

‘Diuiduntur in quattuor’: the Interim and Judgement in Anglo-Saxon England

Abstract

The division of souls in the afterlife into groups of three or four can be found in the works of many patristic and medieval authors, drawing on a number of traditions about the fate of the soul in the interim and at judgement. These groupings have often been the subject of confusion, not least because it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether descriptions of the various groups of souls are intended to refer to the interim or to the judgement. This paper seeks to clarify and explore some of these divisions as they were discussed in Anglo-Saxon England: firstly in vision accounts by two eighth-century authors, Boniface, a missionary to the Continent, and the Venerable Bede; and secondly in the works of two later authors, Ælfric of Eynsham in the tenth century, and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin in the eleventh.

In the early eighth century, two prominent Anglo-Latin authors recorded visions which were revealed to men at the point of death. Writing to Eadburga, probably between 716 and 719, Boniface describes the marvellous visions of a monk in the abbey of Much Wenlock, who died and came back to life.¹ The visionary was taken up by angels and guided around the otherworld, where he saw various places which housed the souls of the dead. He saw fiery pits belching out souls, which flew up into the air and then fell back in, sometimes clinging to the edge of the pit for a short time before they fell in once more;² and he heard groaning and weeping coming from pits which were even deeper than those he had seen first.³ Then he saw a pleasant place where a glorious multitude of souls rejoiced, and from which came a fragrant smell.⁴ Next to this pleasant place was a burning pitchy river, over which was set a bridge. Occasionally, souls would break away from the crowd and start to cross the bridge, but some could not walk all the way across without slipping, falling into the river up to their knees, waists, armpits, or even being immersed entirely.⁵ On the other side of the river was the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, surrounded with gleaming walls, and the souls who had crossed over the river hurried to the city.⁶ After seeing a range of other wonders, including the souls of some people he had known who had now died, and the souls of people in the world who were still alive, he returned to his body, and was told to tell his vision only to those who asked with pious interest.⁷ Boniface

¹ *Ep. X*, ed. M. Tangl, in *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, Monumenta Germaniae Historiae, Epistolae Selectae I (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1916), pp. 8–15. For the dating of this letter see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 3, p. 243.

² *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 11, ll. 3–13.

³ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 11, ll. 14–20.

⁴ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 11, ll. 21–7.

⁵ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 11, l. 28 – p. 12, l. 9.

⁶ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 12, ll. 10–18.

⁷ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 12–15.

explains at the beginning of the letter that he had heard an account of these visions from Hildelith, but he assures Eadburga that he has now heard the visions from the man himself, and that three religious and venerable brothers, known to him as faithful witnesses, heard the account with him.⁸

In 731, not long after Boniface was writing to Eadburga, Bede recorded the vision of Drythelm in the fifth book of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁹ Like the monk of Wenlock, Drythelm died and came back to life. He too was guided through the otherworld, and although Bede does not state explicitly that the guide was an angel, his description suggests strongly that this is the case.¹⁰ Drythelm was led first to a valley which burned with fire on one side and whirled with snow and ice on the other, filled with souls which leapt from side to side as they could no longer bear the heat or the cold.¹¹ Beyond this valley, he saw a deep pit from which flames flew up and then sank down again, filled with human souls, and from which a horrible stench was emitted.¹² He was then taken to a beautiful meadow full of bright light and the fragrance of flowers, where crowds of blessed souls rejoiced.¹³ Beyond the meadow was a place still brighter and more fragrant, from where the sweetest sound of singing could be heard.¹⁴ After he had seen these things, he was commanded to return to his body, and he became a monk, inspired by what he had seen in the otherworld.¹⁵

There is no doubt that there are significant similarities between the two visions. Patrick Sims-Williams suggests that the simplest way of understanding the verbal and other correspondences between the two accounts is that a report of Drythelm's vision had circulated not long after it occurred.¹⁶ He argues that a written account, now lost, must have been available to Bede, and that this text or a version of it must have travelled south. At this point the account may have reached Hildelith, abbess of Barking, who related it to Boniface, as described at the beginning of the letter.¹⁷ Ananya Kabir also proposes that a common text underlies both accounts, but has the report of the vision travelling from Boniface to Bede: she argues that Bede learned of a version of the account recorded by Boniface, who had incorporated ideas from

⁸ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl., p. 15, ll. 23–6; cf. p. 8, ll. 9–15.

⁹ Bede, *HE*, V.12, ed. M. Lapidge and trans. P. Monat and P. Robin, *Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)* (Sources chrétiennes, 489-491; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005), III.68-84.

¹⁰ Bede, *HE*, V.12.2, ll. 1–2, ed. Lapidge, III.70, 'Lucidus ... aspectu et clarus erat indumento'.

¹¹ Bede, *HE*, V.12.2, ll. 4–22, ed. Lapidge, III.70–2.

¹² Bede, *HE*, V.12.3, ed. Lapidge, III.72–4.

¹³ Bede, *HE*, V.12.4, ed. Lapidge, III.76.

¹⁴ Bede, *HE*, V.12.5, ed. Lapidge, III.76–8.

¹⁵ Bede, *HE*, V.12.6–8, ed. Lapidge, III.78–84.

¹⁶ P. Sims-Williams, 'A Recension of Boniface's Letter to Eadburg about the Monk of Wenlock's Vision', in *Latin Learning and Old English Lore*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keefe and A. Orchard, I.194-214, at 197; and also his *Religion and Literature*, p. 250.

¹⁷ Sims-Williams, 'Recension', p. 196–8. For Hildelith as the abbess of Barking, see Bede, *HE* IV.10.

Julian of Toledo's *Prognosticon* into his retelling of the monk of Wenlock's vision. Bede, she suggests, shaped Drythelm's vision, perhaps well known locally, into this mould; and she reasons that Bede may have omitted Boniface's name from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* precisely because he did not wish to highlight the source that had influenced him.¹⁸

From the time of Augustine the usual division of souls in the interim had included only three categories, determined by whether or not they required help from the living after death: those who were so good that they required no help; those who were so bad that they could not benefit from it; and those who were neither so bad that they could not benefit from it, nor so good that they did not require it.¹⁹ This issue has been rather confused in some recent scholarship, since in his extremely influential study of purgatory Jacques Le Goff fundamentally misunderstands Augustinian thought on the matter and reads four categories where there are only three.²⁰ The fourfold division is therefore rather more innovative than it has sometimes been viewed,²¹ but it is unclear where this comes from in the Anglo-Latin accounts. Kabir suggests that the fourfold grouping is attributable to the influence of Julian of Toledo's *Prognosticon futuri saeculi*, a work written some time after 688;²² but this cannot be the case since the *Prognosticon* does not in fact include such an arrangement. Julian relied heavily on earlier authors and the *Prognosticon* is to some extent a patchwork of their writings; in fact, Julian follows Augustine's three interim groups of souls. The first book of the *Prognosticon*, which considers 'the origin of human death', that is, how and why it is that humans must suffer death, concludes with a chapter 'on the offerings which are made for the faithful departed'.²³

¹⁸ A. Kabir, *Paradise, Death, and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 32 (Cambridge, 2001), p. 97.

¹⁹ *Enchiridion* 110.9–13, ed. M. Evans, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*, CCSL 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), pp. 48–114, at p. 108: 'Est enim quidam uiuendi modus, nec tam bonus ut non requirat ista post mortem, nec tam malus ut ei non prosint ista post mortem; est uero talis in bono ut ista non requirat, et est rursus talis in malo ut nec his ualeat cum ex hac uita transierit adiuuari'; 'For there is a certain manner of living, neither so good that someone does not require these [masses and alms-giving] after death, nor so bad that these cannot help him after death: there is truly one so good that he does not require these; and again one so bad, that he cannot profit from these when this life is over.'

