The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley

The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint

Susan E. Wilson

Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West

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About the volume

This represents the first study devoted to the life and after-life of St John of Beverley. John was bishop of Hexham and then York, after which he retired to his own monastery in Beverley and was buried there in 721. His cult was quickly established and spread to attract pilgrims from all over the British Isles, and even Europe. It was also established in Brittany by the tenth century, especially in the town of Saint-Jean-Brévelay, which is named after him. The great economic wealth of Beverley in the Middle Ages was largely due to it being a major ecclesiastical centre focused around John's relics. His reputation as a powerful saint was harnessed not only to protect Beverley and the surrounding areas and to give succour to pilgrims to his shrine, but also to further the ambitions of successive kings of England to the extent that Henry V raised him to the status of a patron saint of England following the battle of Agincourt, which was fought on the feast day of St John's translation.

The hagiographic works on John extend over nearly six hundred years from that written by Bede *c.* 731, the *Vita Sancti Johannis* composed by a monk called Folcard *c.* 1066, then four separate collections of post-mortem miracle stories of the eleventh–thirteenth centuries, and a number of miracles recorded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This span is greater even than the hagiography relating to St Benedict, which had been believed to cover more years than any other collection in Europe. Dr Wilson uses these sources as a unique opportunity to examine the ways in which an Anglo-Saxon saint was promoted over a long period of time by different hagiographers, and how the saint was continually re-created in the image which the hagiographers or his community required, depending on their current needs and perceptions. The volume also includes the first English translations of the Life and the miracle stories.

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The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint

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List of Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana*, 64 vols (Antwerp, 1680)
AMI	*Alia Miracula I*
AMII	*Alia Miracula II*
AMIII	*Alia Miracula III*
BAACT	British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions
Bede, *HE*	Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CCR	*Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 6 vols, HMSO (London, 1903–27)
CIPM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other analogous documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, HMSO (London, 1904–)
CPR	*Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, HMSO (London, 1901–)
DNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford 2004)
Historians	*The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. James Raine, 3 vols, RS 71 (1879–94)
Memorials	*Memorials of Beverley Minster: the Chapter Act Book of the Collegiate Church of St John of Beverley, 1286–134*, ed. A. F. Leach, 2 vols, SS 98 (1898) and 108 (1903)
MSJ	*Miracula Sancti Johannis*
PL	*Patrologiæ cursus completus, series latina (Patrologia latina)*, 221 vols, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1841–64)
RS	Rolls Series: *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, published ... under the direction of the Master of the Rolls*, 99 vols (London, 1858–96)
SS	Surtees Society (Durham)
VCH, Yorks	*The Victoria History of the County of York: East Riding*, vol. 6, *The borough and liberties of Beverley*, ed. C. R. Elrington (Oxford, 1969)
VSJ	Folcard, *Vita Sancti Johannis*

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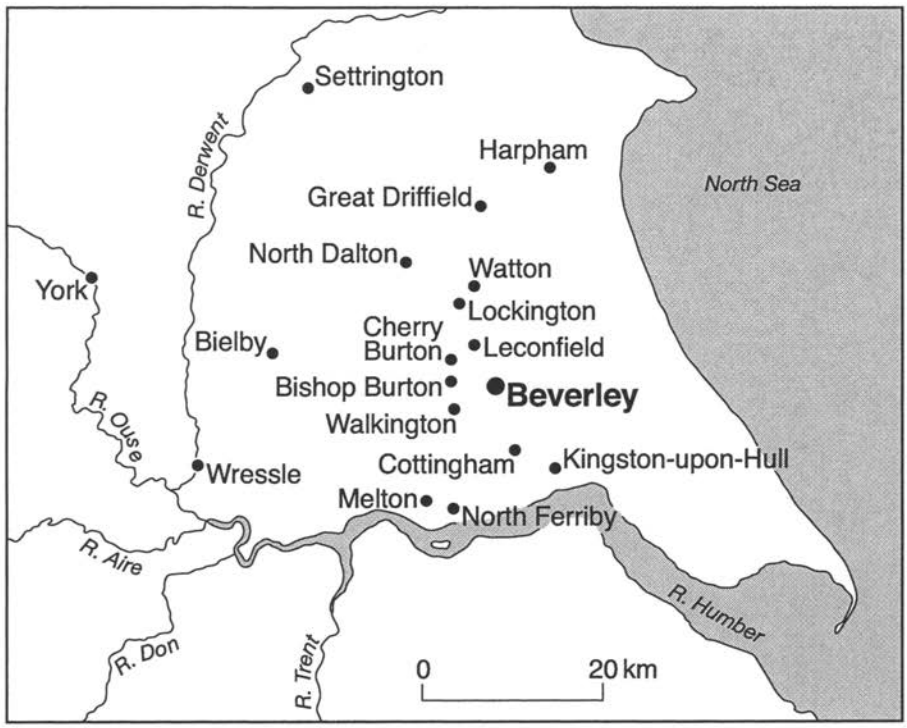

