Latin text on a much more substantial level. It supplanted Orosius' teleological framework with one of its own, at the same time removing large amounts of data irrelevant to its argumentation. By depicting the Goths as Christians and God's voluntary agents in bringing about truly *universal* peace (through the destruction of the armed might of Rome), the translator broadened the scope of salvation to include all humans ready to follow Christ. OEH focuses on all of *þisses middangeard* (this middle-earth), and not just England, or one particular *gens*. This is a radically new development compared to Bede, Isidore or Fredegar. OEH in its novel Augustinian vision of universal history and salvation, and its careful structuring of information marks a departure from its precursors and the contemporary historiographical schools, which still followed the Eusebian model, albeit with changed actors and roles.

Where does this lead us about the dynamic equivalence – or, as it is clear now, dynamic difference of the translation and the original? OEH certainly does offer the same information

---

[899] See footnote 119.
[900] Pizarro 'Ethnic and national history ca. 500–1000 ', p. 62.

content as Orosius did, even if only a carefully chosen selection of it. The translators even added some of their own explanations for concepts and events, such as the functioning of the Doors of Janus,[901] the machinations of Egyptian wizards,[902] identification of ancient peoples with modern ones,[903] and so forth. Even while taking into account the many mistakes and botched translations,[904] the informative function of LH was preserved in the translation, even expanded upon – the translator certainly valued factual data, and viewed such knowledge as part of the *lar* that the Alfredian programme sought to transmit.

It is difficult to gauge whether the expressive function of the Latin original was retained, as we are not in possession of an Anglo-Saxon theory of aesthetics. What can be qualified, for instance, is the utter disappearance of Orosius' manifold citations of Roman poets; it seems that the translator did not understand or considered these important. At the same time, the additions which formulate the metanarrative of OEH are, as far as modern readers may judge this, smooth and energetic texts, which do not stand out in any way from the rest of the translation. The poetic effect, I would argue, manifests itself rather in the manner the translator sought to substitute familiar Old English terms to Latin/Roman concepts: thus, for example, Hercules becomes an *ent*;[905] ships are called *dulmunus*, a specifically Alfredian type of vessel;[906] and the Amazons are consistently referred to as *wifmenn*.[907] Their use of language was specific to their time and location, and thus presumably aesthetic to an Anglo-Saxon reader or listener.

Analyzing the maintenance and adaptation of the imperative function is much clearer. Orosius' intentions were the reaffirmation of the Eusebian metanarrative in the age of Honorius, in the face of crumbling Roman military and political power, and increasing pressure on Christianity (internal strife in the form of heresies, external strife with the pagans both Roman

---

[901] OEH 58/29–59/13.

[902] OEH 26/19–21

[903] OEH 97/4: the Gauls identified with the Lombards; 110/8: the Basterne identified with the Hungarians.

[904] For example, in OEH 50/14–30 a completely garbled account of the conspiracy of the decemviri is given (LH, 2/13/2–6), where Claudius is beaten to death *mid saglum* (with rods) – a trainwreck of a rendition of *fasces*, mentioned by Orosius only as their sign of power. In LH, the conspiracy is dissolved peacefully. The translators seemed to have problems in any case with the numbers of the consuls: where Orosius gave thes names of the *two* consuls in the Roman *praenomen-nomen-cognomen* format, the translator understood them to refer to *three individuals*, for instance in OEH 97/12; 99/19; 101/2–3. Another example is the absolutely mangled rendition of the post-Alexandrian states and their conflicts in OEH 76/26–83/7 (LH 3/23/1–68) where the names of individuals, cities, kingdoms, regions, and tribes, are merely listed out without any understanding of their references, often twisted into unrecognizable forms and disrupting the narrative.

[905] OEH 30/15

[906] OEH 30/17 and 31/27.

[907] OEH, *passim*. They are called 'Amazons' only twice: 1/26 and 29/35. In 1/26 the chapter heading actually reads '7 ymbe þa wif mon Amozenas het' (and about the women which are called Amozenas). In 29/35 the etymology of *Amazenas* is given to mean *fortende* (burned away, referring to the ostensible cauterization of their breasts).

and Germanic). He wanted to bolster Augustine's *De civitate dei*; convince Roman pagans into conversion; and console and calm Roman Christians. Whether intentionally or not, Orosius also proposed a new vision of the *oikumene*: a global community where all nations are Christian and subservient to Rome. A great deal of this was, as we have seen, transmitted into the Old English version. OEH reads as a much more successful companion piece to *De civitate dei*, indeed preserving its logic and supporting it with data. Nonethless, a very small amount of Eusebianism remains – God's vengeance for arrogance is retained. The translation transposed the *oikumene* to the next world, but nonetheless urges its achievement with the same vehemence as Orosius did. Similarly to LH, the Old English version is also an *argumentum* for Christianity, seeking to convince its audience about the truth of their religion, assuage their doubts, and motivate them to find their faith once more. Thus it is also, like Orosius' text, consolation, and an explication for a crisis. In response to the Viking destruction and the Anglo-Saxons' likely doubts about the rightness of their actions and religion (perhaps even on the basis of Bede himself), the translator outlined a different metanarrative, where the fate in *this* world is not contingent upon one's perceived merits. In the position of the Anglo-Saxons an entirely Eusebian metanarrative could not have explained the complete reversal of their fortunes in the brief space of fifty years, nor, for that matter, their survival, even perhaps victory.

This secularization of history is parallel with what we have seen already in the case of the translation of Bede. OEH, too, is a testament to the Alfredian idea that *lar,* knowledge, and *wisdom*, the right application of the selfsame knowledge, are the tools to mitigate (and perhaps avert) crises. The translation amply demonstrates that it is *not* enough to be Christians only in name, as famously stated by Alfred in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*.' Contrary to Orosius' group identity and communal salvation, OEH directs the audience's gaze towards redemption and the next life, which is achievable only as individuals. Thus the imperative function of the original is retained – the translation still aims to console and to urge to action – but it does so in vastly different ways, starting out from an altogether opposite metanarrative. Whereas Orosius seeks to console us with the idea that life has never been better (a statement open to doubt, and by the time of Alfred, plainly untrue), the translators rather sought to demonstrate that the fate of the world never *was* better – but that the *next* world shall be.

Old English literature is unique in being the earliest – and for a long time, the most extensive – vernacular corpus after the fall or Rome. The translations of Bede and Orosius show that during the ninth century Anglo-Saxon authors were revolutionary in other aspects as well.

The perception of the world evident in the Alfredian corpus and its satellite texts is unlike that of any other contemporary work in its universality and Christian equanimity. In the adoption of the Augustinian view of salvation and of the role of man and God in history, this small circle of texts seems completely disjointed from the long tradition of Christian historiography from Eusebius onwards. As we have seen, a considerable amount of labour went into the transformation of the source texts, and in the case of OEH, in the combination of the novel understanding of history, the painstaking effort of differentiation from LH, the ingenious interpolations, and the fully developed organising ideology, we can witness the first attempts at an individual *English* history.

Conclusions

In the first part of the dissertation, I first traced the developments of Semitic and Graeco-Roman historical thought, which was largely developed in response to dramatic reversals of fortunes: war, plague, natural catastrophes, the collapses of empires, and sometimes the revival of kingdoms. Key elements of these historical perceptions spread over the Mediterranean through the expansion of Hellenism and Latin culture, and were eventually incorporated into the Roman Imperial cult of the Empire. Central concepts, such as the Theory of the Four Monarchies, the ruler as the divinized vicegerent of God, the vicarious representation of the people, and the system of divine *do ut des* were all appriopriated and aggrandized centuries later by Constantine the Great. Under the first Christian Emperor the union of the Church and the State was swiftly effected. Eusebius of Caesarea, the chronicler and to a certain extent ideologist of the reign of Constantine, proposed a metanarrative of history which proved to be extremely influential, dominating all historiography for centuries to come. Eusebius claimed that the victory of Christianity over its enemies was historical inevitability, and that Constantine was an almost-God Emperor, directly appointed by the Father and representing Him. The Eusebian concept of Christianity became an integral part of *Romanitas* in the 4th and 5th centuries, and was essentially adopted as the imperial ideology of the Late Empire. When the crises of the Migration Period embroiled the Empire in decades of warfare with significant losses, confindence in the Eusebian metanarrative was shaken. The Gothic sack of Rome in 410 was such a traumatic event that it impelled Augustine of Hippo to address the calamity and try to provide consolation to the trouble Christians. In doing so, he developed his own metanarrative of history, returning to the Johannine concept of Christianity.

Augustine's novel and radical interpretation of historical causation divorced salvation forcefully from worldy considerations. According to *The City of God*, all terrestrial power and the resulting hierarchies, states, and communities are sinful, because the power of one human over another is the result of the original sin. The city of God cannot be identified with any earthly community or society; instead, its members will be gathered in the communion of saints from all over the earth, solely based on their individual merits. The Roman Empire is a transient community, ultimately destined to perdition like all others. Its welfare or misery is not contingent upon divine approval or hatred; instead, it is a direct consequence of the sinfulness of its citizens. Christianity as a community is more peaceful than other societies; however,

salvation rests not upon Christianity, but the individual's personal and secret virtue – a secret known and evaluated by God only.