²⁰ J. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1984), pp. 69–78; see also the review of Le Goff's book by G. R. Edwards, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), p. 639. Le Goff imagines that there are two intermediate categories, the 'non ualde boni' and the 'non ualde mali', but this not, in fact, correct. A distinction is made between the 'not very good' and the 'not very bad' in later works: for example in the ninth-century, Sedulius Scotus' *Collectaneum miscellaneum* (XXV.xxv.14–16, ed. D. Simpson, *Collectaneum miscellaneum*, CCCM 67 (Turnhout, 1988–90), p. 185); and in the early eleventh-century, Burchard of Worms' *Decretum* (XX.70, ed. PL 140.1044A). However, the 'not very bad' are in these works clearly condemned to hell and not an intermediate group of souls, since the offerings made on their behalf simply make the damnation more tolerable and do not provide any release from torment.

²¹ Kabir, *Paradise*, 90–1.

²² Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 93–7; J. N. Hillgarth, *Sancti Iuliani sedis episcopis opera*, CCSL 115 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), p. xix.

²³ 'De oblationibus quae pro defunctis fidelibus offeruntur', *Prognosticon*, I.22, ed. J. N. Hillgarth, *Sancti Iuliani sedis episcopis opera*, CCSL 115 (Turnhout, 1976), pp. 39–40.

The whole (short) chapter is in fact made up of two Augustinian quotations, firstly from the *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, where Augustine refers to the story of the Jews for whom Judas Maccabeus offered sacrifices as a sin-offering.²⁴ Next to this, Julian places a quotation from the *Enchiridion*, where Augustine describes the ways that offerings may help the departed:

Cum enim Deo sacrificium pro spiritibus defunctis offertur, pro ualde bonis gratiarum actiones sunt, pro non ualde malis propitiationses sunt, pro ualde malis etiam si nulla sint adiumenta mortuorum qualescumque tamen sunt consolationes uiuentium.²⁵

Clearly, Julian subscribes to Augustine's three interim groups here. Interestingly, while Augustine describes the middle category as the 'non ualde boni', Julian's quotation from Augustine changes the wording here, to describe this group as the 'non ualde mali'. This alteration may be drawn from his exemplar, and the same change is found in Isidore's *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, where the value of offerings for the departed are described.²⁶

In the second book Julian turns to address the question of how the souls of the departed exist in this interim between death and the resurrection of the body, that is, at the universal judgement.²⁷ He begins by discussing the two paradises, earthly and celestial, describing that the earthly paradise was where Adam and Eve lived before they sinned, and juxtaposing this with the heavenly paradise 'ubi animae beatorum statim ut a corpore exeunt transferuntur, atque digna felicitate laetantes, expectant receptionem corporum suorum'.²⁸ Kabir incorrectly interprets this celestial paradise as an interim state of rest, separate from heaven and reserved for blessed souls who are not fully perfect.²⁹ But rather than signifying the interim paradise, Julian uses *paradisus* to refer to heaven – and in fact if this celestial paradise is not understood as heaven, then there is no discussion of heaven in his entire work.³⁰ He goes on to discuss the location of this celestial paradise, the meaning of the 'bosom of Abraham', the different types of hell and the nature of hell, addressing the nature of post-mortem states or places, and where

²⁴ *Prognosticon*, I.22, ll. 3-8, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 39–40; Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, I.3.

²⁵ 'For when the sacrifice is offered to God on behalf of dead souls, for those who are very good they are deeds of thanks; for those who are not very bad they are atonements; and for those who are very bad, even if they may be no help of any sort for the dead, nevertheless they are consolation to the living.' *Prognosticon*, I.22, ll. 8-14, ed. Hillgarth, p. 40; drawn from Augustine, *Enchiridion* 110, ed. Evans, p. 108.

²⁶ *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, c. 18, ed. C. M. Lawson, *Opera Sancti Isidori episcopi hispalensis*, CCSL 113 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), pp. 22–3.

²⁷ 'Liber secundus de animabus defunctorum quo modo se habeant ante ultimam corporum resurrectionem', ed. Hillgarth, pp. 41, 44.

²⁸ *Prognosticon*, II.1, ll. 6–8, ed. Hillgarth, p. 44: 'where the souls of the blessed are transferred as soon as they leave the body, and rejoicing with worthy happiness, they await the reception of their bodies'.

²⁹ Kabir, *Paradise*, pp. 44–5.

³⁰ Kabir notes that *paradisus* could 'as frequently merge with heaven as it could be distinguished from it' (*Paradise*, p. 3); but she seems not to have realised that this is in fact what has happened here.

these are.³¹ The ‘animae beatorum’ reappear where Julian explains that these souls go to heaven as soon as they leave their bodies, confirming that the celestial paradise which contains them must be understood as heaven.³² A later chapter in the *Prognosticon*, drawn from Julian Pomerius’ lost treatise on the nature of the soul, again simply uses *paradisus* as a term for heaven: here Julian states that the souls which are not so perfect that they can enter paradise immediately, nor are so wicked that they merit eternal damnation, will become participants of the heavenly kingdom after purification by medicinal pains.³³ *Paradisus* and *regnum caelorum* are equated here: both terms refer to the same place, that is heaven, which is denied to all but the purest souls. The medicinal pains afflicting those less than pure are purgatorial, distinct from the fire of hell, which would be as inappropriate for these souls as would direct entry into heaven.³⁴ This chapter confirms belief in the purgatorial interim for souls who are not perfect.

Once he has discussed the souls which go to heaven (Augustine’s ‘ualde boni’) and the souls which go to hell (Augustine’s ‘ualde mali’), Julian focuses on the category in between: the group which Augustine describes variously as ‘nec tam bonus ... nec tam malus’, or ‘non ualde boni’, and which has become ‘non ualde mali’ in Julian’s discussion. Julian addresses the questions surrounding purgatorial fire and how it is applied to souls in the interim.³⁵ Again, he follows earlier theologians closely, juxtaposing Augustinian thought on the possibility of purgation of small faults with the statement in Gregory’s *Dialogues* that purgatorial fire must be believed.³⁶ After five chapters considering various aspects of purgatorial fire, the rest of the book focuses on complicated issues such as whether the souls of the wicked and the good can see each other in the beyond, and again Julian derives much of his material from Augustine and from Gregory’s *Dialogues*. He concludes the book by affirming that the souls of the blessed have already come to Christ in heaven, before turning in the third book to questions concerning the universal judgement and bodily resurrection.³⁷ Julian’s *Prognosticon* cannot, therefore, be the model which underlies the fourfold structure of the interim in the visions recorded by Boniface and Bede.

³¹ *Prognosticon*, II.2–7, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 44–8; N. P. Stork, ‘A Spanish Bishop Remembers the Future: Oral Traditions and Purgatory in Julian of Toledo’, *Oral Tradition* 23.1 (2008), pp. 43–70, at p. 53.

³² *Prognosticon*, II.8, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 48–9.

³³ *Prognosticon*, II.10, ed. Hillgarth, p. 49. Kabir asserts that this chapter contains a clearer explanation of the interim paradise (*Paradise*, pp. 44–5) but again, this cannot be the case.

³⁴ C. Carozzi, *Le voyage de l’âme dans l’au-delà, d’après la littérature latine: Ve-XIIIe siècle*, Collection de l’École française de Rome, 189 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994), p. 93.

³⁵ *Prognosticon*, II.11–23, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 50–60.

³⁶ *Prognosticon*, II.19 ed. Hillgarth, pp. 55–6; Gregory, *Dialogues*, IV.41.

³⁷ *Prognosticon*, II.37, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 74–6.

In any case, one might question whether it is even necessary to look for sources which provide the framework for a vision tale, particularly if, as Sims-Williams suggests, the same vision underlies both reports. It is worth considering precisely how visions made the journey from visionary experience to written text, possibly by way of oral reports travelling outside the immediate circle of visionary and listeners. Sims-Williams discusses the shaping of dreams as they are recounted, explaining that the more the story was retold, the more it might take on the characteristics of other visions known to himself or to his listeners.³⁸ Friends and family might contribute to the process of interpretation,³⁹ or a priest might ask leading questions, expecting particular features to have been seen by the visionary. Popular visions such as the apocryphal *Visio. S. Pauli* or the seventh-century vision of Fursey might therefore have been influential at one of several stages: in the form of ‘cultural conditioning’, i.e. the visionary sees what he expects to see; as the visionary retold the story to others; or, perhaps most significantly, as the oral account was solidified into a written form. One could also take the position of the extreme cynic, and suggest that simply hearing that someone had had a vision might be enough of an excuse for a medieval author to create his own account of what he imagined the afterlife to be like. Although there is no certain evidence in Bede’s or Boniface’s case that this is what either has done, it can safely be assumed that authors with such working methods would not alert their readers to the fact.

