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Patristic Exegesis and the Liturgy
Medieval *Ressourcement* and the Development of Baptism[1]

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Introduction

Contemporary interest in patristic exegesis grew steadily over the course of the twentieth century as both critical editions and studies proliferated. Through careful study of the early church, scholars and theologians quickly established the profound influence of patristic exegesis on the liturgy. They also recovered hints to the enduring value of that exegesis for today. In this essay, I will explore an example of early Christian exegesis which exemplifies the impact patristic interpretation of the Bible had on Christian liturgy and suggests the importance of engaging our Christian tradition as we move forward in our own day on important questions of catechesis and conversion. Specifically, I will show how and why Jerome's brief observations about Jesus' language at the Great Commission became normative for medieval baptismal catechesis. But first, a few more words of introduction.

It is well-known that patristic exegesis enriched—and enriches—the theology of the sacraments. For instance, in 1950 Jean Daniélou SJ (1905–1974) published *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*.[2] Famously, Daniélou explored patristic interpretation of several well-known biblical stories including Noah and the Flood and Moses and the Exodus. He illumined the wonderful theological depth and nuance teased out of these stories by patristic thinkers as they interpreted the stories typologically. In his study, he noticed the rich sacramental theology suggested to the fathers by these stories, such as how the Flood or the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea could teach about the theology of baptism. He almost immediately continued to unpack his findings with some detail in *The Bible and the Liturgy*, in which he focused on how the first theologies of the Church's sacramental life were biblically derived.[3] Daniélou noted how most theologians agreed that sacraments are "efficacious signs," but that most theology focused on the "efficacious" and not on the "sign." In the biblical typology of the Fathers, he argued, the meaning and importance of the sacramental rites becomes fuller and more evident through attention to their nature as signs.[4] Our example

1 I would like to thank Neil Dhingra, Meg Garnett, Tom Noble, and Michael Roach for careful reading and advice on various drafts of this article. All remaining errors are my own.

2 Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960).

3 Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).

4 Daniélou, *Bible and the Liturgy*, 3.

of Jerome's comments on the Great Commission builds on the connection of the Bible to the liturgy not in the sense that Jerome deepens our appreciation of the mystery of baptism, but in that Jerome's observations determined how Christians instructed people coming to baptism. The intimate connection of the Bible to the liturgy is not limited to theological meaning, but also includes execution of rites like baptism.

Jerome's example also speaks to a larger concern of theologians like Daniélou, the so-called "*nouvelle theologie*" and its interest in *ressourcement*.[5] Essentially a reaction against what some viewed as a vapid neo-Scholastic stranglehold on Roman Catholic theology in the early twentieth century, theologians like Daniélou, Yves Congar, and Henri DeLubac advocated a return to the sources of the Christian tradition, especially the careful study of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. They strongly felt that faithful engagement with these ancient sources would put tradition to work for the modern church. Thinking with the best of the Christian tradition would suggest solutions to contemporary problems at the same time creative and traditional. The example of early medieval theologians turning to Jerome and putting Jerome's ideas to work in a new context serves as a medieval example of *ressourcement*. We will see that the practice of turning to patristic exegesis in search of innovation is a powerful theological tool that long pre-dates more recent controversies. The example may also serve as exhortation to us. As the Church faces numerous challenges at the beginning of the twenty-first century, perhaps the way forward lies in faithful and prayerful engagement with sage advice from the past.

Matthew 28: The Great Commission

The Gospel of Matthew has been perhaps the single most influential book for Christians. So important was its putative author and its content that early Christians placed it first among the Gospels and then of the entire New Testament.[6] The Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20) appears at the very end of Matthew's Gospel, a kind of epilogue or key to a series of five discourses, which focus on Jesus as the Christ and the approach of the Kingdom, interspersed between five narrative sections which move Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.[7] The number five

5 For a brief apologetic introduction to *la nouvelle théologie* see Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio* 18:4 (1991): 530–555. For a sympathetic review in the slightly larger context of twentieth century theology, see the biographies Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

6 On the Gospel of Matthew generally see the Dennis C. Duling, "The Gospel of Matthew," *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 296–318. See also the fuller discussions in William Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew*, Anchor Bible 26 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) and in John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazer, 1980).

7 See Duling, "The Gospel of Matthew," 306–311. Compare Benedict Viviano, "The Gospel

harkens back to the five books of the Torah. In the final chapter of the Gospel, after Jesus' resurrection, Matthew describes the angel at Jesus' empty tomb speaking to Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary." The angel tells the women to have the Apostles gather in Galilee. Jesus then appears to the women and reiterates the order. In this final scene, the eleven are on a mountain in Galilee when Jesus appears to them and issues a last instruction. In the Latin of Jerome's *Vulgate*, the Gospel's final verses run:

> Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world.[8]

In the context of the Gospel, these words underscore the profound missionary concerns of the author, particularly the importance of transmitting Jesus' teachings contained in the discourses throughout the Gospel, especially as seen in the monumental first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7).[9]

Jerome's Exegesis

In March 398, Jerome (347–420) wrote a commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew at his library retreat in Bethlehem.[10] His treatment encompasses the entire Gospel and is organized as a line-by-line commentary for his friend Eusebius of Cremona, who had requested something edifying to pass the time during an upcoming trip to Italy. Jerome finished the work in only two weeks! The consequent symptoms of haste in the commentary include erroneous citations and extreme brevity.[11] As Jerome reached the end of the Gospel, he paused to consider Jesus' "Great Commission" to the Apostles. He concentrated on the order of Jesus' instruction rather than the general missionary impulse of Jesus' words. He broke

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According to Matthew," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990): 631–633 and Meier, *Matthew*, 366–374.

8 For a discussion primarily about Western Christianity and the Western liturgy, I cite not the Greek, but the Latin version of the Gospel familiar to all the writers under discussion here. See the *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 4th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 1574. The translation here is adapted from the revised Douay-Rheims Bible.

9 Viviano, "Matthew," 674.

10 For a detailed biography see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1975). See also the more recent portrait with updated bibliography in Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome* (New York: Routledge, 2002). On Jerome as an author, especially his contribution to how the Latin West receives and interacts with the Bible, see Mark Vessey, "Jerome and Rufinus" *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 218–327.