At Augustine's behest, Orosius composed LH, presumably without full knowledge of *The City of God.* A completely Eusebian work, Orosius' text is driven by the idea of a Christian Roman world theocracy. By deconstructing the Ciceronian historiographical categories and as a consequence appropriating the role of the only trustworthy historiographer, Orosius subverted the Roman self-image by a carefully selected set of data. LH posits that Rome before the coming of Christianity was as bad as any of the other empires of the world. Yet at the same time, Orosius carefully crafted a lattice of numerological and typological correspondences which argued that from the very beginning of history Rome was chosen by God as the vessel of His divine plan for a Christian universal empire. The most creative *argumentum* employed by Orosius is his depiction of the good Roman Emperors as secretly Christian. These 'Christian' emperors at the same time reiterate the archetype of Augustus and anticipate Constantine, the creator of the Christian Empire. Orosius explains the recent past under Theodosius and Honorius by manipulating his data to suit his agenda, and portraying the recent decades and the Sack of Rome as an age of ever-increasing welfare and saintliness for Rome.

Although the progressive apotheosis of the Empire is achieved through the increase and persistence of Christians (and the deaths of heretics and pagans, enthusiastically celebrated by LH), individual salvation for Orosius does not exist: through the Eusebian doctrine of vicarious representation a community *en bloc* is perforce either evil or good. This way Orosius can always find an explanation for any event: in the case of misery, one only needs to find sin, or in the case of felicity, virtue. Since Rome is now brimming with Christians, its welfare and prosperity are the highest in its history. LH looks forward to the point when all pagans and heretics, including the foreign nations, will have been converted (by force, if need be) and the Christian *oikumene* will be complete. This *oikueme* is envisioned as an expansion and transformation of the Roman Empire, with the barbarian nations pacified and voluntarily becoming subservient to Rome. 'Salvation' in LH thus is almost completely only material: it is understood and expressed as peace, physical welfare and prosperity, glory, and longevity/permanence. Orosius' metanarrative can almost be said to have supplanted Christ with Honorius and Heaven with Rome.

Three centuries after Orosius, but carrying on his legacy, Bede composed HEGA. In the Eusebian spirit, he wrote a history of the Anglo-Saxon tribes united by a single Catholic Church, drawing their legitimacy from his ideology of Anglo-Saxon supersessionism. As I have shown, Bede insists that God's plan of spiritual and material salvation was removed from the Britons due to their sinfulness, hereditary heresy, and the failure to spread the Gospel to the English. Contrariwise, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons is a smooth process, with only a very few setbacks that are easily overcome with aid of God, who is directly involved in the events. Bede's reality is permeated with miracles and visions: the Anglo-Saxon Church can boast of the special attention of God. Saints, and holy kings and churchpersons abound in the new Church, which is modelled on a Eusebian conception of the Roman Church as the perfect community of saints. HEGA unfolds the story of the maturation of the Anglo-Saxon Church, and foretells its eventual full communion with Rome, in a sense promising the realization of Orosius' Christian *oikumene*. By the righteous and rightful subordination of the Britons and the missionary activities of the English on the Continent, the Anglo-Saxons are fulfilling their mandate from Gregory the Great. Their spiritual and political authority rests upon their invitation to the Roman Church, and their decision to play their part in the divine plan mediated by the papacy. In a sense, HEGA's Anglo-Saxons and Britons can respectively be read as the continuations of Orosius' Christian and pagan Romans.

At the same time, as we have seen, Bede is not quite so clearly Eusebian as Orosius was. The latter was unshaken in his belief in the invincibility of Christian Rome, and forcefully argued for his times having been simply the best since the creation of the world, (despite evidence to the contrary). HEGA, conversely, was composed by Bede not as an *argumentum*, but as as a collection of *exempla* to be imitated in order to ensure the salvation of the Anglo-Saxons as a community and as individuals. The existence of a divine plan for Britain, that is, its inclusion in the universal Roman Church, was a fact for Bede, but *how* this was to be effected was neither fixed nor certain. HEGA is an instruction and a warning to the Anglo-Saxons to avoid the errors of the Britons, and carry on their Catholic mission and mandate if they do not wish to share their perdition. Through the analysis of Bede's use of *gratia* and *misericordia* I have shown that HEGA depicts God's gift of redemption as equally open to all, to gain or to lose. Indeed, Bede does on occasion include stories about Britonic conversion, and recounts instances of Anglo-Saxon failure and sin. The Venerable was concerned about the ecclesiastical developments of his day, especially about the secularization and increasing dissoluteness of

monastic life. The inclusion of ambiguous characters and the great number of supernatural visions and miracles in Book Five impress the reality of the afterlife upon the audience. Their presence proves that Bede was nowhere near as convinced about the inevitability of salvation as Eusebius and Orosius were; nor did he subscribe to the idea of automatic communal redemption. Focus on individual salvation and the ultimate contingency of the roles of communities in the divine plan with history appear as central and Augustinian elements in the Bedan metanarrative.

During the First Viking Age the Eusebian metanarrative was used to explain the devastation caused by the pirates and invaders to England. In the lands attacked and occupied by the Vikings in the 8th and 9th centuries the interruption of the Christian Anglo-Saxon way of life was well-nigh complete. Ecclesiastical and Latinate culture was, according to archaeological, paleographical, and literary evidence, on the brink of destruction in the unoccupied lands as well. King Alfred successfully stemmed the tide of Danish expansion and initiated his cultural reform. He also posited an alternative explanation for the devastation of England: the sloth evidenced by the Anglo-Saxons in acquiring and transmitting knowledge and wisdom. Alfred's programme of cultural renaissance aimed to secure England's survival by the rediscovery of knowledge and wisdom, and the creation of a new community of literati through the production and popularization of 'the books most necessary for all men to know.' Augustine played a formative role in Alfred's interests, as the king's translation of the *Soliloquies* shows.

As I have shown, OEHE, of unknown provenience, but certainly in dialogue with the Alfredian canon, removes its metanarrative farther from that of Eusebius and closer to that of Augustine. Although in many respects a faithful rendering of HEGA, subtle changes to the text's historical perception were achieved by the translators' omission of key material from HEGA and the restructuring of the work. Through the elision of both Bede's divine plan of Britain and the Britons' supposed heresy, OEHE works its way toward a truly universal British Church which includes both nations. The translation also exhibits a marked disinterest in Rome and the outside world: the almost complete elision of Britain's pre-Conquest history, half of the papal letters sent to England, and Adomnán's *On the Holy Places* focuses the narrative on Britain and to some degree secularizes its history. With the diminishment of Rome and Roman righteousness, the Christian *oikumene* becomes to a certain extent a political one. Orthodox Catholicism is depicted in OEHE as a political community which enforces and encourages

peace amongst its members through Christian teachings, but in itself is not the community of the saints – much like as argued by Augustine. The translator expands upon Bede's inclusion of bad *exempla* with the toning down or outright negative evaluation of key events and characters in HEGA. At the same time, OEHE recasts the image of the king as one who is tasked in maintaining the rules of this political community by teaching, moulding it to the Alfredian political ideal.

This secularization of history and the Christian community does not radically alter the metanarrative of HEGA. Rather, it shifts the accents of the original Bedan narrative in a manner that tones down the Eusebian elements and strengthens the Augustinian ones. OEHE also reorients the Bedan text to focus on Britain and individual salvation, a narrowing of perspective which is quite different from Orosius' sweeping 'universal' history and Bede's desire to conjoin the history of the Isle to that of the Continent. These alterations can be read as responding to the catastrophe which Anglo-Saxon England barely survived and was still recovering from. A purely Eusebian metanarrative of history would not have helped contemporary Anglo-Saxons to make sense of the reversals in their fortunes. A prosperous and steadily progressing England and English Church, which was carrying out Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations, was beaten within an inch of its life by pagans, only to pull itself back from the brink of catastrophe, initiate a counterattack, and find a *modus vivendi* with the selfsame pagans. Guthrum's baptism is especially interesting in light of the secularization of the Christian *oikumene*. Through the much more lenient depiction of the Britons, OEHE demonstrated that it is political unity, achieved through Christianity, that is important in *this* world, and that for terrestrial peace, this unity suffices. At the same time, through the reduction of physical security and welfare, the miracles and visions, which are retained by translator, stand out all the more strongly. Their presence stresses the importance of private, individual salvation.

This idea is reiterated and further elaborated in OEH. The metanarrative of this text is entirely different from that of Orosius, displaying sharply Augustinian elements. OEH defocuses Rome by the omission of almost four fifths of LH, especially material concerning the Late Republic, thus attempting to balance the attention the text pays to the Four Kingdoms. While taking over Orosius' data, the translator carefully dismantled the structure of Orosius' prophecies, numerological correspondences, and Rome's divine election. With the misery of the world equally accounted for, the image of Rome as the world's appointed saviour and the earthly manifestation of God's eternal realm dissolves: the Empire is shown to have been no

better or more fortunate than the other kingdoms. OEH also deconstructs Orosius' Christian myth of latent Christianity among the 'good' emperors and their archetypal narratives. These actions strike at the core of the Eusebian metanarrative: Roman salutology, the divinely ordained system of *do ut des* and historical predetermination are obliterated in the translation.