It is clear that a significant level of shaping has taken place by both authors in the process of creating a written text, whatever oral accounts or written theologies may underlie the vision narratives they present. Although Boniface occasionally stands at some distance from the brother, presenting a third-person narrative (e.g. ‘vidit quoque mire amoenitatis locum ...’⁴⁰), for much of the letter he describes simply what the brother apparently said, in reported speech (e.g. ‘referebat se ... vidisse’⁴¹) or direct speech (e.g. ‘et sublevabant me, dixit, in aera sursum’⁴²). The repetition of ‘he said’, or ‘he reported’ throughout the letter reminds the reader that Boniface apparently heard about these marvels directly from the visionary, and invites the reader to assume that first-person statements have been recorded straight from the man himself. Bede’s

³⁸ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 249.

³⁹ J. S. Hanson, ‘Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity’, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung II Band 23.2*, ed. W. Haase (Berlin, 1980), pp. 1395–1427, at pp. 1412–13. Details could ‘jump’ from one vision to another, such as the name of the priest in a vision described by P. G. Schmidt, ‘Bède et la tradition de récits visionnaires’, in *Bède Le Vénérable Entre Tradition Et Postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille: Ceges-Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2005), pp. 261–6.

⁴⁰ Ep. X, ed. Tangl, p. 11, l. 21, ‘he saw a place of marvellous pleasantness ...’.

⁴¹ Ep. X, ed. Tangl, p. 11, l. 3, ‘he reported that he saw’. Frequently the initial ‘he said’ is simply understood from the accusative and infinitive constructions of each sentence.

⁴² Ep. X, ed. Tangl, p. 9, l. 3, ‘and they lifted me up, he said, into the air’.

description, with the exception of the opening and closing passages which set the scene and conclude with a moral admonishment, is almost entirely in the first person, without apparent comment from Bede himself as author. And yet on closer reading, both authors' voices come through these narratives fairly strongly. Allusions to, or parallels with, other literary works are to be found in both accounts. Bede echoes Vergil's *Aeneid* in his description of the gloom of the otherworld and Boniface's account has verbal parallels with the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.⁴³ The *Dialogues* may have been influential more generally because of the many stories of otherworld visions that are recounted therein, just as tales of the visions of Fursey (also paraphrased by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*) or of St Paul may have influenced Bede and Boniface at a conscious or subconscious level.

More specifically than these verbal echoes, it is possible to see the authors' own interests emerging throughout the visions that they recount. Before Boniface describes the places in the otherworld which are shown to the brother from Wenlock, the visionary narrates that his sins rose up against him, crying out against him and accusing him of everything that he had done and had failed to confess, or had forgotten, or had not even realised was sinful.⁴⁴ Against these, his virtues stood up in his defence, each countering its opposing sin.⁴⁵ It is possible that this passage shows the influence of the redactions of the *Visio S. Pauli*, echoing the fights between angels and demons as the souls leave their body.⁴⁶ However, Boniface's own interest in the vices and virtues is evident from the *Enigmata* which he composed on the subject, ten on vices and ten on virtues.⁴⁷ Although Boniface presents the personified vices and virtues as part of the direct speech of the visionary, it is by no means clear how much of this depiction is from the brother himself, and how much from Boniface as the recorder of the vision.

The angelic guide in the vision of the monk of Wenlock explains the significance of each part of the afterlife, and which souls are located there, as the vision unfolds.⁴⁸ In contrast, Bede reserves the guide's explanation of the different places until the end of the visionary experience, whereupon they are explained in order: the relationships between the places and the types of

⁴³ E.g. Bede, *HE* V.12.3, ll. 6–7, ed. Lapidge, III.72, n. 1, drawn from Vergil, *Aeneid*, VI.268; echoes of *Dial.* II.35, IV.8 (Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p.250–1, n. 40), and IV.37 (Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 98 and n. 68) are found in Boniface's account.

⁴⁴ *Ep.* X, ed. Tangl, p. 9, ll. 26–9; 'omnia ... peccamina, quae fecit a iuventute sua et ad confitendum aut neglexit aut oblivioni tradidit vel ad peccatum pertinere omnino nesciebat'.

⁴⁵ *Ep.* X, ed. Tangl, p. 10, l. 24 – 11, l. 2.

⁴⁶ See C. Carozzi, *Eschatologie et au-delà: recherches sur l'Apocalypse de Paul* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1994), p. 81; C. A. Mango, *Byzantium: the Empire of New Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 164; J. Stevenson, 'Ascent through the heavens, from Egypt to Ireland', *CMCS* 5 (1983), pp. 21–35.

⁴⁷ *Enigmata Bonifatii, De virtutibus et vitiis*, ed. F. Glorie, in *Collectiones aenigmataum merovingicae aetatis*, CCSL 133 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), pp. 279–343.

⁴⁸ Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 87–8.

souls which are allocated to each place are much clearer as a result.⁴⁹ Kabir describes Boniface as a ‘synthesiser’ and Bede as an ‘editor’,⁵⁰ and indeed Bede’s authorial interference seems to be much greater than Boniface’s, extending to the entire structure of the vision and the way the otherworld is described and framed. There is an extremely close correspondence between the description of Drythelm’s vision and Bede’s homily for the second Sunday in Advent.⁵¹ In this homily, Bede’s most detailed discussion of the interim between death and resurrection, the souls of the truly wicked are not discussed, perhaps because he is primarily interested in those who will be saved, but naturally this category is understood.⁵² After stating that the souls who go directly to heaven are the perfect, including apostles, martyrs and confessors, Bede turns to the question of those souls who are less than perfect. These souls wait in paradise (‘paradisus’), evidently distinct from heaven since these souls are separated from God and will only come into his presence after the universal judgement. Finally, Bede discusses another group who will ultimately be included in the elect: those had performed good works, but because of some evil deeds must be severely chastized in the flames of purgatorial fire before the judgement.⁵³

The function of each of the different parts of the otherworld is the same in Drythelm’s vision and in Bede’s homily, although they are explained in a different order since Drythelm’s guide discusses each place in the order in which it was seen in the vision.⁵⁴ First, the guide explains that the valley of fire and ice is for the souls of those who repented late, in the moment of death, but that because they did repent, they will come to heaven at the day of judgement.⁵⁵ He adds further that these souls are much aided by the prayers, alms, fasts, and especially the masses offered for them by the living, such that some souls may be released from the valley before the judgement.⁵⁶ The possibility of this release is also included in the Advent homily, where Bede explains that the souls who are released by prayers, alms, fasts, weeping and the oblations of the mass will come ‘ad beatorum ... requiem’.⁵⁷ The guide explains the deep pit of

⁴⁹ Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 88–9.

⁵⁰ Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 87–8.

⁵¹ *Hom. I.2*, ed. Hurst, *Beda Venerabilis opera homiletica*, CCSL 122 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), pp. 7–13.

⁵² Carozzi, *Voyage*, p. 250.

⁵³ *Hom. I.2*, ll. 208–12, ed. Hurst, pp. 12–13.

⁵⁴ Given Jacques Le Goff’s insistence in his important and influential book, *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), that purgatory is a place rather than a state, it is interesting that Bede portrays the otherworld both as places and as states depending on the context of his discussion. Bede describes places in the vision, where Drythelm moves physically between them; in the theological discussion in the homily, he describes states of existence. In the context of the history of purgatory as a whole, however, Le Goff’s insistence on place and spatialization is rather problematic.

⁵⁵ V.12.6, ll. 3–8, ed. Lapidge, III.78.

⁵⁶ V.12.6, ll. 9–13, ed. Lapidge, III.78.

