Bede lived a life usually described as austere and studious, lodged in the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Life as a monk in the eighth century probably much resembled that of a clergyman in any century; much of one’s time is devoted to the study of Scripture. A lifetime of devotion to God and near-constant study of the Bible is sure to alter a person’s perspective no matter what the century, as has happened in innumerable instances, Bede’s case being only one (less extreme) example. However, Bede did live in a superstitious time, and he “believed in miracles as part of his world and of his history.” (Brown, 95) As a result, God works wonders repeatedly throughout Bede’s Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, bestowing favors upon the virtuous and dealing woe and death to the wicked.

The history of the earthly kingdom of man is to Bede a continuation of the events in the Bible, and thus the world of eighth century Britain works in much the same way that biblical Israel did. The connection between religion and history is one of the central elements of Bede’s Historia. Generally speaking, Bede reveals his vision of a world of commonplace miracles and divine intervention in three basic ways. The use of typology identifies characters in English history with characters from Scripture or from Christian history. This is a common scenario, and raises several questions about Bede’s outlook since he sometimes postfigures biblical events which were themselves prefigured in the Scripture. Second, Bede often explains that key events happened the way they did because the Apostles stated that they would. For the purposes of this paper, this phenomenon will be called scriptural fulfillment. Finally, Bede most directly seeks to prove the hand of God in Britain by dint of his miracles, which vary in scope and effect. On an interesting side note, the author makes his greatest efforts at verification when it comes to his miracles, on more than one occasion taking the time to name the exact authority upon which the tale comes to him. Taken together, these three aspects of Bede’s work seem to demonstrate the impact of the author’s religious convictions on his interpretation of events ranging from ecclesiastical to political to even geological.
I. Typology

From the very beginning, familiar patterns begin to appear in Bede’s *Historia* that give the reader pause. Typologies abound in the author’s work, and not just of biblical events, but from later history as well. In some instances, Bede appears to have chosen to mimic events which themselves seem to be mimicked throughout the Bible itself. In others, the resemblance is not as exact, but still evident. In others, the typology is self-proclaimed, and the author makes a direct comparison with biblical characters or events. In any case, Bede can be shown to have been influenced by the Bible in his portrayal of events. Whether this is all intentional cannot be truly known, but at the very least we can assume that those who later read Bede's *Historia*, many of them monks and other churchmen, might have drawn parallels between Bede's characters and lessons and those in the Bible.

After giving an outline of the geography of Britain, Bede jumps into a brief account of the Roman arrival in and occupation of Britain then describes how Christian faith came to the island in the days before the arrival of the Roman Church under St. Augustine. In the fifth century A.D., Bede tells us, the Britons were simultaneously devastated by famine and beset by the Irish and Picts. The Britons, however, “trusting in God’s help where no human hand could save them,” (Price Bede, 54) eventually triumphed over their enemies and were subsequently blessed by plenty. (On a note which will be discussed later, the fact that persecution leads to power seems to be a fulfillment of 1 Peter 4:13-19.) As the Britons enjoy the fruits of their victory over famine and heathens, they soon slip into idolatry and wickedness, “giving themselves up to drunkenness, hatred, quarrels and violence, [throwing] off the easy yoke of Christ.” (Price Bede, 55) This passage resembles several in the Bible, most notably the state of society before the Flood or the sins of Israel at Mt. Sinai. For example, Genesis 6:11-12 reads:
The earth was also corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

Here the Britons are pre-figured, and when they act wickedly, they are punished by God. In the case of Genesis, mankind is eradicated in a Flood. In Bede’s Britain, God brings in the Angles and the Saxons to punish the Britons for their vice. Bede is quite sure that the Anglo-Saxon invasion, a watershed political event, is manifestly God’s will; “it was God’s will that brought the Saxons to Britain so that punishment should fall on the British ‘inprobos’.” (Wallace-Hadrill, 21) In each case, humans have been punished by God for their earthly misdeeds.