Map 1 Beverley and the surrounding area

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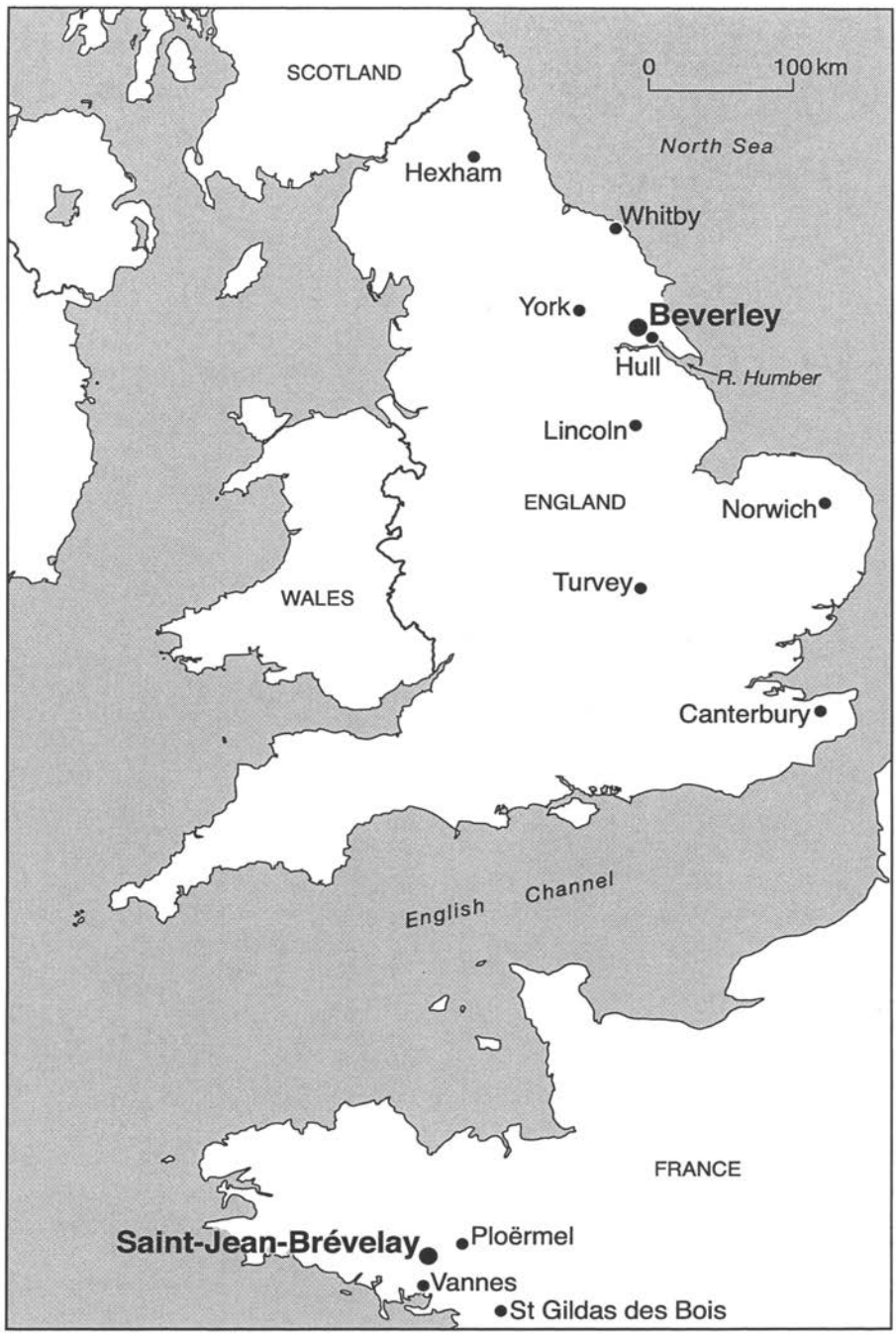