Instead of these, several of the translation's additions construct an anti-metanarrative in the Augustinian vein. They present an equianimous perception of the events of this world, where misery and ill fortune happens to good and evil alike. Christianity is depicted as bringing worldly peace, which is most desireable; yet OEH clearly states that the audience's attention should be their afterlife and the supernatural peace that can be attained through redemption. As the obverse of both LH and HEGA, the *oikuemene* in OEH is recast as a peaceful community of peers, without any difference between Roman and Goth. In a surprisingly Augustinian move, the translator depicts the Romans as niggardly in their appropriation of salvation, and their reticence in spreading the Gospel, the tool of political unity and spiritual redemption to the barbarians - turning Bede's accusations completely upside-down. Yet this portrayal of the Romans is in line with both the Augustinian and Alfredian explanation for war and physical destruction. The behaviour of the Romans in LH echoes Alfred's statement in the 'Preface to the *Pastoral Care*': 'þone naman anne we lufodon ðætte we cristne wæren, swiðe feawe þa þeawas' (we loved the name only that we were Christians, and loved very little the customs).

Together, the Old English translations present a transition from the Eusebian metanarrative of history, which dominated historiography for centuries to come on the Continent, to the Augustinian 'anti-metanarrative.' They are novel in their outlook, yet concomitant with the Alfredian texts' preoccupation with Augustine. Although often dismissed as faulty renderings, I have shown that they follow a very specific agenda both in their policies of translation and in the material they have decided to present. Far from botched works, they perhaps are the first attempts at constructing a new perception of history, responding to contemporary needs. The elucidation of the reversals of fortune that the translations provide carefully balances the Alfredian concept of governance and the Augustinian idea of power as a consequence of sin. Such a deliberate and sedulous narrative and conceptualization requires intelligence, skill, forethought, and a keen sensitivity to the mood and requirements of its target audience. Composed by Anglo-Saxons to their own community, the Old English Bede and Orosius, 'most necessary for all men to know', are thus vernacular not only in their language, but in their metanarratives as well.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Aelfric, *Sermones catholici*, vol. II., ed. by Benjamin Thorpe (London: printed for the Aelfric Society, 1846)

Alcuin, 'Letter to Higbald', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolarum Tomus IV, Karolini Aevi II.*, (Berlin: apud Weidmannos, 1895) pp. 56 –58

Alfred, *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care,* ed. by Sweet (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by N. Trübner & Co., 1871).

Arnobius, *Adversus gentes*, trans. by Hamilton Bryce (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871)

Asser, *Annals of the Reign of King Alfred,* trans. by J. A. Giles, (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, Medieval Latin Series, 2000) <http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/asser_giles.pdf> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Augustine of Hippo, *De cathecizandis rudibus*, ed. Adolf Wolfhard (Freiburg, Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1893)

—, *On Genesis¸* trans. by Roland J. Teske (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991)

—, *The City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1984)

Aurelius, Marcus, *Meditations*, trans. by Robin Hard (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997)

Bede, *Be domes dage, De die iudicii*, ed. by J. Rawson Lumby (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society by N. Trübner & Co., 1876)

—, *Ecclesiastical History*, vols. I–II, ed. and trans. by J. E. King, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 246 and 248 (Harvard University Press, 1930)

—, *The Reckoning of Time,* ed. and trans. by Faith Wallis, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Inventione*, ed. by Eduard Stroebel <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0683> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Epitome de caesaribus, trans. by Thomas M. Banchich <http://www.roman-emperors.org/epitome.htm> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Eusebius of Caesarea, *Constantini imperatoris oratio ad coetum sanctorum* in *Documenta Catholica Omnia,* tabulinum 'De Ecclesiae Patribus Doctoribusque', materia "Ecclesiae Patres Graeci", <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0265-0339__Eusebius_Caesariensis__De_vita_Imperatoris_Constantini__MLT.pdf.html> [accessed 2018.12.30]

—, *Vita Constantini* (or *De vita beatissimi imperatoris Constantini)* in *Documenta Catholica Omnia,* tabulinum 'De Ecclesiae Patribus Doctoribusque', materia "Ecclesiae Patres Graeci", <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/04z/z_0265-0339__Eusebius_Caesariensis__De_vita_Imperatoris_Constantini__MLT.pdf.html> [accessed in 2018.12.30]

—, *Life of Constantine*, ed. and trans. by. Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire since the Death of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. by Edward C. Echols <http://www.livius.org/sources/content/herodian-s-roman-history/> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. by A. D. Godley <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Historia Augusta, ed. by Susan H. Ballou and Hermann Peter, trans. by David Magie <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Historia_Augusta/home.html> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ed. and trans. by Philipp Schaff <www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.htm> [accessed 2018.12.28]

—, *Against Heresies,* trans. by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1., ed. by Alexander Roberts and others. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Jerome, *Commentary of Daniel*, trans. by Gleason L. Archer (BAKER BOOK HOUSE, 1958) <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_daniel_01_intro.htm> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Jerome, *Letters*, trans. by Philipp Schaff and Henry Wace <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-03.htm#P5437_1504817> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri septem,* ed. and trans. by Arnaud-Lindet, Marie-Pierre*,* in *Orose: Histoires contre les païens,* 3 vols, Collection des Universités de France (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990–1991)

Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964)

Ovid, Publius Naso, *Metamorphoses,* trans. by A. S. Kline, <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Ovhome.htm#askline> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Paterculus*,* Velleius, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, ed. and trans. by Frederick W. Shipley, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 152 (Harvard University Press, 1979)

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars,* trans. by Robert Graves (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 2007)

Terence, *The Comedies of Terence,* ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1874), < http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Ter.%20An> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. by Alexander Souter <http://www.tertullian.org/articles/mayor_apologeticum/mayor_apologeticum_07translation.htm> [accessed 2018.12.28]

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *An Electronic Edition (Vol 2) philological edition*, ed. by Tony Jebson <http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/> [accessed 2018.12.28]

The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised and Standard Version with the Apocrypha, ed. by Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

The Old English History of the World: An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius, ed. and trans. by Malcolm R. Godden (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016)

The Old English Boethius, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

The Old English Orosius, ed. by Janet Bately (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1980)

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1972)

Vergilius, P. Maro, *Aeneid*, ed. by J. B. Greenough, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0690.phi003.perseus-lat1:1.1-1.7> [accessed 2018.12.30]

Vergilius, P. Maro, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1–6,* ed. and trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 63 (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Secondary Sources

Albrektson, Bertil, *History and the Gods* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1967)

Alföldi, Andrew, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome*, trans. by Harold Mattingly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948)

Allen, Michael I., 'Universal History 300–1000', in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 17–42

Anlezark, David, 'The Anglo-Saxon World View' in *Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Malcolm Godden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 66–81

Anson, Edward M., *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

Armstrong, Karen, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (New York: Anchor, 2007)

Arnaud-Lindet, Marie-Pierre*, Orose: Histoires contre les païens,* 3 vols, Collection des universités de France (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990–1991)

Assmann, Jan, 'Myth as historia divina and historia sacra', in *Scriptural Exegesis. The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination. Essays in Honor of Michael Fishbane*, ed. by Deborah A. Green and Laura S. Lieber (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 13–24

Ayres, Lioness, 'Meta-narrative', in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, Volumes 1&2*, ed. by Lisa M. Given and others (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc., 2008) pp. 508–9

Bardill, Jonathan, *Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Barnard, L. W., *Studies in Church History and Patristics* (Thessalonike: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1978)

Barnes, Timothy D., 'Lactantius and Constantine', in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 63 (1973), 29–46

Barnes, Timothy D., *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 1984)

—, *From Eusebius to Augustine: Selected Papers, 1982–1993* (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Variorum, 1994)

Baskin, K. and Bondarenko, D., 'Chapter 1: The Axial Age as Cultural Transformation: A Dream of Social Order', in *Emergence: Complexity and Organization, Complexity Thinking and Systems Theory*, ed. by Kurt A. Richardson and Gerald Midgley (Emergent Publications, 2014)

Bately, Janet, 'Alfred as Author and Translator', in *A Companion to Alfred the Great,* ed. by Nicole Gunther Discenza (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 113–42

—, 'The Old English *Orosius*', in *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. by Nicole Gunther Discenza (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 313–43

—, *The Literary Prose of King Alfred's Reign: Translation or Transformation?* (Binghamton: CEMERS-SUNY, 1980)

Berkhofer, Robert F. Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Camebridge, Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Bietenholz, Peter G., *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1997)

Billows, Richard A., *Julius Caesar: The Colossus of Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2009)

Blair, John, 'Monastic Sites', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 326

—, 'Parochial Organisation', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 363–365

Blair, Peter Hunter, *The World of Bede* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, '1214 - Literature and History in the Late Feudal Age', in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. by Denis Hollier (Cambrige, Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 75–81

Bosworth, Joseph, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, ed. by Thomas Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898)

Bowden, John, ed. *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Breed, Brennan W., 'Daniel's Four Kingdoms Schema: A History of Re-writing World History', in *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, vol. 71, issue 2 (2017)

Brown, George Hardin, *A Companion to Bede,* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009)

Campbell, Joseph and Moyers, Bill, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor, 1991)