After the Anglo-Saxon invasion, the bishops of Gaul send the bishop Germanus to Britain to eradicate what Bede calls the "Pelagian heresy." Germanus becomes a central figure in the history at this point, and Bede's portrayal of him deserves some analysis. Scripture, once again, seems to shape the many aspects of this story, in one place by Bede's own admission.

The great heresy preached by Pelagius, "that man had no need of God's grace," (Price Bede, 49) appears in the Historia much like the golden calf of the time of Moses. Pelagius' heresy is supported, according to Bede, by a deposed bishop by the name of Julian of Campania. This character, who was "eager to recover his bishopric," (Price Bede, 49) lends an element to the history of the Pelagian heresy reminiscent of Aaron, who forged for Israel a golden calf as his brother and Joshua received the word of God. The heresy of these two men has infected the British church by the time Germanus arrives.

The similarity with the Book of Exodus continues as Germanus sets out to prove the Pelagian heresy wrong through the correct teachings of God. After the arrival of the bishops, the Pelagians, unable to prove their cause through Scripture, resort to an attempt
to sway the people with "rich ornaments and magnificent robes, supported by crowds of flattering followers." (Price Bede, 59) Here the theme of idolatry is invoked, as the heretics place their faith in finery rather than in God. At length, the teaching of Christ is victorious, but the heretics have no Moses to protect them from God's wrath, and the virtuous slay them: "The people, who were acting as [the heretics'] judges, were hardly restrained from violence, and confirmed their verdict with acclamation." (Price Bede, 60) It was surely a familiar lesson, though evidence does not suggest that Bede's account existed purely for allegorical purposes. (Wallace-Hadrill, 26)

Bede connects Germanus with Scripture even further, comparing him with Job, who was robbed of his wealth and afflicted with boils to test his faith. Similarly, Germanus suffers a broken leg and his lodging is destroyed by fire. Bede states, however, that Germanus' "merits, like those of the blessed Job, would be enhanced by bodily affliction." (Price Bede, 61) Moreover, Germanus plays the purely apostolic role here, behaving as a Christian monk would believe that an Apostle should, travelling great distances and enduring great hardships for the betterment of the worship of Christ.

Bede continues this trend through the Historia, sometimes seeming, without actually mentioning it, to cast his characters as mighty biblical figures. For example, King Edwin at the beginning of Bede's Book III resembles Joshua in the Book of Judges. After the great proselytizer’s death, the Kings of the Northumbrians, as seems common in such situations in both the Bible and Bede, revert to their previous idolatry. They are soon destroyed by the pagan king Cadwalla, and the salvation of the English comes in the form of Oswald, that colossal figure who will be discussed in greater depth later. In the Book of Judges, Israel reverts to older idolatry and are punished by God through human agents.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. 14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the
King Oswald enters this power vacuum and restores Northumbria to the Christian faith, defeating the “pagan” Cadwalla.¹ Thus, if the logic of Judges was invoked to make post-Edwinian Northumbria into post-Joshuan Israel, (and thus \textit{de jure} Edwin into Joshua) then Oswald has been typologized as a judge, sent by God to lead the people from their own wickedness. The fact that Bede spends much of Book III outlining the many virtues of Oswald seems to support the theory that Bede believed he was part of God’s plan. Scholarly opinion also supports this theory: “...Oswald was identified with devotion to the cross’; and more than that, consciously owed his victory against odds to divine aid.” (Wallace-Hadrill, 88) Hence the period following the death of the great King Edwin and the accession of King Oswald would have been seen by Bede as just as critical a time as Israel had endured after the loss of Moses’ lieutenant Joshua.