⁵⁷ *Hom. I.2*, ll. 212–220, ed. Hurst, p. 13.

the vision as the mouth of hell, from which no soul will ever be released if it once falls in.⁵⁸ The flowery field is reserved for the souls who leave their bodies in good works, but who are not so perfect that they deserve to enter heaven immediately – although, the guide adds, they will come to heaven at the day of judgement.⁵⁹ Finally, the guide explains that those who are perfect in every word, deed and thought enter heaven as soon as they leave the body.⁶⁰

It is difficult not to assume that these passages are informed by the same source, but it is not clear what that source might be. It seems likely that the vision of Drythelm was shaped by Bede to fit the scheme espoused in his second Advent homily, since the alternative, that the homily is based on a vision told by popular report, is most unlike Bede's normal working methods.⁶¹ The different groups described in the vision and the homily are, like Augustine's categories, determined by the state of the souls at death and whether or not the offerings of the living affect the souls in each group. But Bede's four categories of souls in the interim are perhaps best understood in the light of his presentation of the different groups of souls at the universal judgement. In a homily which was apparently to be read on the memorial of Benedict Biscop,⁶² Bede discusses Jesus' statement that those who have left everything to follow him will be judges when the Son of Man comes in glory.⁶³ He explains that all those who follow Christ according to the example of the apostles, leaving everything they own, will be judges.⁶⁴ It should be noted, he says, that there are two orders of the elect – those who will judge, and those who are judged. As well as those who judge, there are those who, although they did not give up everything, gave alms to the poor: they will be the ones who hear 'Venite, benedicti' at the judgement.⁶⁵ Parallel to this are two orders of the wicked, those who were baptized, who will hear 'Discedite, maledicti'; and those who either never received baptism or who were baptized and then apostasized. These last are at the other extreme from those who judge: they are not judged, but are sent directly to eternal torment.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ V.12.6, ll. 13–16, ed. Lapidge, III.78.

⁵⁹ V.12.6, ll. 16–22, ed. Lapidge, III.78.

⁶⁰ V.12.6, ll. 22–6, ed. Lapidge, III.78–80.

⁶¹ Bede drew an immense amount of information from patristic authors, and in some of his works (notably his gospel commentaries but not, interestingly, his homilies) noted his sources in the margins to show that his work was drawn from a recognised authority; it was evidently important to him to demonstrate that he followed in their footsteps (J. Hill, *Bede and the Benedictine Reform*, Jarrow Lecture (1998), pp. 2–4).

⁶² '... in beatae memoriae patre nostro Benedicto cuius hodie uenerandum adsumptionis diem debita sollemnitate recolimus ...', *Hom.* I.13, ll. 98–9, ed. Hurst, p. 91.

⁶³ Matt. 19:27–9, the gospel set for the day.

⁶⁴ *Hom.* I.2, ll. 35–41, ed. Hurst, p. 89.

⁶⁵ *Hom.* I.2, ll. 42–61, ed. Hurst, p. 89–90.

⁶⁶ *Hom.* I.2, ll. 61–79, ed. Hurst, p. 90.

The source for this passage of Bede's homily is a passage from Gregory's *Moralia* where these four groups are set out.⁶⁷ At the beginning of his discussion, Gregory explains the parallels between the groups succinctly:

Duae quippe sunt partes, electorum scilicet, atque reproborum. Sed bini ordines eisdem singulis partibus continentur. Alii namque iudicantur et pereunt, alii non iudicantur et pereunt. Alii iudicantur et regnant, alii non iudicantur et regnant.⁶⁸

He goes on to describe that the middle two groups, those who are judged and perish, and those who are judged and reign, are those who hear the words of Christ as described in the gospels, the 'Discedite, maledicti' and the 'Venite, benedicti' respectively. He also explains that those who are not judged and reign are those who followed all the Lord's commandments, especially the commandment to leave everything and follow him. This passage is discussed by Frederick Biggs, and he examines the motif of the fourfold judgement at the end of time, which made its way into a number of insular homiletic works, and 'was once thought to be distinctively Celtic'.⁶⁹ Biggs notes that this motif also appears in Isidore's *Libri Sententiarum* and in Julian of Toledo's *Prognosticon*, but does not comment on its presence in Bede's homilies.⁷⁰

Isidore and Julian both present abbreviated versions of Gregory's discussion, Julian perhaps drawing directly on Isidore, to judge from the wording.⁷¹ But Bede seems to have drawn on the longer, Gregorian exegesis, since the crucial statement for Bede's understanding of the judgement – and perhaps also the interim – is Gregory's statement that 'Ex electorum uero parte alii iudicantur et regnant, qui uitae maculas lacrimis tergunt, qui mala praecedentia factis sequentibus redimentes, quicquid illicitum aliquando fecerunt ab oculis iudicis eleemosynarum superductione cooperiunt.'⁷² In contrast to the saints, who even immediately after death are received into heaven with Christ, these souls come to heaven only after they have been judged. Before the judgement, these souls cannot be in heaven, but according to Gregory, they have

⁶⁷ Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, 26.27.50, l. 18 – 51. l. 102, ed. Adriaen, *S. Gregorii Magni Opera. Moralia in Iob*, CCSL 143, 143A, 143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979-85), pp. 1304–6.

⁶⁸ Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, 26.27.50, ll. 18–22, ed. Adriaen, p. 1304. 'Indeed there are two groups, namely of the elect and of the wicked. But two orders are contained within individual groups. For some are judged and perish, others are not judged and perish. Some are judged and reign, others are not judged and reign.'

⁶⁹ F. Biggs, 'The Fourfold Division of Souls: the Old English 'Christ III' and the Insular Homiletic Tradition', *Traditio* 45 (1989-90), 36–51, esp. pp. 45–7.

⁷⁰ Biggs, 'Fourfold Division', p. 46.

⁷¹ Isidore of Seville, *Sententiarum libri iii*, I.27.10, ed. PL 83.596B–597A ('Duae sunt differentiae uel ordines hominum in iudicio, hoc est electorum et reproborum. Qui tamen diuiduntur in quattuor. Perfectorum ordo unus est qui cum Domino iudicat, et alius qui iudicatur. '); Julian of Toledo, *Prognosticon*, III.33, ed. Hillgarth, pp. 107–8 ('Duae sunt enim differentiae uel ordines hominum in iudicio collectorum, hoc est electorum et reproborum, qui tamen in quattuor diuiduntur. Perfectorum ordo est unus, qui cum domino iudicat, de quibus dominus ait: sedebitis et uos super sedes duodecim.').

⁷² *Moralia in Iob*, 26.27.50, ll. 56–9, ed. Adriaen, p. 1305. 'But from the group of the elect, some are judged and reign, who covered the sins of life with tears, who redeeming their previous crimes with their following deeds, whenever they did any illicit thing, they covered it from the eyes of the judge by the drawing over of almsgiving.'

already wiped away many of their sins with tears, good deeds, and almsgiving. These are precisely the souls who, in the words of Dryhthelm's guide, 'non tamen sunt tantae perfectionis, ut in regnum caelorum statim mereantur introduci; qui tamen omnes in die iudicii ad uisionem Christi et gaudia regni caelestis intrabunt'.⁷³

Bede explains that those who will be judged and yet reign include another category, those who 'propter bona quidem opera ad electorum sortem praeordinati sed propter mala aliqua quibus polluti de corpore exierunt post mortem severe castigandi excipiuntur flammis ignis purgatorii'.⁷⁴ In Augustine's scheme, this is the only middle category, since he defines the different groups according to the effects of prayers and masses offered by the living. For Bede, as for Augustine, souls who are purified in purgatorial fire are cleansed by the alms which are offered for them, along with the tears shed for them and the masses said for them, so that when the judgement occurs, they too will hear the 'Venite, benedicti', and join the crowd of the elect. Crucially, Bede explains that after suffering purgatorial fire, they will either be released on the day of judgement after they are cleaned from their sins by a long trial – or even before this they may come to rest, if they are absolved by the offerings of their friends.⁷⁵ The interim state of rest therefore absorbs souls who must suffer to be cleansed of their sins, and are yet absolved before the judgement, as well as those who are simply not quite perfect, and therefore do not merit direct entry into heaven as soon as they die. No source has been identified for this passage, and in fact, no paradise rest of this kind appears in Bede's known sources at all, as far as I am aware, or indeed in Julian's *Prognosticon*, as I have mentioned; or in any patristic literature. Echoes of an interim paradise may be found in the apocryphal *Visio S. Pauli* and in Byzantine literature,⁷⁶ but these do not seem to have been a significant influence on Bede. It is theoretically possible that Bede used a source which is lost or which has not been identified, but it is perhaps more likely that this is the result of Bede's own meticulous working-out of the relationship of souls to one another, perhaps deliberately set up in parallel with the Gregorian scheme of the four-fold

⁷³ *HE*, V.12.6, ll. 19–22, ed. Lapidge, III.78. 'But they are not of such perfection that they deserve to be led into the kingdom of heaven immediately; however on the day of judgement all will enter the vision of Christ and the joy of the heavenly kingdom'.