11 Saint Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 16.

the command into two sections for analysis. In the first, he focused on the sequence and vocabulary of Jesus' words to the apostles, explaining:

> "Go, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). First they teach all the nations, then they dip those they taught in water. For it is not possible that a body receive the sacrament of baptism, unless the soul first receives the truth of the faith. They are, however, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit so that whose divinity is one, is one dispensation. And the name of the Trinity is one God.[12]

In the sequence of Jesus' words Jerome intuited a catechetical strategy; in the language he discerned the doctrine of a monotheistic Trinity. Further, he assumed a sacramental dimension to mission and understood the teaching required by Jesus to revolve around baptism. He then considered the second part of the instruction, from which he distilled a three step approach to Christian teaching, writing:

> "… teaching them to preserve everything which I commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). The order is particular. He orders the apostles first to teach all the nations, then to dip them in the sacrament of faith and after faith and baptism to instruct them what things ought to be observed. And lest we think what was ordered to be trivial, he added a few things: "everything which I commanded you," so that those who believe, who were baptized in the Trinity, do everything which was taught.[13]

Jerome focuses his readers' attention on two issues: Christian education and the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover the centrality of baptism is not merely systematic, but instrumental. He twice emphasized the significance of a specific approach to catechesis. Faith is the initial step. Faith, then, provides a foundation for fruitful baptism. Only with a sound faith and after a right baptism can moral instruction finally be delivered. Jerome's brief remarks, his juxtaposition of education and the baptismal liturgy, would capture the interest of influential medieval Christians beginning with the Venerable Bede.

Bede's Development

Some 300 years later and on the far side of Continental Europe, an Anglo-Saxon monk brought Jerome's teachings into the context of the liturgy to which it ap-

12 Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri iv*, CCSL 77, eds. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 282. For an English translation see the corresponding section in Saint Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*.

13 Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Matheum*, 282–283.

plied. Sometime in the 720's, Bede (673–735) composed a homily on the Great Commission for his brother monks at Wearmouth-Jarrow, where this particular passage was read at Easter.[14] The Easter liturgy, of course, along with Pentecost, had long been the preferred setting for baptism.[15] Bede's homily, delivered within a liturgy already strongly tied to baptism, reflects not only the close connection of the Bible to the liturgy in the mind of this celebrated Anglo-Saxon monk, but also an instance of looking to patristic exegesis for advice on current matters. Bede, ever the teacher, adopted Jerome's perspective on order in baptismal instruction and clarified it so as to make it more compelling as an argument for contemporary preachers, and not simply an observation.

Bede's sermon focused on the Lord's triumph and its implications for Christians. Throughout his homily he cited writings from Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Jerome. At the heart of his address Bede recalled the three-stage instruction outlined by Jerome, while adding important developments of his own. Bede identified a contemporary context for Jesus' instruction: modern preaching. From within his own homily, he addressed preachers and insisted upon the importance of proper order in their preaching. Bede took up and added to Jerome's thoughts.

Drawing from his own experience as a teacher, Bede explained why Jerome's order was so important. Specifically, he considered the pedagogical challenge of sound moral instruction. Bede's own skill and experience as a teacher enabled him to identify for his audience when a student would be ready to accept teaching and under what conditions. A skilled preacher must take into account both a person's mind-set and his general circumstances. Bede described a ready student as free. One should not be forced into moral behavior, but after proper preparation one should want to be moral. He added that moral teaching should be offered at an opportune moment, when the student is free from distraction:

> "Go," he [Jesus] said, "teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19-20)." This, indeed, is the most correct order of preaching and to be followed most diligently also by modern church

14 For an overview of Bede's importance in his own time and his subsequent influence see the essays (and bibliography) in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On the liturgical calendar see Hurst's introduction to Bede's homilies, Beda Venerabilis, *Homeliarum evangelii libri ii*, CCSL 122, ed. D. Hurst (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), xiv.

15 The tradition of holding baptisms on Easter (or Pentecost) has been observed in the Western Church at least since the time of Tertullian. For a summary of this tradition see *The Study of the Liturgy*, eds. Cheslyn Jones et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 97–99 and W.J. Conway, *The Time and Place of Baptism. A Historical Synopsis and a Commentary* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 4–20.

> preachers so that first the hearer is taught, then imbued with the sacraments of faith, then unconstrained and at the right time he should be instructed in keeping the Lord's commands. This is because one uninstructed and ignorant of the Christian faith is not able to be washed in the sacrament of the very same faith. It does not suffice to be purified from sins by the bath of baptism, if he does not strive after baptism to persevere in good works.[16]

Bede continued by teasing out theological implications of the order proposed by Jerome. With the juxtaposition of two scriptural passages, he explored how Jerome's notion of order hints both at the efficacy of the sacrament and at the final end of those to be baptized. First, he viewed order in terms of metaphysical causation. A passage from the letter to the Hebrews—in this context—frames moral life as a consequence of faith. Faith enables one to obey God's commands. This is related to but distinguishable from the proper understanding of faith that leads people to want to obey Christian moral teachings. Second, he identified the ultimate goal toward which Christian teaching must be oriented, namely, eternal life.[17] A passage from the Gospel of John illumines why in Bede's mind Christians must get baptism right. Baptism is more than just water. The Holy Spirit is at work in and through the sacrament. His agency guarantees its effect. Bede foregrounded what he saw as being at stake in the whole discussion of preaching:

> First, therefore, teach the nations, that is, establish a knowledge of truth, and thus he orders them to baptize because "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6) and "unless one is born again of water and of the Holy Spirit, he is not able to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Jn. 3:5).[18]

Bede concluded his thoughts on the "Great Commission" by reiterating the importance of having faith well taught and baptism rightly executed. Again, his genius as an instructor appears. He recognized that Jerome's explanation lacked an explicit compelling conclusion. Why does formation matter? Sliding another passage into his analysis of Matthew, this time a verse from the Letter of James, Bede reiterated that a rewarding afterlife follows from a moral life enlivened by faith. He dropped Jerome's Trinitarian insight and replaced it with a reason for conversion.

