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# Aldred among the West Saxons: Bamburgh, and What *bebbisca* Might Mean

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## Abstract

The Northumbrian Aldred wrote the interlinear glosses in the Lindisfarne Gospels, and glossed the Durham Collectar. In the Lindisfarne glosses he entered at Luke 18:37 NAZARENUS *nazarenisca* » *ðe bebbisca* .i. *allsua monn cuoeðas*, and *bebbisca* has never been explained. At the centre of Aldred's spiritual life is the community of St Cuthbert, close to Bamburgh, a holy place in Northumbria, with *Bam-* from *Bebba*, the name of Æthelfrith's queen. Nazareth is to Jesus as Bamburgh is to Northumbrian Christendom.

Aldred, the scribe who wrote the glosses in Old Northumbrian, the dialect of Old English that was spoken by the Anglo-Saxons in the north of England about a thousand years ago, wrote the following colophon at the end of the Gospel of St John at the end of the Lindisfarne Gospels:<sup>1</sup>

† Eadfrið biscop<sup>b</sup> Lindisfearnensis æcclesie he ðis boc aurat æt fruma Gode & S[an]c[t]e Cuðberhte & allum ðæm halgum \gimænelic<sup>e</sup> ða ðe in eolonde sint; & Eðiluald Lindisfearne-eolondinga bisc[op] hit uta giðryde & gibelde sua he uel cuðæ; & Billfrið se oncræ he gismioðade ða gihrino ða ðe uta on sint & hit gehri-nade mið golde & mið gimum æc mið su<sup>l</sup>lfre of[er]gylded faconleas feh. & Aldred *p[re]sb[ite]r indignus et misserrim[us]* mið Godes fultu<sup>m</sup>mæ & S[an]c[t]i Cuðberhtes hit of[er]gloesade on Englisc, & hine gihamadi mið ðæm ðriim dælu[m]. Matheus dæl Gode & S[an]c[t]e Cuðberhti, Marc' dæl ðæm bisc[o]pe, & Lucas dæl ðæm hiorode & æht<sup>e</sup> ora seo<sup>l</sup>lfres mið to inlade, & S[an]c[t]i Ioh[annis] dæl f[or]e hine seolfne \f[or]e his saule/& feouer ora seo<sup>l</sup>lfres mið Gode & S[an]c[t]i Cuðberhti þ[æt]te he hæbbe ondfong ðerh Godes milsæ on heofnu[m], seel & sibb on eorðo, forðgeong & giðyngo, uisdom & snyttro ðerh S[an]c[t]i Cuðberhtes earnunga. † Eadfrið, Oeðiluald, Billfrið, Aldred *hoc Euange[lium] D[omi]ni & Cuðberhto construxer[un]t t[em]p[or]a ornauerunt*.

The words *gimænelic* ‘jointly’ and *f[or]e his saule* ‘for his soul’ are written above the line, to make quite clear how we are to understand to whom is

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- 1 I have expanded the contractions and have converted the punctus of the manuscript to modern punctuation. For both the colophon and its translation I have relied on Facsimile (1956, 1960) II/2, 5–11, largely the work of A. S. C. Ross.
  - 2 This word is written above the line to explain that all the saints and relics taken together, not all the many understood individually.

dedicated the pious work of producing the Lindisfarne Gospels, with all the various skills in their production: Bishop Eadfrith who so accurately wrote the text, Bishop Oethilwald impressed and covered the outside of the binding, Billfrith adorned the binding with gold, jewels, and silver, and Aldred, last and not least, wrote the gloss. Their collaborative work is dedicated to God, to St Cuthbert, to all the saints and relics that are on the island of Lindisfarne jointly. Especially important is that Aldred glossed the Gospel of St John for himself, that is, *ffor]e his saule* ‘for his soul’, in the hope of entry into heaven through the grace of God. Aldred adds another note in the margin, in Latin and perhaps rhythmical and rhyming: *Ælfredi natus Aldredus uocor; bonæ mulieris filius eximius loquor* ‘I am called Aldred, son of Ælfred, I who speak (am) the excellent son of a good mother’. Above *mulieris* is written *.i. tilw*, which used to be expanded *id est Tilwyn(n)*, and interpreted as the name of Aldred’s mother. No such name is recorded, and the superscription is, in more recent scholarship, expanded *id est til wif* ‘that is a good woman’.<sup>3</sup> All this is movingly personal: the glossator’s work on St John is for the good of Aldred’s soul, for his hope that, by the mercy of God, he may, when his time comes, find heaven open to him as his reward for glossing the Latin Gospel texts.