Map 2 UK and northern France

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Introduction

This work represents the first ever study of St John of Beverley, bishop of Hexham from 687 to 706, and then bishop of York from 706 until his retirement some years before he died on 7 May 721. John was a senior figure in the northern Church and after his death his cult was rapidly established. The great economic wealth of Beverley in the Middle Ages largely resulted from its position as a major ecclesiastical centre focused around John's relics. The cult evolved from being primarily local to one of national, and even international, importance, and John's shrine attracted pilgrims from all over England, Ireland and Scotland, as well as becoming a major destination for European penitential pilgrims. The cult was also firmly established in Brittany by the tenth century, especially in the town of Saint-Jean-Brévelay, which is named after him, and where a number of bones are preserved that are claimed to be some of his relics.

John's reputation as a powerful saint was harnessed not only to protect Beverley and the people of the surrounding areas, and to give succour to pilgrims who visited his shrine, but also to further the ambitions of successive kings of England. The traditional connection between John and King Athelstan was used to support Beverley's claims that its rights and liberties, including its special sanctuary rights, dated back to this illustrious Anglo-Saxon king, whereas later kings of England exploited the legend to validate their claims to rule over Scotland. The apogee of John's connection with English kings came when Henry V raised him to the status of patron saint of England, on a par with St George, following his victory at the battle of Agincourt, which was fought on 25 October, the feast day of St John's translation.

The major sources for John's life and after-life were written in the Middle Ages, and their probable relative dates, including problems connected with their dating, are fully discussed here. The initiator of John's written cult was Bede who wrote five chapters about him in book v of the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which was completed in 731.[1] Posthumous miracles performed in John's name continued to be recorded over the next seven hundred years, which is longer even than the hagiography relating to St Benedict, which spans a little over five hundred years from the writings of Gregory the Great in the late sixth century to the

[1] For an edition and translation see *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1979).

miracle stories recorded at Fleury in the beginning of the twelfth century.[2] The longevity of John's hagiography therefore provides a unique opportunity to trace the development of the cult of an Anglo-Saxon saint, and perceive the ways in which the persona of the saint, and hence the sort of miracles he was called upon to perform, was transformed by successive generations depending upon their economic, social, and political needs. At the same time, a discussion of the historical contexts within which the major texts were produced helps to identify the impetus behind their creation at particular times in history.

John's hagiography not only reflects the perceptions and aspirations of the community at Beverley in relation to their saint, but also reveals the character and function of miracles: how and why the type of miracle recorded changed depending upon the changing needs of the saint's community. The miracles reveal that people from different levels of society sought different kinds of assistance: kings sought help in war and divine endorsement for their political actions, merchants needed protection for themselves and their goods at sea, penitents required forgiveness, criminals desired dispensation for their crimes, and almost everyone needed relief from illness. These differing requirements are reflected in the different kinds of miracle stories recorded at various times in Beverley's history.

As well as providing valuable insight on the development of the cult itself, the miracle stories also afford a glimpse at the motivations of the composers of the various stories, some of whom were diligent in verifying the stories they wrote, while others were somewhat less concerned with their validity. Certain of the composers were clearly aware of the power of language to affect an audience and to put across religious concepts and church dogma in an entertaining and memorable manner.

An attempt has been made to determine the historical character of John of Beverley the man as opposed to the possible fictions relating to the saint he was regarded as after his death. As almost all the written material relating to his life appears in works of a hagiographical nature, these texts have been treated with caution when trying to establish historical actuality. My emphasis is, at all times, on the textuality of the sources rather than on their historical veracity, and my approach has been to treat the ancient texts as historical phenomena that reflect, and are shaped by, the historical forces of their production.