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16 Beda, *Homeliarum*, 235. For an English translation see Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels, Volume 2*, trans. L. Martin and D. Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1991).

17 On the importance of the afterlife to early medieval missionary strategies, including those of Bede and Alcuin, see Owen M. Phelan, "Catechising the Wild: The Continuity and Innovation of Missionary Catechesis under the Carolingians" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61:3 (2010): 455–474.

18 Beda, *Homeliarum*, 235.

Christians toiling in the present needed to know that eternal reward awaited those who in faith lived a holy life:

> "… teaching them to observe everything which I commanded you (Mt. 28:20).' 'Because just as the body without spirit is dead, thus faith without works is dead" (Ja. 2:26). He [Jesus] subsequently suggests how great are the rewards of a devout way of life and the kind of pledge of future beatitude remaining for the faithful in the present saying: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28:20).[19]

Even as he appropriated Jerome, Bede added to Jerome's thoughts for a contemporary audience at a baptismal liturgy. Bede deepened Jerome's contribution through a consideration of formation's purpose. His great sensitivity as a teacher led him to concentrate not on the meaning of the liturgy, but rather on enriching his discussion of the Gospel with pedagogical flourishes directed to contemporary preachers seeking to instruct others.

Alcuin's Augmentation

Late in the eighth century, Jerome's interpretation resurfaced. This time the Latin doctor's comments on the Great Commission were marshalled to address a burning issue for a nascent Christendom: high stress, high stakes Frankish missionary endeavors.[20] Throughout the 790s, the Carolingians were dealing with a political, military, and religious challenge from the Saxons, who nearly annually rose up against the Franks in violent efforts to reject conquest and conversion.[21] In the mid-790s Carolingian expansion continued with the conquest of the pagan Avars of east-central Europe, and Carolingian theologians thought hard about mission and about how to avoid the dreadful mistakes committed among the Saxons.[22]

Alcuin of York (ca. 740–804), an Anglo-Saxon deacon recruited by Charlemagne to lead religious and intellectual reform in Frankish Europe, found a solution to this contemporary conundrum in the wisdom of Jerome, as trans-

19 Beda, *Homeliarum*, 235.

20 For an introduction to Christianity during the early medieval period with an emphasis on mission see Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversions: From Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelization of Europe, 400–1050* (New York: Longman, 2001); and Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200–1000*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

21 For a general treatment of the Saxons and the Carolingians see Roger Collins, *Charlemagne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 43–57. See also the provocative study Yitzhak Hen, 'Charlemagne's jihad' *Viator* 37 (2006): 33–51.

22 On the Avars and the Carolingians consult Collins, *Charlemagne*, 89–101. For a more thorough treatment of the Avars, see Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk im Mitteleuropa, 567–822 n. Chr.* (Munich: Beck, 1988).

mitted by Bede.[23] Alcuin evidences the close connection between the Bible and the liturgy, and exemplifies *ressourcement* as he sought to apply faithfully in a new context traditions handed down from Jerome through Bede via biblical exegesis. Alcuin distilled from Jerome's observation concrete liturgical advice. He developed not a new theology of baptism, but rather refined a useful approach to baptism's execution. He then dispersed it across Western Europe through his numerous contacts, friends, and students.

In 796 Alcuin drafted three letters on the mission to the Avars. He considered not only how best to avoid the disappointing Saxon cycle of subjugation and revolt, but also how best to communicate his ideas to the right people. The first letter was written to Arn, the bishop of Salzburg, who Alcuin felt should run the mission to the Avars. A second letter was dispatched to Meginfrid, the Carolingian court chamberlain, who had influence over financial matters and a widely known special advisory role with the Frankish king.[24] A third letter Alcuin directed to King Charlemagne himself. In each letter, Alcuin used Jerome's interpretation to apply Matthew's passage to a very complicated contemporary problem, and did so for three individuals with differing concerns about the Avars.

While the core of his position remained Jerome's order, Alcuin tailored his explanation for each recipient. For Arn, he placed Jerome's model amid a treatment of how a sound catechetical program would yield reliable Christians, emphasizing the religious themes of faith and salvation and accenting the duty of preaching to his friend and bishop. Alcuin wrote:

> Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded his disciples saying: "Go, teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to preserve everything I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). In those very few words, he set out the order of all holy preaching. He said to teach twice and to baptize once. First, he instructed them to teach the catholic faith to all and he ordered after the faith is received to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity; then, given instruction in the faith and washed with holy baptism, he commanded to instruct with evangelical precepts.[25]

23 The most recent biography of Alcuin is Donald Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). For a brief introduction to education, learning, and Carolingian Renewal—especially Alcuin's role—see Rosamond McKitterick, "The Carolingian Renaissance of Culture and Learning" *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 151–166.

24 A brief discussion of Meginfrid's widely acknowledged special influence with Charlemagne is in Bullough, *Alcuin*, 441.

25 Alcuin, *Epistola* 113, *MGH Epistolae IV*, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmannschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1895), 164.

Alcuin made virtually the same case to Meginfrid. This time, however, Jerome's insight is set in a discussion of how well-formed Christians would enrich the Carolingian treasury. Alcuin developed his argument by exploiting the semantic range of "glory" and "wealth." Unlike for Arn, whom Alcuin advised to instruct the Avars with Christian moral precepts, for Meginfrid the precepts should be doled out to the Avars:

> For our Lord Jesus Christ, returning to his Father's seat in the triumph of his glory, instructed his apostles, saying: 'Go, teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to preserve everything that I have commanded you (Mt. 28:19-20).' First the faith ought to be taught, and then the sacrament of baptism ought to be received, then the evangelical precepts ought to be handed over.[26]

Finally, Alcuin laid out his interpretation for Charlemagne. He described how baptism in the context of his formation program would yield good Carolingian subjects. And, rather than recasting Jerome's argument for Charlemagne, Alcuin merely recopied the words of the famous church father, with special emphasis on the sequence of instruction:

> And the Lord himself in the Gospel teaching his disciples said: "Go, teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). Saint Jerome explains the order of this teaching thus in the commentary which he wrote on the Gospel of Matthew. First they teach all the nations, then they dip those they taught in water. For it is not possible that a body receive the sacrament of baptism, unless first the soul first receives the truth of faith. They are, however, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit so that whose divinity is one, is one dispensation. And the name of the Trinity is one God. "… teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). The order is particular. He orders the apostles first to teach all the nations, then to dip them in the sacrament of faith, and after faith and baptism to instruct them with what things ought to be observed. And lest we think what was ordered to be trivial, he added a few things: "Everything which I commanded you"

26 Alcuin, *Epistola* 111, 160.

> (Mt. 28:20), so that those who believe, who were baptized in the Trinity, do everything which was taught.[27]

Alcuin's fidelity to Jerome is evident in each of his letters; however, Alcuin's study of tradition was not reserved to a single Latin church father.[28] He also, clearly, was indebted to Bede. In this way, he demonstrates the very best process of *ressourcement*, returning not to one source but consulting the full tradition as it was available to him. Bede's thoughts appear through Alcuin's choice of biblical citations. Both the Letter to the Hebrews and John's Gospel shaped his analysis. For example, in his letter to Arn, immediately following his exposition of Matthew's Great Commission, Alcuin reiterated that the order of teaching should be observed for all adults. In the case of infants, however, even though they cannot be taught as adults are, they must nevertheless be baptized because of the stain of original sin. The passage from Hebrews cited by Bede supports his defense of infant baptism. As with his use of Jerome, Alcuin used Bede's work to address a contemporary concern. Following a long-held view in Christian theology, Alcuin tied together his Christian anthropological assumptions with ideas of legal representation first laid out in Late Antiquity by theologians both eastern and western.[29] He dealt with the baptism of infants by a reference to the idea of a *fideiussor*, one who swears an oath on behalf of another. Because infants presented for baptism are stained with the sin of another (Adam), it is appropriate for others, in this case the godparents, to answer for infants at baptism. Making the then common assumption that Hebrews was written by Paul, he explained to Arn:

> You, most holy teacher, firmly maintain this order of catechizing everywhere in men of adult age, to those of a more frail age the Holy Mother Church grants that he who is bound to sin in paternal transgression by another, another may release him by profession in the mystery of baptism. But if this may not be, how many children passed away from whose number now the heavenly Jerusalem is built daily? Without faith what profit is

27 Alcuin, *Epistola* 110, 158.

28 Alcuin is well-known for walking "in the footsteps of the fathers." See, for example, John C. Cavadini, "A Carolingian Hilary," in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, eds. Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003) 133–140; idem, "The sources and theology of Alcuin's 'De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis,'" *Traditio* 46 (1991): 123–146; and, idem, "Alcuin and Augustine: *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies 12* (1981): 11–18. Moreover, in the context of these letters themselves, Alcuin advises his audience to consult Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus* and Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*. Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* is mentioned to Arn at Alcuin, *Epistola* 113, 166. Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus* is recommended to Charlemagne at Alcuin, *Epistola* 110, 158.

29 Joseph Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 106–109 and 123–124.

> baptism? Since the Apostle says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6)."[30]

The necessity for infant baptism and importance of godparents vouching faith is cemented in Alcuin's mind by the remark from the letter to the Hebrews on the necessity of faith.

In the very next section of his letter to Arn, Alcuin grounded his treatment of baptism's efficacy with the other quotation supplied by Bede:

> He [the catechumen] equally ought to understand that the Holy Trinity works the salvation of man. The Lord himself says in another place: "No one is able to come to the Father except through me (Jn. 14:6).' Likewise concerning the Holy Spirit he says: 'Unless anyone is reborn from water and the Spirit, he is not able to enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). For what the priest at baptism visibly works in the body through water, the Holy Spirit does this invisibly in the soul through faith.[31]

Again Alcuin applied Bede's work to late eighth century Europe. He took up Bede's thread and used John's Gospel to confirm that it is not the priest, nor the baptizand (be one adult or infant) who works the sacrament. Rather, the power of the sacrament to reform one's soul flows from the Holy Spirit. Unlike Bede, whose use of John accented the baptized entering the kingdom of God, Alcuin focused on the agency of the Spirit who guarantees baptism's effect. Alcuin's primary concern remained mission. Whether addressing the conversion of pagan adults or children, he consistently defended the necessity of an orderly baptismal program.

Importantly, Alcuin did not confine his efforts to these letters. He aggressively advocated his ideas through liturgical commentaries and hagiography. At the end of the eighth century Alcuin composed a commentary on the rite of baptism which provided a concrete form to his plan for Christian formation.[32] He applied Jerome's three steps to the liturgy of baptism, at once adapting the baptismal liturgy to fit Jerome's order and presenting the liturgy as a pedagogical tool for communicating faith and morals to others. The commentary, identified by its opening words *Primo paganus*, survives in two separate letters from the year 798, likely indicating a circular letter-type distribution, not dissimilar from his advocacy of Jerome's (and Bede's) interpretation of Matthew's Great Commission.[33]

30 Alcuin, *Epistola* 113, 164.

31 Alcuin, *Epistola* 113, 164.

32 The authorship of the commentary has been the subject of scholarly disagreement. I have argued that Alcuin composed the work himself in Owen M. Phelan, "Textual Transmission and Authorship in Carolingian Europe: *Primo Paganus*, Baptism, and Alcuin of York," *Revue Bénédictine* 118 (2008): 262–288.

33 Not surprisingly, the letters are transmitted in otherwise unrelated collections of Alcuin's

Wide distribution of the text is further evidenced by its unquestionable popularity across the Carolingian world. It was the most copied and cited commentary on baptism in early Medieval Europe.[34]

The first surviving instance is a letter to an otherwise unknown priest named Oduinus.[35] The note contains little more than a brief introduction and the commentary itself. The second instance is a longer missive addressed as an open letter to a community of monks in southern Gaul, whom Alcuin knew through Leidrad, bishop of the important and influential see of Lyon.[36] The letter includes the commentary amid a larger treatment of the dangers of Spanish Adoptionism and advice on how to combat its spread.[37] *Primo paganus* enumerates the various elements of the baptismal ceremony and offers a spiritual interpretation of each. In typically Alcuinian fashion, the text draws heavily on earlier authors, reworking older materials to new ends.