⁷⁴ *Hom.* I.2, ll. 212–16, ed. Hurst, p. 13. 'some, preordained to the fate of the elect on account of their good works, but on account of some other crimes by which they were stained, went out of the body after death to be fiercely chastised, and are received by the flames of purgatorial fire.'

⁷⁵ *Hom.* I.2, ll. 216–20, ed. Hurst, p. 13. '... et uel usque ad diem iudicii longa huius examinatione a uitiorum sorde mundantur uel certe prius amicorum fidelium precibus elemosinis ieiuniis fletibus et hostiae salutaris oblationibus absoluti a poenis et ipsi ad beatorum perueniunt requiem.' '... and either are cleaned by their long examination from the stain of their sins until the day of judgement, or indeed are released from punishments and come to the rest of the blessed before this, through the prayers, alms, fasts, and weeping of their faithful friends, and by the offering of the salvatory sacrifice.'

⁷⁶ Kabir, *Paradise*, pp. 14–37.

division at judgement.⁷⁷ This would accord with his approach elsewhere, for example following the practice of ‘concordance exegesis’, where a theme in one pericope might lead him to consider another comparable scriptural passage.⁷⁸ Despite his systematic and extremely wide-ranging reading of patristic authors, it has also been emphasized in recent studies that Bede was more of an innovator than he is sometimes considered.⁷⁹

In contrast to Bede’s interim scheme, Boniface’s account of the monk of Wenlock’s vision shows souls leaving the paradise rest and entering heaven. The souls in the pleasant flowery field occasionally – apparently as the whim takes them – rush to a bridge, set over a burning pitchy river. Crossing the bridge, some souls fall into the river, which reaches up to their knees, waists, or armpits according to how many sins need to be purged away.⁸⁰ There is no indication of why the souls cross the bridge when they do, and it is therefore not clear how the purgative process of the bridge and river relates to anything else. The placement of the bridge and river between paradise and heaven is surprising in any case, because it might more naturally be located between paradise and the pits containing the souls which will eventually be released. Movement between these two interim places is possible in Bede’s accounts of the interim, for example. The pits in the monk of Wenlock’s vision are also rather puzzling: there is nothing which asserts that the souls within are purged in any way, and in fact they seem to be part of an upper hell from which some souls will escape at the judgement rather than a purgatorial area from which all souls will be released as their sins are purged. Masses, almsgiving, and fasts, the traditional methods of releasing souls in the beyond, appear to play no part in the mitigation of punishment for these souls, which sets Boniface’s depiction of the interim somewhat apart from

⁷⁷ There are two other occasions where Bede uses ‘paradisus’ in a way which *may* apply to the interim. One is in the context of the paradise promised to the ‘Good Thief’: ‘...beatissima paradisi requies, quia non alium finem quam glorificae resurrectionis habet initium ...’ (*De Temporum Ratione*, c. 71, l. 42, ed. C. W. Jones, *Beda Venerabilis opera didascalica*, 2. *De Temporum Ratione* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977) CCSL 123B, p. 543); the rest of paradise seems to end at the resurrection, indicating its impermanence and suggesting that it cannot be equated with heaven. The other is a passage in his commentary on Luke which is rather difficult to interpret: ‘Pulchre generationum ordo a baptizato dei filio usque ad deum patrem ascendens septuagesimo gradu enoch habet qui dilata morte translatus est in paradysum ut significet eos qui in gratiam adoptionis filiorum ex aqua et spiritu sancto regenerantur interim post absolutionem corporis aeternam suscipiendos in requiem, septuagenarius quippe numerus propter septimam sabbati ad requiem eorum significandam qui iuuante christi gratia decalogum legis impleuerint aptissime congruit, et in tempore resurrectionis indemutabili dei sapientiae contemplandae per saecula monstret esse iungendos’ (*In Luc. euang. exp.*, ed. D. Hurst, *Beda Venerabilis opera exegetica*, 3. *In Lucae euangelium expositio. In Marci euangelium expositio*, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), pp. 90–1).

⁷⁸ L. T. Martin, ‘Bede’s Originality in his Use of the Book of Wisdom in his *Homilies on the Gospels*, in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio, Medieval European Studies (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), pp. 189–202, at pp. 191–2.

⁷⁹ See for example the essays in *Bède Le Vénérable Entre Tradition Et Postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille: Ceges-Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2005) and *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio, Medieval European Studies (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006).

⁸⁰ *Ep. X*, ed. Tangl, p. 11, l. 28 – p. 12, l. 9.

the Augustinian model.⁸¹ Many of the souls who wait in the paradise rest shown to the monk of Wenlock are evidently not perfect, since they undergo purging in the fiery river when they try to cross the bridge; but it is never revealed how the moment of crossing is determined. Perhaps more interestingly, those who cross without falling in are presumably sinless, like the saints who Bede describes will sit as judges; but in Boniface's letter even the perfect are apparently unable to enter heaven immediately without going first to the place of paradise rest. Given the significant cleansing role of the river and bridge, which functions as a separate place, it is probably worth considering the monk of Wenlock's vision as a five-part, rather than a four-part, scheme.⁸²

The schematic presentations of the interim are therefore quite different in the two eighth-century vision accounts: the functions of the various places, and the relationships between them, have quite distinct significances. Bede presents a balanced four-part hierarchical scheme with two permanent outer places, and two interim inner places. The soul can journey from the lower interim place of purgation to the paradise rest, and will ultimately join the saints in heaven after the judgement. Those in the outer places, heaven and hell, will never leave once they have entered, and these places endure beyond the judgement. Despite their superficial similarity and the coincidence of literary motifs, the two eighth-century vision-accounts are substantially different. It seems to me unlikely that they are dependent on one common source, particularly since this overlooks a significant point: that Bede has shaped Drythelm's account to match his own theology of the interim, and that his conception of the interim appears to have been influenced by his understanding of the universal judgement, based on Gregorian thought. The similarities between the two visions are probably better explained as a result of the influence of the body of vision literature that was popular in Europe and circulating widely at this time.⁸³

Both of the eighth-century Latin vision narratives themselves became part of this body of vision literature, and were copied and recopied in the following centuries. In the ninth century, King Alfred's efforts to improve literacy and learning in England resulted in translations of a good number of Latin works: the surviving Old English translation of Bede's *Historia*

⁸¹ Another (fragmentary) letter included in the Bonifatian letter-collection relates a vision which includes a description of souls in pits, and the visionary observed one woman's soul released by the celebration of mass (*Ep. CXV*, ed. Tangl, pp. 247–50, at p. 248, ll. 5–7).

⁸² Sarah Foot also considers this, but views all those in the paradisaic fields in the monk of Wenlock's vision as sinners – although less sinful than those in the punishments of the fiery pits of the lower and upper hell – which does not explain how some souls are able to cross the bridge untouched by the fiery river (S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon "Purgatory"', in *The Church, the Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul. Papers read at the 2007 Summer Meeting and the 2008 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. P. Clarke and T. Claydon (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 87–96, at 93–5).

⁸³ Boniface did request that a copy of Bede's homilies be sent to him (e.g. *Ep. XVII*, ed. Tangl, pp. 29–31), but probably only after he had already heard and written down the monk of Wenlock's vision.