Now the translation of the Colophon:<sup>4</sup>

† Eadfrith, Bishop of the Lindisfarne Church, originally wrote this book, for God and for St Cuthbert and jointly for all the saints whose relics are in the Island. And Æthelwald, Bishop of the Lindisfarne-islanders, impressed it on the outside and covered it – as he well knew how to do. And Billfrith, the anchorite, forged the ornaments which are on it on the outside and adorned it with gold and with gems and also with gilded-over silver – pure metal.<sup>5</sup> And Aldred, unworthy and most pitiable priest, glossed it in English between the lines with the help of God and St Cuthbert. And by means of the three ‘sections’, he made a home for himself – the section of Matthew was for God and St Cuthbert, the section of Mark for the Bishop, the section of Luke for the members of the Community (in addition, eight ores of

3 See Facsimile (1956, 1960) II/2, 10 and footnote 5.

4 Again largely the work of A. S. C. Ross, see footnote 1, above.

5 I am not sure if *faconleas* means ‘pure’ or with *DOE* s.v. *facen-leas* ‘unalloyed’. The first element *facon* means ‘deceit, fraud, guilt, crime, and treachery’, see *DOE*, 1986 s.v. *facen*, so that *faconleas feh* probably mean ‘treasure innocent of guilt’. In Anglo-Saxon England bullion is likely to have been the subject of crime, and of robbery by the Vikings; the silver referred to in the Colophon is innocent of such crimes.

silver for his induction, and the section of St John is<sup>6</sup> for himself \for his soul/(in addition, for ores of silver for God and St Cuthbert), so that, through the grace of God, he may gain acceptance into Heaven; happiness and peace on Earth,<sup>7</sup> and through the merits of St Cuthbert advancement and honour, wisdom and sagacity. † Eadfrith, Æthelwald, Billfrith, Aldred made, or, as the case may be, embellished this gospel-book for God and Cuthbert.

The personal and the local are emphasized by Aldred; in the margin his parents, and he himself an excellent son, *filius eximius*, and above all God and the Community of St Cuthbert. We may wish to see him as someone deeply rooted in the land between Lindisfarne and Chester-le-Street, the home of his Community, and with faith that St Cuthbert, from that same region of Northumberland and Durham,<sup>8</sup> has his eyes on his Community, and may when the time comes mediate Aldred's way through the grace of God to acceptance into heaven.

In fact, we know that Aldhelm's skilled services were at least once required far away from Chester-le-Street at Woodyates, Dorset,<sup>9</sup> now on the road A354 half-way between Salisbury and Blandford (Forum). More precisely, where he was in the South, the place bore the name *Aclee*, now Oakley Down,<sup>10</sup> about a mile south of Woodyates. There he added four collects to St Cuthbert and a colophon in the Durham Cathedral MS A. IV. 19, the Durham Collectar, traditionally called the Durham Ritual. The colophon giving these details reads:<sup>11</sup>

Be suðan Wudigan Gæte æt Aclee on Westsæxum on Laurentius mæssan daegi, on Wodnes Dægi, Ælfsige ðæm biscope in his getelde, Aldred se P[ro]fast ðas feower collectæ on fif næht aldne mona ær underne awrat.

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6 The verb is not in the Old English; Ross has 'was', I prefer 'is'.

7 I follow the word order of the Old English, Ross has 'on earth' at the end of the sentence. My punctuation differs slightly from that of Ross, because I believe that his hope of promotion is in the Community of St Cuthbert.

