

## Conclusions

Bede's methodology in writing his Gospel homilies corresponds closely to that found in his other works. However, the homilies are a more personal expression of his theology, as shown in the pericopes he chose and in the allusive references to other theologians. Bede is at his most original here; he carefully conceals his debts to other authors, much as he did in his poetic life of Cuthbert. But Bede is extracting the most important ideas from Gregory and Augustine, forming a tradition and transmission of those ideas that persist in the Roman Church to this day.

There are some notable points about Bede's theology as expressed in the homilies; Bede has a complex, coherent theology, which is only presented to us in glimpses as he discusses a single biblical verse. We have seen that the unity of the Church is very important to Bede; it is important for heavenly unity that the Church on earth can be united. This building of the Church is accomplished through the action of grace, which can be seen throughout history. The framework of the six to eight ages allows Bede a framework for explaining history and the importance of various aspects thereof, through free-ranging connections. These connections demonstrate his acute awareness and understanding of time. This complex yet optimistic theology ensured the popularity of his homilies in Carolingian Europe.

Bede's theology was profoundly influenced by Augustine and Gregory. His homiliary was probably inspired by Gregory's own collection, although the precise audience and intent of the two authors was rather different. Bede was preaching primarily to a monastic audience, and was most concerned with a close understanding of the biblical text, though both men wished their differing congregations to appreciate the moral implications of the biblical text. Gregory's influence on Bede's concept of pastoral care has long been noted; it is equally apparent in the homilies. Augustine's influence is more perceptible in Bede's view of time and history, and in Bede's understanding of the complex theological issues concerning the nature of God.

The homilies were most likely not originally preached in their present form. They were certainly rooted in Bede's own preaching, and may be designed to be read aloud or in private, so that people could derive benefit from them in many contexts. The manuscript evidence bears this out, as it shows that at an early date, Bede's

homilies were used both in a liturgical context and were read in private. The rhetorical artistry used suggests strongly that Bede was keen to insert the kind of aural markers which would help listeners understand his theology. The moral discussions within the homilies surely sprang from his own work within the monastery, even though the homilies were probably composed in private, and carefully arranged.

There are many fruitful areas for further research which arise from this study. There is yet more work to be done on Bede's use of cadences, especially with regard to his use of them in other texts, and on how he compares to other early Anglo-Latin authors. The statistical methods used for such a survey also need further refinement, in order to give a reliable method with sufficient sensitivity. There is also further work to be done on the manuscript transmission of the homilies, examining the English tradition and the remaining continental manuscripts. Such work would also reveal more about how scribes treated the punctuation in Bedan manuscripts, and how readers parsed the text.

Bede commands many registers of style. Augustine and Jerome seem to have influenced different aspects of his style. Augustine's early work may have nurtured Bede's interest in periodic prose. In the homilies, he tends towards a complex, rhetorical style. His style highlights the key words for the less well-educated, and provides food for thought for others. The style of the homilies is used to produce an emotional effect; Bede wants his audience to grow closer to God, and he is prepared to use his rhetoric to induce the appropriate emotions. Statistical analysis suggests that Bede used *clausulae*, perhaps even the *cursus mixtus*, though this is an area which deserves further research. The *clausulae* would have been of particular use to listeners, in order to indicate the end of clauses. Their use by Bede suggests that he was aware that people would be listening to his homilies, not just reading them.

At Wearmouth-Jarrow a complex system of punctuation was used. In minuscule text, points at two heights and capital letters were used to facilitate reading. Particular attention is paid to punctuating paratactic clauses. Bodley 819 also shows the response that later readers had to the text. Not only do we have glosses by Aldred, but a twelfth-century scribe or reader felt the need to repunctuate in a more familiar idiom. Similar responses can be seen in manuscripts of the homilies; influenced by their exemplars, most of the early continental manuscripts use a similar system of punctuation consisting of two points and capital letters.

However, later scribes and readers have again felt the need to repunctuate, showing that the texts were still of interest to readers in the twelfth century and beyond. The manuscripts show evidence of having been used for private reading for all that time; however, some of the early manuscripts show signs of being used in the liturgy, demonstrating a flexibility of use that Bede surely intended. The manuscripts of the homilies show signs of a complicated transmission, and have clearly been disordered and reordered over time. This question of ordering deserves further research, not least because it indicates a far more lively manuscript tradition than the number of manuscripts surviving today would suggest.

The medieval reader of the homilies would have had considerably more help than a reader of the CCSL edition. The very complexity of the Latin becomes a virtue when considered in the context of meditation upon a spiritual text. A reader can feel a very real sense of achievement, having understood Bede's Latin and appreciated the theological message behind it. Bede's homilies also reached a wider audience through the homiliary collected by Paul the Deacon. While some of the finer points may have been lost through hearing the homilies aloud, the stirring rhetorical effects and language used surely inspired the listeners at the night office.

Bede's theology and the undoubted authority of his sources made his homilies popular reading in Carolingian Europe. They provided authoritative sources for preachers and profound content for meditating monks. The precise allocation and ordering of the homilies stayed remarkably stable across four centuries, as did the manuscript punctuation. The twelfth-century reader could see the fingerprints (so to speak) of the eighth-century scribe in the layout and punctuation of the words he was reading; a punctuation set out by Bede to help his readers appreciate his message.