As the *Vita Sancti Johannis* was written more than three hundred years after John's death it is more readily recognized that caution must be exercised in attempting to extract historical realities from it. Conversely, because Bede's account of John's life was written very close to the time at which John lived, that is within ten years of his death, there is a tendency to place more dependence on it as a source of historical information than is, perhaps, justified. The *Ecclesiastical History* has a strong reputation as a source for the history of England up to the

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[2] Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* (London, 1987), 42–3.

eighth century and because of this reputation, and the fact that the surviving manuscripts, which are virtually contemporary with the author, are extraordinarily consistent, it is sometimes easy to overlook the textuality of the work. However, even the works of Bede were informed by his personal world view: as a committed Christian he saw the hand of God in everything, therefore, both the way he wrote, and what he chose to include or exclude from his works, were strongly influenced by his profound faith. This feature of his work is discussed by Kirby, who suggests that Bede's idealization of kings and ecclesiastics was a product of his 'sheltered and limited upbringing'.[3] It is possible, for example, that Bede's kindly portrayal of John may have been influenced by his intention to represent him in a totally positive light as an ideal bishop, whereas it is likely that John was far more politically involved than Bede allows: as a senior church figure his appointment to the bishopric was as much a decision for the secular as the ecclesiastical powers, and he was very much involved in the controversy surrounding Wilfrid I's claims relating to the diocese of York.[4]

Some communities in the north of England included John in their liturgical practices within eighty years of his death, and knowledge of his sanctity was transmitted to western Europe within a very short period of time.[5] There is evidence to suggest that his feast day was included in the metrical calendar of York, which was estimated by Wilmart to have been completed in 812 or 813.[6] Although neither of the two extant English manuscripts of this calendar contains an entry for John, it is believed that the original poem did because his feast day appears in several of the continental redactions of the poem, which were known all over western Europe from the ninth century onwards, and it is presumed that such an entry would not have been composed and interpolated at a continental centre. This calendar was widely known in France perhaps as early as *c.*800, which draws its composition even closer to the date of John's death in 721.[7] Further, a Bavarian necrology includes a reference to a feast day of 7 May for a bishop John, who has been identified with John of Beverley; this was recorded before 754, that is, within

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3 D. P. Kirby, ed., *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1974), 2.

4 For a discussion on the partitioning of Wilfrid's diocese, see Michael Roper, 'Wilfrid's Landholdings in Northumbria', in Kirby, *Saint Wilfrid*, 61–79, at 74–5; and Catherine Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops': episcopal elections in Anglo-Saxon England, *c.*600–*c.*800', *Northern History*, 25 (1989), 18–38.

5 See *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100*, ed. Francis Wormald (Woodbridge, 1934; repr, 1988); and *English Benedictine Kalendars after A.D. 1100*, ed. Francis Wormald, 2 vols (London, 1939–46).

6 A. Wilmart, 'Un témoin Anglo-Saxon du calendrier metrique d'York', *Revue Benedictine*, 46 (1934), 48.

7 Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993), 344–6, 359.

thirty-three years of John's death, which indicates a very early awareness of John's sanctity on the continent.[8]

The conventional tradition, created by Bede and augmented by subsequent hagiographers, was that John was a conscientious disciple of Christ who had always lived a holy and pious life. However, some evidence points to the existence of an alternative tradition that John had sinned conspicuously in his youth and was a reformed sinner. Although it is highly improbable that such a tradition had any factual basis, the evidence for its existence is fairly persuasive.

The community at Beverley constructed and reconstructed John according to its own changing needs, and his created identity also defined the community's self-identity, its internal relations, and its relations with the outside world. The significant influence which John's cult exercised in the northern church elevated Beverley's prestige beyond its official position as a subordinate minster, the successful development of the cult having had a profound effect on the economic, ecclesiastical, and political status of the town and community.

The Texts

With the exception of the Bedan prose narrative, which is already widely available, and Alcuin's verse account which is also in print,[9] the texts given here represent the first English translation of all the major hagiographical works pertaining to John. The *Vita Sancti Johannis*, written by the monk Folcard in the eleventh century, and *Miracula Sancti Johannis*, attributed to a clerk of Beverley called William Ketell or Kecell, are taken from London, British Library, MS Cotton Faustina B. iv and supplemented with reference to *Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana,* Maii ii, and London, British Library, Additional MS 61901 known as the Beverley Cartulary. There are also three anonymous collections of post-mortem miracles, which I have called *Alia Miracula I, II,* and *III* respectively, taken from *Acta Sanctorum* and the Beverley Cartulary, as well as a number of other extracts from the Beverley Cartulary, the Chapter Act Book of Beverley Minster, and the Chronicles of the Monastery of St Albans. Details of these and their possible dates of composition are discussed fully in Chapter 1 below.

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[8] *DNB*, xxx, 194; Jan Gerchow, *Die Gedenküberlieferung der Angelsachsen* (Berlin, 1988), 329.