8 To these two counties we must, since the dehistoricization of the English counties in 1974, add Tyne and Wear. See the maps in Mills, 1991: pp. [xxxii, xxxiii].

9 See Mills, 1980: 271–273.

10 See Mills, 1980: 266.

11 Facsimile II/2: pp. 25–26; again largely the work of Ross. For the manuscript see Brown (1969: fol. 84<sup>ro</sup>). Thompson and Lindelöf (1927: pp. xiv–xix) discuss the colophon and its context at length.

[To the south of Woodyates at Oakley Down among the West Saxons on (St) Lawrence's mass-day, on a Wednesday, for Bishop Ælfsige in his tent, Provost Aldred wrote these four collects before Tierce, the moon (being) five nights (old).]

The word order of my translation, above, follows that of Aldred; the following translation, largely by Ross, is easier:

Alfred the Provost wrote these four collects at Oakley, to the south of Woodyates, among the West Saxons, on Wednesday, Lawrence's Feast-Day (the moon being five nights old), before Tierce, for Ælfsige the bishop, in his tent.

Of course, we are interested in the fact that the Northumbrian Aldred is among the West Saxons, that he describes himself as 'the Provost', no longer *p[re]sb[ite]r indignus et misserrim[us]*. He appears to have been promoted, and earlier he had prayed for promotion.

These four St Cuthbert collects mattered to Aldred, when he entered them on fol. 84<sup>ro</sup> of the Durham Collectar.<sup>12</sup> He refers to them in his colophon immediately under them. This page is Aldred's personal page, in what is, unlike the Lindisfarne Gospels, a quite unpretentious book, perhaps compiled for teaching purposes rather than to guide the Community of St Cuthbert in prayer. The collects read as follows, and I am grateful to Mr Colin Leach, formerly of Pembroke College, Oxford, for the translations:

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus qui in meritis sancti tui Cuthberhti sacerdotis semper es, et ubique mirabilis<sup>13</sup> quesumus clementiam tuam ut sicut ei eminentem gloriam contulisti sic ad consequendam misericordiam tuam eius nos precibus adiuuari, per.

(Colin Leach's translation:) Almighty and everlasting God, who art forever in the deserts of thy priest St Cuthbert, and art everywhere wonderful, we beseech (thee) for thy mercy so that, just as thou didst confer on him outstanding glory, that thou even so bringest about [*facias*] that we be helped by his prayers to obtain thy pity, etc.

12 Thompson and Lindelöf, 1927: 185. For a relevant discussion of these collects see Corrêa, 1992: 78–79.

13 Colin Leach's note: '*et ubique mirabilis* hangs rather loose: I have assumed that *es* is understood; *facias* is a good supplement, and *facis* appears later: a better word would be *impetres* "bringest about"'. The editors, Thompson and Lindelöf (1927: 220), suggest that 'before *precibus* the writer (Aldred) seems to have omitted *facias*.

Deus qui nos sanctorum tuorum temporali tribues<sup>14</sup> commemoratione gaudere. presta quesumus ut beato Cudberhto pontifice intercedente in ea numeramur salutis<sup>15</sup> in qua illi sunt gratia tua gloriosi, per...

(Colin Leach's translation:) O God, who grantest us to rejoice in the timely<sup>16</sup> commemoration of thy saints, be present we beseech thee, that, by the intercession of the blessed bishop Cuthbert, we may be numbered [in that company of the saved], wherein they glory in thy grace, etc.

Deus qui sanctorum tuorum libenter suscipis uoluntates intercedente beato Cudberhto sacerdote familiam tuam quesumus Domine miserationis tuæ dextera semper et ubique protege, per

(Colin Leach's translation:) O God who willingly undertakest [to answer] the wishes of thy saints when the blessed priest Cuthbert makes intercession, protect thy family we beseech thee at all times and in all places by the [strong] right hand of thy pity, etc.

Deus qui sanctorum tuorum aput te gloriam permanentem fidelium facis deuotione clarescere presta quesumus ut beatus Cudberhtus sequentibus sibi beneficia dignanter<sup>17</sup> inpendat, et pro populo tuo intercessor existat, per Dominum.