Campbell, Ted, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996)

Careless, Brian J., 'Rediscovering Text Analysis in Translator Training and Further Training – a Macro-Textual and Micro-Textual Approach', <https://www.academia.edu/11315998/Rediscovering_Text_Analysis_in_Translator_Training_and_Further_Training_a_Macro-Textual_and_Micro-Textual_Approach > [accessed 2018.12.28]

Cartledge, Paul, 'Historiography and Ancient Greek Self-Definition', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. by Michael Bently (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 20–37

Carver, Martin, O. H., 'Exploring, Explaining, Imagining: Anglo-Saxon Archaeology 1998', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: Basic Readings*, ed. by Catherine E. Karkov (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999), pp. 25–52

Chadwick, Henry, 'Conversion in Constantine the Great', in *Religious Motivation: Studies in Church History 15*, ed. by Derek Baker (1978), pp. 1–13

Chadwick, Henry, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1993)

Chesnut, Glenn F., *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986)

Clark, Gillian, *Christianity and the Roman Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Clark, Mark Edward, 'Spes in the Early Imperial Cult: "The Hope of Augustus"', in *Numen*, vol. 30, fasc. 1 (1983), pp. 80–105

Cline, Eric H., *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Cochrane, Eric W., *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1981)

Coleman, Janet, *A History of Political Thought: From Ancient Greece to Early Christianity* (Oxford and Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2000)

Copeland, Rita, 'The Fortunes of "Non verbum pro verbo": or, Why Jerome Is Not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator: the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Age; Papers read at a conference held 20–23 August 1987 at the University of Wales Conference Center Cregynog Hall*, ed. by Roger Ellis and others (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15–35

Cowdrey, H. E. J., 'Bede and the "English People"', in *Journal of Religious History,* vol. 11, issue 4 (1981), pp. 501–23

Darby, Peter, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012)

Davidse, Jan, 'The Sense of History in the Works of the Venerable Bede', in *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982), pp. 647–95

Davis, R. H. C., 'Alfred and Guthrum's frontier', in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 97 (1982), pp. 803–10

Davis, R. H. C., 'Alfred the Great: Propaganda and Truth', in *History*, vol. 56 (1971), pp. 169–82

Discenza, Nicole Guenther, 'Alfredian Texts', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 31–33

Dodaro, Robert, 'Augustine on the Statesman and the Two Cities', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Mark Vessey (Chicester: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 386–397

Donald, Merlin, 'An Evolutionary Approach to Culture: Implications for the Study of the Axial Age', in *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, ed. by Robert N. Bellah, Hans Joas (Camebridge, Massachusets: Belknap Press, 2012) pp. 47–76

Drake, Harold, 'The Emperor as a "Man of God": the Impact of Constantine the Great's Conversion on Roman Ideas of Kingship', in *Histora*, issue 35 (2016), pp. 1–17

Dyson, R.W., *St Augustine of Hippo: The Christian transformation of Political Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006)

Edwards, M. J., 'The Arian Heresy and the Oration to the Saints', in *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 49, no. 4 (1995), pp. 379–387

Eliade, Mircea, *Myth and Reality* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1998)

Elliott, Jackie, *Ennius and the Architecture of the Annales* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Fear, A. T., *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

Feldman, Noah, 'Religion and the Earthly City', in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 4 (2009), pp. 989–1000

Ferrari, Leo C., 'Background to Augustine's "City of God"', in *The Classical Journal,* vol. 67, No. 3 (1972), pp. 198–208

Fine, Stephen, *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013)

Fleming, Robin, 'Monastic Lands and England's Defence in the Viking Age', in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 100 (1985), pp. 247–265

Foot, Sarah, 'The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 6 (1996), pp. 25–49

Fortin, Ernest L., 'Augustine's City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness', in *Review of Politics*, vol. 41 (1979), pp. 323–43.

Fowden, Garth, 'The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and Their Influence', in *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 84 (1994), pp. 146–170

—, 'The pagan holy man in late antique society', in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 102 (1982), pp. 33–59

Frank, Roberta, 'Germanic Legend in Old English Literature' in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 82–100.

Frantzen, Allen J., *King Alfred* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986)

Fredriksen, Paula, 'The Confessions as Autobioraphy', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Mark Vessey (Chicester: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 87–98

Fulk, Robert D. and Cain, Christopher M., *A History of Old English Literature* (Chicester: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)

Funkenstein, Amos, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung. Formen der Gegenwartsbestimmung des hohen Mittelalters* (München: Nymphenburger, 1965)

Furry, Timothy J., *From Past to Present and Beyond: The Venerable Bede, Figural Exegesis, and Historical Theory,* dissertation submitted to the University of Dayton, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/pg_10?0::NO:10:P10_ACCESSION_NUM:dayton1323463429> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Galinsky, Karl, 'Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century', in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. by Jörg Rüpke (Malden, Massachusets and Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) pp. 71–82

Gameson, Richard, 'Anglo-Saxon Art, Chronology ', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 35–37

Goffart, Walter, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005)

Grabbe, Lester L., 'A Dan(iel) For All Seasons: For Whom was Daniel Imporant?', in *The Book of Daniel Reception & Composition,* vol. I, ed. by John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 229–246

Gradel, Ittai, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004)

Grafton, Anthony and Williams, Megan, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Cambrdige, Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Grant, Raymond J. S., *The B Text of the Old English Bede: A Linguistic Commentary* (Leiden: Brill / Rodopi, 1989)

Grey, Cam, 'Historiography and Biography from the Period of Gildas to Gerald of Wales' in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature., vol. I, 800–1558* ed. by Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 323–350

Griffiths, Paul J. 'Secularity and the saeculum', in *Augustine's City of God: a Critical Guide*, ed. by James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 33–54

Gunn, Victoria A., *A study of Bede's historiae,* dissertation submitted to the University of Glasgow, < http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1923/1/1999gunnphd.pdf> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Hall, Richard A., 'York 700–1050', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: Basic Readings*, ed. by Catherine E. Karkov (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999), pp. 119–136

Hamilton, J.R., 'Introduction', in: *Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. by J.R. Hamilton (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 13–40

Hanning, Robert W., *The vision of history in early Britain: from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966)

Harbison, Elmore Harris, *Divine Purpose and Human History: Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Harris, Stephen J., 'The Alfredian "World History" and Anglo-Saxon Identity', in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 100, no. 4 (2001), pp. 482–510

Heather, Peter, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Pan Books, 2006)

Henten, Jan Willem, *The Maccabean Martyrs As Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997)

Herbert, Deane A., *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963)

Herz, Peter, 'Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors', in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. by Jörg Rüpke (Malden, Massachusets: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) pp. 304–316

Higham, Nick J., 'Edward the Elder's Reputation: An Introduction', in *Edward the Elder, 899–924*, ed. by Higham, N. J. and Hill, D. H. (London and New York: Routledge. 2001), pp. 1–11

—, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006)

—, 'Danelaw', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 139–140

Hollerich, Michael J., 'Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the First "Court Theologian"', in *Church History*, vol. 59, no. 3 (1990), pp. 309–325

Honko, Lauri, *The Problem of Defining Myth* (Helsinki: Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion, 1972)

Joas, Hans, 'The Axial Age Debate as Religious Discourse,' , in *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, ed. by Robert N. Bellah, Hans Joas (Camebridge, Massachusets: Belknap Press, 2012) pp. 9–24

Jones, Arnold Hugh Martin, *The later Roman Empire, 284–602: A social economic and administrative survey* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964)

Jones, W. R., 'The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1971), pp. 376–407

Jossa, Giorgio, *Jews Or Christians? The Followers of Jesus in Search of Their Own Identity* (Mohr Siebeck, 2006)

Kelly, S.E., 'Canterbury', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 86–87

Kennedy, Emmet: *Secularism and its Opponents from Augustine to Solzhenitsyn* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006)

Ker, N. R., *Catalogue of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957)

Keynes, Simon, 'Burghal Hidage', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 79–80

—, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 40

—, 'Plegmund', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 379

—, 'Vikings', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 479–480

Kirby, D. P., *The Making of Early England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968)

Koch-Peters, Dorothea, *Ansichten des Orosius zur Geschichte seiner Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1984)

Kreitzer, Larry, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 53, no. 4 (1990), pp. 210–217

Landes, Richard, 'The Birth of Heresy: A Millennial Phenomenon', in *Journal of Religious History* vol. 24 (2002), pp. 26–43

Lane, Melissa, 'Ancient Political Philosophy', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/ancient-political/> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Lapidge, Michael, 'Monasiticism', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 327–329

—, 'Schools', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 421–423

—,'The Latin Exemplar of the Old English Bede', in *Un tuo serto di fiori in man recando: scritti in onore di Maria Amalia d'Aronco*, ed. Patrizia Lendinara, vol II. (Udine, 2008), pp. 235–246

—, *Anglo-Latin Literature, Vol.1, 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996)

Lavelle, Ryan, *Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Press, 2012)

Lemke, Andreas, *The Old English Translation of Bede's* Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum *in its Historical and Cultural Context* (Göttingen: Universitätsdrucke Göttingen, 2015)

Leppin, Harmut, 'Old Religions Transformed: Religions and Religious Policy from Decius to Constantine', in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. by Jörg Rüpke (Malden, Massachusets: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) pp. 96–108

Lietzmann, Hans, *A History of the Early Church, vol III: From Constantine to Julian and vol. IV: The Era of the Church Fathers* (Lutterworth Press, 1958)

Lobur, John Alexander, *Consensus, Concordia, and the Formation of Roman Imperial Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2008)

Love, R. C., 'Hagiography, in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 231–233

Loyn, H. R., *Anglo Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London and New York: Longman, 1991.)

