

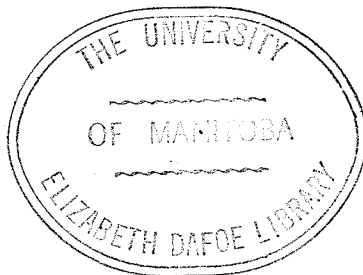
SOME ANGLO-NORMAN HISTORIANS  
AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY

by

Joan Gertrude Greatrex, B. A.

A thesis presented to the Department of History of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

SEPTEMBER 1962.



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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed the flowering of Anglo-Norman historiography. Since the Church continued to be the main repository of learning throughout this period, it is no surprise to find that the historians are either monks or secular clergy. Even a cursory examination of their works is sufficient to reveal both the eagerness and diligence with which these men devoted themselves to the writing of history. Contrary to the opinion of many present day historians, the medieval historiographer took painstaking care to assure himself of the reliability of his source materials, and of the validity of all the available evidence. In this respect, he shows at least the beginning of the modern scientific approach to history and to all fields of learning. Furthermore, the medieval chronicles and narratives all reflect the writer's belief that the true value of history lies in its inner meaning, in that it reveals the working out of the Divine Will in the lives of men. This is the medieval philosophy of history, a philosophy which is found first clearly expressed in Augustine; and from his day on to the time of Bossuet this view is constantly reiterated. The very phrase "philosophy of history" is the centre of much controversy, for many claim that it is a contradiction in terms, while others who

accept it as valid for their age, deny its existence in the Middle Ages. A very brief discussion is all that is possible in this thesis, the purpose of which is to examine, first the style and method of writing, and, secondly the motive, which led medieval writers to take up their pens.

Four medieval historiographers are studied with regard to these two aspects of historical writing. In William of Malmesbury, the first of these, we find a robust and vigorous style with a marked classical flavour, revealing the influence of the twelfth century Renaissance. His method of collecting and arranging historical data is worthy of sound scholarship in any age. Of his outlook on history there is frequent mention; for he comments on the events which he records, and expresses his belief that, despite the disaster and wickedness of the time, all will be well, since Providence rules over the lives of men and is the Lord of history. Orderic Vitalis, although at once less scholarly, and yet more ambitious in his endeavour to write an universal history, reveals the same view of history as that of William. His style is not as polished nor his descriptions as vivid, and his frequent digressions leave the reader quite confused; but his humility, and his affection for his fellow man, together with his devotion to his work, give posterity good reason to be grateful to him. John of Salisbury is the most brilliant stylist of the four

writers studied; and this is due to the combination of great intellectual ability and vast learning. History was only one among many types of writing which he essayed; and his small volume of memoirs of the Papal Curia in the middle of the twelfth century is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the relationship of Church and State in this period. The fact that he was a secular cleric enabled him to have more contacts and a wider experience than either William or Orderic. Thus his historical work gives us insight into affairs unknown to the monk-historians. John's view of history, however, is essentially the same as that of his contemporaries. In his chronicle Jocelin of Brakelond gives an intimate description of the inner workings of a great medieval monastery. His account is more a diary than an actual history, for it was not intended for public reading. Its interest and value also lie in its vivid and homely descriptions of Jocelin's Abbot and of his fellow monks, and in his frankness in depicting their vices as well as their virtues.

From this short study it seems clear that the writings of medieval historians are as diverse as their individual temperaments. What is more important, however, is that their view of history is one, for they were all loyal sons (even when they were critical) of the Church. When Professor Walsh suggests that much of the controversy among historians today might be done away by striving to

formulate a set of basic principles to which all historians would assent, I would make the further suggestion that the first step in this direction ought to consist of a re-examination of medieval historiography. Here we see a fundamental unifying outlook in the Christian philosophy of history which had universal assent.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

Man has always been intrigued by the story of his own past. Long before there were any written records, great exploits and grievous disasters were preserved by means of memory and oral tradition. Thus, the art of story telling was born when the first recounting of human struggles and achievements was passed on from one generation to the next.

With the beginning of a written tradition there came to be a new view of history through the possibility of increasing accuracy in recording past events. The period of written history, which covers the last twenty-five hundred years, is marked by the almost continuous growth in importance and extension in influence of history in the affairs of men. This growth, at first slow, and during certain times interrupted by history itself in act in the shape of a succession of barbarian invasions in western Europe, was marked by the gradual development and flowering of monastic historiography in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. And, finally, beginning with Vico in the seventeenth century, followed by Herder in the eighteenth, Hegel in the nineteenth, and Collingwood and others in our own day, new attitudes to history have come to view, and with them a changed outlook toward both method and purpose in historical writing, and also toward the relevance of history in the modern world.