O God who makest by the devotion of thy faithful saints everlasting glory to shine in thy presence, be present we beseech thee so that the blessed Cuthbert with complaisance [*or*; courteously] lay benefits on those following him, and remain [*subjunctive*] as intercessor for thy people, etc.

At the foot of the first column of fol. 84<sup>ro</sup>, that is, below the second of these collects, there are four lines of writing, badly damaged, perhaps partly erased:<sup>18</sup> 'deus omnipotens & Maria & Helena & sanctus Cudbertus ... gilanidon Aldred' [God Almighty and Mary and Helen and St Cuthbert granted ... to Aldred].

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14 Colin Leach's note: 'why *tribues*, future? I would expect *tribuis*.'

15 Colin Leach's note: '*salutis* is inadequate by itself: I think we need something like *societate saluatorum* – certainly some word which is singular, because of *ea*, but implies plurality, like *cohors* or *societas*, because of *illi* following.' Thompson and Lindelöf (1927: 220) suggest that the writer (Aldred) 'appears to have written *salutis* instead of *sorte saluati*'; and they say for this suggestion they rely on Lingard, 1845: II, 365.

16 Colin Leach's note: 'but *temporali* normally means "for the time being".'

17 Colin Leach's note: '*dignanter* is rare and late; I have accepted the translation of Lewis and Short, 1879: s.v., "courteously".'

18 Julian Brown, Alan Ross and I discussed the wording, which we tried to read despite their damaged state. The results of our discussion are in Facsimile, vol. II/2, 26-28. The results of our effort are given here. The reading *gilanidon* still seems questionable to me.

Aldred's much longer statement that he wrote the Cuthbert collects while he was among the West Saxons stands at the foot of the second column, below the last collect. Though among the West Saxons, far away from the Community of St Cuthbert, his heart and mind (to use the hackneyed journalistic phrase)<sup>19</sup> are with St Cuthbert. His mind, it seems, was on higher things than the Durham Collectar proper, namely on St Cuthbert and that, granted God's mercy, Aldred might find heaven open to him when his time comes.<sup>20</sup> Our minds too should be on higher things than brutal Philology if we wish to understand Aldred's glosses and marginal entries in both the Durham Collectar and especially the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Some of Aldred's glosses and annotations are difficult, and for anyone a thousand years and more later to attempt an explanation one or more steps of reasoning may have to be supplied, steps not even hinted at directly or symbolically by Aldred. Highly subtle explications are not likely to convince, and I think the following explication, though new, is not subtle.

The place-name Nazareth and the adjective *Nazarenus* derived from it occur more than twenty times in the Gospels.<sup>21</sup> Occasionally Aldred leaves it unglossed,

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- 19 It must not be thought that the phrase now on the well-oiled lips of politicians and journalists is new or that it has always been used so glib and void of force and sense, for in former days every child learnt an allied phrase by reciting his or her hornbook; cf. Blunt (1907: 429): 'to feare God, and to love God, with all our hert, with all our mynd, with al our soul.'
- 20 I understand Aldred's statement that he was writing at Oakley, south of Woodyates, among the West Saxons to refer only to his writing these four collects away from Chester-le-Street, not the entire book. Hohler (1956: 157–158) interprets Aldred's statement to refer to the whole book, relating the prayers invoking St Cuthbert to a more southerly tradition of such prayers, chiefly Continental.
- 21 Matthew 2:23, 4:13, 21:11, 26:71; Mark 1:9, 24, 10:47, 14:67, 16:6; Luke 1:26, 2:4, 39, 51, 4:16, 4:34, 18:37, 24:19; John 1:45, 46, 18:5, 7, 19:19. Aldred leaves it unglossed at Matthew 2:23, 21:11; Luke 1:26. It is glossed at Matthew 4:13 *CIUITATE NAZARETH ceas-tra natzareðes* (gen. sg. masc.), 26:71 *NAZARENO nazarenesco*; Mark 1:9 *A NAZARETH from Nazareth ðær byrig* 'from Nazareth the city' (*ðær byrig* in the margin), 1:24 *NAZARENE* (vocative) *ðe nazarene*, 10:47 *NAZARENUS nazaresca*, 14:67 *NAZARENO ðæm nazarenesco*, 16:6 *NAZARENUM nazarenasca*; Luke 2:4 *NAZARETH nazareth*, 2:39 *NAZARETH nazar*, 2:51 *NAZARETH to naza*, 4:16 *NAZARETH to naza*, 4:34 *NAZARENAE nazarenesca*, 18:37 *NAZARENUS nazarenisca* » [in the margin:] *ðe bebbisca .i. allsua monn cuoeðas*, 24:19 *DE IH'U NAZARENO from t of ðæm nazarenisco hælend*; John 1:45 *A NAZARETH*

