

MIRACLES
AND THE
MEDIEVAL
MIND

THEORY, RECORD AND EVENT

1000-1215



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This was the basis of the miracle collections of the period. Miraculous explanations of events were preferred to natural ones; God who created and controlled all things was seen as constantly intervening in inexplicable ways, and most obviously in connection with the power of his saints at the places where their relics lay. Abbot Samson expressed the same opinion of causation as William of Canterbury when he described the miracles of St Edmund. After an account of the immediate cure of William Fitzsketil from fever at the shrine, he added that some might think such a cure unnatural from its suddenness:

Someone may marvel at this; but only to those who consider the ordinary laws of matter instead of the nature of the Creator. For if he created the laws of matter in accordance with his will, why should he not alter them whenever he chooses to do so?⁴⁰

This Augustinian approach to miracles expressed in these two shrine collections underlies the accounts of miracles next to be considered. The reflections on miracles and nature that have been observed in the theory of miracles in the period lay mostly outside the actual daily events at shrines where the most unlikely tales were supported with the simple assertion that God is glorious in his saints; the greater the miracle, the more power it demonstrated at that place.⁴¹ Popular expectations of the miraculous in every kind of situation could be focused on shrines and their saints; they presented a formidable force in evidence of the theory that produced them, and, in a later age, provided material for those with other theories of events and reality to criticize.

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Miracles at Traditional Shrines: St Faith, St Benedict and St Cuthbert

THE DISCUSSION OF MIRACLES during the Middle Ages shows above everything else the acceptance of the miraculous as a basic dimension of life. The bounds of reality included the unseen in a way alien to modern thought. Miracles were the rule rather than the exception, and the concept of the hand of God at work in the whole of life coloured the perception of miracles and their records. Given this preoccupation with miracles, it is to be expected that there would be many records of contemporary miracles. These records provide the main body of material for studying miracles. The largest number of these miracles were recorded at the shrines of the saints, since virtually every town had its shrine and frequently someone able to record the miracles.

This large amount of material about miracles reflects the urgent needs of the living and their trust in the powers of the dead. Needs of every kind were focussed upon the bones of the saints in their shrines, the special places on earth where men could be in touch with the saints, who enjoy the full vision of God and who could therefore be expected to offer potent and efficacious prayer for those who asked for their intercession. From the evidence produced by the shrines of Europe, I will present a general outline of this process, before proceeding to a more detailed examination of certain major shrines where the collections are both extensive and illuminating.

The relics venerated in the West in this period can be placed in three groups. First, there were the relics of saints connected with the Bible and the early church: relics of the true cross, bones of the apostles, relics of the early Christian martyrs. The hand of St James at Reading was the chief relic of Reading Abbey in the twelfth century; the tomb

of the Three Kings was central in the cathedral of Cologne; the Holy Lance formed part of the imperial relic collection; the remains of the martyrs from the persecutions were venerated in many places. Very often such relics were connected with the calendar of the church and were venerated on certain days of liturgical celebration, for instance on the two feasts of the Holy Cross or the anniversaries of the death of the martyrs. Such relics would also receive special veneration on the anniversary of their arrival at a shrine or at their translation to a more important shrine. Though miracles could and did take place at any time, these days were a focus for the miraculous powers of a saint. Secondly, a church might also possess the relics of its founder or of a venerated bishop or abbot in its history. The body of Adalhard, for instance, was venerated at Corbie; those of the bishops Virgilius, Hartwic, and Eberhard at their cathedral in Salzburg; while the body of Edward rested at the centre of his church at Westminster. These relics also would be venerated, though more locally, on the anniversary of the person's death and at the relic's translations. Thirdly, the relics of a modern saint would be venerated on the anniversary of his death in the place where he was buried, later perhaps also on the anniversary of his translation. Veneration elsewhere would be rare for some time, and his acceptance into the calendar of the church perhaps slow, though not necessarily so; two new saints, Thomas of Canterbury and William of Norwich, were venerated elsewhere within a few years of their deaths, William in Reading Abbey and St Thomas as far away as Sicily and Scandinavia.

The miracles that happened at these shrines were recorded, in many cases, for at least a brief time after either the death or translation of a saint; in some cases, the records continued for much longer. They were written down for the glory of the saint and to advertise his powers to pilgrims. The end of the records of miracles for a period does not necessarily indicate that the miracles then ceased. The records at some shrines are continuous, but at others they are more sporadic. The kinds of miracles will be observed in detail later, but they can be classified in a general way as acts of power or acts of mercy. In the first class are the miracles of judgement by which the saint causes pain or loss to someone who offends him and preserves and favours his devotees. In the second class are cures of illness. Cures can, in fact, be organized into a pattern that recurs at shrines everywhere; this pattern was determined partly by

the kinds of illness that were diagnosed, partly by a literary pattern inherited from the Gospels. The pattern of cures was stated in the second century by St Irenaeus:

For they are able to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, to put all demons to flight. . . . The infirm, or the lame, or those paralysed, or those disturbed in other parts of the body, are cured; it often happens that those who have contracted some bodily illness or have had some kind of accident, are restored in this way to good health.¹

This list is repeated universally throughout the Middle Ages.

The miracle-working shrines belonged in a specific sense to the people who lived near them. Those associated with the monastery and the people of the parish or town had first claim on their saint; beyond that, a local saint could command the veneration of those in the countryside near the shrine. Pilgrims devoted to the saint or attracted by the fame of his local miracles were also devotees at the shrine. All these men, women, and children, from all classes of society, could claim the prayers of the saint. They would come to the shrine at the great festivals of the church, at the festival of the saint in question, or at any time dictated by their own needs; they would pray there, either for a brief time, or through the night, or for days at a time, offering candles, coins, *ex voto* offerings, with prayers for the intercession of the saint. A miracle might have occurred before they came, in which case they would be there to give thanks and make an appropriate offering; it might happen on the way to the church, or inside during their prayers. Sometimes it took place after they had gone home. The miracles would be proclaimed and sometimes recorded by the officials of the shrine, with or without a public thanksgiving. Some miracles, perhaps most, went unrecorded, particularly those that happened to the poor. And for every miracle that took place, there were many more petitioners who went away as they came, with no visible successe of their needs. In this period records of miracles at shrines were kept with particular care, without the need that arose later to streamline the collections. The accounts of individual miracles were written down as they were reported to the officials of the shrines, and often rewritten in a literary form by a capable writer. In the formal introductions to collections, it was a convention for the writer to praise the saint, state that his miracles should be made known for the glory of God and the edification of

men, suggest that, in spite of his lack of qualifications, he has been urged to undertake the task, and ask the help of the saint in his undertaking. While the influence of individual writers must be taken into account, these collections do reflect the needs and aspirations of the clientele of the shrines. They are, in the 'traditional' period concerned with the application of the power of the saint to local needs. They emphasize the religious, social, and economic interdependence of the saint and his people. They show how the saint was used to appeal to the supernatural, as the Eucharist was used later. The reverence for the saint and the richness of offerings to him indicate the 'honour' and worth the people attributed to this focus of the supernatural. On the social level, mutual benefits and responsibilities were established between the patron saint and his people, involving not only his intervention in a supernatural fashion in securing good weather and averting natural disaster, but also extending to his intervention in law suits and in the liberation of captives. Economically, the power of the saint through supernatural sanctions helped increase and consolidate the lands held by his shrine as well as providing his church with great wealth through offerings.

The records are more extensive for certain shrines, and I have selected some of those for close analysis. I have divided them into two main groups: The miracle collections at the beginning of this period I call 'traditional'; those later in the period, 'modern'. These categories are by no means mutually exclusive, but a gradual shift of emphasis takes place from one to the other that suggests this period is a watershed between the two.