Luebering, J. E., ed., *English Literature from the Old English Period through the Renaissance* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2010)

Lyotard, Jean-Francois, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Machester: Machester University Press, 1984)

Malcom, Godden R., 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', in *Medium Ævum*, vol. 76, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1–23

Marenborn, John, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibiniz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Markus, R. A., 'Church history and early church historians', in *Studies in Church History*, vol. 11 (1975), pp. 1–17

Markus, R. A., *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Martin, Lawrence, 'Bede's Structural Use of Wordplay as a Way to Truth', in *From Cloister to Classroom: Monastic and Scholastic Approaches to Truth*, ed. by E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1986), pp. 27–46.

Massey, Shepherd H., 'Liturgical Expressions of the Constantinian Triumph', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 21 (1967), pp. 57–78

Matthews, Gareth B., 'Post-medieval Augustinianism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 267–79

Mayr-Harting, Henry, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (University Park, Pennslyvania: Penn State University Press, 2001)

McC. Gatch, Milton, 'King Alfred's Version of Augustine's Soliloquia: Some Suggestions on its Rationale and Unity', in *Old English Prose Basic Readings*, ed. by Paul E Szarmach (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001), pp. 199–236

McGrath, Alister, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013)

McGrath, Alister, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Newark: Wiley, 2011)

McGrath, Alister E., *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Mendels, D., 'The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic Topos', in *The American Journal of Philology* Vol. 102, No. 3 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 330–37

Merrills, A. H., *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Miller, Dale T. and Ross, Michael, 'Self-Serving Biases int he Attribution of Causality: Fact or Fiction?' in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 82 (1975) pp. 213–25

Miller, Sean, 'Edward the Elder', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 167

Moloney, Francis J., 'God, Eschatology, and "This World": Ethics in the Gospel of John,' in *Johannine Ethics: the Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*, ed. by Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner (Minneapolis: Fortess Press, 2017) pp. 210–215

Molyneaux, George, 'The Old English Bede: English Ideology or Christian Instruction?', in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 124 (2009), pp. 1289–323

Mommsen, Theodor E., 'St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God', in *Journal of the History of Ideas, v*ol. 12, no. 3 (1951), pp. 346–374

Murphy, Ronald G., *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century Heliand* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

Nicholson, Oliver, 'Hercules at the Milvian Bridge: Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 1,21,6–9', in *Classical and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 43 (1984), pp. 133–42

Nicolai, Roberto, 'The Place of History in the Ancient World', in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. by John Marincola (Malden, Massachusets: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 13–26

Niskanen, Paul V., *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004)

Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí, '"New Heresy for Old": Pelagianism in Ireland and the Papal Letter of 640', in *Speculum*, vol. 60, no. 3 (1985), pp. 505–516

O'Daly, Gerard, 'Augustine' in *From Aristotle to Augustine*, ed. by David Furley (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 388–428

O'Meara, John, 'Introduction' in *City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth : Penguin Classics, 1984)

O'Neill, Patrick P. , 'The Prose Translation of Psalms 1–50' in *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. by Nicole Gunther Discenza (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 256–281

O'Brien, Bruce R., *Reversing Babel: Translation Among the English During an Age of Conquests, c. 800 to c. 1200* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011)

Odahl, Charles Matson, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013)

Ogilvy, J. D. A., *Books Known to the English, 597–1066* (Cambridge, Massachusets: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1967)

Orchard, Andy, 'Wulfstan', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 512–3

Pelikan, Jaroslav, 'The Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of Rome as Historical Paradigm', in *Daedalus* Vol. 111, No. 3, Representations and Realities (The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 1982), pp. 85–91

Pizarro, Joaquin Martinez, 'Ethnic and national history ca. 500–1000' in Historiography in the Middle Ages, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 43–88

Plummer, Charles, *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistolam ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1896)

Podskalsky, Gerhard, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie: die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche* (München: W. Fink, 1972)

Pratt, David, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Rainbow, Paul R., *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, the Epistles and the Apocalypse* (Nottingham: APOLLOS, 2014)

Raith, Josef, *Untersuchungen zum englischen Aspekt* (München: Hueber, 1951)

Raymond C. St-Jacques: '"*Hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete*"' Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and its Old English translator', in *Florilegium,* vol. 5 (1983), pp. 85–104

Rees, B. R., *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998)

Reynolds, L. D. and Wilson, N. G. , *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1991)

Richards, Julian D., *Viking Age England* (New York: The History Press, 2013)

Riches, John*, The Bible: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Richey, Lance Byron, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007)

Richter, Michael, 'Bede's *Angli:* Angles or English?', in *Peritia*, vol. 3 (1984), pp. 99–114.

Riley, S. M., 'Bede, Beowulf and the Law: Some Evidence for Dating the Poem', in *Old English Newsletter,* issue 11 (Published for the Old English Division of the Modern Language Association of America by the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1978) pp. 4–5

Rist, John, 'On the nature and worth of Christian philosophy: evidence from the City of God', in *Augustine's City of God: a Critical Guide*, ed. by James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 205–24

Rosenthal, Joel T., 'Bede's Use of Miracles in *Traditio* Vol. 31 (1975), pp. 328–35

Rowley, Sharon M., *The Old English Version of Bede's* Historia Ecclesiastica (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 2011)

Rüpke , Jörg, ed., *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden, Massachusets: Blackwell Publishing, 2007)

Ryberg, Inez Scott, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1955)

Schepens, Guido, 'History and Historia: Inquiry in the Greek Historians', in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. by John Marincola (Malden, Massachusets: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 39–55

Schreiber, Carolin 'Searoðonca Hord: Alfred's Translation of Gregory the Great's Regula Pastoralis', in A Companion to Alfred the Great, ed. by Nicole Gunther Discenza (Leiden: Brill, 2015) pp. 171–199

Seston, William, 'Constantine as a "Bishop"', in The Journal of Roman Studies, vol. 43 (1980), pp. 457–61

Shaw, Brian A., 'The Old English Phoenix', in Medieval Translators and Their Craft, ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1989), pp. 155–83.

Shippey, T. A., 'Wealth and Wisdom in King Alfred's Preface to the Old English Pastoral Care', in The English Historical Review, vol. 94, issue CCCLXXI (1979), pp. 346–55

Shiu-Lun, Shum, Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline an Qumran Sectavian Texts (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002)

Simpson, D. P., Cassell's New Latin-English English-Latin Dictionary (Cassell 1964)

Snyder, Christopher A. , The Britons, (New York, Wiley, 2003)

Speed, Diane, 'Bede's Creation of a Nation in his Ecclesiastical History', in Parergon, vol. 10 (1992), pp. 139–54.

Stanton, Robert, 'The (M)other Tongue: Translation Theory and Old English', in Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages, ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), pp. 33–46.

Stephens, John, Retelling Stories, Framing Culture, (New York: Garland, 1998)

Stern, Henri, 'Remarks on the "adoratio" under Diocletian', in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, vol. 17/1 (1954), pp. 184–9

Stevenson, J., Studies in Eusebius (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929)

Stevenson, T. R., 'The "Divinity" of Caesar and the Title Parens Patriae', in Ancient History in a Modern University, ed. by T. W. Hillard (Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1998), pp. 254–68

Stone, M. W. F., 'Augustine and Medieval Philosophy', in The Cambridge Companion to Augustine, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 251–66

Swain, Joseph Ward, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies Opposition History under the Roman Empire', in Classical Philology, vol. 35, No. 1 (The University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 1–21

Swanton, Michael, Anglo-Saxon Prose (London: Everyman, 1993)

Syed, Yasmin, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005)

Szarmach, Paul, 'Augustine's *Soliloquia* in Old English' in *A Companion to Alfred the Great,* ed. by Nicole Gunther Discenza (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 227–256

Taylor, Charles, 'What was the Axial Revolution?', in *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, ed. by Robert N. Bellah, Hans Joas (Camebridge, Massachusets: Belknap Press, 2012) pp. 30–46

Teske, Roland J., *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996)

The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity, ed. by Daniel Patte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Tracy, David, 'The Christian Understanding of Salvation-Liberation', in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol. 7 (1987), pp. 129–38

Trompf, G. W., *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London and New York: Continuum, 1999)

van Buren, Benjamin and Scholl, Brian, 'Who's chasing whom?: Changing background motion reverses impressions of chasing in perceived animacy' <https://jov.arvojournals.org/article.aspx?articleid=2651099> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Van Henten, Jan Willem, 'Daniel 3 and 6 in Early Christian Literature', in *The Book of Daniel Reception & Composition,* vol. I, ed. by John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 149–70

van Nuffelen, Peter, *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Van Seters, John, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997)

Vessey, Mark, 'History of the book: Augustine's *City of God* and post-Roman cultural memory', in *Augustine's City of God: a Critical Guide*, ed. by James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 14–32

Wallis, Christine, *The Old English Bede: Transmission and Textual History in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts,* dissertation submitted to the University of Sheffield (2013), <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/5459/> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Wardle, David, 'Caesar and Religion', in *A Companion to Julius Caesar*, ed. by Miriam Griffin (Chicester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 100–11

Watson, Alaric, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London: Routledge 2004)

Webster, Leslie, 'Bone and Ivory Carving', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and others (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 71–2

Weithman, Paul, 'Augustine's political philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 235–53

Westgard, Joshua Allan, *Dissemination and Reception of Bede's* Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum *in Germany, ca. 731–1500: The Manuscript Evidence*, dissertation submitted to the University of North Carolina, <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:2701d6c8-117f-4dc1-8e6c-46d7286794e0> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Whitelock, Dorothy, 'After Bede, Jarrow Lecture 1960', rpt. in *Bede and his World*, ed. by Michael Lapidge (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), pp. 37–49

Wiles, Maurice, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum,* ed. and trans. by R.A.B. Mynors and others, 2 vols. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1999).