Two significant features of this change are conflict and controversy which, however stimulating and amiable, result in confusion and imbalance; and these have replaced the earlier twofold harmony of diversity of method and unanimity of purpose. The modern situation in the historical field, as in other branches of knowledge, has its origin in Descartes' stove, whence emerged the "cogito ergo sum", which became the basic formula of the Enlightenment. This led to the birth of an anthropocentric universe, an age in which man claimed to have discovered a new divinity, namely himself. It is therefore not surprising that the medieval world, in which spiritual realities were predominant, was cast into outer darkness by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Not until the latter part of the nineteenth century was there a renewed interest in the Middle Ages, when scholars in England and Germany began to appreciate the continuity of history, and to realize that, in any age, the present is built on the foundations of the past. Lord Acton has explained this clearly:

We go back to the Middle Ages in order to know the realities of the past.---For the civilization of that age, its ideas, habits, and institutions, possess a direct importance for us who are its descendants and its heirs. Our society is the development of that of the medieval chivalry; our civilization is founded on theirs. Our national instincts and character were moulded by them.---

Until the Middle Ages were reinstated in their proper position, the scientific study of history

was in its infancy; for the omission of a large and essential portion of the subject gave the rest a merely antiquarian interest, as a curiosity, not as part of a single and consecutive process to which the present belongs. (1)

In order to understand the reasons which lie behind man's concern about his own past, we need to examine both the methods and the aims which directed the minds of those men who, in each succeeding generation, devoted their time to the writing of history. However, to attempt a complete study of medieval historiography would be a task requiring many years of scholarly research.

A more feasible approach to this subject, and at the same time one that is sound and reliable at least within its own prescribed limits, may be made through the study of one particular section of the whole field. In this present work several of the Anglo-Norman historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries have been chosen to provide the necessary source materials and examples; and a careful investigation of their writings may possibly reveal certain general trends of thought concerning both the method employed in the selection and arrangement of facts, and the inner meaning or significance as seen by them in the documents and records at their disposal.

It must be realized that in selecting any given point of time in the past for detailed study, we, who perform this work, have the advantage of knowing the

subsequent events in the succeeding centuries. Thus, to a limited extent, we are, as it were, omniscient, and must be careful not to allow this fact to prejudice our attitude towards the writers whom we examine. There is another pitfall about which we need to be warned. This is the danger of following our natural inclination to find in the Middle Ages what seems important to us now, and thus to fail in the essential task of seeking to discover what was important to those who lived and wrote then. Bossuet's remark is true:

"The greatest intellectual failing is that of believing in things because we should like them to be, and not because we have seen that they are in fact." (2)

Furthermore, since the present state of historical opinion is such that sharp controversy may follow any suggestion of the possibility of discerning certain general tendencies or patterns of development at the conclusion of our study, it is necessary to show that history is not, what the classical historian Bury so frequently maintained, merely a science in which all that can be validly asserted are the observed or verifiable facts.

Thus the question now arises, "what is history?", and it must be briefly, but nevertheless forthrightly, faced in order to lay the foundation of what is to follow. Without a preliminary consideration of this fundamental

problem, we should be unprepared to proceed with a study of medieval historiography. No endeavour to produce a work of sound scholarship in any field can omit the primary step of constructing a solid framework of evidence resting on the pillars of basic definition. As the King said in Alice in Wonderland:

"begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end!" (3)

The term "history" is derived from the Greek íoropia, meaning "investigation". It was the Greek writer Herodotus to whom Cicero gave the title "patrem historiae" (4) in recognition of his entertaining nine volume account of the past exploits of his countrymen in their struggle toward nationhood. We are also indebted to Thucydides, a younger contemporary, who left to posterity a History of the Peloponnesian War in which he himself played an active and prominent role. His work, if slightly less popular in style, displays the qualities of accuracy and wisdom, and is usually considered one of the first serious attempts to write scientific history. Thus, the historical importance of Thucydides for us is two fold, for his writings clearly reveal the necessity of, first, a scrupulous attention to the accuracy of facts, and second, a careful study of the evidence as a whole, leading to an interpretative discussion of the significance of what actually happened. In other words

the two fundamental questions in history are: "what happened?", and "why did it happen?".

Despite the obvious common sense contained in the preceding statements, they do not remain unchallenged, for present day historians are not in agreement with respect to the basic issues in their own field. In fact, they are in the throes of a lively debate as to what may be cultivated legitimately in this field, and what must be eradicated. The reasons for this controversy are implicit in the constantly changing trends and developments of thought which history itself discloses on every page. The interaction of historical events, and of the human mind reflecting upon these events, is in itself a profound and absorbing study not to be dismissed in a few paragraphs. However, for the moment, its significance for us lies mainly in being aware of this present situation.