The shrine of St Faith in Conques in the Rouergue can be considered traditional. St Faith was said to have been born at Agen at the end of the third century and to have suffered martyrdom at the age of twelve in 303 with Bishop Caprais, Prime, and Felician. In the fifth century her remains were transferred to a basilica in Agen by Bishop Dulcidius, and there miracles occurred. Thus, she was a child-martyr of the first centuries of Christian persecution, mentioned in the Roman martyrology and celebrated with a feast on 6 October, long before her remains reached Conques. No record of her miracles at Agen survives, nor is there a record of her life or her cult in any detail until the eleventh

century. It is very probable that her miracles as recorded at Conques are the earliest written evidence for her cult anywhere, the other material being part of the cult itself.

There are three main literary records of the cult of St Faith: the *Passion of St Faith*, the *Chanson de Ste Foy*, and the *Miracles*. In the *Passion of St Faith*, several stories have been fused into one from accounts of martyrdom in the fourth century, and this was done no earlier than the eleventh century.² The *Passion* is therefore a product of the cult rather than a cause, though the recognition of St Faith as an ancient martyr is itself older. The *Chanson* also is a result of the cult; it is a dramatic account of the *Passion of St Faith* in verse and may have been sung and also used as a dance, particularly on her feast day.³ The oldest written record of the cult is the *Miracles of St Faith*.

The Cluniac monastery in Conques claimed in the eleventh century that in 883 one of its monks, Aronise, had stolen the relics of St Faith from Agen. It was said that he was sent from Conques to join the canons at the shrine of St Faith in Agen with the intention of stealing the relics. After ten years he was left in charge of the shrine and at once removed the relics and fled with them to Conques, where they were rehoused in the abbey church of the Saviour.⁴ Like similar thefts, this was regarded as a *sanctum sacrilegium, fidele furum* and given the widest possible publicity. The story was meant to prove that the relics were truly those of St Faith, a matter of far greater importance than the question of the theft. This story was current in the eleventh century, and the church that received the relics was soon known as the church of St Faith, rather than by its previous dedication.

The relics of St Faith were enclosed in the head of a statue that was henceforth the focus of her veneration at Conques. This statue appears in the miracles as more than a symbol for the monks of the intercession of their saint. St Faith was imagined as the living, present, and powerful patron of the monks of Conques, located in a specific place by the relics in her statue. The compiler of the miracles says that some people even thought the statue was alive and looking at them. The saint assumed a visible place in the affairs of the monastery. In disputes about land she had her advocate in the civil courts; her statue was brought to the councils of the church to assist the proceedings; in case of disaster it was carried to bless the affected area; it was even carried at the charge to quell a riot in the cloisters.⁵ In an age when the property of monasteries was scattered and difficult to defend and therefore increasingly at

the mercy of rapacious neighbours, such supernatural sanctions focused on the saint as patron were vital to survival, and miracles of vengeance a necessary deterrent. On the other hand, the consequence of a monastery was affirmed through the glory visible to all of its saint, and for this assertion to be known, the saint was not only decked in gold and jewels but carried through the streets preceded by her own band.⁶ As the saint protected the monks, so the monks owed service to their saint. An ex-soldier, Gimón, slept in his armour near the statue and defended her with ferocious ill-humour against robbers.⁷

1 But St Faith's power was not limited to the monks: she provided a focus also for the loyalties of the knights of the countryside,⁸ insofar as such loyalties did not conflict with the interests of the monastery. In a country of small isolated castles constantly at war, the influence of the saint was frequently sought to redress the balance of power in favour of one or another. For this reason, St Faith was constantly asked to perform miracles in the deliverance of captives, which she did as much by encouraging their natural ingenuity through dreams as by direct supernatural intervention. Such captives would pray to St Faith, receive her advice in a vision, and if they escaped thereafter they would bring their fetters to Conques and tell their story. They do not seem to have lingered at the shrine, from which it seems proper to assume that deliverance by the saint was not held to constitute any greater immunity from recapture than any other form of escape.

This local loyalty to St Faith took another form that is itself proof of the depth of feeling experienced for this ancient and obscure child-martyr. She was sometimes seen in visions in the form of her statue, but more often she appeared to the local knights as a pretty young girl, engagingly feminine and demanding trinkets of various kinds. This picture is at variance both with the forbidding and archaic statue and with the idea of an early Christian martyr; it springs from the needs and imagination of the knights of the Rouergue. This myth that St Faith demanded jewelry was called by the miracle writer *joca*; it is the application of the miraculous to trivia. It was an image forceful enough for a woman pilgrim to leave her jewelry at home before visiting the shrine, though to no effect.⁹ This aspect of the cult of St Faith foreshadows some aspects of the cult of the Virgin. Like Mary, St Faith was endowed by her devotees with capricious power, and a greater concern with devotion to herself than with the rules of society. She helped her people

juste an iniuste¹⁰ and gave her assistance often to the least deserving. In one miracle, which foreshadows the famous Mary miracle Eppe the Thief,¹¹ St Faith supported for several days on the gallows a man devoted to her, until he was taken down alive and set free.¹²

St Faith was also the intercessor for a wider circle. Pilgrims visited her shrine and prayed for her help. For them she was one of the great saints of heaven who had access to God and could be asked to intercede with him. The majority of such pilgrims came from France, indeed from the district around Conques. They were petty knights, minor land-holders, priests of the district, monks, and clerks. Men, women, and children came to the shrine, though there was a high proportion of men in its clientele. Peasants are mentioned only once when they tried to demand admittance to the shrine,¹³ while at the other end of the social scale there is no record of kings, popes, cardinals, or bishops patronising St Faith. It was predominantly a local shrine, even when its devotees were not directly dependent on the monastery.

The cult of St Faith spread to Spain from Conques,¹⁴ because Conques was on one of the direct routes to Compostela.¹⁵ Her cult was also established in England in the twelfth century by Robert Fitzwalter and his wife Sybilla, who visited Conques in 1100. They took home two monks, Bernard and Gerald, to found the monastery of St Faith at Horsham in Norfolk; this was confirmed to the abbot of Conques by Henry I.¹⁶

At Conques itself the miracles show a great and elaborate cult in process. The statue was above the High Altar, not in the crypt, and pilgrims were allowed at all times to have access to it; there are descriptions of vigils all night when the sick lay before the statue in the church. When the statue was taken out in procession, it was accompanied by the monks and preceded by music; such a procession might last all day, with the monks saying their offices and eating meals by the wayside.¹⁷ Cures might occur for those watching, or even at a place where the statue had rested. Offerings were made to the statue and increased its splendour; miracles were recorded at the shrine, though in a somewhat haphazard fashion.

The miracle collection itself achieved literary form between 1013 and 1020. Bernard of Angers was a student under Fulbert of Chartres early in the eleventh century; from him he heard St Faith praised for her miracles. He visited the chapel dedicated to St Faith near Chartres.¹⁸

Bernard and his fellow students found the accounts of her miracles barbarous and superstitious, notably lacking in moral content, and indeed, as has already been shown, Bernard was always to think this of some of them. He heard the criticisms of the miracles and decided to visit Conques and sift them for himself, which he did in three visits. As a result, he wrote two books of miracles, drawing his material from the *scutella* of the shrine and from the personal witness of the monks and of those cured. His work was continued by a monk of Conques who added two more books of miracles. Between them they cover nearly fifty years, from 1013 to 1060.

The kind of criticism Bernard records about the shrine is two-fold.