occasionally he explains it a little, e.g. Mark 1:9 *nazareth ðær byrig*, ‘from Nazareth the city’, most often his are not very exciting glosses for either word manifesting minor differences in spelling or inflection. Once, however, at Luke 18:37, he adds a marginal explanation to a straightforward gloss. The context, the healing of a blind man, is in no way obscure in the synoptic Gospels, Luke 18:35–43 (set out *per cola et commata* in Bible (1889–1954: I, pp. 436–437), making use of Y [= Lindisfarne], in the collation of Wordsworth and White, their readings checked against the Facsimile (and found amazingly accurate):

- (35) Factum est autem cum appropinquaret hiericho  
caecus quidam sedebat secus  
uiam mendicans
- (36) et cum audiret turbam  
praetereuntem  
interrogabat quid hoc esset
- (37) dixerunt autem ei quod iesus  
nazareus transiret
- (38) et clamauit dicens  
iesu fili dauid miserere mei
- (39) et qui praeibant increpabant  
eum ut taceret  
ipse uero \multo/ magis  
clamauit  
fili dauid miserere mei
- (40) stans autem iesus iussit illum  
adduci se  
et cum appropinquasset  
interrogauit illum (41) dicens  
quid tibi uis faciam?  
at ille dixit domine ut uideam
- (42) et iesus dixit illi  
respice fides tua te saluum fecit
- (43) et confestim uidit  
et sequebatur illum  
magnificans deum  
et omnis plebs ut uidit  
dedit laudem deo

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from *ðær byrig*, 1:46 A NAZARETH *of nazareth*, 18:5 NAZARENUM *natzarenisca*, 18:7 IH'M NAZARENUM *hæl'ðone nazarenisca*, 19:19 NAZARENUS *ðe natzarenisca*.

The Rhemes New Testament (Bible, 1582: p. 192) translates these verses literally:<sup>22</sup>

(35) And it came to passe, when he drew nigh to Iericho, a certaine blinde man sate by the way, begging. (36) And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this should be. (37) And they told him that I E S V S of Nazareth passed by. (38) And he cried saying, I E S V S sonne of Daud, haue mercie vpon me. (39) And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried much more, Sonne of Daud haue mercie vpon me. (40) And I E S V S standing, commaunded him to brought vnto him. And when he was come neere, he asked him, (41) saying, Vwhat wilt thou that I doe to thee? but he said, Lord, that I may see. (42) And I E S V S said to him, Do thou see, thy faith hath made thee whole. (43) And forthwith he saw, and folowed him, magnifying God. And the people as they saw it. gaue praise to God.

To this text at verse 37 Aldred adds his explanation: NAZARENUS *nazarenisca* » [in the margin:] *de bebbisca .i. allsua monn cuoedas* ‘the \*Bebbish i.e. as one says’. The synoptic Gospels relate the matter: Matthew 20:29–34, and Mark 10:46–52, which at verse 46 gives the name of the blind man with that of his father, FILIUS TIMAEI BARTIMAEUS, *sunu timaeis* (BARTIMAEUS unglossed). Mark’s naming of the blind man seems quite irrelevant for an understanding of the marginal explanation at Luke 18:37, and the full context in Luke suggests no help either with Aldred’s obscure *bebbisca*. The dictionaries, etc., do not do well with the adjective. *DOE* prints the headword with a question mark, *?bebbisc*, and suggests that the word is perhaps a ‘miscopying of *hehbisc*’ (for *hehbiscop* ‘pontifex, pontiff’) adducing a use of PONTIFICEM MAGNUM glossed by Aldred in the Durham Collectar *hehbisc*’ *micil*.<sup>23</sup> Cook (1894: 16) gives the word *bebbisc*, parses it, but has no meaning. Toller (1908–1921: 66) quotes the text accurately, and attempts no explanation.