For explanations of the liturgy Alcuin plundered two earlier texts, a long letter on baptism written by the sixth-century Roman, John the Deacon, to a man named Senarius, and a sermon spuriously attributed to Saint Augustine.[38] Echoing Jerome's three steps, the text considers pre-baptismal instruction, baptism itself, and post-baptismal instruction. Put simply, Alcuin explained that doctrine ought to be taught before baptism, especially through instruction in the Creed and the Paternoster. Baptism itself is presented as a refashioning of a person in the image of the Trinity, so that after baptism the new Christian could gradually take on the moral responsibilities of Christianity. Post-baptismal moral teachings

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letters. For an introduction to Alcuin's letters, see Ernst Dümmler, *Epistolae karolini aevi II*, *Epistolae IV* (Berlin: MGH, 1895), 1–17. See also the discussion of major collections of Alcuin's letters in Bullough, *Alcuin*, 43–102.

34 See Susan A. Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire*, Vol. I (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 80.

35 Alcuin, *Epistola* 134, 202–203. An English translation of this letter is supplied in Gerald Ellard, *Master Alcuin, Liturgist: A Partner of our Piety* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956), 76–78.

36 Alcuin, *Epistola* 137, 210–216. That the letter was written for circulation among clerical and monastic communities of Gothia and Provence is discussed at Bullough, *Alcuin*, 7.

37 On Spanish Adoptionism generally, see John C. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West, Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul 785-820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

38 John the Deacon, *Letter to Senarius*, PL 59.399–408. For further treatment of John the Deacon's material in *Primo paganus* consult: "Epistola de Iohannis Diaconi ad Senarium" in "Un florilège carolingien sur la symbolisme des ceremonies du baptême, avec un Appendice sur la lettre de Jean Diacre," ed. André Wilmart, in *Analecta Reginensia* (1933): 170–179. The sermon is printed in Migne PL 47.1151A-1152C. The text is identified as spurious in *Clavis Patristica Pseudepigraphorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990): 273–274. On the myriad problems still surrounding pseudo-augustinian material, see *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 530–533. On Alcuin's blending of John the Deacon and pseudo-Augustine, see Phelan "Textual Transmission," 262–288.

revolved around instruction in the virtues and vices, their benefits and dangers to the immortal soul.

Alcuin's efforts to spread his approach spilled beyond letters and into saints' lives. In mid-796, at the same time he wrote his letters, he composed a *Life of Saint Willibrord* in two versions, both dedicated to Beornrad, the powerful archbishop of Sens and abbot of Echternach. Alcuin expected him to promote the vision of baptismal formation featured in the works on Willibrord, one in prose and the other in verse. He anticipated that the former would be read "publically by the brothers in church" and that each of Beornrad's monks would read the latter "privately in his room."[39] The works recount the miraculous birth of St. Willibrord in 658, his early education in Northumbria, his quest for personal holiness in an Irish monastery, and his mission to the Continent—including authorization by the papacy, his death in 739, and some posthumous miracles.[40]

An example of Jerome's order flowed from the mouth of the saint in the midst of a particularly audacious speech before the notoriously violent Frisian king, Radbod. The speech addressed the king's charge that Willibrord's mission had insulted the Frisian deity. In the middle of the speech, the missionary invited the king to convert. In a passage filled with references to the sacrament of baptism, Alcuin identified conversion with the three stages identified by Jerome: faith, baptism, moral life. The sophistication of Alcuin's presentation is accented by an echo of the Creed in the invitation to assent and the references to cardinal virtues in the characterization of moral life:

> As his [God's] servant I [Willibrord] call upon you this day to renounce the empty and inveterate errors to which your forebears have given their assent and to believe in the one Almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Be baptized in the fountain of life and wash away all your sins, so that, forsaking all wickedness and unrighteousness, you may henceforth live as a new man in temperance, justice, and holiness.[41]

39 Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi archepiscopi Traiectensis*, ed. Wilhelm Levison, MGH SRM 7 (Hannover: Hahnshe, 1920), 113.

40 For a further information on Willibrord see Arnold Angendt, "Willibrord im Dienste der Karolinger," *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein: insbesondere das alte Erzbistum Köln* clxxv (1973): 63–113; and *Der hl. Willibald-Klosterbischof oder Bistumsgründer?*, eds. Harald Dickerhof, Ernst Reiter, and Stefan Weinfurter (Regensburg: Pustet, 1990). On Alcuin's *Life of Willibrord* more specficially see Kate Rambridge, "Alcuin's narrative of evangelism: The life of St. Willibrord and the Northumbrian hagiographical tradition," *The cross goes north: processes of conversion in northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), 371–381 and Wood, *The missionary life*, 81–85. An English translation of the *Life of Willibrord* may be found in *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

41 Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi*, 125.

This stirring depiction of the work of Christian formation under the most difficult circumstances emphasizes the value seen by Alcuin in right catechetical order for missionary work. Thus is the *Life of Willibrord* another key component in Alcuin's circulation of Jerome's insight into Matthew, its ramifications for the practice of baptism, and its importance to Christian mission.

Subsequent Reception and Development

Alcuin's flurry of literary activity quickly gained traction among influential Carolingians. His friends, contacts, and students across Carolingian Europe integrated Jerome's approach to baptism into their own teachings. Almost immediately after Alcuin's letters on the Avar mission were dispatched a synod held on account of the Avars gave canonical teeth to Alcuin's missionary strategy. By the fall of 796, Patriarch Paulinus of Aquileia, and likely Arn, organized a council on the banks of the Danube in order to present a policy on the appropriate understanding and execution of the sacrament of baptism for the conversion of the Avars, a record of which survives from Paulinus' own hand.[42]

Both in its general approach and in the particulars of its explanation, the council applied the advice of Jerome as recommended by Alcuin. As if reading an epitome of Alcuin's principal concerns, the Patriarch of Aquileia wrote:

> The Lord ordered his disciples saying "Go, teach all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Mt. 28:19–20), and again, "who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Indeed it is agreeable to look at the Lord's words with watchful zeal and to pay close attention to the most sacred order in those commands. For he does not say "Go, baptizing all the nations teaching them," but first he brings in "teach" and then he adds "baptize." And not who was baptized and believes, but "who believes and was baptized will be saved." And after baptism again "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you," so that manifestly it was given to be understood and the faith was to be taught before baptism, and so the new one understands what the grace of baptism is, because through it sins are forgiven and a new man is regenerated. Certainly with the old man with his

42 *Conventus episcoporum ad ripas danubii*, *MGH Concilia 2:1*, ed. Albert Werminghoff (Hannover: Hahnsche, 1906), 176. On this meeting in the context of Carolingian councils see Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1989), 116–117. For the council in the context of the Avar conquest see Pohl, *Die Awaren*, 319–320. On Paulinus' importance to Carolingian control of Lombard Italy see Nick Everett, "Paulinus, the Carolingians, and Famosissima Aquileia," *Paolino d'Aquileia e il contributo italiano all'Europa carolingia*, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Udine: Forum, 2003): 115–154.