Williams, George Huntston. 'Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century', in *Church History,* vol. 20, no. 3 (1951), pp. 3–33

Woolf, Greg, 'Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome', in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond,* ed. by Nicole Brisch (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), pp. 235–51

Wormald, Patrick and Baxter, Stephen, *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and its Historian* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2006)

Wormald, Patrick, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the Gens Anglorum', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. by Patrick Wormald (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp. 99–129

—, 'The Venerable Bede', in *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. by Geoffrey Rowell (Wantage: Ikon, 19923, pp. 13–27

Wright, Robert J., *A Companion to Bede: A Reader's Commentary on The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008)

Yorke, Barbara, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995)

Zerzan, John, *Origins of the One Percent: the Bronze Age*, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/john-zerzan-origins-of-the-one-percent-the-bronze-age.pdf> [accessed 2018.12.28]

Ziethen, Gabriele, 'Heilung und römischer Kaiserkult', in *Sudhoffs Archiv*, vol. 78, issue 2 (1994), pp. 171–91

APPENDIX:
Translations of the Anglo-Saxon citations from the Old English *Orosius*

The Modern English translations, unless noted with *italics*, follow the text as published by Malcolm R. Godden, in *The Old English History of the World – An Anglo-Saxon Rewriting of Orosius*.

1/9

Hu Ioseph se ryhtwisa mon ahredde Egypta folc æt þæm seofan geara miclan hungre mid his wisdom.

How the just man Joseph saved the Egyptians from a seven-year famine by his wisdom.

24/23

Ac þæt is to wundrianne þæt þa Egipti swa lytle þoncunge wiston Iosepe þæs þe he hi æt hungre ahredde, þæt hi hys cyn swa raðe geunaredon, 7 hy ealle to nydlingum him gedydon.

It is much to be wondered at that the Egyptians showed so little gratitude to Joseph for saving them from famine that they son stopped respecting his descendants and reduced them all to slavery.

28/28

. . . him untweogendlice secgan het þæt hie oðer sceolden, oþþe ðæt lond æt him alesan, oþþe he hie wolde mid gefeohte fordon 7 forherigan.

 . . . and ordered them [the Scythians] to be told, unambiguously, that they would either have to give up that land to him or he would destroy them with warfare and plunder them.

30/24–31/21

Hit is scondlic, cwæð Orosius, ymb swelc to sprecanne hwelc hit þa wæs, þa swa earme wif 7 swa elðeodge hæfdon gegan þone cræftgestan dæl 7 þa hwatestan men ealles þises middangeardes, þæt wæs Asiam 7 Europe, þa hie forneah mid ealle aweston, 7 ealda ceastra 7 ealde byrig towearpon. 7 æfter ðæm hie dydon ægþer ge cyninga ricu settan ge niwu ceastra timbredon, 7 ealle þa worold on hiora agen gewill onwendende wæron folneah c wintra. 7 swa gemune men wæron ælces broces þætte hie hit folneah to nanum facne ne to nanum laðe næfdon þætte þa earman wifmen hie swa tintredon 7 nu, þa ða Gotan coman of þæm hwatestan monnum Germania, þe ægðer ge Pirrus se reða Creca cyning, ge Alexander, ge Iulius se cræftega casere, hie alle from him ondredon þæt hi hie mid gefeohte sohte Hu ungemetlice ge Romware bemurciað 7 besprecað þæt eow nu wyrs sie on þiosan cristendome þonne þæm þeodum þa wære, for þon þa Gotan eow hwon oferhergedon, 7 iowre burg abræcon, 7 iower feawe ofslogon; 7 for hiora cræftum 7 for hiora hwætscipe iowra selfra anwaldes eoweres upþonces habban mehton, þe nu lustlice sibbsumes friðes 7 sumne dæl landes æt eow biddende sindon, to þon þæt hie eow on fultume beon moten, 7 hit ær þiosan genog æmettig læg 7 genog weste, 7 ge his nane note ne hæfdon. Hu blindlice monege þeoda sprecað ymb þone cristendom, þæt hit nu wyrse sie þonne hit ær wære, þæt hie nellað geþencean oþþe ne cunnon, hwær hit gewurde ær þæm cristendome, þæt ænegu þeod oþre hiere willum friþes bæde, buton hiere þearf wære, oþþe hwær ænegu þeod æt oþerre mehte frið begietan, oððe mid golde, oððe mid seolfre, oþþe mid ænige feo, buton he him underþiedd wære. Ac siþþan Crist geboren wæs, þe ealles middangeardes is sibb 7 frið, nales þæt an þæt men hie mehten aliesan mid feo of þeowdome, ac eac þeoda him betweonum buton þeowdome gesibbsume wæron. Hu wene ge hwelce sibbe þa weras hæfden ær þæm cristendome, þonne heora wif swa monigfeald yfel donde wæron on þiosan middangearde?

 It is embarrassing to record, said Orosius, how it was then, when those grieveing women, exiled from their home country, had overcome the strongest part and the bravest men of the whole world – that is, Asia and Europe – when they devastated almost all of it and overthrew old cities and towns and set up kingdoms and built new cities, and bent the whole world to their desires for very nearly a century, abd yet people were so used to every kind of disaster that they virtually thought it no offence or harm that those poor women so tormented them.

And now, when the Goths have come, from the *most valiant* people in Germania, a people whom Pyrrhus the fierce king of the Greeks and Alexander and Julius the mighty *ceasar* were afraid to meet in battle, how endlessly you Romans moan and complain that things are now worse for you under Christianity that they were for those peoples, and because the Goths made a brief attack and captured your city and killed a few of you. Given their strength and courage they could have taken *your own sovereignity*, but instead they are gladly seeking a tranquil peace from you and abit of land, so that they can be of assistance to you, and the land hitherto has lain empty enough and uncultivated, and you had no use for it.

How ignorantly many *peoples* talk about Christianity, saying that it is worse now than it was before, and they won't ask themselves, or don't know, where it ever happened ever before Christianity that any nation willingly asked another for peace, unless they had to, or where any nation could obtain peace terms from another, either with gold or with silver or with any riches, without being subjected to the other. But after the birth of Christ, who is peace and tranquillity for all the *middle-earth*, not only have people been able to release themselves from servitude with money but also nations have been at peace with each other without being subject to them. What sort of peace do you think men had before Christianity, when their women were doing such terrible things in this *middle-earth*?

31/18

Ac siþþan Crist geboren wæs, þe ealles middangeardes is sibb 7 frið, nales þæt an þæt men hie mehten aliesan mid feo of þeowdome, ac eac þeoda him betweonum buton þeowdome gesibbsume wæron.

But after the birth of Christ, who is peace and tranquillity for all the *middle-earth*, not only have people been able to release themselves from servitude with money but also nations have been at peace with each other without being subject to them.

33/22

Hi þa hiera wif him ongean iernende wæron, 7 hie swiþe tornwyrdon, 7 acsedon, gif hie feohtan ne dorsten, hwider hie fleon woldon; þæt hie oðer gener næfden, buton hie on heora wifa hrif gewiton.

Then their wives ran to meet them in a rage an asking where they were planning to run to, if they didn't dare fight, since they had nowhere else to hid but their wives' wombs.

37/18

Þæt þa swa gelomp, ðætte on þære ilcan tide þe Babylonia ðiowdome onfeng from Ciruse ðæm cyninge, þætte Roma aliesed wearð of þeowdome þara unryhtwisestana cyninga 7 þara ofermodgestana, þe mon hæt Tarcuinie; 7 ða ðæt eastrice in Asiria gefeoll, þa eac þæt westrice in Roma aras.

So it happened that at the very time when Babylon *began its slavery* to King Cyrus, Rome was released from the *slavery* of the most unjust and arrogant kings called Tarquins, and when the *eastern kingdom* in Assyria fell, the *western kingdom* rose in Rome.