Some are of the opinion that Oswald has also been typologized as the Emperor Constantine, who converted the Roman Empire to Christianity after his victory at the Milvian Bridge. Before this battle, Constantine is said to have had a vision of a cross. Oswald, on the other hand, before he fights pagan armies at Hefenfelth, plants a wooden cross in the ground, a site which will become the scene of innumerable miracles. The contention is that Oswald and his cross post-figure Constantine and his: “...the reader of Christian history cannot help but note the similarity between Oswald and...Constantine.” (Brown, 92) The parallel here would be that Bede believes that Oswald’s role in the Christianization of Britain is much like Constantine’s in the Christianization of the Roman Empire. (Note: There are further typologies, but I want to move on to the other

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¹Wallace-Hadrill, 87 --A suggestion that Cadwalla was not actually a pagan, and that Bede may have created this detail for a reason.
parts of the paper. Also, the structure of my thesis may undergo a drastic revision, and I have omitted my text on fulfillment, as I have yet to decide what to do with it. Obviously the full content will appear in the final draft.)

III. Miracle

It is by means of the miraculous that the Venerable Bede attempts to most directly show the work of God in the history of the English. C. Grant Loomis counts fifty-two miracles in Bede's *Historia*, each used as evidence of the power of Christ. The type of miracles he portrays, or rather the way he portrays them, is of great importance. Bede's miracles are meant to establish something of concrete significance, as evidenced by his calling them "signa as in the Bible, not miracula, for they are indications, signs of an inner meaning, not ascetical fireworks." (Brown, 95-6) Nonetheless, they were a palpable part of Bede's history, and so important are they that he makes an effort, on numerous occasions, to prove the veracity of his claims through sources. The source of Bede's miracles is also interesting in that often when magic is turned against the virtuous, it is the work of evil spirits rather than God.

Bede's monastic world was one where the miraculous and the magical were regarded as commonplace, even to pre-Christian peoples. The Britons had their own gods and spirits, all equally capable, in their eyes, of performing feats of magic. Bede's selection of miracles, therefore, becomes ideologically driven. As Loomis states:

Theoretical theology was forced to recognize the impossibility of stamping out the belief in magic. A wise substitution of Christian magical elements was made wherever possible. Old beliefs were reinterpreted, and the cult of wonder served to capture the popular imagination. (Loomis, 404)
Christian miracles supplanted older superstitions, and Christ was shown to be as capable of feats of wonder as the older, heathen gods. This speaks of an element of compromise in early Christianity that is commonly known and laid out in part by Bede himself in his text of a letter from Pope Gregory to Mellitus: "And since they [the Britons] have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to demons, let some other solemnity be substituted in its place, such as the Day of Dedication or the Festivals of the holy martyrs whose relics are enshrined there." (Price Bede, 87) Thus Bede shows the willingness to compromise or substitute one tradition for another which also affected the understanding of miracles. If Bede is to be believed, the pagans came to believe that Christ did have magic powers, even if they themselves were not Christian. Book II, Chapter 5 relates how several heathens saw Bishop Mellitus giving the eucharist and demanded that he allow them to "be strengthened with this bread." (Price Bede, 109) While this might not demonstrate that heathens believed in Christ's power, it does demonstrate that human understanding in early medieval Europe was pervaded with a belief in magic.

It is this belief in magic that Bede invokes when he explains the special favor God has granted Britain in the development of its faith. In his first chapter, Bede explains that he himself has witnessed manifestations of magic:

I have seen that folk suffering from snakebite have drunk water in which...leaves of books from Ireland had been steeped, and that this remedy checked the spreading poison. (Price Bede, 39)

Here Bede uses himself as a source for the reality of supernatural wonders.

The first occurrence of a saintly miracle appears in his account of the death of St. Alban, but his sources for this are unknown. (Loomis, 405) St. Alban is executed by Roman heretics, but not before a riverbed dries up and a spring suddenly appears at the top of a hill. Interestingly, despite the fact that these miracles have been described as
"commonplace," (Loomis, 405) a man who at the last minute decided he would not execute St. Alban and is later himself executed is admitted into heaven despite not having been baptized. According to Bede, "although he had not received the purification of Baptism, there was no doubt that he was cleansed by the shedding of his own blood, and rendered fit to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Price Bede, 47)