No one should sit down to write history without having two considerations before him, namely the purpose or aim of his work, and the method or approach which he believes will best bring out the significance or truth in what he describes. If history is held to be merely a science, as distinct from a branch of knowledge to which the scientific method may be applied, the aim of the historian is reduced to the accumulation and description of empirical evidence. However, the word

"history" signifies the investigation or study of man, of all his thoughts and actions through all the ages; and therefore it cannot be confined within the limits of any other field of knowledge. As Bishop Stubbs declared: "the study of History is coextensive with all pursuit of human knowledge." (5) Furthermore, the argument of Bury and of those who follow him, loses much of its cogency as soon as it is realized that the vast amount of historical information now available necessitates selection and rejection on the part of the historian; and this very act per se is an act of judgement as to what he deems most important.

Although Coulton (6) has rightly pointed out that understanding and judgement are not mutually exclusive terms, here we have one of the principal issues which divide modern historians. No doubt the problem is to some extent a question of degree or of definition, for as Butterfield has pointed out in his Christianity and History:

The historian deals with historical events not as though they were things which could be mechanically and externally explained but as they come out of personalities and run into personalities; so that the insides of human beings have to be brought into the discussion—mind and motive, hope and fear, passion and faith have to come into the question—before we can begin to connect one fact with another and understand anything at all. (7)

Knowles makes this same distinction when he shows that the historian's task is to contemplate the men and women of the past in order, first, to see them as in

truth they thought and lived, and secondly, to present them as such to others. (8) This is also one of the main points made by Miss Wedgwood in her lecture "The Sense of the Past" (9) in which she follows Burckhardt by claiming that only he who takes independent possession of what most appeals to him in history can hope to reach any clear understanding of the past. This is the basis of her conclusion that the writer, whose patient research and careful reasoning has resulted in certain convictions about a chosen period, will prove capable of producing an account more true and of more value than one who strives to remain dispassionate, impartial and hence unconvincing.

For Butterfield, the reading of history makes it abundantly clear that the only legitimate form of judgement on the part of human beings is that of their own self-condemnation—"what history does is--to uncover man's universal sin". (10) His view is strongly upheld by Pere Daniélou who remarks that the word, "judgement", "sums up the mature, reflective wisdom of the experienced historian, who knows what he is talking about, and presents us with a true picture of the facts. That makes his book worth reading as an intellectual production. But the word also indicates a divine perspective; for Judgement is the revelation of things as they are in God's sight—that is, as they

really are.---

"This is the Judgement that illuminates human history; and the great achievement of Butterfield's book is to have shown that history is meaningless with it." (11)

In a more recent work Butterfield has reverted to a more scientific outlook. In History and Human Relations it appears that he no longer believes in the validity of any philosophy or judgement of history, since the historian's field should be restricted to setting forth the evidence on both sides. But, "if this be all that the historian can do", in the words of D'Arcy, "then history so far written must be purged of some of its most interesting pages." Christianity and History seems to present a more balanced view in that it clearly recognizes the modern predicament, for, as D'Arcy continues:

Human beings cannot be treated as measurable things and the course of history cannot be predicted. Freewill, morals and religion have all to be taken into account, and if we believe in God we are bound to think of Him as not only creating man but directing man to that end for which he was created. Providence therefore is behind and in history. (13)

The existence of this sharp cleavage in outlook among historians springs from the inconsistencies and uncertainties which prevail in much of the thinking done by modern man. Inconsistencies, because in this age of specialization and departmentalization in all branches of learning, history has allowed itself to be



labelled, pigeonholed, and redivided, to the loss of all internal unity, and with resulting distortion and imbalance. Uncertainties with regard to its own position because of the host of recent writers and scholars who represent many differing view points. Some, like Kierkegaard and Barth, have opposed revelation to history, and in so doing have ruled out all hope of relating heaven and earth, grace and nature. Others, as we have seen, give a scientific interpretation of history; and this involves a more or less futile attempt to banish themselves from their writings. Still others, like Croce and Collingwood, with their varying forms of historical idealism, have aroused a great deal of controversy; but their desire for a rapprochement between philosophy and history is surely to be commended as a step toward the return to unity and wholeness. History, if it is to be of any value for mankind, can no longer be separated from other branches of knowledge nor divided internally within itself. Moreover, a return to unity does not imply a return to the past, for, like truth and goodness, "unity," as its Latin derivation clearly indicates, is essentially one, although its outward form may vary from age to age.

D'Arcy notes that

History has suffered by being taken for a serious and "scientific" subject long after the physical sciences had established themselves and taken over the field of knowledge. Philosophers, too, with their strict standards as to what constituted knowledge have been chary of admitting the pretensions of history. (14)

He then proceeds to define "historicism" as "philosophy of history"; this whole book is written for the purpose of demonstrating, first, the possibility and, secondly, the value of this as a field of study. Where the historian must of necessity have a microcosmic view, as he records the sequence of historical events, the historicist, according to D'Arcy, uses a macrocosmic approach in the endeavour to find any underlying unities and patterns which may serve as guides toward a better understanding of the meaning of history as a whole. The latter, therefore, has the advantage of being permitted to exceed the bounds of the historian qua historian, although the exact line of demarcation cannot be sharply defined.