> acts having passed away among the waves of redemption, who was a son of sin may begin to be a son of God through adoption and a sharer in the kingdom of heaven and after this mortal life may obtain a blessedness of life. After baptism they ought to be taught to observe all the commands of God by which, mercifully and rightly, they ought to live in this age.[43]

The continuity with Jerome's approach as mediated through Bede and Alcuin is evident. Moreover, the influence of biblical interpretation on the liturgical activity is quite direct. Rather than an academic exercise of one stripe or another, here Jerome's interpretation of Matthew appears in a document suggesting imminent application to liturgical practice "out in the field."

Alcuin's vigorous advocacy of Jerome's idea resonated with Carolingian intellectuals in an enduring way. Across the ninth century, several theologians with connections to Alcuin incorporated Jerome's teaching on Matthew's Great Commission into their efforts. For example, one of Alcuin's most celebrated students, Hrabanus Maurus (780–856) incorporated the explanation into several texts including his own *Exposition of Matthew* and his widely transmitted manual on clerical formation, *On the Training of Clergy*.[44]

Hrabanus served as the Abbot of Fulda and Archbishop of Mainz. One of the greatest intellectuals of his age, he is remembered as man of deep prayer and immense learning. His *Exposition* was written between 814 and 822 while he was schoolmaster at the famous monastery of Fulda. Hrabanus for the most part copied Bede's homily in explaining the end of Matthew's Gospel, but with an addition. Hrabanus underscored that prebaptismal formation is essential to the success of baptism, writing in his *Exposition*:

> This, indeed, is the most correct order of preaching and to be followed most diligently also by modern church preachers, so that first indeed the hearer is taught, then imbued with the sacraments of faith, then unconstrained and at the right time he should be instructed to preserve the Lord's commands, *because it is not possible for the body to receive the sacrament of baptism, unless first the soul receives the truth of the faith. Since* one uninstructed or ignorant of the Christian faith is not able to be washed in the sacraments of the very same faith, and the washing of baptism does not suffice to cleanse from sins, if after baptism one does not strive to persevere in good works. First, therefore, teach the nations, that is establish a knowledge of truth, and thus he

43 *Conventus episcoporum*, 174–175.

44 For an introduction to Hrabanus see *Hrabanus Maurus: Lehrer, Abt und Bischof*, eds. Raymund Kottje and Harald Zimmermann (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982).

> orders them to baptize, because "without faith it is impossible to please God" and "unless he is reborn from water and the Holy Spirit, he is not able to enter the kingdom of God."[45]

Hrabanus did not merely regurgitate Bede, but remixed Bede's interpretation of Jerome with Jerome's own work, likely reflecting his work with Alcuin. Hrabanus' concluding observation broke from Bede and added a sentiment from Jerome, but not Bede, before concluding with the quotation from James, again from Bede. Although most of the text was drawn from Bede, interest in a happy afterlife is noticeably de-emphasized. Hrabanus' tinkering delivered a slightly more ominous reflection on the theological stakes of moral action for the Christian, no doubt underscoring the importance of *successful* missionary conversion so important to his teacher:

> And to the end indeed he added "teaching them to preserve everything whatsoever I commanded you." And lest we think this is trifling and small, what he commanded, he added "everything whatsoever I commanded you" so that whoever believes, who was baptized in the Trinity, does everything which was ordered, because "just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith also without works is dead."[46]

In his widely-esteemed work on clerical formation, *On the Training of Clergy*, Hrabanus testifies to how quickly Jerome's order became tied to the administration of the sacrament of baptism. In his section explaining baptism, Hrabanus anchored pre-baptismal instruction in the Great Commission. Written sometime between 816 and 819, he dedicated the work to Haistulf, the archbishop of Mainz (813–825). The work had a long influence on theological reflection concerning priestly life, cited throughout the Middle Ages by people like Gratian, Thomas Aquinas, and Gabriel Biel. The work comprises three books, which treat holy orders and the sacraments, clerical life, and clerical education.

In the middle of the first book, when considering the priest's obligations at baptism, Hrabanus addressed the formation of catechumens. He presented baptism as following a beginning of faith laid down during pre-baptismal instruction. Referring to Matthew and to Jesus' instructions to the Apostles, he interpreted Jesus' message as assigning order to formation where catechumens would be taught the faith first and then baptized. Hrabanus explicitly mentioned pre-baptismal instruction and baptism itself. He did not include an exhortation to moral in-

45 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, ed. Bengt Löfstedt, CCCM 174A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 787 (my emphasis, highlighting Hrabanus' addition to Bede).

46 Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, 787.

struction because he did not consider post-baptismal teaching, which appears in another section of his text:

> But before baptism of the one to be catechized, his [the priest's] duty to the person ought to come first so that the catechumen first receives the beginning of the faith. For it is read in the Gospel according to Matthew that after the resurrection the Lord ordered the apostles to teach in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to baptize all peoples, that is, first to teach the faith of God to them and then to baptize the ones believing into the remission of sins. Hence it is because according to the Gospel of Mark the same Lord is read to have placed the faith of baptism first when he said thus: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). And according to John Jesus himself smeared over the eyes of the man born blind mud that he made from his spit and then sent him to the waters at Siloe because first the one to be baptized ought to be instructed in the faith of the incarnation of Christ and then, now a believer, be admitted to baptism, so that he knows in whose grace he is a partaker, and to whom now from this moment he becomes a debtor.[47]

Throughout his discussion of baptism, though not in this section, Hrabanus betrayed a dependence on his teacher Alcuin. For example, once Jerome's order was established as normative, Alcuin's liturgical commentary *Primo paganus* was raided for its interpretation of the baptismal rites.[48] Perhaps Alcuin's influence can also be detected in the reference to Mark, cited earlier by Paulinus, which helped Hrabanus establish the stakes involved in baptismal formation. As befitting a text on teaching, he emphasized sound instruction as the fundamental responsibility of the priest and a critical element for fruitful baptism. In both his commentary and his training manual, Hrabanus advanced Alcuin's approach to the Bible and the liturgy as well as his inclination to *ressourcement*.