First, the statue was said to be an idol, and secondly, the miracles were said to be incredible. The Golden Majesty of St Faith still exists at Conques and dates from the tenth century. Before that period the bones of saints were kept in caskets engraved and ornamented; these could be kept under the altar or carried about in procession; the requirement for relics to consecrate an altar increased this custom.¹⁹ In the eleventh century relics began to be kept in statues and later in busts of the saints to whom they belonged; a further development was to place the relic in a container shaped like itself, the most obvious example being reliquaries which were crosses shaped to hold fragments of the True Cross. The earliest record of a statue for relics is that of the Virgin, which was made of wood and covered with gold for Clermont Cathedral by Bishop Stephan in c. 946; later, as abbot of Conques he enshrined the relics of St Faith in a statue in the form of a seated woman, which could be carried about. It was plated with gold and covered with jewels and given a casket to hold. It was so rich in appearance that it caused an onlooker to wish that it would fall in the mud so that he might secure some of its jewels.²⁰ These seated majesties, images in three dimensions, aroused adverse comment, such as the indignant remark of a companion of Bernard after seeing the statue:

What do you think, brother, of this idol? If it were of Jupiter or of Mars they would not think such a statue worth very much.²¹

The fact that it was compared to a classical statue is significant; the iconoclastic theories of the age of Charlemagne were still current in the West, and statues were regarded as pagan idols. The symbols appropri-

ate for Christians were the cross, the Bible, and the church itself. Bernard says that in his own opinion, the saints should be represented only by paintings or written descriptions. He himself approached the statue of St Faith with a carefully worded prayer: 'St Faith, part of whose body is present here enshrined in this likeness, help me in the day of judgement'. In a chapter devoted to the statue, Bernard says that such statues were a local custom:

It is an old usage and an ancient custom in the whole country of the Auvergne, whether in the Rouergue or Toulouse, and in all the country around, for a statue to be set up either of gold or silver or of some other metal, in which the head of the saint or some other part of the body is preserved with reverence.²²

He adds, however, that others thought this a superstition and a way of preserving the cult of demons. He mentions the Majesty of St Gerald that was placed over his altar at Aurillac and says that the Majesties of St Maurus and St Amans were brought to attend the Synod of Rodez between 1025 and 1031, as well as that of St Faith. This is the last time that any qualms were expressed about statues as reliquaries in miracle collections, and it marks the cult of St Faith as the last of an older and more reticent era.

The best known miracle of St Faith was the highly-coloured tale of repeated cures of blindness in a local man, Witbert. Bernard's account of this miracle illustrates his approach to the whole collection of miracles at this shrine. When he heard the story, he was sceptical: 'I did not', he says, 'easily believe it',²³ and when allowance has been made for using doubt as a literary device to heighten wonder, this story would strain credulity in any age. Bernard, in fact, undertook writing the collections because he thought such rough material safer if handled by a scholar and by someone from outside the monastery.²⁴ Written records of all kinds were becoming popular, and his offer to write down the miracles was accepted with enthusiasm. Bernard placed Witbert's story first in his collection and told it at some length. Witbert still lived at Conques and told Bernard his story himself. He said that as a youth his guardian had suspected him of adultery with his wife and had blinded him; he attributed his cure to prayer for many years to St Faith; subsequently, he twice lost his sight and had it restored. The details he added increased the drama of the tale. His eyes, he said, were torn out and two birds flew off with them; later they returned the eyes to his

eyesockets.²⁵ Bernard recorded other cures by St Faith, though none with the style and exaggeration of Witherbert. St Faith cured people, and she also cured animals; she was capable of the ultimate 'cure' of raising the dead. She freed captives; she punished her detractors; her sanction controlled weather, plague, and warfare; she demanded jewelry and miraculously obtained what she wanted. Bernard made such stories acceptable to the theologically informed by allegorizing them, in the same way that other writers commented on the miracles of Scripture. In the case of Witherbert's story, Bernard explains a discrepancy, in which Witherbert said that the birds that flew off with his eyes were white and others said black. Bernard offers a parallel with the biblical story of Elijah and the ravens and asserts that the birds were white to the righteous Witherbert and black to his persecutors. Similarly, faced with a story of St Faith raising a dead mule to life, a story that appeared to some of his contemporaries as pointless a miracle as it does to us, Bernard gave it respectability by saying that it prefigured the resurrection of the flesh. Earlier collectors of miracles, such as St Gregory and Bede, had dealt with similar tales this way. Incredulity about a miracle was resolved not by a reference to facts or evidence but by a closer examination of the tale's significance.

Under the Latinity and theological reflection of Bernard, the miracles of St Faith at Conques retain a crude and primitive air. They are miracles for the protection of the monks, the extension of their lands, and the aggrandisement of their church through their saint. They are set firmly in the countryside that housed the saint and take their colour from the needs and aspirations of the surrounding population. St Faith is seen as the protector of her own people, as great a lord as any in the countryside. The miracles of St Faith assert her consequence as a protector, and also the consequence of those associated with her; the pilgrims who asked for her protection and aid extended her power of patronage.



The miracles of St Benedict of Nursia were recorded at the two centres that claimed to possess his relics, Monte Cassino and Fleury. The local cult of St Benedict's relics was to some extent the same as for St Faith. The collections of his miracles, however, cover a longer period of time, and some changes can be observed within them. The miracles of St Benedict were first recorded by Gregory the Great at the end of

the sixth century; those at Monte Cassino by Abbot Desiderius in the mid-eleventh century; and those at Fleury by several writers from the end of the ninth century until the beginning of the twelfth. This collection of miracles therefore covers more years than any other in Europe. It might be thought that St Benedict would inevitably have a wider and less localized cult than that of St Faith, since he was not only the founder of a particular monastery but the patron of all monks following his Rule. This was not, however, the case. St Anselm might pray to St Benedict as 'advocate of monks'²⁶ and the devotion of monks might recognize his importance for them as such, but the miracles of St Benedict centred primarily on the places that claimed his relics. His cult, especially at Fleury, was deeply influenced by local social and economic factors. The new influences noticeable in these miracles at the end of this period are not due to a recognition of St Benedict as founder of western monasticism, but to more localized changes.

My discussion of the miracles of St Benedict will focus on the post-humous miracles in the eleventh and twelfth centuries at the local shrines of Monte Cassino and Fleury. I will, however, look briefly first at the tradition of miracles of St Benedict that was established by Gregory in his record of miracles during the saint's life, since the later miracles were influenced by them. In addition, I will examine the cult of St Benedict in relation to the chief monastery following the Rule of St Benedict at the time, Cluny, to see how this cult developed at a monastery that did not have any relics of the saint.

The miracles of St Benedict, as presented by Gregory in the second book of *Dialogues*, claim to be an account given to the pope by four of St Benedict's first disciples ('I will relate a few of the things which I have learned from his disciples').²⁷ Gregory's own prologue and the letter he wrote to Bishop Maximian of Syracuse²⁸ indicate that a community, the papal household, urged him to write the *Dialogues*. The work was meant to encourage contemporary Christians by reflecting on the wonders of God in their own time. It takes the form of a dialogue with an interlocutor, Peter the Deacon. The second book is devoted to the life and miracles of St Benedict: 'There was a man of venerable life, Benedict both by name and by grace, who from his youth upwards had the mind of a mature man'.²⁹ The miracles he records are those familiar in hagiography: 'dreams, visions, insight so acute that it seemed prophetic, and the assistance obtained by prayer for every kind of need'. Finally, he describes the death of Benedict and says he was buried in

the same tomb as his sister, Scholastica.³⁰ He is buried in the chapel of St John the Baptist, which he had built when he pulled down the altar of Apollo.³¹ The *Dialogus Miraculorum* of Desiderius, five centuries later, continued this account of miracles, but this time they were the posthumous miracles of the saint. The book is modelled in more than title on the *Dialogues* of Gregory. Desiderius, the abbot of Monte Cassino, says in his preface that he was urged to write by the community around him and that he undertook this for the same reasons as those that made Gregory write: 'I will take care to set out the story for the edification of readers'.³² Like Gregory, Desiderius cast his work in the form of a dialogue with an interlocutor, 'Theophilus the Deacon'. Desiderius uses other sources for his material, but the *Dialogues* of Gregory are frequently behind his account of miracles. In one instance he explicitly draws a parallel: 'The blessed Benedict by his merits restored our hammer to us, as he once rescued the iron of a certain Goth'.³³