Today there are many philosophers and historians who deny the possibility of a philosophy of history, and among those who do accept it as a field of study, not all agree with D'Arcy. One of the major sources of disagreement centres around the "why did it happen?" in history, or, in other words, the nature of historical explanation. If the only process of explanation allowed is of the type employed in scientific thinking, then, a priori, no interpretation in history is admissible. However, Walsh maintains that

History differs from the natural sciences in that it is not the aim of the historian to formulate a system of general laws; but this does not mean that no such laws are presupposed in historical thinking. In fact---the historian does make constant use of generalizations, in particular generalizations about

the different ways in which human beings react to different kinds of situations. History thus presupposes general propositions about human nature... (15)

The development of a philosophy of history depends also on the possibility of the attainment of objective truth. First, as Walsh reminds us, we must be careful to note that historical objectivity is radically different from scientific objectivity because the historian deals with what is largely unpredictable, namely personalities, both individually and in groups; and, in addition, falling as he does within these categories, he is actually studying himself. Hence there is a certain element of subjectivity always present which rules out complete scientific impartiality. The historian, however, deals also with concrete fact, the veritability of which can be proved by means of eye-witness and document.

The problem of subjectivity involves not only what is written but also the writer himself, for it is indisputable that some degree of personal bias is present in all historical writing. If, for example, I feel that St. Thomas à Becket was misunderstood and unjustly treated, I will be inclined to describe Henry II in rather harsh terms. Thus a mature appreciation of any particular historical work presupposes a knowledge of the point of view of the author. And, ultimately, it is his attitude to moral and metaphysical truth which is most vital, because this determines all his thought and is, in consequence, the

decisive factor in forming a standard of judgement to be applied to each single event and to the whole course of history. Walsh points out

that historians approach the past each with his own philosophical ideas, and that this has a decisive effect on the way they interpret it.----differences between historians are in the last resort differences of philosophies, and whether we can resolve them depends on whether we can resolve philosophical conflicts. (16)

To this D'Arcy adds a word of warning to the effect that a historian may not

take a set of moral or religious ideas and principles and foist them on the human scene. If he does this he may show himself a good moralist or a worthy propagandist of a faith, but he is exploiting history. The judgement must arise naturally and almost inevitably out of the facts, a conclusion which is seen to be contained in the premises. (17)

The vital, universal significance of history for everyman cannot be overemphasized. Each of us, by the fact of our existence, is a part of the historical process, and no one can avoid the responsibility of deciding what his own particular role should be.

Our final interpretation of history is the most sovereign decision we can take, and it is clear that everyone of us, as standing alone in the universe, has to take it for himself. It is our decision about religion, about our total attitude to things, and about the way we will appropriate life. (18)

Professor Galbraith has remarked (19) that medieval historians are in most circles still underrated at the present time. And it was Professor Little, who, at the end of his life after many years devotedly given to medieval research, made the following profound comment summing up all that study, experience and insight had

taught him:

In the Middle Ages most good and serious-minded people worked for the glory of God: now they work for the good of man - or rather of some men - not very successfully, owing to mistaken ideas of what is good. There are two Great Commandments: and unless and until both are kept the world will be a lop-sided place. (20)

The contemporary situation within the realm of historical studies, to which our attention has been drawn above by reference to some of the controversies and comments arising from recent investigations and research on the part of medievalists, points clearly to the fact that the history of this period has, still, much of value to disclose to the single-minded and untiring scholar.

When our minds turn to survey the past, there is no doubt that they find much in history which is interesting for its own sake because of the multitude of men and women, both good and bad whose adventures, since they are true, are more thrilling than even the most highly imaginative fiction. And yet, once these tales have been related, the human mind instinctively introduces comparison and contrast in the effort to understand the past in terms of what is known by personal experience. Thus, it is essential that we should ask what light the past can shed upon the present, especially since our modern age acknowledges many unsolved fundamental problems related to man's position in the universe, and also since the prevailing outlook is one of uncertainty, disillusionment and even despair. In undertaking a study of the past, we must not fail to realize that

although history does not, as Thucydides thought, repeat itself, events and circumstances varying from age to age, still, human nature remains essentially the same; and for this reason all painstaking endeavour is bound to be fruitful.

In Cicero's day one of the chief reasons for the study of the past was that "plena exemplorum est historia". (21) This, the classical pagan attitude to historical writing, is also found in Plutarch; and Tacitus declared that the impulse which led him to write was the desire: "ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit". (22) Instances of supposed divine intervention in human affairs are recorded; but wherever the ethical motive is predominant the virtues lauded or vices condemned are seen as natural qualities acquired through human effort.