Paschasius Radbertus (785/795–865), an instructor and abbot at the celebrated monastery of Corbie across the tumultuous middle decades of the Ninth Century, shows an impulse similar to Hrabanus'.[49] A learned and devout monk,

47 Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum libri tres*, ed. Detlev Zimpel (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 318.

48 See Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum*, 320–323.

49 For more on Paschasius' life, see Henri Peltier, *Pascase Radbert, Abbé de Corbie, contribution à l'étude de la vie monastique et de la pensée chrétienne aux temps carolingiens* (Amiens: L.-H. Duthoit, 1938).

Paschasius was a widely respected exegete and theologian. In addition to learned commentaries on scripture, he wrote one of the first Latin treatises on the Eucharist and the oldest surviving Latin treatise on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In his massive twelve-book *Exposition of Matthew*, Paschasius' explanation of the Great Commission is textually dependent upon both Jerome and Bede, but with changes that reflect his own interests—especially his personal investment in Christian mission—and, I think, a debt to Alcuin of York.

Paschasius' predecessor as abbot of Corbie, Adalhard, had been a regular correspondent of Alcuin and consequently the library at Corbie was well-stocked with Alcuin's works.[50] Moreover, Paschasius was sensitive to the demands of mission and conversion. During his lifetime, Corbie established daughterhouses such as Corvey, erected in Saxony, and sponsored missions among the Danes.[51] Throughout his comments on Matthew's Great Commission, Paschasius emphasized how integral both education and preaching were to the rite of baptism, showing that Alcuin's efforts had been absorbed into ninth century liturgical customs:

> "Go," he says, "teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything whatsoever I commanded you." The most correct order of preaching is therefore handed down and most carefully preserved. It should be preached by all modern preachers of the churches of God so that, indeed, first they teach their hearers and then hand over to them the sacraments of the faith. From the newness of their birth to the last they should observe everything which was commanded to them for one renewed, because neither is baptism without faith beneficial nor is faith without the works of the commands of God. And, therefore, first is to be taught faith by which God is rightly believed and that faith is given so that all things are possible for those believing, and also, indeed, is given the power of adoption so that we are called and are sons of God. Thence to these ones who have thus been instructed the sacraments of faith are to be handed over and thus they are to be dipped in baptism so that they are reborn whole in the same sacrament. Then finally it is fitting that the preacher and doctor press so that now thereafter in that

50 See David Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1990), 43–45, 137.

51 Paschasius' famous treatise on the Eucharist was in fact first written for the instruction of unlettered novices at Corvey. See Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine domini*, ed. Beda Paulus, CCCM 16 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 4–5.

> new birth the works of faith follow and the commands in which charity is fulfilled are preserved.[52]

Thanks largely to Alcuin and his network, the Hieronymian interpretation dominated reflection on the Great Commission and on baptism across the ninth century, though far removed from its late antique context and applied to the missionary and organizational concerns at the dawn of Christendom.

A High Medieval Assumption

The impetus for considering baptism fundamentally as an issue of formation diminished in the twelfth century when theological reflection began to shift somewhat from issues of mission and the execution of baptism toward questions of sacramental efficacy.[53] For baptism, philosophical and intellectual problems supplanted social and missionary ones. Still, Jerome's order for Christian formation had been so integrated into the practice of baptism that it was simply assumed, even as interest in baptism moved in new directions.

For example, the issue of baptismal formation appeared in Peter Lombard's (c. 1100–1160) *Sententiae*, the basic textbook of high medieval theology.[54] In his fourth book, which deals with sacraments, Peter took up catechetics. That the issue was of some importance is established by its inclusion. Yet the relative (un) importance of the matter is suggested not only by the fact that Peter addressed formation in the thirty-first and final paragraph on baptism, but also that the topic is conceptually joined with and subordinated to exorcism. The resulting picture preserved the sense of order to catechetical formation, but not the purpose. Questions of mission became invisible. Teaching was very deliberately separated from baptism and not treated as essential to the rite. Catechesis was sacramental, but not sacrament. Peter emphasized the theology of baptism over the transmission and understanding of faith.

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52 Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Matheo libri xii*, ed. Beda Paulus, CCCM 56B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), 1432–1433.

53 The Twelfth Century has long been seen as a period of dramatic change in Western Europe, for an introduction consult the essays in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert Benson, Giles Constable, and Carol Lanham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). On the vibrance of the theological tradition in the twelfth century see M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), originally published in a more substantial form as M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie du douzième siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1957). For a darker perspective on the period see R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

54 On Peter Lombard see the exhaustive treatment in Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). On Book Four in particular, see the translation and introduction in Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010).

His textual dependence on Hrabanus Maurus underscores the new and different interest of the Parisian thinker. He drew from Hrabanus' *On the Training of Clergy*, from the very section where Hrabanus interpreted Matthew's Great Commission. However, Peter selected text from around the abbot of Fulda's interpretation and then juxtaposed his selections with passages from Augustine's *On the Symbol*. Peter used Hrabanus' language, but did not communicate Hrabanus' concern when he wrote:

> Catechism and exorcism pertain to neophytes, and are to be called sacramentals rather than sacraments. … And so these precede baptism: not that there cannot be true baptism without them, but so that the one to be baptized may be instructed concerning the faith, and that he may know whose debtor he will afterwards become, and that the power of the devil may be diminished in him. Hence Hrabanus: "The office of catechizing the candidate is to precede baptism, so that the catechumen may receive the rudiments of the faith and know whose debtor he will afterwards become."[55] Also Augustine: "Children are breathed over and exorcized, so that the devil's power may be expelled from them;"[56] "lest he strive to subvert them so that they do not attain baptism."[57] "And so in children it is not God's creature which is blown over and exorcized, but"[58] the devil, so that he may go out of the person.[59]

The catechetical imperative imposed by missionary anxiety at the end of the eighth century has faded and concerns about sacramental efficacy raised by changing philosophical interests has moved to the fore. Nevertheless, Alcuin's application of Jerome remains.