37/22–38/30

Giet scæl ic, cwæð Orosius, monigfealdlecor sprecan wiþ þa þe secgað þæt þa anwaldas sien of wyrda mægenum gewordene, nales of Godes gestihtunge, hu emnlice hit gelomp ymb ðas tu heofodricu, Asiria 7 Romana, swa swa we ær sægdon, þætte Ninus ricsade on ðon eastrice lii wintra, 7 æfter him his cwen Sameramis xlii wintra, 7 on middeweardum hire rice hio getimbrede Babylonia þa burg. From þæm geare þe heo getimbred wearð, wæs hire anwald m wintra 7 c 7 lx 7 folnæh feower, ær hio hiere anwaldes benumen wurde 7 beswicen from Arbate hiere agnum ealdormenn 7 Meþa cyninge; þeh þe siðþan ymbe þa burg lytle hwile freodom wære buton onwalde, swa we ær sægdon, from Caldei þæm leodum. Swa eac swilce wearð Romeburg ymb m wintra 7 c 7 lx 7 folneah feower, þætte Alrica hiere ealdormon 7 Gotona cyning hiere onwaldes hie beniman woldon; 7 heo hwæðere onwealg on hiere onwalde æfter þurhwunade. Þeh þe ægþer þissa burga þurh Godes diegelnessa þus getacnod wurde: ærest Babylonia þurh hiere agenne ealdormon, þa he hiere cyning beswac; swa eac Roma, þa hi hiere agen ealdormonn 7 Gotona cyning hiere anwaldes beniman woldon, hit þeh God for heora cristendome ne geþafode, naþer ne for heora caseras ne for heora selfra, ac hie nugiet ricsiende sindon ægþer ge mid hiera cristendome ge mid hiora anwalde ge mid hiera caserum. Þis ic sprece nu for ðæm þe ic wolde þæt þa ongeaten, þe þa tida ures cristendomes leahtriað, hwelc mildsung siþþan wæs, siþþan se cristendom wæs; 7 hu monigfeald wolbærnes ðære worulde ær þæm wæs; 7 eac þæt hie oncnewen hu gelimplice ure God on þæm ærran tidum þa anwaldas 7

þa ricu sette, se ilca se þe giet settende is 7 wendende ælce onwaldas 7 ælc rice to his willan. Hu gelice onginn þa twa byrg hæfdon, 7 hu gelice heora dagas wæron, ægðer ge on <ðæm> gode ge on ðæm yfele. Ac hiora anwalda endas wæron swiþe ungelice; for þon þe Babylonie mid monigfealdum unryhtum 7 firenlustum mid heora cyninge buton ælcre hreowe libbende wæran, þæt hie hit na gebetan noldan, ær þon hie God mid þæm mæstan bismere geeaðmedde, þa he hie ægðres benam ge heora cyninges ge heora anwaldes; ac Romane mid hiora cristnan cyninge Gode <þeowiende> wæron, þætte he him for þæm ægþres geuþe, ge hiora cyninges ge heora anwaldes. For þæm magan hiora spræce gemetgian þa þe þæs cristendomes wiþerflitan sint, gif hie gemunan willað hiora ieldrena unclænnessa, 7 heora wolgewinna, 7 hiora monigfealdan unsibbe, 7 hiora unmiltsunge þe hie to gode hæfdon, ge eac him selfum betweonum; ðæt hie nane mildheortnesse þurhteon ne mehtan, ær þæm him seo bot of ðæm cristendome com, þe hie nu swiþost tælað.

I need to speak more fully, said Orosius, in opposition to those who claim that *powers* are created through the *might* of fate rather than the direction of Go, and show how *similarly* it fell out with these two *capital kingdoms,* Assyria and Rome. As *we* said before, Ninus reigned in the eastern *kingdom* for fifty-two years and after him his queen Semiramis forty-two years, and she built the city of Babylon in the middle of her *kingdom*. From the year when it was built its *power* lasted almost on thousand one hundred and sixty-four years, before it lost its power and was betrayed by Arbatus, its own *alderman* and the king of the Medes, though afterward there was for a short time some freedom for the city but without power, under the Chaldeans, as I said before.

So also the city of Rome lasted almost one thousand one hundred and sixty-four years until Alaric, its *alderman* and the king of the Goths, tried to take its power away, but it remained undimished in power after that. Although each of these cities was *betokened* through God'ssecret ordiance in this way, first Babylon by means of its own *alderman*, when he betrayed its king, so too Rome, when both its *alderman* and the king of the Goths wanted to take its power away, God would not allow this because of their Christian faith – *not because of their caesars, not because of themselves* – and the Romans are still ruling with their Christian faith and their *power* and their *caesars.*

I say this now because I want those who disparage Christian times to recognise what mercy there *has been* after Christianity was established, and how many calamities were in the towld before that; and also to acknowledge how fittingly our God established the *powers and the*

kingdoms according to his will. What similar beinnings the two cities had, and how similar their times were, both the good and the bad. But the ways that their power cam to an end were very unlike, since the Babylonians along with their king were perpetrating all kinds of injustices and vices without repentance, and were unwilling to make amends, until God humbled the city with the utmost disgrace, depriving it of its king and its *power*; but the Romans were serving God along with their Christian king, so that he granted the both their king and their *power*.

So those who oppose Christianity can hold their hold tongue, if they will recall the lechery of their ancestors and their terrible wars and their endless dissension and their hostility to God and to each other, so that they could win no mercy until the remedy came from Christianity, which they now criticise so much.

44/12–17

Ond nu ure Cristne Roma bespricð þæt hiere wealles for ealdunge brosnien, nales na for þæm þe hio mid forheriunge swa gebismrad wære swa Babylonia wæs; ac heo for hiere cristendome nugiet is gescild, ðæt ægþer ge hio self ge hiere anweald is ma hreosende for ealddome þonne of æniges cyninges niede.

And now our Christian city Rome complains that its walls are decaying from old age, not because it has been humbled by assault as Babylon was. It is still protected by its Christianfaith so that both the city itself and its power are decaying more from age than from the *deceit* of any king.

48/18

Hu God þa mæstan ofermetto 7 þæt mæste angin on swa heanlice ofermetto geniðerade, þæt se, se þe him ær geþuhte þæt him nan sæ wiþhabban ne mehte þæt he hiene mid scipun 7 mid his fultume afyllan ne mehte, þæt he eft wæs biddende anes lytles troges æt anum earman men, þæt he mehte his feorh generian.

See how God humbled that greatest arrogance, and the biggest enterprise undertaken by such [Xerxes'] shameful *pride*: so that this king, who imagined that no sea can prevent him overpowering it with his ships and army, was afterward begging for a little boat from a poor wretch, to save his life.

56/4–13

Æfter þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wæs III hunde wintra 7 LXXVI, wæs in Achie eorþbeofung, 7 twa byrig, Ebora 7 Elice, on eorþan besuncon. Ic mæg eac on urum agnum tidum gelic anginn þæm gesecgan, þeh hit swelcne ende næfde, þætte Constantinopolim Creca burg on swelcre cwacunge wæs, 7 hiere gewitgad wæs of soðfæstum monnum þæt heo sceolde on eorþan besinca; ac heo wearð gescild þurh þone cristnan casere Arcadiusan, 7 þurh þæt cristene folc. On þæm burgum wæs getacnad þæt Crist is eaðmodegra help 7 ofermodigra fiell.

Three hundred and seventy-six years after Rome was built, there was an earthquake in Achaia, and two cities, Ebora and Helice, were swallowed up in the earth. I can mention a similar event in our times, though it had a different ending: the Greek city of Constantinople experienced a similar quake, and it was prophesied by honest men that it would sink into the ground, but it was protected Christian *Caesar* Arcadius and the Christian people. *It was betokened on* those cities that Christ is a help for the humble and destruction for the arrogant.

65/25–30

Ic nat, cwæð Orosius, for hwi eow Romanum sindon þa ærran gewin swa wel gelicad 7 swa lustsumlice on leoðcwidum to gehieranne, 7 for hwy ge þa tida swelcra broca swa wel hergeað, 7 nu, þeh eow lytles hwæt swelcra gebroca on becume, þonne gemænað ge hit to þæm wyrrestan tidum, 7 magon hie swa hreowlice wepan swa ge magon þara oþra bliþelice hlihhan. Gif ge swelce þegnas sint, swelce ge wenað <þæt> ge sien, þonne sceoldon ge swa lustlice eowre agnu brocu aræfnan, þeh hie læssan sien, swa ge heora sint to gehieranne.

I don't know why you Romans, said Orosius, take so much pleasure in the old wars and so enjoy hearing about them in poems, and why you praise so extravagantly those times with all these afflictions, and now if you suffer just a little of such troubles, then you moan about it as being the worst of time, and can weep overe them as miserably ay you cheerfully laugh over the others. If you were such warriors as you think you are, then you ought to *endure* your own hardships, thought they are slighter, as cheerfully as you listen to theirs.

82/33–83/6

Þætte hit is us nu swiþor bismre gelic þæt we þæt besprecað, 7 þæt, þæt we gewinn nu hatað, þonne us fremde 7 ellþeodge an becumaþ, 7 lytles hwæt on us bereafiað, 7 us eft hrædlice forlætað; 7 nyllað geþencan hwelc hit þa wæs, þa nan mon ne mehte æt oþrum his feorh gebycggan, ne furþon þætte þa wolden gefriend beon þe wæron gebroðor of fæder 7 of meder.