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the miracles of St Benedict recorded by Gregory and those by Desiderius: Gregory was presenting a certain kind of sanctity, that of the *vir dei*, the *santus abbas*, father of monks and writer of a rule for monks. Desiderius, on the other hand, was abbot of the monastery of St Benedict and responsible for many monks and wide possessions; the monks were not only spiritual sons but also tenants of St Benedict, and for this reason his power was invoked more frequently than his holiness. The miracles recorded by Desiderius illustrate the power of St Benedict as patron, like those of St Faith at Conques. In six instances this is particularly clear. St Benedict is said to have saved his monastery from the first attacks of the barbarians by punishing the attackers;³⁴ he protected his monastery when fire threatened it;³⁵ Pandulf of Capua was punished with exceptional severity by a sentence of everlasting and irreversible damnation for his devastations of the monastic lands,³⁶ when a monk ran away from the monastery he was so alarmed by an encounter with the devil outside its walls that he returned to the protection of St Benedict;³⁷ thieves who broke into the monastery were miraculously caught and punished; a Norman who interfered with a fisherman of the monastery at work was also punished.³⁸

The theme of the power of St Benedict is dominant in these miracles; it seems to have extended to cures of illness relatively rarely. Desiderius mentions the tomb of St Benedict 'on the right of the altar' and de-

scribes it as a centre for devotion. When describing one cure there he mentions others by St Benedict: 'They heard that many oppressed with diverse diseases were restored to their former health at the threshold',³⁹ a generality common in miracle collections. He gives only two instances of such cures. In one case the monk John, who was thought to be a demoniac and was confined to the infirmary, went to pray at the tomb of St Benedict and came away cured. More detail is given in the second instance: Desiderius says he heard the story from the monk Smaragdus who claimed to have heard it from his uncle the priest Leo. The monk Antony, 'no mediocre scholar in both secular and sacred learning', was once ill after an accident and seemed in need of surgery:

He went to the tomb of blessed Benedict, to implore his mercy, hoping that he who was his patron would cure him. As soon as he entered the church he prostrated himself before the altar and prayed at length that almighty God would deign to grant him healing by the merits of such a great father.

He also collected dust from the tomb and placed it on the injured part, 'and the next day he was restored to health'.⁴⁰ The localization at the tomb of the saint and the use of dust from the tomb, as well as prayer prostrate before it, are typical of the healing shrines and indicate that the tomb of St Benedict at Monte Cassino was used in this way. But the majority of miracles of St Benedict in this collection are not cures; where cures are described, they are generally connected with other saints, such as St Maur, St Leo, and St John of Beneventum.

Monte Cassino was where St Benedict lived and had been buried. It had first claim to be the centre for veneration of the saint and it continued to be so. Peter Damian, for instance, when thinking of a visit there commended himself to the protection of St Benedict for the journey.⁴¹ At the rebuilding of the monastic church by Desiderius, an examination of the graves found beneath it was undertaken and two bodies were said to be those of St Benedict and St Scholastica, despite the claims of Fleury.⁴² Peter the Deacon described miracles continuing at this place and asserted that St Benedict remained there, no matter where his bones lay, since after burial his flesh had decayed into the ground at Monte Cassino.⁴³ The local tradition was for the power of St Benedict in that place; the tradition of veneration for him there survived even the abundance of miracles connected with his relics in another place.

The 'other place' was the monastery of Fleury on the Loire. The miracles of St Benedict recorded by Gregory were those of a living saint, those at Monte Cassino were those of the acknowledged founder and patron of the monastery. There had been no need to prove that St Benedict could work miracles in Italy. At Fleury the need before anything else was to prove that the monastery did indeed hold the relics of St Benedict; it had no other specific claim on his power as a saint.

To establish this claim, as in the case of the relics of St Faith at Conques, Fleury asserted that the relics of St Benedict had been stolen from his acknowledged resting place at Monte Cassino. The oldest account of this transference states that after Monte Cassino had been devastated by the Lombards at the end of the seventh century, a French priest who visited the ruins found the bodies of St Benedict and his sister and took them back to France where there were buried with honour at Fleury.⁴⁴ Two centuries later, Adrevald of Fleury composed a more elaborate account, filled with visions and miracles, all intended to show that St Benedict had encouraged the translation and that it had in fact taken place. He says that Mommold, first abbot of Fleury, inspired by a vision, sent the monk Aigulf to Italy to find and recover the body of St Benedict. He was joined by two monks from Le Mans looking for the body of St Scholastica.⁴⁵ At Monte Cassino they discovered, by the aid of miracles, the two bodies and took them back to France on a journey accompanied by miracles and cures. In a dream, the abbot of Fleury was directed to bury the body of St Benedict in the church of St Mary.⁴⁶ The claim to keep the relics was fiercely disputed by the monks of Monte Cassino. In the reign of Pope Zacharias, the monks of Monte Cassino demanded the return of the relics, and Carloman came to Fleury with letters from the pope ordering the restitution. According to Adrevald, the body remained at Fleury, and the petition failed.⁴⁷ In the eleventh century Andrew of Fleury records a vision of Richard, abbot of Monte Cassino, in which he was told by St Benedict that his body rested at Fleury but his favour was equally distributed between the two monasteries, 'so they both remain one in glory, one in foresight; one in care, one in defence'.⁴⁸

The record of the theft of the relics, however elaborated, was not enough in itself to establish Fleury's claims so strongly that they were allowed even by Monte Cassino. What asserted more than anything else that the body of St Benedict was indeed at Fleury was the fact of

miracles at that place. The record of such miracles continued to assert the validity of the relics. They were those of a powerful patron, and what they chiefly proclaimed was the power of the saint at his French shrine.

The first book of miracles was written by Adrevald who also wrote the account of the translation, around 870. He provides a link with the previous tradition as recorded by Gregory. The miracles he describes take their tone from the specific needs of the monastery in the ninth century. He sets them against the disturbed political background of the times, under the last of the Carolingians and through the Norman invasions. This reference to outside events was a feature of each of these books of the miracles of St Benedict at Fleury, and helps to give them their local focus. The miracles Adrevald recounts are predominantly ones of vengeance and power. In seven instances the anger of St Benedict is experienced by local knights who attack the lands of Fleury; in three cases St Benedict shows special favour toward dependents of the monastery. Adrevald compares St Benedict to Jehovah, as the leader and protector of his own people.⁴⁹ As with St Faith, his power extends to the actual protection of the shrine and its goods. Christian, a monk of Fleury, guarded the shrine and could be as angry with the saint as Gimon at Conques was with St Faith. Adrevald mentions several cures, all of local people or of monks of Fleury, 'at the threshold of the tomb of the confessor of Christ, Benedict'.⁵⁰ After this, it is the power of St Benedict that dominates the miracles until the twelfth century, when cures again are prominent.

Adelarius of Fleury adds two miracles to Adrevald's account, both of which show the protection exercised by St Benedict toward his monastery during the Norman invasions. The account necessarily lapsed during the disturbances of the tenth century and was taken up again in the reign of Abbot Abbo by the monk Aimon, about the year 1000.⁵¹ Aimon continues to emphasize the theme of the harsh judgement of St Benedict toward the enemies of his monastery. He gives nine instances in his first book of local knights and of rural land-owners punished for proceeding against St Benedict. In the second book, he gives five more such examples. St Benedict is presented as favouring his monks and his dependents and as a stern enemy to their opponents. Only two miracles in the first book and four in the second are cures; these are of local people and workmen at the monastery.

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Despite the re-emphasis in Aimon's account of the power of St Benedict as lord of Fleury, two new features emerge. The first is the growth of Fleury as a centre for pilgrimage, and the increasing need to centralize the miracles of St Benedict around his relics. The stories show a great concourse of pilgrims around the shrine; a hospice for pilgrims is mentioned; night vigils, offerings of candles and coins are established features of the scene. The relics had been transferred to an altar in the crypt for the convenience of pilgrims.⁵² The power of the saint is shown as available for devotees at his shrine as well as for the monks and their dependents. Secondly, Aimon links the miracles of St Benedict with Mary. Presumably out of personal devotion to the Virgin, Aimon includes her name with that of St Benedict as the saint responsible for half the miracles he records. This association continues in the later books of miracles at Fleury, and is symptomatic of the increase of Marian devotion at the time.