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22 The King James Bible is not significantly different.

23 Thompson and Lindelöf (1927: 91), line 1; cf. Corrêa (1992: 208) No. 556, Hebrews 4:14. The *DOE* explication is derived from Meritt, (1954: 7); and Meritt enters it, with a question-mark, in his supplement to Clark Hall (1960): s.v. *bebbisc*. Aldred’s glosses in the Durham Collectar are later than the glosses in the Lindisfarne Gospels, and how Aldred came to miscopy what he had not yet written is not revealed by Meritt or in the *DOE* entry, and no examples are provided to illustrate where else he so savagely miscopied explanatory notes on biblical texts. Furthermore, how the healed beggar-man could have risen to pontificacy is not explained by Meritt or *DOE*.

Other dictionaries have nothing. Adjectives formed like *bebbisc* by adding *-isc* (often with a preceding geminate consonant) are recorded in Old English: common *mennisc* ‘human’; rare *gimmisc* cf. *gim(m)* ‘jewel’, *gullisc* perhaps connected with *gold*, *gylden*.<sup>24</sup>

By the time Aldred was glossing the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Community of St Cuthbert, carrying with them the book and the relics of St Cuthbert, was further south than Lindisfarne, at Chester-le-Street. Lindisfarne, called Holy Island at least since c.1125 (see Mawer, 1929: 116), and the Farne Islands too are likely to have been at all times in the pious memory of the monks of this community. St Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne before St Cuthbert, had been called from the Farne Islands to Lindisfarne; St Cuthbert himself was also called to Lindisfarne from the Farne Islands, to which he returned to die.<sup>25</sup> Bamburgh, towering high on the mainland, was the great Northumbrian repository of the relics of saints. It had been St Oswald’s royal seat, and, as we shall see, here was displayed Oswald’s incorrupt right hand, as blessed by St Aidan. Saints’ bodies in Durham Cathedral had been found incorrupt when their tombs were opened in 1104, an incorruptibility thought a monkish imposture<sup>26</sup> by the Anglican Raine (1828: 227):

With respect to the reported incorruptibility of St. Cuthbert’s body, the facts which I have disclosed are, I think, decisive. The inner coffin, in which he was found during our late investigation, has been proved to be the inner coffin which contained his remains in the year 1104, and, upon the testimony of Reginald,<sup>27</sup> the

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24 Cf. *OED* s.v. *-ish* suffix<sup>1</sup>.

25 Colgrave, (1940: 96–97, 214–215, 292–293, 313, 325–326, 337).

26 Raine is by no means averse from relating, with full documentation, Cuthbertian miracles; thus (Raine 1828: 69–70), how Archbishop Thomas [of Bayeux, 1070–1100] was healed by Cuthbert’s touch, according to his dream related in a charter (still preserved). Raine (1828: 68) begins his account of the miracle by a parenthetical ‘(I now come to fiction)’, which must have annoyed Lingard, though he does not refer to it in his *Remarks* (Raine 1828).

27 Cf. Lingard (1828: 19–20): ‘There is, in the library at Durham, a manuscript collection of stories respecting St. Cuthbert and his relics, compiled by Reginald, a monk of Durham, about the close of the twelfth century.’ The manuscript is MS Hunter 101 (see Raine 1828: 1 and Battiscombe, 1956: 3, footnote 1); edited by Raine 1835, much of it translated by him in Raine 1828. Raine tells us that the book was bought by the Dean and Chapter of Durham from the executors of Dr [Christopher] Hunter in 1757.

very coffin in which those remains were placed in the year 698. Now, the state of this inner coffin in 1827, most satisfactorily proved, that flesh and blood had never been its inmates.