[9] See Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Peter Godman (Oxford, 1982), ll. 1084–217.

Chapter 1

Sources

The narratives relating to John's life, and the accounts of miracles connected with his name after his death, survive in both hand-written manuscripts and printed transcripts which are variously dated over several hundred years. They are presented here largely in chronological order, as far as I have been able to ascertain it, and the relative dates and problems connected with dating are discussed.

Bede: *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

This work purports to cover the whole of English history from before the time of Roman occupation up to Bede's present. It was completed in 731, and soon became so popular that it was well known not only in England but also in western Europe; no less than 160 manuscripts still survive.[1]

Five chapters of the *History* are devoted to recounting episodes which are claimed to have happened during John's lifetime: they cover the period from John's appointment as bishop of Hexham in 687 up to his death in 721.[2] Apart from these chapters, which are told in the context of miraculous narratives, the *History* provides other, limited information about John's life, including the statement that he ordained Bede himself as a deacon and then as a priest.[3] This makes Bede the only written source with personal acquaintance with John. Further, the accounts of the miracles that Bede relates rely on the testimony of people who were all intimate with John during his lifetime: Berthun the first abbot of his monastery, and Herebald, who was a member of the bishop's clergy at the time of the events to which he testified.

As the earliest source of information about John's life and death, the *History* was heavily drawn upon by subsequent chroniclers, who reworked, reinterpreted, and supplemented the Bedan texts to suit their own objectives in writing about John.

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1 *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1979), xvii. (Hereafter Bede, *HE*)

2 Bede, *HE*, v.2–6.

3 *Ibid.*, v.24.

Alcuin: *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiæ*

Alcuin's verse history of Northumbria, which covers the period from the time of the Romans up to the death of Archbishop Albert in 780, was probably completed around 792/3.[4] There is only one extant medieval manuscript containing this work: Reims Bibliothèque, MS 426, which is of the twelfth century.[5] The poem honours the traditions of the northern church, which Alcuin centres on York, by celebrating the lives of its saints, bishops, and kings. As one of the earliest bishops of York, and one whose sanctity had been acknowledged, it was appropriate that John be included in this history. A laudatory account of his life is set out in lines 1084 to 1217, which Alcuin authenticates by acknowledging Bede's *History* as his source.

London, British Library, MS Cotton Faustina B. iv

This manuscript contains the *Vita Sancti Johannis* and a set of John's post-mortem miracles.[6] An inscription on the first leaf, 'Liber Sanctæ Mariæ de Holmcoltran, lib. cxli', suggests that it came out of Cumberland. Raine identified the text as having been written in a twelfth-century hand and, whereas Leach asserts that the writing is not later than 1160, Ian Doyle judges it to be of the slightly later hand of *c.*1175.[7]

Vita Sancti Johannis (VSJ)

This was written by a monk called Folcard, who claims that he composed it at the behest of Archbishop Ealdred of York. The date of its original composition must, therefore, have been roughly a hundred years before the Cottonian manuscript was compiled: that is, between 1060 when Ealdred was appointed to the see of York, and 11 September 1069 when he died. Attempts to determine whether it was composed pre- or post-Conquest have centred on the prologue, but because

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4 For a discussion on dating, see *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Peter Godman (Oxford, 1982), xxxix–xivii.

5 *Ibid.*, cxiii.

6 Fos 158r–179v.

7 *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. James Raine, 3 vols, RS 71 (1879–94), i, lvi–lvii ; *Memorials of Beverley Minster: the Chapter Act Book of the Collegiate Church of St John of Beverley, 1286–1347*, ed. A. F. Leach, 2 vols, SS 98 (1898) and 108 (1903), i, xx; Richard Morris and Eric Cambridge, with an appendix by Richard Doyle, 'Beverley Minster Before the Early Thirteenth Century', in Christopher Wilson, ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, BAACT, 9 (1983), 29, n. 52.

Folcard is not specific about either the timescale involved, or the names of certain people and places, this does present certain difficulties in trying to establish a date.

Folcard praises his patron for his efforts to reform and modernize the clergy, and claims a special obligation to him because of the latter's many acts of kindness towards him. In particular, Folcard relates the story of how Ealdred had come to his aid when he had been unjustly evicted from his monastery, but unfortunately the tale is recounted in such figurative language that it makes identification of the people and places referred to impossible to determine with any degree of certitude. It appears that, at a time when Folcard was a simple monk in a convent, he was attacked by a superior for what seem to be personal reasons rather than for any breach of the rules or sinful behaviour. When his brother monks rallied to his aid his superior, backed up by secular authority, evicted him from the monastery. A queen then saved him from ruination and placed him under the protection of Ealdred, although he still feared the malice of his enemies at the time of writing the prologue.