Ecclesiastica is perhaps attributable to this impetus.⁸⁴ Alfred's reforms kick-started a vernacular prose tradition unparalleled in Europe, particularly for homiletic and religious writing, and the effects of this were significant.⁸⁵ A translation of Boniface's letter, as well as the original Latin text, was included in a manuscript from later eleventh-century Worcester, along with Wærferth's Old English translation of the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (another product of Alfred's educational program) and translations from the *Vitas patrum*.⁸⁶ The manuscript was evidently intended as some kind of *Liber uisionum*, a collection of visions and miracles. In a rather different context, a translation of Bede's account of Drythelm's vision circulated independently of both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the ninth-century Old English translation. In the late tenth century, Ælfric of Eynsham produced a translation of Drythelm's vision, and presented it as an orthodox vision to counter the heretical (and extremely popular) *Visio S. Pauli*, which had itself been translated into English.⁸⁷ As one of the generation of churchmen following the Benedictine Reform which had begun earlier in the tenth century, Ælfric was particularly concerned with education and with orthodoxy. He was apparently rather uneasy with the concept of the interim paradise, and in his translation of Drythelm's vision seems to have tried to present a picture of this interim pleasant place which is much closer to the earthly paradise of Eden than to a paradise such as that described in the *Visio S. Pauli*.⁸⁸ In his other works, Ælfric seems to have avoided the Old English word for paradise, *neorxnawang*, where possible, restricting its use to places sanctioned by Scripture, or in the context of the Garden of Eden.⁸⁹ Perhaps fortunately for Ælfric, Bede's account of Drythelm does not describe the pleasant interim place as *paradisus*, and thus there was no need to use the term *neorxnawang*.

Elsewhere, Ælfric presents the interim rather differently from the fourfold scheme found in Drythelm's vision. Ælfric's most detailed discussion of the afterlife, a sermon for the octave

⁸⁴ D. Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962), pp. 57–90, at p. 77; see also G. Molyneux, 'The *Old English Bede*: English Ideology or Christian Instruction?', *English Historical Review* 124, 1289–323, at pp. 1292–3.

⁸⁵ See, for example, M. Godden, 'Ælfric and the vernacular prose tradition', in *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and B. F. Huppé (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), pp. 99–117, esp. pp. 106–10; and M. McC. Gatch, 'The achievement of Ælfric and his colleagues in European perspective' in *ibid.*, pp. 43–73, esp. pp. 60–1.

⁸⁶ London, British Library, Cotton Otho C.i, volume 2. See K. Sisam, 'An Old English Translation of a Letter from Wynfrith to Eadburga (A.D. 716–7) in Cotton MS. Otho C. 1', *Modern Language Review* 18.3, 253–72, which includes an edition of the letter at pp. 263–72; and N. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), no. 182.

⁸⁷ Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* II.21, ll. 1–139, ed. M. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, the Second Series Text*, Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series, 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 199–203. The Second Series of Catholic Homilies was composed probably in 992: P. Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's works', in *The Anglo-Saxons: studies in some aspects of their history and culture presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. P. Clemoes (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959), pp. 213–47, at p. 244.

⁸⁸ Kabir, *Paradise*, pp. 46–7.

⁸⁹ Kabir, *Paradise*, p. 38.

of Pentecost written probably somewhere between 1002 and 1005, is based closely on Julian's *Prognosticon*, or rather on extracts which he had made from the *Prognosticon* fairly early on in his career.⁹⁰ He discusses human mortality, brought about by Adam's sin, and the effect of sin and death on humanity. Like Julian, Ælfric describes three different categories of souls after death. But unlike Julian, he brings them together in comparison, and in fact discusses these categories twice in the course of the homily:

To goddra manna forðsiðe God asent his englas, þæt hi heora sawla onfon on heora forðsiðe, and gelædon to reste, swa swa we leorniað on bocum, and Crist him tæcð wununge be heora gewyrhtum. Ða ðe gode beoð, and Gode ær gecwemdon, on eallum godum weorcum, ða wuniað mid Gode, and ða ðe ne beoð ful gode, ne afeormode mid ealle fram eallum heora synnum, þa sceolon to witum faran, and on þam witum þrowian, oððæt hi wurðon clæne, and þurh ðingrædene ðanon alyse. Ða fordonan synfullan þe deofle gehyrsumodon on eallum synnum, and forsawon heora Drihten, and swa geendodon, [þa] sceolon to helle swa raðe swa hi gewitað, and ðær wunian æfre.⁹¹

Sumera manna sawla siðiað to reste æfter heora forðsiðe, and sume farað to witum, be þam ðe hi geworhton ær, and beoð eft alysede þurh ælmesdæda, and swiðost þurh ða mæssan, gif him man fore deð, and sume beoð fordemeded mid þam deoflum to helle, and se ðe æne cymð to helle, ne cymð he næfre ðanon, and se ðe æne cymð to reste, ne cymð he næfre to witum.⁹²

Ælfric evidently believes there are three categories of souls in the interim between death and judgement: those who do not suffer at all, those who suffer temporarily, and those who will never be released from punishment. The souls in his intermediate category are released through intercession, and this can be through almsgiving (perhaps meaning also 'good works' more generally), but occurs most often through the mass. By contrasting this 'rest' and hell, Ælfric underlines the finality and permanence of heaven and hell, contrasting these states with the one interim state of purgation, from which it is possible to be released.⁹³

⁹⁰ M. Mc. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Aelfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1977), pp. 101–4.

⁹¹ *Supp. Hom. XI*, ll. 181–94, ed. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, Early English Text Society, 259–60 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967–8), pp. 424–5. 'To the death of good men God sends his angels, so that they might take their souls at their death, and lead them to rest, just as we learn in books, and Christ takes them into his dwelling according to their deeds. Those who are good, and those who pleased God before, in all good works, they dwell with God, and those who are not completely good, nor purified from all their sins, they shall go to punishments, and suffer in the punishments, until they become clean, and from there be released through intercession. Those corrupt sinful men who obeyed the devil in all sins, and abandoned their Lord, and so ended, shall go to hell as soon as they die, and dwell there for ever.'

⁹² *Supp. XI*, ll. 208–215, ed. Pope, pp. 425–6. 'The souls of some men go to rest after their death, and some go to punishments, according to what they did before, and are released again through alms-giving, and most often through masses, if someone does it on his behalf, and some are condemned with the devil to hell, and whichever one comes to hell, he will never come from there, and whichever one comes to rest, he will never come to punishments.'

⁹³ Kabir interprets the 'rest' at the end of the passage as signifying the interim paradise (*Paradise*, pp. 43–4), but this cannot be the case, or there is no discussion of heaven here.

In a homily for the feast of the nativity of St. Paul composed probably in 989, Ælfric uses the motif of the fourfold judgement, based again on Julian's *Prognosticon* and/or the extracts he made from it.⁹⁴ However, it is a fairly bare account and he does not provide any indication of how he believes the second group of souls (which in Bede's description incorporates those who spent the interim either in paradise or in a purgatorial place) might relate to his three interim groups, simply providing a translation of his source.⁹⁵ Ælfric certainly had access to at least some of Bede's homilies, although it is not always clear whether he had read them directly or in compilations such as those by Smaragdus or Paul the Deacon;⁹⁶ if he did know Bede's second Advent homily, he either chose to ignore Bede's comments about the interim, or perhaps did not think to include them, since he follows Julian quite closely. In the absence of more specific information from Ælfric, one must assume that if he thought about it at all, the three interim groups of souls that he describes in the sermon for the octave of Pentecost correspond to the fourfold division at judgement as follows: the saints remain the first group in each; the second group at judgement is the middle category of souls who were purged in the interim; and the order of the wicked is one group in the interim which is ultimately divided into two – those who are judged and those who are not judged. Although he hints at this, explaining that the two lower orders will hear the 'Discedite' – a point on which he differs from Julian and Gregory – he never makes this explicit.

⁹⁴ Clemoes, 'Chronology', p. 244. Gatch identifies these extracts, one of Ælfric's earliest datable works, as the source for this passage (Gatch, *Preaching*, p. 101).