Much of Raine's careful account was confirmed, it seems, in 1899, when the tomb was reopened, and more recently as shown in Battiscombe (1956), in whose book there is nothing on the incorruptibility of the saint's body, though much on his badly rotted coffin. If we wish to read Raine's book in the hope of finding incorruptibility we have to be guided by the Roman Catholic Lingard (1828: *passim*), who in his *Remarks* hotly controverted Raine's careful account, with a history, like Raine's account, based partly on Reginald. He lists well-attested instances of incorruptibility from 1404 onwards, making it seem the most natural thing in the world that (Lingard 1828: 7–8) '[u]nder the notion ... that Catholics are taught to believe in the incorruptibility of St Cuthbert's body, the Reverend gentlemen [Raine, rector of Meldon (Northumberland), and two canons of Durham Cathedral] resolved to investigate on the 17th of May [1827], the contents of his reputed grave'.

I do not know if in Aldred's life-time the inside of St Cuthbert's grave was ever exposed to view. It cannot have been buried during the seven years from 875–882, if we can believe Roger of Hoveden;<sup>28</sup> but that was a century before Aldred's day. We may assume that in the second half of the tenth century the 'innermost coffin, generally regarded as identical with the *levis theca* in which the saint was deposited in A.D. 698', was still in perfect condition, and not rotted and in need of loving reconstruction, as reported by Kitzinger (1956: 202–304).<sup>29</sup>

We should think of Aldred as a highly learned, devout member of the Community of St Cuthbert, successful in his prayer that he be promoted, for he was promoted to provost, as we have seen. Wherever he was, whether at home in Chester-le-Street or in the deep South of England among the West Saxons, his thoughts were, one may surmise, always on the holiness at the old home, the

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28 See Stubbs, 1868–1871: I, 42: *Anno DCCC LXX V ... Tunc Erdulfus, episcopus Lindisfarnensis, et Edredus abbas, corpus Sancti Cuthberti de insula Lindisfarnensi tollentes per septem annos passim vagabantur* (Then Erdulf, bishop of Lindisfarne, and Abbot Edred carried away the body of St Cuthbert from the Island of Lindisfarne, and wandered hither and thither for seven years).

29 The term *levis theca* 'light chest' is used by Bede in his description of the burial of St Cuthbert (Colgrave, 1940: 294, the reference is in Kitzinger, 1956: 203).

Farne Islands, and especially Lindisfarne, the miracles of St Cuthbert and how his gospel book, the one we call the Lindisfarne Gospels, was somehow lost to the seas and arrived unharmed on dry land. Raine (1828) recounts many of these miraculous events, and does not believe one word of what he relates, and I too should need a Lingard's help to assuage my doubts.

High in Aldred's memory must have risen the holy city of Bamburgh. Its geography is well described by an enthusiastic early editor of the Lindisfarne and Rushworth Gospels and their glosses (Waring, 1865: p. xiii):

Bamborough Castle, the old Bebbanburh, then Oswald's royal residence, rises from a bold headland to the south; on the east it is open to the sea, while westward the monks looked over the mainland, the field of their missionary labours.

Earlier in the history of the literary criticism of Bamburgh, relevant to Middle English romances, not Old English gospel glosses, is Walter Scott's Romantic *mise-en-scène* (Scott, 1804: pp. xxxvii–xxxviii):

It must be supposed that the favourite traditions of Arthur and his knights retained their ground for a length of time, among a people thus descended [*i.e.* from the Britons of old]. Accordingly, the scene of many of their exploits is laid in this frontier country: Bamborough castle being pointed out as the Castle Orgeillous of romance, and Berwick as the Joyeuse Garde, the stronghold of the renowned Sir Lancelot.