There has been some controversy over identifying the location of the convent and the identity of the queen, and in order to form an opinion it is necessary to look at Folcard's career as far as it is possible to determine. The possibilities are that he was ejected from St Bertin's, from Christ Church Canterbury, or from Thorney Abbey; and the queen may have been Edith, wife of King Edward the Confessor, or Matilda, wife of King William I.

Orderic Vitalis, who is extremely fulsome in praise of Folcard's personal qualities and literary skill, writes that he was a monk of St Bertin at St Omer, and was appointed to Thorney by William I following the conquest of England. Orderic claims that he acted as abbot there for approximately sixteen years, although without receiving the benediction, and left following a dispute with the bishop of Lincoln.[8] In fact Folcard was deposed by Lanfranc at the Council of Gloucester at Christmas 1085, which means that he must have been appointed to Thorney around Christmas 1069.[9] Given that this was a mere three months after Ealdred died, unless Folcard spent a period of time at Thorney as a simple monk before he was appointed abbot, the monastery from which he says that he was ejected and placed under the protection of Ealdred, is unlikely to have been Thorney.

Notes in two of the manuscripts containing copies of *VSJ* have led to a general assumption that Folcard went straight from St Bertin's to Christ Church Canterbury some time before the Conquest: in the Cottonian manuscript there is an inscription in the margin in a much later hand than the text, which reads, 'A

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[8] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford 1969–80), vi, 150–51.

[9] Frank Barlow, *The Life of King Edward Who Rests at Westminster*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1992), lii.

Folcardo ecclesiæ S Trinitatis Cantuaria monacho ad preces et instantiam. Aldredi archiepiscopo Eboracensis; edita'; and in London, British Library, MS Harley 560, which is written in a seventeenth-century hand, there is a heading which reads, 'Collectiones de Vita et miraculis S. Johannis Beverlaci transcriptæ ex veteri manuscripto Folcardi monachi cœnobii Dorobernensis qui anno nati servatoris claruit 1060 sub Edwardo anglorum rege et confessore'.[10] However, despite these inscriptions, both were written hundreds of years after Folcard's original composition, there is no 'hard evidence' that Folcard was at Canterbury before 1069. Barlow suggests that he either went to Canterbury after he was ejected from Thorney or, indeed, that he never became a monk of Christ Church.[11] Despite the lack of definitive proof, however, the possibility that Folcard was there at some time during his career cannot be dismissed.

A third possibility is that the problems to which Folcard refers occurred at his monastery of St Bertin, which could have provided the reason for his migration to England.

The identity of the queen is equally perplexing. If the queen were Matilda, wife of William I, then the troubles at Folcard's monastery must have occurred between May 1068 when she arrived in England for her coronation, at which Ealdred officiated, and 11 September 1069 when the archbishop died. As Barlow points out, according to this scenario, it would have been possible that Folcard travelled to England with her for her coronation and was immediately handed over into Ealdred's keeping. This would have given him a period of just under sixteen months to compose all his works under the archbishop's patronage and gain the good will of the king: all this at a time of great upheaval.

As Barlow convincingly argues, it is more plausible to consider the possibility that Folcard arrived in England before the Conquest following expulsion from St Bertin, possibly joining Bishop Herman, who had close connections with Queen Edith and Ealdred, in about 1061. In this case, the queen referred to would have been Edith. Furthermore, although the evidence is ultimately inconclusive, Folcard is a strong candidate for being the author of the anonymous *Life of King Edward the Confessor*. As demonstrated by Barlow, the circumstances of the anonymous writer exhibit many similarities with those of Folcard, including his persecution by envious men, and receiving the patronage of Queen Edith.[12] Although there are limitations to Barlow's argument, as he himself acknowledges, and it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that Folcard came to England before 1066, nevertheless the accumulation of circumstantial evidence for Queen Edith having been his benefactor is reasonably persuasive; in which case the *VSJ* would have to

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[10] *Historians*, i, lix.

[11] Barlow, *King Edward*, liii–lv.