The advent of Christianity gradually wrought a complete change of outlook as to the meaning of history, but there was no clearly defined expression of it until the time of St. Augustine. During the first three centuries there was only a relatively small group of Christians surrounded by a hostile pagan world with which no possibility of reconciliation was seen. Attention was focused on the joys of heaven, for Christ's message had been interpreted as signifying that the end of all things was at hand. After the official recognition of Christianity

a change became evident; and it was St. Augustine who, with wisdom and insight, worked out a new and specifically Christian definition of history. In the lengthy De Civitate Dei he shows that history, as knowledge of the past, can never be more than incomplete and uncertain. Above this history, therefore, he sees a higher form of history, historia ipsa, which is a plan, an ordo temporum belonging to Divine Providence; and his aim in writing this work was to describe the gradual unfolding of God's plan as it is revealed in the events of human history. As D'Arcy remarks, Augustine was concerned to "prove the debility of pagan ideals and the grandeur of the Christian revelation". (23) In so doing he

admits no fraternization between the Civitas Dei and the Civitas Terrena---. Peoples and civilizations rise and fall, and their distresses are due to sin. To Augustine the self-inflicted wounds of man are far more noticeable than his growing welfare, and by emphasizing---this fact, he prevents any false optimism and underlines a truth which must be taken account of in any philosophy of history. (24)

Nevertheless, D'Arcy does not agree with Walsh (25) and Portalié (26) that a case could be made out for Augustine as the first to have produced a philosophy of history. His argument is based on the fact that he interprets Augustine as holding that the earthly city is to be patiently endured rather than to be considered a

preparation for the heavenly city; and therefore the appropriate term to be applied is theology of history. This apparent contradiction of viewpoint is reconciled by Copleston, who points out that

to the Christian history is necessarily of profound importance. It was in history that man fell, in history that he was redeemed: it is in history, progressively, that the Body of Christ on earth grows and develops and that God's plan is unfolded. To the Christian, history, apart from the data of revelation is shorn of its significance: it is small wonder, then, that Augustine looked on history from the Christian standpoint and that his outlook was primarily spiritual and moral. If we speak of a philosophy of history in Augustine's thought, the word 'philosophy' must be understood in a wide sense as Christian wisdom.---the 'philosophy' of history, as he understood it, is the discernment of the spiritual and moral significance of historical phenomena and events. Indeed, so far as there can be a philosophy of history at all, the Christian at least will agree with Augustine that only a Christian philosophy of history can ever approach adequacy. (27)

The importance of St. Augustine for the Middle Ages lies in the fact that he gave written expression to what was to become, for the next thousand years, the accepted approach to historical interpretation in western Europe. Throughout the greater part of this period there is an almost universal unanimity concerning the purpose and value of history.

For example, the monastic foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow was, in the early eighth century, the home of Bede, whose works bear the marks of a close acquaintance with St. Augustine. For him, like his great predecessor, history may be regarded as a looking-glass in which is seen reflected the working out of the Divine Will in the lives of men. In contemplating history "ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de pravis,



nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor sive lector devitando quod noxium est ac perversum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognoverit, accenditur." (28) His main theme is the introduction of Christianity into Britain and the progress of the Church throughout the island. The emphasis is always on man's dependence on the "divina pietas" (29) which, in the words of the Collect, "ordereth all things in heaven and earth".

So much for Bede's purpose in writing the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation. It is now necessary to glance at his method. He is careful to list his various authorities and their qualifications in the preface and concludes with a plea to the reader "ut si qua in his quae scripsimus aliter quam se veritas habet posita repererit, non hoc nobis imputet qui, quod vera lex historiae est, simpliciter ea quae fama vulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis literis mandare studuimus." (31) Where possible he quotes documents, and when first-hand evidence is unavailable he never fails to acknowledge this fact. Thus, his clearness, honesty and sound learning have been lauded by every generation of historians; and it is worthy of note that a high degree of critical scholarship in the field of history (within, of course, the limits set by the age in which he lived) is not lacking in this period.