From such geographic and literary flights we must descend to the relative realities of etymology and what the place stands for in Anglo-Saxon England. The second element of Bamburgh is *burh* 'stronghold; township, village, town', the first element the hypocoristic form of a name, Bebba, also Bæbba, the name of the queen of Bernicia, Æthelfrith's queen, an important figure in the history of the Northumbrian kingdoms. The history of these northern lands is the story of royal saints, with Oswald, king and martyr, the son of Æthelfrith by Æcha (his second wife),<sup>30</sup> also significant for Bamburgh; Æcha is probably also a hypocoristic name-form.<sup>31</sup> I believe that *bebbisc* is the adjective derived

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30 Some of this information about Bebba is derived from Nennius, as a note in Colgrave and Mynors (1969: 231, with a reference to Whitelock 1979: 262) tells us.

31 For the place-name evidence see Mawer 1920: 10, 244 (Bebba), 224 (*burh*). For the historical record see Nennius in Whitelock 1979: 262; Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 218–219 n. 4, 231 and n., 252 and n. 1, 262 and n. 1; Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 97, 105–106, 109–110; Battiscombe 1956: 36 n. 1, Colgrave 1956: 116–117, 121,

from Bebbā, characterizing her holy connections, mentioned by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. The sacred relic preserved in Bamburgh is Oswald's munificent right hand or hand and arm (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 230–231), with that and more about King Oswald:<sup>32</sup>

Denique omnes nationes et prouincias Britanniae, quae in quattuor linguas, id est Brettonum Pictorum Scottorum et Anglorum, devisee sunt, in dicione accepit. Quo regni culmine sublimatus, nihil hominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit. Denique fertur quia tempore quodam, cum die sancto paschae cum praefato episcopo consedisset ad prandium, positusque esset in mensa coram eo discus argenteus regalibus epulis refertus, et iamiamque essent manus ad panem benedicendum missuri, intrasse subito ministrum ipsius, cui suscipiendorum inopum erat cura deligata, et indicasse regi quia multitudo pauperum undecumque adueniens maxima per plateas sederet, postulans aliquid elemosynae a rege. Qui mox dapes sibimet adpositas deferri pauperibus, sed et discum confringi, atque eisdem minutatim diuidi praecepit. Quo uiso pontifex, qui adsidebat, delectatus tali facto pietatis, adprehendit dexteram eius, et ait: 'Nunquam inueterescat haec manus.' Quod et ita iuxta uotum benedictionis eius prouenit. Nam cum interfecto illo

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135. Oswald's incorrupt right hand was at Bamburgh according to the Peterborough Chronicle entry for 641 (Irvine 2004: 25). I use the term *hypocoristic form* in preference to *pet-form*, the latter being more obvious in denominating how a little child, a pet, is called; yet the former is no different in affectionate denomination, the adjective being closely related to the verb *ὑπο-κορίζομαι* 'to use terms of endearment'; see Frisk 1960–1973: I, 920 s.v. *κόρη*; so also Chantraine 1968–1980: I, 567/2 s.v. *κόρος*. We have no evidence if, when used of adults (male and female, queens among them), such Old English name-forms necessarily imply endearment. Woolf (1939: 3 and footnotes) draws attention to the fact that such forms are not confined to women's names, and, thinks of such naming as 'a not infrequent deviation from the established name-type [consisting of two elements], a shortened form of the name was occasionally used for the more regular compound name, this so-called hypocoristic form being essentially a nickname.' Woolf (1939: 3, 71–72, and 79) shows that the West Saxon male names Cuthwulf and Cuthwine are both shortened to Cutha.

- 32 My text follows the St Petersburg Bede (Arngart, 1952: fol. 52a, with modern punctuation, mainly that of Colgrave and Mynors 1972: 230 [and one of their minor variant readings superimposed and italicized]). Ælfric retells the story of the sacred incorruptibility of Oswald's right hand in his homily on the saint's life (Skeat 1888–1900: II, 130–133); and for a very long time it was familiar to students of Old English because that homily was administered by Sweet (1876: 95–102; and still 1967: 77–84, as pap with a hatchet for beginners valiantly struggling with <æ>, <ð>, and <þ>).