Another example of the same transition is found in the writings of Hugh of St. Victor's (1096–1141). While little is known about Hugh's life, his surviving works encompass an intimidating breadth of topics from grammar to geometry to hermeneutics to theology. Among the most influential of the Victorines, his works remained hugely popular throughout the Middle Ages. *On the Sacraments of the*

55 Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum*, 318.

56 Augustine, *De symbolo ad catechumenos*, ed. R. Vander Plaetse, CCSL 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 186.

57 Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum*, 321.

58 Augustine, *De symbolo*, 186.

59 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in iv libris distinctae*, ed. Ignatius Brady, OFM, Vol. 2 (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1981), 276.

Christian Faith is his rather sizeable compendium of Christian theology.[60] Hugh took up the sacrament of baptism in book two, part six of *On the Sacraments*.[61] As with Peter Lombard, the order of topics reflect Hugh's interests: pre-baptismal catechesis is the ninth entry in the section on baptism.

Clues to the concerns guiding Hugh's interests survive in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). Around 1125, Hugh wrote to Bernard asking for his opinion on four questions concerning baptism. While Hugh's letter is lost, Bernard's reply survives, and lengthy excerpts were incorporated into Hugh's treatment of baptism in *On the Sacraments*. Bernard's letter addressed the four questions in order and at some length.[62] The first three are clearly derived from the opinions of the famous philosopher Peter Abelard.[63] The first is whether one can be saved without baptism. The second revolved around the extent of faith possible before the time of Christ. The third considered the culpability of one who sins out of ignorance. The fourth question addressed Bernard's novel opinions on the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Bernard's antipathy toward Peter Abelard is well-known. Hugh's concern may derive from Abelard's strident philosophical and theological opinions, or perhaps from Abelard's coarse treatment of his teacher and then adversary, William of Champeaux (d. 1121), who established the canons of St. Victor in 1108. Whatever the reason, Hugh's interest in the sacrament differed from that of the early medieval theologians insofar as he prioritized the theology of baptism over its application. Nevertheless, Hugh's explanations retained the Hieronymian analysis of the Great Commission. He evaluated Jesus' instruction as imposing order on catechetics, but not to the extent emphasized under the Carolingians. After a definition of catechumen well-known from the early Middle Ages, the Victorine offers a streamlined recapitulation of Jerome's order, sans moral instruction.[64]

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60 For an overview of Hugh and his work see Paul Rorem, *Hugh of St Victor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

61 See Hugh Feiss, "St Bernard's Theology of Baptism and the Monastic Life," *Cistercian Studies* 25:2 (1990): 79–91 and *idem*, "Bernardus Scholasticus: The Correspondence of Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor on Baptism," *Bernardus Magister*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 349–378.

62 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 77*, *Sancti Bernardi Opera 7*, eds. J. Leclercq and H.M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1974,) 184–200. See also the introduction and translation in Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Baptism and the Office of Bishops*, trans. Pauline Matarasso, intro. Martha G. Newman and Emero Stiegman (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004).

63 For an orientation on Peter Abelard see Michael Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); and John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

64 This definition is repeated in many early medieval discussions of baptism. For example, see the letter by Magnus of Sens (d. 818) in Keefe, *Water and the Word, Vol. II*, 266.

Interestingly, he included the quotation from Mark first seen in Paulinus' record from the Synod on the Danube. He wrote:

> A catechumen is interpreted as one instructed or as one hearing; for to catechize is to instruct, since those to be baptized are first instructed and are taught what the form of the Christian faith is in which they must be made safe and receive the sacrament of salvation, as it is written: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19). First teach, afterwards baptize. Teach unto instruction, baptize unto cleanness. Teach unto faith, baptize unto remission of sins. Therefore, teach since you baptize him who has believed because "he that is baptized, shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). So, this form of catechization was instructed from the earliest period of the Christian faith.[65]

Hugh's analysis transmits much of what had come before, even as its priority was somewhat diminished in his overall presentation of the sacrament.

Conclusion

Jerome's hurried observations on Matthew's Gospel in the late fourth century sprouted in the Christian tradition and burst into full bloom in the early Middle Ages, especially in the mind of Alcuin of York. Through careful attention to the transmission of Jerome's comments on the Great Commission, we can learn a lot about medieval Christianity and—I hope—a little about contemporary Catholicism.

First, we can see how Jerome's thoughts were transformed by Bede and then synthesized and popularized by Alcuin. This action underscores the close connection in the Church between the Bible and the liturgy. When liturgical development is called for, the Bible remains a principal source for inspiration. Moreover, we learn about the nature of the connection between the Bible and the liturgy. More than just connected in meaning, which Danielou demonstrated more than half a century ago, the Bible informs the practice or execution of the liturgy, and not via some sort of reductionist originalism. It is active in responding to contemporary pastoral concerns, but not unbounded or detached from the traditions of the Church.

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65 Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis christianae fidei*, PL 176.455D-456C. For an English translation, see Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, trans. Roy Defarrari (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1951).

Second, we have discovered the "pre-history" of *ressourcement*. Rather than "a new theology" dreamed up *ex nihilo* in the first half of the twentieth century, *ressourcement* may be the recovery of a theological instinct long important to the Church and deeply embedded in the history of theology, liturgy, et al. Across the church's deep tradition, Christians looked for answers to pressing contemporary problems and sometimes found them in unusual places or prompted by unrelated concerns. When Alcuin of York diagnosed a problem with mission and baptism among his contemporaries, he turned to the long tradition of the Church for an answer. And he found one. In this case, the solution to a critical early medieval missionary crisis lay—of all places—in a hasty explanation of Matthew occasioned by the fear of boredom.