[12] *Ibid.*, lvii–lix.

have been written before the Conquest, and after the appointment of Ealdred in 1060.

Miracula Sancti Johannis (*MSJ*)

A set of miracles, which in this manuscript is defective at the end, follows *VSJ*. There is no indication in this manuscript as to whom the author might have been, but in the *Acta Sanctorum* (discussed below), the Bollandists printed the complete series of miracles from a different manuscript, the date of which is unknown, and ascribed the collection to William Ketell, or Kecell, a clerk of Beverley.[13] In the *Acta Sanctorum* this text is preceded by an address to 'Dominis amicis suis, Christo præposito et Magistro Jesu, Ethal et Thur, Willelmus, Joannis Clericorum minimus, salutem, cum totius bonævoluntatis affectu'. No satisfactory identification of these two characters has been made: 'Thur' could refer to Thurstan, a provost of Beverley who died *c.*1153/54, or to Archbishop Thurstan who died in 1140.[14]

Without explaining his reasoning, apart from referring to an examination of the first appendix, which I have called *Alia Miracula I* (*AMI*), Raine concluded that it was to the provost that the 'Thur' referred, which indicates a date of about 1150 for the composition of this work.[15] A date prior to 1154 is certainly indicated in Ketell's text, which claims that the York clergy sought John's assistance in ending a drought that was threatening the livelihood of the entire area.[16] Presumably, this would have been before York had adopted William Fitzherbert, a former archbishop of York, as patron saint on his death in 1154, or they would surely have appealed to him rather than make the, perhaps humbling, journey to their subordinate minster. This points to Archbishop Thurstan as the recipient of the dedication and puts the composition of the work before 1140. Support for an early date comes from Ketell's own reference, in his second chapter, to Archbishop Ealdred of York, who died in 1069, as 'bonæ memoriæ', which suggests that he might have known the archbishop when he was alive.

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[13] *AASS*, Maii ii, 172–9.

[14] *Memorials*, i, xxi.

[15] *Historians*, i, 1, liv. Raine concluded that the word 'prius', which had been interpolated into chapter 4 in the phrase, 'ante sepulcrum, quo beati viri corpus prius humatum fuerat . . . statuerunt', meant that the suppliants had been standing before John's 'former tomb', meaning the place from where his remains had been translated in 1197. In my opinion this is mistaken and the proper translation is, 'before the tomb, where the body of the blessed man had formerly been buried'. There is abundant evidence to indicate that John's suppliants prayed to him either before his original burial place in the tomb, or in front of the shrine that housed his relics.

[16] *MSJ*, 3.

Other backing for an earlier date comes from the author of *AMI* who claims that not only that he can find no miracles written down apart from those of Ketell, but also that he is writing the story of Athelstan visiting John's shrine because he cannot find it anywhere else. Given his reference to the work of Ketell, and his admission that he has read widely, his claim implies that the Athelstan legend was not contained in any manuscript of Ketell's work that was available to him. This suggests that the story was not part of Ketell's original composition, but that it was interpolated into the Cottonian manuscript, or its archetype, by another scribe who felt that it was appropriate to introduce the story at this point. This would then mean that Ketell's own work opens with the account of John safeguarding the people of Beverley from William the Conqueror's Harrying of the North.

There has also been some doubt as to the originator of this story: Raine supposed that Ketell was quoting Alfred of Beverley whose *Annales* were composed around 1150, but Leach maintained that Alfred 'was the least original of all the writers of that age' and it was more likely that either Alfred copied from Ketell, or that they both copied from a common source.[17] In support of Leach's contention, there are some indications in *AMI* that Ketell was of an earlier generation than Alfred. First, in the prologue it is stated that Ketell wrote after the arrival of the Normans in England for the benefit of future generations and his successors. Clearly this indicates a date later than 1066, but implies that Ketell wrote his collection not long after the Conquest. Further, it suggests that Ketell was of a much earlier generation than the writer of *AMI*, who is presumably including himself as part of this posterity whom Ketell served. A second pertinent comment comes in a story that concerns a clerk imprisoned by Robert de Stuteville, sheriff of Yorkshire from 1169 to 1175.[18] On his escape, the clerk fled to the church at Beverley where Alfred, the sacrist of the church, healed his bruised feet. The author refers to Alfred as 'bonæ memoriæ'. This does not necessarily prove that the author had known Alfred when he was alive but, despite its conventionality, it implies that the memory of Alfred was more recent than that of Ketell. Taken together with the remarks made in the prologue, this comparison suggests that Ketell was of an earlier generation than the sacrist and may well have been writing as early as 1100.