⁹⁵ *Catholic Homilies* I.xxvii, ll. 177–92, ed. P. Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, First Series: Text*, Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series, 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 406): ðær bið feower werod æt þam dome. twa gecorenra manna. 7 twa wiðercorenra; ðæt forme werod bið þæra apostola. 7 heora efenlæcendra. þa ðe ealle worulþing for godes naman forleton: hi beoð ða demeras. 7 him ne bið nan dom gedemed; Oþer endebyrdnys bið geleaffulra woruldmanna him bið dom geset: swa þæt hi beoð. asyndrede fram gemanan þære wiðercorenra. þus cwependum drihtne; Cumað to me ge gebletsode mines fæder. 7 onfoð þæt rice þe eow is gegearcod fram frymþe middanearde; An endebyrdnyss bið ðæra wiðercorenra þa ðe cyððe hæfdon to gode: ac hi ne beodon heora geleafan mid godes bebodum: þas beoð fordemede; Oþer endebyrdnyss bið ðæra hæpenra manna. þe nane cyððe to gode næfdon; ðysum bið gelæst se apostolica cwyde. þa ðe buton godes æ. syngodon: hi eac losiað buton ælcere æ; To þysum twam endebyrdnyssum cweð ðonne se rihtwisa dema: gewitað fram me ge awyriedan. into þam ecum fyre þe is gegearcod deofle. 7 his awyrigedum gastum. 'There are four companies at the judgement, two of chosen men and two of the wicked. The first company is of the apostles, and of their followers, those who abandoned all worldly things in God's name: they will be judges then. And nothing will be judged to them. Another order will be of believing men who will be judged so that they are divided from the company of the wicked. Thus the Lord will say: "Come to me, you blessed of my father, and receive that kingdom which was prepared for you from the beginning of the world". One company will be of the wicked, those who knew God, but did not continue their belief with his commandments: these will be judged. Another company will be of the heathen men, those who never know God; about these the apostle said: "Those who sin without God's law, perish without any law." To these two groups the righteous judge will then say: "Depart from me, you wicked, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his wicked spirits."'

⁹⁶ It has been suggested that Ælfric knew Bede's homilies as whole items only through Paul the Deacon's homiliary; but he knew others of the homilies through other routes, e.g. through Smaragdus' exegetical *Expositio libri comitis* (see J. Hill, 'Ælfric and Smaragdus', *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992), 203–37 and *Bede and the Benedictine Reform*, p. 13).

Moving to the later eleventh century, the Gregorian fourfold judgement scheme is found also in the writings of Goscelin, a monk from Saint-Bertin. Goscelin came to England in the early 1060s, joining the household of Bishop Hermann.⁹⁷ He came into contact with Eva, a young English nun at Wilton, where he may have been a chaplain; he both visited Eva and exchanged letters with her, and they seem to have become very close.⁹⁸ But Eva left Wilton without telling Goscelin, and went to Angers to become an anchorite, prompting him (probably in 1082–3) to write the *Liber Confortatorius*, a book of spiritual instruction – but also of consolation, apparently as much for Goscelin as for Eva.⁹⁹ Towards the end of the *Liber Confortatorius*, Goscelin describes the judgement and the four orders, two of the elect and two of the wicked.¹⁰⁰ The first order consists of the saints, who left everything for Christ, and followed the Lord through various tribulations in perfect justice and love.¹⁰¹ The second order is the ‘minus perfectorum electorum’, including good and faithful married people, who gave alms and abstained from illicit pleasures.¹⁰² Like Bede, Goscelin clarifies that this second order includes those who suffer in purgatorial fire, adding that ‘saluabuntur aut hic per ignem laborum ibi per ignem purgatorium’.¹⁰³

Elsewhere in the *Liber Confortatorius*, Goscelin seems also to envisage an interim place of paradise, distinct from heaven, where many religious, including himself, may await the judgement. As he describes how true friends can never be parted his thoughts turn to the afterlife, and he tells Eva, ‘aliquando presumebam, si Dominus propitiaretur peccatis meis, quod te in paradiso Dei gremio possem refouere, sed nunc hoc opto ut te merear digniori sinu patris Abrahe feliciter uidere’.¹⁰⁴ Goscelin’s second group of souls at judgement, those who are judged and saved, also includes the greater part of those in religious life, who lived ‘mediocre lives’ and

⁹⁷ F. Barlow, *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 134–6; R. C. Love, ‘Goscelin of Saint-Bertin’, in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 213.

⁹⁸ S. Hollis, ‘Goscelin and the Wilton Women’, in *Writing the Wilton Women*, ed. Hollis et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 219–20.

⁹⁹ A. Wilmart, ‘Ève et Goscelin’, *Revue Bénédictine* 50 (1938), pp. 42–83 at p. 62; C. H. Talbot, ‘The *Liber Confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin’, *Analecta Monastica* 37 (1955), pp. 1–117, at p. 8; S. Hollis, ‘Goscelin and the Wilton Women’, p. 220; see also in the same volume R. Hayward, ‘Goscelin’s *Liber confortatorius*: Complaints and Consolations’, pp. 355–67.

¹⁰⁰ *Liber Confortatorius* III, ed. Talbot, pp. 110, l. 34 – p. 111, l. 18.

¹⁰¹ *Liber Confortatorius* III, ed. Talbot, p. 110, l. 35 – p. 111, l. 3.

¹⁰² *Liber Confortatorius* IV, ed. Talbot, p. 111, ll. 5–7. This wording may derive from Isidore, who describes that there are two orders of the ‘perfect’: ‘Perfectorum ordo unus est qui cum Domino iudicat, et alius qui iudicatur. Vtrique tamen cum Christo regnabunt.’ ‘One order of the perfect is that which judges with God, and another which is judged. However both will reign with Christ.’ (*Sententiarum libri iii* I.27.10).

¹⁰³ ‘They will be saved either here through the fire of toil or there through purgatorial fire.’

¹⁰⁴ Goscelin, *Liber Confortatorius* I, ed. Talbot, p. 45, ll. 35–8. ‘At one point I presumed, if the Lord had mercy on my sins, that I might embrace you in my lap in the paradise of God, but now I hope that I might deserve to see you happily in the more worthy bosom of father Abraham.’

are not so good that they can be received directly into heaven.¹⁰⁵ Goscelin seems here to imagine that he and Eva would, like many other religious, have reached this paradise, and there they would be close to each other once more. But now that Eva has become an anchoress, and has truly renounced everything for Christ, she will deserve to enter heaven, here described as the bosom of Abraham, immediately after she dies. The ‘sinus Abrahae’, mentioned in the parable of the leper and the rich man in Luke’s Gospel,¹⁰⁶ was conventionally understood as follows: before the Incarnation, the souls of the patriarchs and the good were kept in an upper chamber of hell, protected by Abraham. After the Resurrection and the ‘harrowing of hell’, these souls were released, and so the ‘sinus Abrahae’ in a post-Resurrection context simply means heaven, where these holy souls had now been received.¹⁰⁷ Since both ‘sinus Abrahae’ and ‘paradisus’ are used frequently to refer to heaven, they are equated by many authors. Julian summarises the scholarly opinion at the time of writing as follows:

Sinum Abrahae requiem patris uel secretum quietis, seu etiam paradisum significare, multiplicum doctorum sententiis definitum esse non ambigo, cum inter ceteros Ambrosius, Augustinus atque Gregorius tanti patriarchae sinum nihil aliud quam id ipsum significasse elegantius docuerunt.¹⁰⁸

This is quite different from the distinction drawn by Goscelin between paradise, where he imagines himself after death, and the bosom of Abraham where the ‘more worthy’ Eve will await the judgement. Like Goscelin, Bede is quite clear that the ‘sinus Abrahae’ is heaven, the abode of the saints, just as he is quite clear in his Advent homily that the ‘paradisus’ he describes is for a less than saintly group of souls.¹⁰⁹

Goscelin refers to the concept of the ‘sinus Abrahae’ earlier in the *Liber Comfortatorius* – although not by name. Discussing the virtue of patience, he describes how the patriarchs waited patiently for Christ, first living in the world, and then waiting in darkness to greet him; and he makes explicit that the patriarchs are waiting in some part of hell by closely echoing the

¹⁰⁵ *Liber Comfortatorius* IV, ed. Talbot, p. 111, ll. 3–9.

¹⁰⁶ Luke 16:19–31.