Aimon ceased to record the miracles in 1042 and they were continued by Andrew, another monk of Fleury.⁵³ He wrote four books of sixty-six chapters, though the period of time they cover is only fifteen years. The books by Andrew are much more a chronicle of events at Fleury than a record of shrine miracles for St Benedict. He records matters of local interest, wars and disputes, that involved the monastery; he deals with events at places connected with Fleury, in Aquitaine, Brittany, Die, and Spain. He includes accounts of miracles by other saints, for instance St Posen (whose relics were transferred to Fleury), St Martin, St Peter, and St Paul, as well as those of St Michael at a favourite shrine of the Normans at Monte Gargano.⁵⁴ Several miracles are connected with Mary as well as St Benedict. Like other monastic chroniclers, he inserts records of omens and wonders in the heavens, eclipses, shooting stars, cloud formations of unusual shapes, as presages of disasters such as plague, famine, flood, or war. Moreover, Andrew's style is ornate and rhetorical; he makes the miracles occasions for preaching and drawing out lessons.

Yet there is still a nucleus of miracles of St Benedict in this more diffuse collection of material. Six stories are told of cures at the shrine. Three demoniacs, one paralytic, a blind man, and a cripple came there and were cured by prayer to St Benedict. Andrew mentions vigils at the tomb, with offerings of candles. He also says that the relics were still taken out in procession when plague ravaged the neighbourhood, and

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that many were cured by the presence of St Benedict in his relics among them. Other miracles of St Benedict record the punishments attributed to him; seventeen stories deal with the fate of local landholders who in some way offended the saint by attacks, trespass, mockery, or harm to the saint's dependents. In one case, a serf, Stabillis, ran away from the monastery and established himself for some years elsewhere as a free man; a dream of St Benedict, however, ensured that he should resume his servile status and return to the monastery.⁵⁵ Punishments were also recorded of those who worked on the feast days of the saint. It is a catalogue of the dangers of a violent society, in which calamity was usual and in which recourse was had to the local saint.⁵⁶ In these four books of miracles by Andrew, the depiction of St Benedict as a great landholder, a fierce protector of his property, received new dimensions. The miracles at the shrine for the pilgrims continue; the sick are healed of various diseases from the minor to the horrific. But the sensationalism is supplied by accounts of pitched battles in which the monks claimed to win by the power of St Benedict, by litigation in which they also triumphed, by defence of the monastery with the battle cry of *Sainte Benedicte!*⁵⁷ and by protection of monastic goods. When thieves tried to steal wine from the abbey cellars, for example, they found it frozen in its barrels.⁵⁸ These books record the place of the local saint in the daily affairs of a rough and ready society.

Ralph of Tortraire, the next monk of Fleury to continue this account of the miracles of St Benedict, wrote his account in verse as well as in prose. He continued the book into the first years of the twelfth century, with forty-eight chapters in all.⁵⁹ Like Andrew, he recorded events in the countryside as well as miracles at the shrine. However, the shrine was still the centre of local devotion at Fleury and for the people of the valley of the Loire. Ralph records more cures there than any of his predecessors and gives instances of the mad, dumb, and crippled lying in the crypt awaiting cures before the relics. He mentions the use of 'saint vinage', the water in which the relics had been dipped, which was given to the sick to drink and to pour over their maimed parts, or to take away. Miracles of vengeance still predominate. Ralph gives seventeen instances of the punishments that befell those who offended the saint or harmed his possessions. He includes animals, dogs, cows, pigs, and birds such as peacocks who were also 'punished' by the saint. Fleury was still a great monastery ruled by an all-powerful patron.

The last miracles in the collection were recorded by the monk Hugh of St Mary,⁶⁰ who added eleven miracles in 1118; the collection ends there, perhaps from a break in the manuscript. These stories differ from earlier ones. Apart from the first miracle, an account of the deliverance of a captive, they are all cures. The cures happened at the shrine and are recorded in detail, with names, dates, diseases, and the manner of the cure. Hugh was also responsible for several capitals in the church that show the miracles of St Benedict. One instance from Hugh's record will demonstrate how similar these cures were to those at other healing shrines and how different from the usual miracles of St Benedict (best described thus: 'He deserved his punishment since his pride had led him to oppose the friend of God'⁶¹):

There was also a woman of that town called Hosanna; on that same night she lay prostrate before the high altar asking for healing for her hand and arm. For it was a very grave sickness, which had taken all the strength from her hand and from her arm, so that . . . she could not clench her fist. When she had prayed for a long time to the Creator for divine help, she was cured and was as if she had never felt ill.⁶²

The miracles of St Benedict achieved their primary purpose of focusing devotion to St Benedict on Fleury, where his body was buried. Relations between Cluny and Monte Cassino were, in the eleventh century, cordial: Hugh of Cluny visited Monte Cassino in 1083 and established a confraternity between the two abbeys;⁶³ Peter Damian visited and admired the life at both monasteries.⁶⁴ But the veneration of the Cluniacs for St Benedict's relics was focussed on Fleury. The feast of the translation of the body of St Benedict was celebrated at Cluny in the eleventh century,⁶⁵ and Peter the Venerable supplied a new hymn for it in the twelfth. The vital contact between the two monasteries had been made when Odo of Cluny became abbot of Fleury. John of Salerno says that Odo was called, elected, and preordained to be abbot of Fleury by St Benedict himself. He records a miracle story in which St Benedict was seen to leave Fleury in person, because of the disobedience of the monks; the monks 'rode round on their horses to find him and bring him back'. St Benedict, according to this story, had said he would send them an abbot 'from Aquitaine', whom they recognized as Odo. During Odo's abbacy, St Benedict appeared in visions, supporting his reforms, and he appeared also to Odo himself while he was keeping vigil

'before the body of the saint'. It seems from this account that the body of St Benedict had been removed from Fleury during the Norman invasions and was restored, amid miracles, at this time.⁶⁶ That the monks of Cluny believed Fleury to be the miracle-working shrine containing St Benedict's body indicates the importance attained by this shrine through the long record of miracles there.

The shrine of St Benedict drew pilgrims from France, but not from much further away. Ralph mentions a boy from Italy brought for a cure, but most visitors were local. The great emphasis on vengeance against local knights remained a distinctive feature of the cult, as with St Faith at Conques. It is possible to see the cult emerging from a localized, power-centred cult, dominated by concern for the social and political place of the monastery, into a shrine for pilgrims who asked not for vengeance but for mercy and for cures of sickness. Royal persons do not seem to have frequented the shrine in this period; it was of interest mostly to the monks of the abbey and people of the locality.

The miracles of St Benedict at Fleury have their main record in the *Historia Miraculorum*. The church at Fleury, however, also contains a record of some of the miracles of St Benedict in the carving on certain capitals, some of which can be assigned to the twelfth century and the last writer of the miracle stories, Hugh of St Mary. Like the stained glass at Canterbury, these carvings are not an independent source for the miracles, but they do provide a further illustration of the importance of the miracles to the monastery; they are also evidence of the continuity between miracles of St Benedict recorded by Gregory and those known at Fleury. Four of the carvings represented here illustrate miracles found in the *Dialogus* of Gregory. Another carving shows the translation of the relics of St Benedict from Monte Cassino to Fleury.

The southwest pillar at the south crossing has three faces carved with scenes from the life of St Benedict (the fourth face forms part of the arch). The left face is broken and indecipherable. The right face contains a carving of St Benedict seated in his cave at Subiaco; outside, the monk Romanus prays to him; the devil is depicted breaking the bell Romanus was accustomed to ring to tell the saint his food supply was ready. The centre shows a building considerably defaced, possibly the cave of St Benedict at Subiaco.

On the lintel over the north door of the nave a carving shows the translation of the relics of St Benedict from Monte Cassino to

So guiding
monastery
functioning





1 ST BENEDICT TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL IN THE FORM OF A WOMAN. From the capitals in the abbey of St Benoît sur Loire, Fleury. *Dialogues* of St Gregory 2. 2.