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[17] *Historians*, i, liv–lv; Alfred of Beverley, *Aluredi Beverlacensis annales, sive historia de gestis regum Britannia*, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1716), 129–30; *Memorials*, i, xxi.

[18] *Historians*, i, lv.

Chronica Pontificum Ecclesiæ Eboracensis[19]

These chronicles comprise a series of three annals which were created to record the lives of the bishops of York in order to prove that the diocese of York was independent of the see of Canterbury.[20] All of them used to be ascribed to Thomas Stubbs, a fourteenth-century writer, but this was disproved by the discovery of a manuscript written at least one hundred and fifty years before his time. The first part of this manuscript, which contains an abbreviated *vita* of John, must have been written in the first half of the twelfth century, probably soon after 1140, which is the date of the latest event recorded.[21] This makes it the earliest existing post-Conquest chronicle to be produced in the area. It was most likely composed by a member of the cathedral body who had access to the documents and manuscripts of the minster.[22] The author of this first part drew mainly upon Bede and Folcard, but also upon other, unknown sources for his history of John.

Aelred of Rievaulx: *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*[23]

Aelred, who was abbot of Rievaulx from 1147 to 1167, wrote his chronicle around 1150. The Migne edition contains a version of the Athelstan legend that is virtually identical to the account attributed to Ketell. In discussing his namesake's writings, Squire claims that Aelred's work is a blend of creative imagination with historical data gleaned from other sources, with the primary aim of reconciling the Anglo-Saxon past with the northern present.[24]

Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana, Maii ii

The *Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana* contains Folcard's *Vita Sancti Johannis*, which is followed by a set of miracles that are attributed to William Ketell, and also by three further collections of post-mortem miracle stories, which are referred to as *Alia Miracula I* (*AMI*), *Alia Miracula II* (*AMII*), and *Alia Miracula III* (*AMIII*), respectively. These texts were edited from an English manuscript supplied by Leander Pritchart, a Benedictine monk, and they contain a number of differences

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19 *Historians*, ii, 2, 312–87.

20 *Ibid.*, xxi.

21 The last event recorded was the death of Archbishop Thurstan (*Historians*, ii, 313, 387).

22 *Historians*, i, lvii.

23 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*, in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiæ cursus completus, series latina*, 122 vols (Paris, 1844–64), xcv (1855), cols. 724–5.

24 Aelred Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: a study* (London, 1969), esp. 88–92.

from the Cottonian manuscript. These texts may have originated from a much older manuscript, but there is no evidence to indicate whether this is the case, or whether they came from a seventeenth-century transcript.[25] Almost all of these texts are also in the fourteenth-century Beverley Cartulary, which is discussed below.

Alia Miracula I

The author of this set of miracles was clearly a member of the religious community at Beverley because he frequently uses the words 'us' and 'we' when referring to the clergy. As he claims that one of the stories he tells occurred during the reign of King Stephen, one can be reasonably certain that his work was composed sometime after that king's death in 1154. One story set in the time of the archbishopric of Gerard, who held the see of York from 1100 to 1108, concerns a deaf mute who, following his cure, is said to have remained in Beverley where he took up the trade of baker; he died an old man shortly before the death of Archbishop Thurstan in 1140. If one accepts the author's claims that he heard the story personally from the elderly baker when he, himself, was a schoolboy, it is highly unlikely that he could have been alive to record the tale much later than 1180.[26]

Alia Miracula II

This provides no clues as to its date of composition. It is clear from the text, however, that the author was a member of the religious community at Beverley as he refers to himself as being one of the priests who responded to the pleas of a mad woman and her son, who had come there hoping for a cure. Taking into account the claim of the author of *AMI* that no one apart from Ketell had recorded John's miracles, it seems reasonable to assume that this set of narratives were written some time after that collection.

Alia Miracula III

Raine estimated that this set of miracles was compiled in the late thirteenth century because he assumed that references to a conflict between the king and his magnates related to the civil war that broke out in 1264 during the reign of King Henry III.[27] However, there is evidence in the text that points to the much earlier conflict between King John and his barons.

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[25] *Historians*, i, lvii.
[26] *AMI*, 2.
[27] *Historians*, ii, lvi.