¹⁰⁷ J. Ntedika, *L’évocation de l’au-delà dans la prière pour les morts: Étude de patristique et de liturgie latines, IVe–VIIIe s.*, Recherches africaines de théologie 2 (Louvain: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1971), p. 159; C. E. Hill, *Regnum caelorum: patterns of future hope in early Christianity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 211–12.

¹⁰⁸ *Prognosticon*, II.3, ed. Hillgarth, p. 45. Several centuries later Thomas Aquinas was to state more succinctly ‘sinus abraham paradisi est’ (*Catena aurea in Lucam* 16.5, l. 20, ed. P. A. Guarienti, *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia* (Turin: Marietti, 1953), II. 228).

¹⁰⁹ E.g. ‘Vides non solum noui sed et ueteris testamenti iustos spe futurae uitae desiderium habuisse dissolui a corpore immo pacis uiam deputasse sarcinam deponere terrestrem utpote qui se in sinu abrahamae requiem non dubitarent habituros esse perpetuam’ (*In Luc. euang. exp.*, I.2, l. 1871–4, ed. D. Hurst, pp. 66–7); ‘Sinus abrahamae requies est beatorum pauperum quorum est regnum caelorum quo post hanc uitam recipiuntur, sepultura inferni poenarum profunditas quae superbos et immisericos post hanc uitam uorat’ (*In Luc. euang. exp.*, V.16, l. 311, ed. D. Hurst, p. 90–1).

processional antiphon ‘Cum rex gloriae’ from the Easter liturgy which refers to the harrowing: ‘... cui [Christo] conclamabant uocibus lacrimosis: “Advenisti, desiderabilis, quem tam longo euo expectamus in tenebris”’.¹¹⁰ He goes on to explain that in contrast to the time of the patriarchs, the effect of Christ’s sacrifice is that now, every holy person who follows Christ perfectly will ascend to heaven as soon as he leaves the body – as long as he is so pure that the purgatorial fire finds nothing to burn away.¹¹¹ Although the term ‘sinus Abrahae’ does not feature in this passage, it is nevertheless clear that the concept is understood.

Goscelin does not explain the relationship between the purgatorial fire and the paradise where he had imagined himself with Eva, nor yet how or when souls journey from one subsection of the afterlife to another. This is never his primary purpose in the *Liber Confortatorius*, and he does not consider here the souls of the dead and what can be done for them by the living, which is the context in which a writer’s understanding of the afterlife can most easily be clarified. The result of this is that it is difficult to ascertain quite how he believes the souls in the beyond are grouped. Nevertheless, it is striking that like Bede, Goscelin seems to have drawn a distinction between heaven (termed or described as the ‘sinus Abrahae’), and paradise, which appears to be set aside for those who are less than perfect. Theoretically, it is possible that Goscelin drew this from Bede’s homilies, although they have not previously been identified as source for his writings. In the *Liber Confortatorius* Goscelin frequently echoes his sources rather than quotes them directly, and so it is not always easy to pin down precisely what he was remembering or drawing on as he wrote a particular phrase. A number of Bede’s homilies are included in the popular homiliary compiled by Paul the Deacon, which was so widespread in monastic circles that Goscelin must have had access to it; but the Advent homilies are not in this anthology. Bede’s homilies as a collection in their own right seem to have been available fairly widely both in England and on the Continent, although pinning down manuscript provenance is not always easy, but Goscelin might have been able to read them either before or after he came to England.¹¹² In the absence of verbal echoes, it must remain speculation as to whether or not he drew on Bede’s second Advent homily for this idea, but it is a possibility: I

¹¹⁰ *Liber Confortatorius* III, ed. Talbot, p. 76, l. 29. ‘... to whom they cried out with tearful voices: “You have come, the desired one, whom in darkness we have awaited for a long time”’. The antiphon does not feature in the *Regularis Concordia*, and may not have been known in England until much later; it seems to be of Gallican origin and Goscelin perhaps knew it from liturgical practice in St-Bertin.

¹¹¹ *Liber Confortatorius* III, ed. Talbot, p. 76, l. 30 – p. 77, l. 2. This echoes a sermon by Caesarius of Arles: sermo 179, c. 4, l. 11, ed. G. Morin, *Caesarius Arelatensis Opera Pars I,2*, CCSL 103–4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), II.726.

¹¹² See M. L. W. Laistner, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, 1943); F. Wiegand, *Das Homiliarium Karls des Grossen auf seine ursprüngliche Gestalt hin untersucht*, Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche I.2 (Leipzig: Böhme, 1897) and R. Grégoire, *Homélieires liturgiques médiévaux: analyse des manuscrits*, Bibliotheca degli Studi Medievali 12 (Spoleto, 1980), pp. 423–79.

have not found such a distinction between ‘paradisus’ and ‘sinus Abrahae’ in the works of any other author.¹¹³ It is also worth remembering that Goscelin certainly had access to Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and potentially could have drawn the idea from the account of Drythelm’s vision.¹¹⁴

Goscelin’s mention of the interim paradise in the later eleventh century is striking. Ælfric was writing just under one hundred years before Goscelin, and like almost all other authors in the tenth century, followed the Augustinian model of three interim destinations for the soul. Even in the eighth century, when there was rather less agreement on the nature of the interim, Bede is unusual in presenting four groups. Ælfric is well-known to have been a champion of orthodoxy, and it is perhaps owing to Bede’s good name that he was prepared to translate the vision of Drythelm with its four-part structure as a ‘sanctioned’ picture of the otherworld for general consumption, albeit with his careful presentation of the paradise. It is worth bearing in mind the difference in nature between a vision – which, while informative, is not innately authoritative – and Scripture or the theological writings of an established author such as Bede or Gregory the Great. The *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great were among the most popular works of the middle ages for the discussion of the beyond, but it is far more often the theological reasoning from Gregory which is quoted by later authors in answer to questions about the afterlife than the tales of visions which are included alongside that reasoning.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, the three-part interim prevailed, supported more by theological discussion than by direct accounts of the otherworld, but vision literature remained popular and the eighth-century visions with which I began had a long life and afterlife. They were evidently very popular and appear together in a number of books, both English and Continental, including Otloh of Emmeran’s *Liber visionum*, compiled in 1062-6,¹¹⁶ and in a book made for the Cistercian monastery of Louth Park, Lincolnshire, where they appear with two accounts of twelfth-century English visions.¹¹⁷ The visions recorded by Bede and Boniface may have had more of an impact on future vision literature, becoming part of the corpus which would

¹¹³ It must be admitted that Bede never compares the two explicitly: however his use of the word ‘paradise’ more generally is most frequently restricted to the earthly paradise, i.e. the Garden of Eden, although he does sometimes equate it with the ‘third heaven’ to which St Paul was caught up (II Corinthians 2:12).

¹¹⁴ Talbot, *Liber Confortatorius*, pp. 16–17.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, F. Clark, *The ‘Gregorian’ Dialogues and the origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 266–7. Clark argues (often rather dubiously) that the *Dialogues* are not one of Gregory’s authentic works at all, but since the authors under consideration here all assumed that Gregory was indeed the author of the *Dialogues*, the main thrust of his argument is not relevant to the present discussion.

¹¹⁶ Otloh von St. Emmeram, *Liber Visionum*, ed. P. G. Schmidt, *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 13 (Weimar, 1989).

¹¹⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax 17: see Sims-Williams, ‘Recension’ and H. Farmer, ‘A Monk’s Vision of Purgatory’, *Studia Monastica* 1 (1959), 393–7. The two visions also appear in Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, lat. 9376, s. xi or xii (Sims-Williams, ‘A Recension’, pp. 199–200).

influence visionaries by way of ‘cultural conditioning’, than they effected on the doctrinal statements about the interim which would be made in later centuries; but their preservation and use despite the consolidation of doctrine and the official acceptance of the threefold interim testifies to a continuing fascination with the afterlife which resisted any ‘official’ doctrinal line. It is difficult to use vision literature as an indication of precisely what any one individual believed about the afterlife, particularly since those who record visions are often not the same as those who saw them. In Bede’s case, however, the close correspondence between the fourfold interim described in his second Advent homily and his description of Dryhthelm’s vision suggests that he did indeed believe precisely what he narrated there, and on this topic he stands apart from the mainstream traditions of western Christian theology.