The ground has now been prepared for an examination of the general background in which medieval historical

writing grew and blossomed. The curve of development, as Galbraith (32) notes, follows the fortunes of monasticism. A high peak was reached at the time of Bede, followed by a decline through the ensuing dark period in Dunstan's day and that of his immediate successors, and then a new and steady rise upward to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Up until the thirteenth century history was never a part of secular medieval education, for it continued to be a by-product of the religious life. At the same time this period exhibited many varied forms of historical writing, for it was a time when "the compilation of annals and the writing of chronicles, memoirs, lives of kings and saints, even autobiography became a serious preoccupation both within the cloister and in the church at large." (33) This love of the past evinced by both religious and secular clerics sprang from "their desire to see it committed to writing so that it should not be forgotten and that others might benefit from all the lessons it held for the future." (34) Peter the Venerable, for example, praises history and those who write it in a lengthy panegyric, part of which is sufficient to indicate the tenour of the whole:

Cumque dicat Deo divinus psalmus "Confiteantur tibi, Domine, omnia opera tua (Psal. CXLIV);" hoc est laudare de omnibus operibus tuis, quomodo de illis operibus Deus laudabitur quae nesciuntur? Quomodo ab his, qui ea non viderunt, scientur, nisi dicantur? Quomodo in memoria recedentium et succedentium temporum permanere poterunt nisi scribantur? et cum omnis sive bona, sive mala, quae

vel volente vel permittente Deo in mundo fiunt ipsius glorificatione, et Ecclesia aedificationi inservire debeant, si ea homines latuerunt, quomodo de his aut Deus glorificabitur, aut Ecclesia aedificabitur. (35)

This same theme is borne out by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which together with Asser's biography of Alfred and the anonymous Vita Edwardi number among the few extant works bridging the gap between Bede and the revival of historical writing after the Norman Conquest. For example, the death of Edward (36) son of Edgar is summed up in the Peterborough version of the Chronicle in the following terse lines:

No worse deed was done in England than this was,  
Since they (the English) came to Britain,  
Men murdered him,  
But God honoured him.  
In life he was an earthly king—  
Now, after death, he is a heavenly saint.  
His earthly kinsmen  
Would not avenge him,  
But his heavenly father  
Has greatly avenged him.  
The earthly murderers wanted to blot out  
His memory on earth;  
But the Avenger on high has spread abroad  
His memory in heaven and on earth.  
Those who before would not  
Bow down to his living body.  
They now humbly  
Bend on their knees to his dead bones.

Now we are able to understand  
That men's wisdom,  
And intrigues,  
And their counsels  
Are as nothing  
Against God's will. (37)

In sharp contrast to the scholarly and critical approach found in Bede's History, which was written in narrative form, the annals and chronicles were at first merely a miscellany of chronological notes most of which

had originated soon after the arrival of Augustine in England. In the early stages they consisted mainly of a collection of jottings on the margins of the pages on which the monks year by year calculated and recorded the date of Easter; and to these were added portions of old songs and royal genealogical lists. In the monastic scriptoria these were copied and gradually amplified from other sources, many of which have not been preserved. But the result of some of these compilations exists in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in its several recensions, one of these having been referred to above.

Since the medieval historiographer had his task set clearly before him, his manner of presentation was also predetermined. The work of discovering and expounding the Divine plan, as we have seen, includes two steps: first, the gathering and recording of factual evidence, and secondly, interpretation and judgement in accordance with the declared end in view. It has also been previously pointed out that, as a man believes so he writes; but awareness of this fact does not allow us to discredit or discount the work of historians who frankly admit their bias. Thus we may neither accuse medieval writers of putting down only what would give weight to their convictions, nor suggest that they altered facts to suit the cause which they upheld. When Collingwood says that "scissors and paste was the only historical method known to----the Middle Ages" (38) it is this sort of approach

to which he referred. According to him, the eschatological element, so pronounced in medieval historiographers, is an intrusion by which "we may know with certainty that something has gone wrong with their fundamental conception of history". (39) He goes on to say that the theocentric outlook of the Middle Ages is so predominant that the "work of providence in history (is) recognized in a way which leaves nothing for man to do". (40) It is true that traces of this tendency toward human passivity are found to be present in almost every age, but it is doubtful that it has ever been as all pervasive as Collingwood's generalization would seem to indicate. The outline of a solution to this problem is discernible as soon as we begin the search for a balance between extremes. It is not a simple matter of choice between a Providence who overrules all the hopes and designs of humanity, and self-sufficient man who considers himself master of his own destiny. The words of St. Thomas Aquinas, although written a century after the period under discussion, are relevant and applicable, and may well serve as a guide to a more complete answer to this perennial problem for the historian. It may not be amiss to point out that the genius of the work of St. Thomas is based not on innovation of ideas but on synthesis, and as such it serves to provide both unity and balance in philosophical thought. What St. Thomas aims to demonstrate is that man's will is moved by God to the "absolute good necessarily and to

particular goods indeterminately, so that His movement leaves it (the will) free to choose or not choose, and free to choose one or another particular good". In the words of the

Summa Theologiae:

Dicendum quod Deus movet voluntatem hominis, sicut universalis motor, ad universale obiectum voluntatis, quod est bonum. Et sine hac universali motione homo non potest aliquid velle. Sed homo per rationem determinat se ad volendum hoc vel illud, quod est vere bonum vel apparens bonum". (42)

Here is the basis of a sound, well-reasoned explanation of the mode of Divine-human co-operation in world history.