2 ST BENEDICT AND TOTILLA THE HUN. Fleury capitals. *Dialogues* of St Gregory 2. 15.



3 ST BENEDICT DELIVERS A CAPTIVE. Fleury capitals. *Dialogues* of St Gregory 2. 29.



4 HUGH OF ST MARY AND HIS FAMILY. Fleury capitals. The author of the last book of the *Miracles of St Benedict* also carved the capitals at Fleury that depict the same theme. Here he shows himself as a monk holding a book, with his family, including his parents who are dead, and his brother, the knight Cleopas.

Fleury—a further assertion that Fleury actually has the relics of the saint. It was completed in 1218. Under a carving of Christ in Majesty are four scenes. On the left a monk removes the relics from their grave; in the centre, cures are effected by the bones of both St Benedict and St Scholastica on the journey; on the right, the monks carry the relics of St Benedict toward Fleury.



The third collection of miracles at a 'traditional' shrine is that of St Cuthbert, abbot and bishop of Lindisfarne. The collection supplies further details of shrines typical of the early part of the period under consideration. The records of miracles of the child-martyr St Faith at Conques illustrate the kind of cult that developed around relics of an early Christian martyr when they were transferred to Northern Europe. The records of the miracles of St Benedict, the greatest of all Western monastic founders, provide much information because of the length of time they covered. The miracles of St Cuthbert are those of a seventh-century monk-bishop. While the collection does not have the same continuity as that of St Benedict, it shows how the veneration of a holy man that started in his lifetime gained new emphasis in later records, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This pattern of a *vir dei*—a great and holy man in an abbey or diocese, whose reputation for sanctity was recognized during his life and fostered by his community after his death, veneration of whom became focussed on his relics and evolved into a new cult through the miracles there—was repeated on a lesser scale all over Western Europe in this period. The records of St Cuthbert's miracles show this development particularly clearly.

The earliest life of St Cuthbert was written about 699, probably by a monk of Lindisfarne; this *Anonymous Life* represents the consensus of opinion about St Cuthbert in his own monastery after his death. Bede wrote his *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* and the *Vita Metrice* in the same tradition; he also gives an account of St Cuthbert in his *Ecclesiastical History*. The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, written by an anonymous monk in the mid-tenth century, tells how the monks of Lindisfarne wandered with the coffin of St Cuthbert for seven years following their expulsion from Lindisfarne by the Danes. In the eleventh century, the account was continued in the *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*, often ascribed to Symeon of Durham; a twelfth-century account records in detail the

examination of the relics of St Cuthbert in 1104. Finally, Reginald of Durham wrote a long account of the miracles of St Cuthbert in the twelfth century. William of Malmesbury also mentions his miracles. While the main part of this record of miracles to be discussed is that by Reginald, we must look first at the earlier accounts that established a pattern in the veneration of St Cuthbert.

The accounts of miracles during the lifetime of St Cuthbert in the *Anonymous Life* are those usual in hagiography. They are related to virtues, particularly the monastic virtue of obedience; they show the control the saint exercised over the elements and over animals and birds; they illustrate his insight and prophetic vision. Biblical parallels are drawn, and because of the miracles accompanying his preaching as bishop, St Cuthbert is compared to the apostles whose preaching was confirmed *in signis et prodigiis* (Acts 2:43). This collection, as well as Bede's account, contains few wonder-tales. But the end of the *Anonymous Life* shows already a difference of approach: the centre of the future cult of St Cuthbert is established as the incorrupt body of the saint: 'His body remained incorrupt, resting as though asleep in his stone coffin, and so they placed him with honour in the church'.⁶⁷

The body of St Cuthbert was the glory first of Lindisfarne, then of Durham, and it became the focus for the posthumous cult of St Cuthbert. Eleven years after his death, the tomb was opened and his body found to be undecayed. Miracles followed at once. A father brought his demoniac son to Lindisfarne, not because of the fame of the shrine, but so that the monks, famous as doctors, might try to cure him. When they failed, the priest Tydi took some soil from the ground where water had been thrown that had washed the body of the saint, mixed it with water and gave it to the boy to drink: 'As soon as the boy had tasted the holy water, he ceased from his ravings that very night'.⁶⁸

A paralysed boy, also brought to the monks as doctors, asked to put on the shoes of the saint, which he did and was cured. Another man, a monk from the household of Bishop Willibald, fell ill while visiting Lindisfarne and asked to pray before the tomb, where he was cured. The miracles were cures at the tomb and they took their pattern from the shrine-cures of the saints rather than from the life of St Cuthbert.

These miraculous cures provide a typical instance of the change from veneration for a living saint to a posthumous cult at his tomb. It is clear from these stories that in sickness other methods of cure would be used: charms, natural medicine, or, as in this case, appeal to doctors who

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were also monks. The medical reputation of the monks had drawn two of the patients to the monastery. It was the sick themselves, not the monks, who suggested that they try the powers of the saint. That the requests of those in need, where every other remedy has failed, were made without any prompting, was held to provide, whether in fact or as a literary device, special evidence of the saint's sanctity. The dead man is thus shown to be a saint, and at the same time devotion to him is focussed at the place where his body rests. With St Cuthbert, these three posthumous cures initiated his later cult.

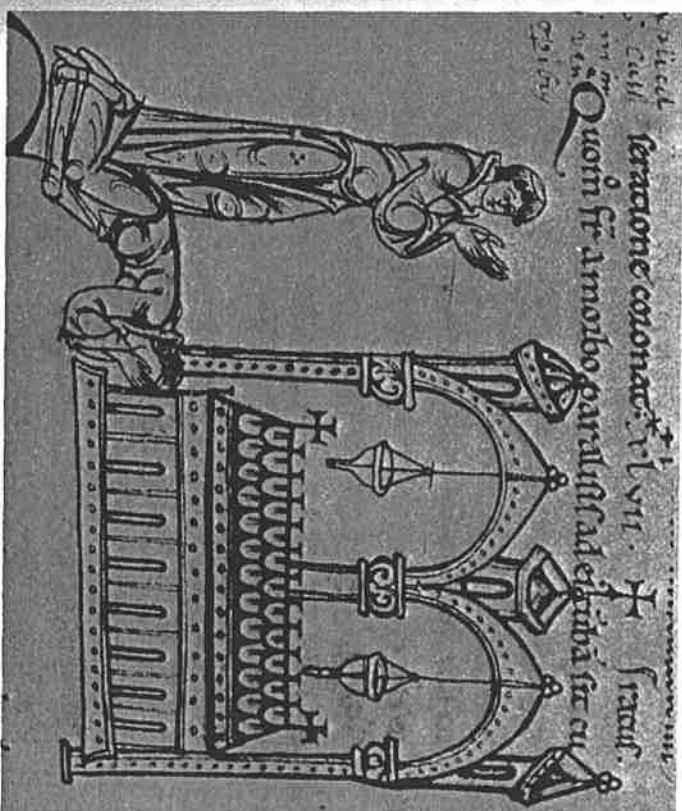
Bede continued the hagiographical tradition of Lindisfarne in his work about St Cuthbert. He stressed even more than the anonymous writer the virtues of the saint and showed that his miracles during his life were part of a long tradition of biblical sanctity. For Bede, the question about a saint's miracles was not how they happened, but why.