It is all the more shameful for us to complain about what we now call war, when strangers from elsewhere come upon us, steal a little from us and promptly leave, and refuse to consider what it was like when no one could buy his life from another, and not even those who were brothers born of the same father and mother were willing to be friends.

87/17–20

For þæm þe hie sume heora þeowas gefreodon, 7 eac him eallum wurdon to milde 7 to forgiefene. Þa ofþuhte heora ceorlum þæt mon þa þeowas freode, 7 hi nolde.

They freed some of their slaves, and were too gentle and indulgent toward all of them. Then the peasants were annoyed because the owners freed the slaves but wouldn't free them.

88/8–13

Hu wene we, nu Romane him self þyllic writon 7 setton for heora agnum gielpe 7 heringe, 7 þeah gemong þære heringe þyllica bismra on hie selfe asædon, hu wene we hu monegra maran bismra hie forsugedon, ægþer ge for hiora agenre lufan 7 londleoda, ge eac for hiora senatum ege.

Given that the Romans themselves wrote such things for their own self-promotion and praise What do we think: now Romans themselves write and state their own praise and glory, and yet in the course of these boasts reported such shameful things about themselves, how many more dreadful things did they conceal, should we think, both out of *love* for themselves and their people and for fear of their senate?

102/2–7

7 ealle þa men þe hie on ðeowdome hæfdon hie gefreodon, on þæt gerad þæt he him aðas swôran þæt hie him æt þæm gewinnum gelæsten. Ond sume, þa þe heora <hlafordas> freogean noldon, oþþe hie ne anhagade þæt hie mehten, þonne guldon hie þa consulas mid hiera gemænan feo, 7 siþþan freodon 7 ealle þa þe fordemede wæron ær þæm oþþe hie selfe forworht hæfdon, hie hit eall forgeafon wið þæm þe hie him æt þæm gewinnum fuleoden.

And freed all the men that they had in servitude, on condition that they swore an oath to support them in the wars. Where the owners refused to free them or weren't in the position to be able to do so, the consuls bought them with money from the common treasury and freed them. All those who had been convicted or had incriminated themselves were *forgiven* provided they gave their full support in the wars.

102/34–103/7:

Hu magon nu Romane, cwæð Orosius, to soþe gesecgan þæt hie þa hæfden beteran tida þonne hie nu hæbben, þa hie swa monega gewin hæfdon emdenes underfongen? I wæs on Ispania; oþer on Mæcedonia; III on Capadotia; IIII æt ham wið Hannibal: 7 hie eac oftost gefliemde wurdon 7 gebismrade. Ac þæt wæs swiðe sweotol þæt hie þa wæron beteran þegnas þonne hie nu sien, þæt hie þeh þæs gewinnes geswican noldon; ac hie oft gebidon on lytlum staþole 7 on unwenlicum, þæt hie þa æt nihstan hæfdon ealra þara anwald þe ær neh heora hæfdon.

So, said Orosius, how can Romans really claim that they had better times then than they have now, when they had so many wars at the same time? One was in Spain, a second in Macedonia, a third in Cappadocia, a fourth at home against Hannibal. And the Romans were repeatedly defeated and humiliated. But it was clear enough that they were better fighters than they are now, since they still would not give up but often hung on in a small and unpromising position until in the end they had all the power that they had had before.

103/30–104/8

Gesecgað me nu Romane, cwæð Orosius, hwonne þæt gewurde oþþe hwara, ær ðæm cristendome, ‹þæt› oþþe ge, oþþe oðere æt ænegum godum mehten ren abiddan, swa mon siþþan mehte, siþþan se cristendom wæs, 7 nugiet magon monege gode æt urum Hælendum Criste, þonne him þearf bið. Hit wæs þeh swiþe sweotol þæt se ilca Crist se þe hie eft to cristendome onwende, þæt se him þone ren to gescildnisse onsende, þeh hie þæs wyrþe næron, to þon þæt hie selfe, 7 eac monege oþere þurh ‹hie›, to ðæm cristendome 7 to ðæm soþan geleafan become.

Tell me now you Romans, said Orosius, when or where did it happen before the time of Christianity, that either you or anyone else could procure rain from any gods by prayer, as people could afterward, when Christianity came, and as many good people still can from the *Healer* Christ, when there is need? It was clear enough that the same Christ who later turned the Romans to Christianity sent the rain for their protection, thought they did not deserve it, in order that they themselves and many others through them may come to Christianity and the true faith.

113/1–10

Swa þæt eow Romanum nu eft cuþ wearþ, siþþan se cristendom wæs, cwæð Orosius, þæt ge eowerra ieldrena hwetstan forluran eowerra gewinna 7 eowres hwætscipes, for þon ge sindon nu utan fætte 7 innan hlæne, 7 eowre ieldran wæron utan hlæne 7 innan fætte, stronges modes 7 fæstes. Ic nat ‹eac›, cwæð he, hu nyt ic þa hwile beo þe ic þas word sprece, butan þæt ic min geswinc amirre. Hit biþ eac geornlic þæt mon heardlice gnide þone hnescestan mealmstan æfter þæm þæt he þence þone soelestan hwetstan on to geræceanne. Swa þonne is me nu swiþe earfeðe hiera mod to ahwettanne, nu hit nawþer nyle beon, ne scearp ne heard.

So now it is clear to you Romans again, said Orosius, that with Christianity established you have lost the whetstone of your wars and of your valour that your ancestors had, since you are now *fat* on the outside and *lean* inside and your ancestors were *lean* on the outside and *fat* inside, with their strong and firm hearts. But I don't know whether it is any use saying this, he said, or whether I am wasting my efforts. It is important to grind the softest stone firmly if you want to use the best whetstone on it, and for me it is very difficult to whet the minds of those who don't want to be sharp or hard.

114/3:

Þæt wæs siþþan Crist geboren wæs þæt we wæron of ælcum þeowdome aliesde 7 of ælcum ege, gif we him fulgongan willaþ.

That came about after Christ was born, when we were released from all *slavery* and fear, if we are willing to follow *him*.

130/25–131/6

Æfter þæm þe Romeburg getimbred wæs vii hunde wintra 7 xxxv, gewearð þætte Octuaianus Cesar on his fiftan consulato betynde Ianes duru, 7 gewearð þæt he hæfde onweald ealles middangeardes. Þa wæs sweotole getacnad, þa he cniht wæs 7 hiene mon wið Rome weard lædde æfter Iuliuses slege, þy ilcan dæge þe hiene mon to consule dyde, þæt mon geseah ymbe þa sunnan swelce an gylden hring, 7 binnan Rome weoll an wille ele ealne dæg. On þæm hringe wæs getacnad þæt on his dagum sceolde weorþan geboren se se leohtra is 7 scinendra þonne sio sunne þa wære, 7 se ele getacnade miltsung eallum moncynne. Swa he eac monig tacen self gedyde þe eft gewurdon, þeh he hie unwitende dyde on Godes bisene.

Seven hundred and thirty-five years after Rome was built, it came about that Octavian Caesar in his fifth consulship closed the doors of Janus and held power over *all middle-earth. It was clearly betokened* when he was a youth and was *led* to Rome after the killing of Julius. On the same days that he was *made* consul, *as it were* a golden ring was seen around the sun, and within Rome from a spring of oil flowed all day. Through the ring it was *betokened* that in during his lifetime should be born the one who is brighter and more resplendent than the sun, and the oil *betokened* mercy/*grace* to all mankind. *He himself also made many tokens which later came to pass, though he with them unwittingly did God's command.*

152/28–153/12

On þæm ðriddan geare his rices, þa he þæt mæste woh dyde wið þa Godes þeowas, þa adrifon hine Gotan ut of hiora earde, 7 hie foran siþþan ofer Donua þa ea on Ualenses rice, 7 wilnedon to him þæt hie mosten on his rice mid friðe gesittan. Þa oferhogode he þæt he him aðer dyde, oþþe wiernde, oþþe tigþade, ac hie let sittan þær þær hie woldon. Ac his gerefan 7 his ealdormen nieddon hi æfter gafole, 7 micel geflit hæfdon ymb þæt, oþ þa Gotan hie mid gefeohte

gefliemdon. Þa Ualens þæt geacsade on Antiochia þære byrig, þa wearð he swiþe sarig, 7 geþohte his misdæda, hu hi hiene bædon ryhtes geleafan 7 fulwihtes bædes, 7 he him sende Arrianisce biscepas to lareowum 7 gedwolmen, swa he self wæs, 7 hwæt he hæfde Godes þeowum on oftsiþas to laðe gedon.

In the third year of his [Gratians'] reign, when he was doing great injury to the servants of God, the Goths drove him out of their territory and then advanced over the river Danube into Valen's territory, and asked him to give permission for them to settle in his empire under *peace*. Then he disdained either to refuse them or to agree but left them to settle wherever they wanted. But his *reeves and aldermen* pressed them for *tribute* and had a great dispute with them over that until the Goths defeated them in battle. When Valens, in the city of Antioch, heard that, he was very distressed and thought about his own misdeeds, and how they had asked for the true faith and baptism, and he had sent them Arian bishops and heretics, such as he himself was, as teachers, and what harm he had often done to God's servants.