Collingwood's reference to "scissors and paste" methods points to another important factor which must be adequately treated. The medieval writer, while aware of his duty to record only ascertainable fact, was at the same time aware of his limitations due in part to poverty of source material, and in part to his frequent dependence on unverifiable evidence and conflicting witnesses. A distinction must, therefore, be made between past history and contemporary history. Ordericus Vitalis makes this clear in the preface of his work:

Quamvis enim res Alexandrinas, seu Graecas, vel Romanas, aliasque relatu dignas indagare nequeam, quia claustralis coenobita ex proprio voto cogor irrefragabiliter ferre monachilem observantiam; ea tamen quae nostro tempore vidi, vel in vicinis regionibus accidisse comperi, elaboro, coadjuvante Deo, simpliciter et veraciter enucleare posterorum indagini. (43)

Several noteworthy changes in historical writing appear after the Norman Conquest. That change was needed is indicated by a number of eleventh and twelfth century writers including William of Malmesbury who wrote in his Gesta Regum

Anglorum that "veruntamen litterarum et religionis studia aetate procedente obsoleverunt, non paucis ante adventum Normannorum annis". (44) Thus the union of the Norman and Anglo-Saxon crowns came at the appropriate moment to give a new impulse to historiography, with a resulting increase in both the amount and the quality of writing. Charles Gross says that the most tangible effect of the Norman Conquest upon the chronicles of England was to widen their horizon, and to make their treatment of history less insular and more cosmopolitan; this was an inevitable result of the closer contact of England with the continent. (45)

Many Norman monasteries were, at the time of the Conquest, seats of learning; and in the century and a half immediately following William's arrival in England, Norman monks crossed the Channel, bringing with them their high standard of learning and writing. Both Lanfranc and Anselm had taught in the same school, that of the Benedictine monastery of LeBec in Normandy, which at this period was highly renowned as a centre of learning; thus, as leaders of the English church it is not surprising that they were most influential in stimulating the development of an Anglo-Norman historiography, as distinct from both the Anglo-Saxon chronicles and the Norman historical writing of the type of William of Poitiers whose biography of Duke William (Gesta Guilelmi Ducis) is full of "constant flattery of his own master, and----frantic hatred towards Godwine and Harold". (46)

This new era in historical writing was marked by several important characteristics. One of these is the gradual substitution of Latin for the vernacular as the written language or literature. It was only at Worcester and later at Peterborough that national history continued to be recorded in the national tongue until the beginning of the reign of Henry I. (47) Another result of the Anglo-Norman union was the introduction of the Norman genius for order and organization into English literary as well as constitutional forms, (e.g. the Domesday book). A third indication of the blending of the two strains is evident in the work of Florence of Worcester. In the early twelfth century he

made a Latin version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which in spite of a mass of interpolations, alterations, and the infusions of a foreigner's prejudice, deserves to be remembered because thereby Norman historiography was grafted onto the literary tradition of England before the Norman Conquest, and so inspired a new generation of English historians. (48)

The twelfth century saw further developments in this new school of historical writing. On the other hand, it did not entirely replace the old, for monastic annals and chronicles did not become extinct. Examples of this type are found in the Chronicle of Abingdon Monastery and in the Annals of St. Edmunds; and the writings in this group are in the form of local ecclesiastical histories, the general affairs of the kingdom being brought in only where the individual monastery is directly affected. The Chronicle



of Jocelin of Brakelond is a vivid eye-witness account of the activities of the Abbots and monks of St. Edmunds at Bury in the closing years of the twelfth century. Professor Butler calls it a

mine of information, not merely about the life of a great monastery, but also concerning the management and organization of a vast feudal estate, and something more than that; for within its ample limits the Abbot was not merely the most important tenant in chief, but in addition took the place of the King's Sheriff". (49)

Where these chronicles cover a longer period of time they are often the work of several hands, with a resulting confusion and lack of classification. However, there is an underlying significance to this lack of cohesiveness and order, because it is evidence of the writer's belief that "history was a collective work which was supposed never to be completed. These monks knew that they could never say the last word in history". (50)

This period also saw the revival of interest in the writing of universal history following the earlier example of Eusebius and Augustine. These began either with the Creation or with the Incarnation, and continued to the author's own day. The reason for the inclusion of Old and New Testament history was that, in this way, historical events might be seen in their proper context within the whole history of salvation. Here, as Mierow notes, is the explanation of the fact that "in the Middle Ages the literature of antiquity was largely superseded by the Hebrew Scriptures". (51) The whole stream of history had

already been divided by Augustine into two main branches: the preparatory period leading up to the Redemption, and the subsequent period in which the world is still living, and in which the Divine Redemptive plan is gradually extending to all mankind.