The 'how' question was already answered: God was acting through all his creation, and what provoked wonder was a particularly interesting message from God that must be examined and deciphered.⁶⁹ Therefore in rewriting the miracles of St Cuthbert, Bede stresses the meaning to be found in them for the reader. One instance of a miracle during St Cuthbert's life reflects in a particularly vivid way Bede's attitude to the miracles he records. A girdle belonging to St Cuthbert was used by the abbess Aelfleda to cure herself and one of her nuns. After a few days, the girdle miraculously disappeared from its box. Bede is in no way interested in the disappearance itself; he does not see it as a warning or a punishment for disbelief. He suggests that it was done by the will of God to avoid the situation where any of the many sick applying for a cure might be disappointed and blame the saint for a failure:

If the girdle had always been there, sick people would always have wished to flock to it, and when perhaps one of them did not deserve to be healed of his infirmity, he would disparage its power because it did not heal him, when really he was not worthy of being healed.⁷⁰

The possibility of cures is linked to the merits of the applicant, and the absence of the relic is as edifying to the reader as its presence. This explanation contrasts, to some extent, with the story of another belt used for cures, the belt of St Anselm, which Eadmer advertised as infallible:

1052 Saint Peter?



5 A PARALYTIC HEALED BY ST CUTHBERT. A sick monk lies before the tomb of St Cuthbert and prays for healing. From a manuscript of Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert* (University College, Oxford, MS 165), to which have been added some miracle stories from the anonymous *History of St Cuthbert* (edited in *Symeonis Dunelmensis Opera et Collectanea*, vol. 1, Surtees Society, 1868). The story that this picture illustrates is shown there, p. 147.

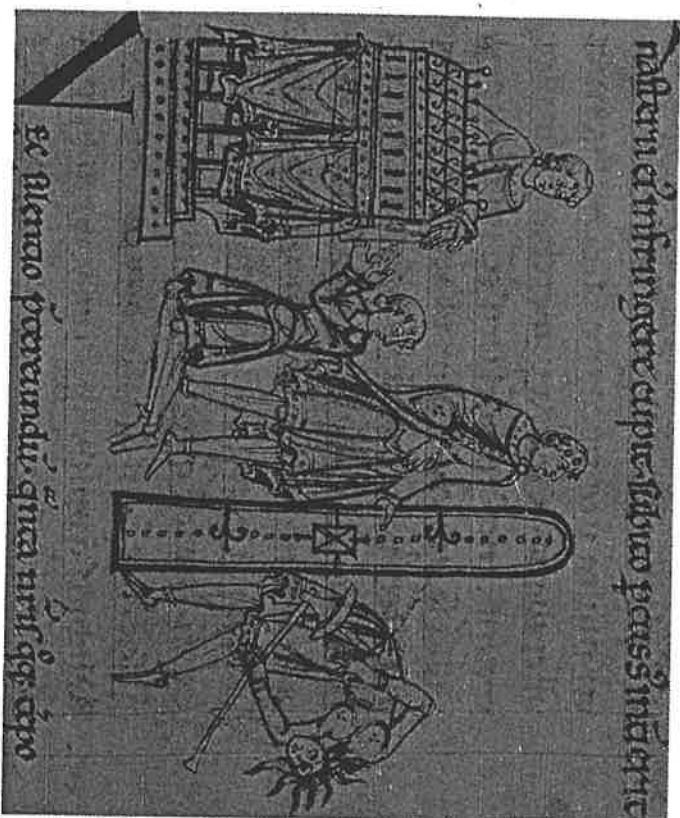
Not, of all those to whose care we have seen fit to entrust the belt on their asking for it in firm faith of their recovery, have we to this day heard of one who has hoped in vain.⁷¹

Here Eadmer stresses the success of the miracles alone; with Bede, the purposes of God are always to the fore. Bede does, however, record several 'external' miracles at the shrine of St Cuthbert⁷² and two cures of monks taken from the *Anonymous Life*. Thus the tradition of post-humous cures by the incorrupt body of St Cuthbert was established very soon after his death.⁷³

Another tradition about the saint developed soon after the monks left Lindisfarne and carried his body into exile—the tradition of St Cuthbert as a fierce and powerful protector of his own people and goods. The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* describes the acquisition of lands and goods by St Cuthbert's guardians, to whom miracles lend force.

This tradition was continued in the *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*, where miracles are directed not only against the Danes but against the threat of local violence. In both these documents, supernatural sanctions are invoked to protect monastic lands. In the former, grants of land from the time of Bede are connected with miracles,⁷⁴ and vengeance falls upon those who, like Osbert and Ella, Halfdane and Onlafbald, tried to deprive St Cuthbert of lands or goods.⁷⁵ So let kings and princes beware lest they be punished, and neither take that which belongs to St Cuthbert nor consent in allowing others to do so.⁷⁶ In the latter account, the theme continues. Someone who tries to plunder the shrine goes mad;⁷⁷ the tax-collector sent by William the Conqueror falls ill;⁷⁸ those who threaten the saint's property are chastised. The ideals of a later age were imposed upon the past, and the anger of St Cuthbert was said to be directed against those who infringed more recent rules. An outstanding instance of this is found in the disasters that were said to have overtaken women who approached the shrine, a prohibition at variance with the life of St Cuthbert and part of more recent propaganda for the monastic rule at Durham, restored under William of St Carleif.⁷⁹

The records of miracles connected with St Cuthbert in the twelfth century contain both these themes. The focus is still the incorrupt body of St Cuthbert, enshrined at Durham in the cathedral. An account was written of the translation of the body of St Cuthbert in 1104, with details of the inspection to which it was subjected. Doubts had been



6 A PAGAN PUNISHED BY ST CUTHBERT. The pagan Onlafbald mocked St Cuthbert and stated his preference for Thor and Odin: the faithful knelt in prayer and he attempted to leave the church in Durham where St Cuthbert's body lay; he was held fast to the threshold and perished miserably. From the same manuscript as plate 1, edited in *Symons*, p. 148.

expressed about the incorruption of the body, and the proceedings to discover if it was still in the incorrupt state recorded eleven years after the death of the saint were distinguished by their caution and their publicity. The monk Symeon was present to make a full record of the examination, precautions were taken against theft, and a second examination was allowed by a less local selection of observers.⁸⁰ Finally the cure of a well-known person, Richard, abbot of St Albans, was seen and witnessed by crowds.⁸¹ The testing of ancient relics, particularly those of Anglo-Saxon saints, was undertaken on more than one occasion in Norman England. They might be tested by fire, like the relics at Evesham that were put to the ordeal by Abbot Walter at the suggestion of Archbishop Lanfranc;⁸² they might be tested to see if they worked miracles, and William of Malmesbury records an instance of this.⁸³ But the proof most impressive to the English was, according to William of Malmesbury,⁸⁴ the incorrupt preservation of the body. It was the great triumph of Durham that it could display the incorrupt body of a saint that had also a continuous reputation for working miracles; it gave St Cuthbert the right to be regarded as one of the major English saints, in spite of the Conquest.⁸⁵

The translation of St Cuthbert forms the centre of the record of St Cuthbert's miracles written by Reginald of Durham after 1104. This large and unwieldy collection contains a long account of this event, with about forty miracles preceding it and over a hundred afterwards. In it, the themes of power and vengeance combine with the themes of mercy and cures. On the one hand, the interests of the monks of Durham are well represented in instances of the anger of St Cuthbert against their enemies and his; on the other hand, the interests of the pilgrims are equally maintained in accounts of cures both at the shrine and at a distance from it. The pattern observed at other shrines is particularly noticeable here. Miracles, including cures, are recorded during the life of a saint, and his posthumous cult begins with cures at his tomb. A period follows when the needs of the guardians of his shrine are paramount and are formulated in records of judgements and acts of power by the saint as patron of his own people. Cures and acts of mercy toward pilgrims to the shrine continue alongside the miracles of power, to flourish and gradually balance the more ferocious miracles as the shrine becomes established and has less need of asserting its position.

Reginald, in his account of the miracles of St Cuthbert, makes the incorrupt body central, and stresses the importance of the shrine with its formidable patron. Those who mock the saint or doubt his powers are punished by St Cuthbert. The severity of the punishment is proportionate to the honour of the saint rather than the gravity of the crime; for instance, a boy who robbed a nest of birds in St Cuthbert's church found his hands contracted and useless until, repentant, he appealed to the saint.⁸⁶ Like St Faith and St Benedict, St Cuthbert had guardians for his shrine, one of whom was Elfred Weston, the sacrist, grandfather of Aelfred of Rievaulx, to whom Reginald dedicates the book. St Cuthbert warned him in a dream when the shrine was in danger from fire.⁸⁷ The protection of St Cuthbert extended to captives, who brought their chains to Durham in thanksgiving. He was also careful of the fate of books associated with him, Gospel books, psalters, or copies of his *Life*, which he preserved from both fire and water. The copy of his Gospel book that was kept at his tomb was venerated as a relic itself, and Reginald describes how it was hung round the neck of a visiting bishop and all members of his party, as a gesture of respect.⁸⁸ Reginald describes with particular pride the wealth of the church at Durham and indicates the amount of riches offered at the shrine. On two occasions some relics of St Cuthbert were taken outside Durham on a tour to collect money to rebuild the shrine.⁸⁹

The honour of St Cuthbert dominates Reginald's collection of miracles and is reflected in the competitive tone of seventeen stories. Cuthbert is described in three stories as a better patron for sailors than St Nicholas and in one as more useful at sea than St Brendan. Twice his miracles are compared to those of St Martin, and once, following the comparisons made by Bede between St Benedict and St Cuthbert, to a miracle of St Benedict. He is favourably compared to St Peter as a miracle worker, and he shares the credit for a cure with St Lawrence. Four sick people who ask for help at the new shrine of St Godric at Finchale are sent by the saint to St Cuthbert. ~~It is notable that these people were all men. The prohibition of women from the shrine of St Cuthbert, however recent its date, meant in the twelfth century that his miracles excluded women, and may account for the large proportion of women at the other northern shrines at Finchale. St Cuthbert is seen in a vision saying mass with SS Aidan, Eadbert, and Ethelwold. When a pilgrim to England wished to decide which was the greatest saint, he~~

lit candles to St Cuthbert, St Edmund, and St Etheldreda, accepting the one whose candle burned out first as the greatest. St Cuthbert triumphed.⁹⁰ At the end of Reginald's collection, the great rival of St Cuthbert was the new martyr, Thomas of Canterbury. Several miracles illustrate the need felt in Durham to assert the power of St Cuthbert against St Thomas.

These miracles asserting the power of St Cuthbert stemmed from the ambitions of those in charge of his body and its shrine. But St Cuthbert belonged also to the pilgrims, and there are many instances in Reginald's collection of cures of illness for pilgrims and for those who prayed to St Cuthbert elsewhere and then came or wrote to the shrine later. Reginald describes with pride the beauties of the shrine of St Cuthbert: the marble paving brought from Italy by Harpin of Thornley; the treasures of an ivory casket, a silver cross, as well as the jewels offered there; a bell believed to have belonged to St Cuthbert and ornamented by Prior Turgot with gold; the 'book of St Cuthbert'⁹¹ and the great bells of Durham.⁹² A lengthy description of the feast of Pentecost at Durham dwells on the glory of the church and its ceremonies and describes the crowds of pilgrims and their motives for coming. These pilgrims were men, sometimes with their sons, from all ranks of society. Most came from the north of England, but some from Scotland and from the south; one pilgrim came from Norway.⁹³ Women might pray to St Cuthbert and be cured by him, but not at the shrine; they sent gifts by their sons or husbands and offered their thanks for their cures. This prohibition of women extended to the Countess Ada, wife of Henry, Earl of Huntingdon and mother of Malcolm IV, on whose illness Reginald dwells in some detail. She was cured not at Durham, but by having some clothing worn by St Cuthbert placed upon her.⁹⁴ At the shrine, pilgrims might pray before the tomb, even all night; they offered candles, sometimes of great size.⁹⁵ The liturgy was continued by the monks, and cures could be proclaimed at any time, with corporate celebrations of joy. St Cuthbert also answered prayer at a distance, sometimes by relics such as hair and nail parings from his incorrupt body,⁹⁶ fragments of his clothing, or dust scraped from the tomb and mixed with water, or water in which the body of the saint had been washed.⁹⁷ Cures were recorded in the church of St Cuthbert in Lixtune in Cumberland. At other times prayer to the saint was sufficient. For instance, a monk of Durham

cured a sick child in Lincoln by making the sign of the cross over him and saying: 'Come to our aid, O Lord, by the intercession of venerable Cuthbert and free us from all the chains of sin to rejoice in your peace.'⁹⁸

The shrine with the body of St Cuthbert at Durham was the main focus of his cult; nevertheless, the place where he had lived as a hermit, Farne, also claimed miracles. Reginald of Durham devoted seventeen chapters of his book to the miracles of St Cuthbert on Farne after his death, and gave as his source Bartholomew, a hermit on Farne, and other monks who had lived there.⁹⁹ The life of this Bartholomew was written at this time by Geoffrey of Durham. Another monk who had known Bartholomew before his death in 1193 also recorded miracles on Farne. This brief record of the miracles of St Cuthbert on Farne comprises thirteen stories, some of which overlap with Reginald's account. They agree with the Durham tradition by making the translation of the saint's incorrupt body the starting place of the account. Having established the central miracle of St Cuthbert, the writer proceeds to show that the presence of the saint on Farne had rendered it holy and available for prayer by male visitors. Of these stories, two record the vengeance of the saint against those who disturb the elder ducks on the island;¹⁰⁰ there is one instance of St Cuthbert's protection against fire and a similar incident in his *Life* is quoted;¹⁰¹ the rest of the miracles are cures of dysentery, paralysis, and madness, by prayer to the saint on the island. The sixth story is a piece of folklore and will be discussed as such later. The collection echoes the tradition about the saint at Durham, but shows that his shrine there was not the only place where the saint performed miracles after his death. The combination of miracles of vengeance with miracles of cures further confirms the pattern of miracles observed in his cult at Durham. Probably the writer describes miracles of St Cuthbert in Farne to assert the monastic claims of Durham to the island that became an important grange for Durham, with a continuing tradition of hermits.¹⁰²

The miracles of St Cuthbert present him either as a fierce northern patron, protecting his shrine and his men, or as the great saint of the North who was available there for any pilgrim in spiritual or temporal need. By the twelfth century, as elsewhere, the theme of healing dominates accounts of his miracles. As with St Benedict, the miracles were to some extent influenced by the miracles recorded in his *Life*, but

gradually assumed a different tone in response to changing needs in the recipients. But the harsher tradition continued into the twelfth century and is reflected in William of Malmesbury's account of St Cuthbert as 'one who is said above all to be a severe corrector of sinners'. He ends his account in a way typical of any writer concerned with a saint of this forbidding and 'traditional' kind:

Rightly ought you to be feared by your monks; I beseech you therefore to remember me for good. 103

4 Three Twelfth-Century Shrines: St William, St Godric and St Frideswide

SO FAR, we have observed two kinds of miracles: miracles in which the saint protects or avenges (connected, in the 'traditional' collections, with the territorial claims of the shrines' guardians) and miracles in which the saint heals (first experienced, at the 'traditional' shrines, by the guardians themselves and then gradually by a widening circle of pilgrims who put themselves under the protection of the saint). Later, as the need for the saint as patron and protector of the monastery lands, goods, and personnel decreased, the number of cures of pilgrims increased, until cures dominated the miracle stories. Another change in later miracle collections was the growing influence of the men who made the miracle stories into books. The early anonymous records kept at shrines remained the basis of the record, but in the twelfth century, reshaping by writers with some literary pretensions influenced the material itself.

Three twelfth-century shrines display these trends clearly. The main difference between the saints buried at these shrines and those already discussed is that these saints were recently dead or newly translated from obscurity. There was, therefore, no place in the liturgical life of the church for them, nor were there previous written accounts of their miracles. Of the three accounts studied here, two record miracles soon after the deaths of the saints, one at the twelfth-century translation of her relics, and not at stages throughout a long tradition. The three saints are in some ways like those already considered, though each has distinctive traits. William of Norwich was, like St Faith, a child-