The best model of the universal history is the chronicle of Bishop Otto of Freising whose work entitled, Historia de Duabus Civitatibus, bears a close resemblance to that of Augustine having a similar name, and written seven hundred years before.

That Otto had a high conception of the historian's primary task, namely to speak the truth, is clear from a letter quoted by Mierow:

The art of the historian has certain things to clear away and to avoid and others to select and arrange properly; for it avoids lies and tells the truth. (52)

However, he does not believe that this prevents him from drawing lessons from the past, for he hopes that in his work the

devout reader may observe what is to be avoided in mundane affairs by reason of the countless miseries wrought by their unstable character, and---the studious and painstaking investigator may find a record of past happenings free from all obscurity. (53)

With regard to universal history, his English (or in this case Norman) counterpart is Ordericus Vitalis whose somewhat lesser merits will be discussed below. In breadth of knowledge Otto is to be compared with his versatile English contemporary, John of Salisbury. All the writings of this German bishop exhibit a highly critical spirit which makes

his chronicle a great landmark in medieval historiography. His philosophy of history like that of Augustine has a predominantly teleological strain; this aim is to show the transitory nature of the earthly in contrast to the permanence and stability of the heavenly.

As is to be expected, the medieval writer is more at home in writing of the Church than of the State, and is apt to overstress the influence of the personal will of sovereign or bishop. Economic and social factors are rarely mentioned.

The economic phenomena-poor harvests, famines, rises in prices - are mentioned only in relation to the charity of virtuous men. Political events are considered from the viewpoint of their religious implications, mainly those involving relations between princes and Church authority. (54)

Now that the general background has been prepared, the medieval writers under discussion may be examined in their rightful setting. The features which have been brought out in this preliminary broad survey are those which are most essential to an understanding of the period and of its contemporary historical writings. The historical antecedents in medieval history and the modern historical approach and attitude to the past have both to be taken into account before the individual writers are considered. Once furnished with some general knowledge along these lines, we are provided with direction signs to assist us in our search for what has most relevance and significance for present day historical studies. In each author, apart from an appraisal

of his technique of writing, which includes both language and style, attention will be given to his approach to and use of his material, and also, what is more basic, his underlying beliefs and motives, on which ultimately all his work depends.

William of Malmesbury may well be considered first, for in him, as in his slightly later namesake William of Newburgh, we see a reflection of the twelfth century Renaissance in thought and letters. This can be traced to the influence of Lanfranc and Anselm whose dialectic and philosophy were largely responsible for the spirit and method of the new historiography. In the eyes of posterity William of Malmesbury has always held a high place among the authors of his century.

For the next historian it will be necessary to cross the Channel in order to find the English born Ordericus Vitalis who spent the greater part of his life in a Norman monastery. He thus reflects a different point of view; and his work is significant in that it is patterned upon the universal history type of which mention has been made above.

Thirdly, the Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury and also his Letters provide us with a further insight both into the diversity of form in historical writing of the twelfth century and into its underlying unity of purpose.

Finally, the Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond presents us with a picture of the inner workings of a great medieval monastery as seen through the eyes of the monk who served for some years as chaplain to the Abbot.

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CHAPTER II

WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY

William of Malmesbury is noted as the first English writer after Bede to attempt to write a systematic general history of England as distinct from a compilation of facts in chronological sequence. He himself was fully aware of this fact, for the task was one which he gladly and in obedience undertook as his life work. His fondness of history per se and the dearth of historical writing on the immediate past were the two factors which led him to begin his research and literary activities. His own words in the preface of Book One of the Gesta Regum Anglorum give a clear and detailed explanation of the situation which existed at the time he took up his pen:

Res Anglorum gestas Beda, vir maxime doctus et minime superbus, ab advento eorum in Britanniam usque ad suos dies plano et suavi sermone absolvit: post eum non facile, ut arbitror, reperies qui historiis illius gentis Latina oratione texendis animum dederit. Viderint alii se quid earum rerum vel jam invenerint, vel post haec inventuri sint; noster labor, licet in quaerendo sollicitas duxerit excubias, frustra ad hoc tempus consumpsit operam. Sunt sane quaedam vetustatis indicia chronico more et patrio sermone per annos Domini ordinata. Per haec senium oblivionis eluctari meruerunt quaecunque tempora post illum virum fluxerunt. Nam de Elwardo, (1) illustri et magnifico viro, qui chronica illa Latine aggressus est digerere, praestat silere; cujus mihi esset intentio animo, si non essent verba fastidio, Nec vero nostram effugit conscientiam domini Edmeri (2) sobria sermonis festivitate elucubraturum opus; in quo a rege Eadgaro orsus usque ad Wilhelmum primum raptim tempora perstrinxit, et inde licentius evagatus usque ad obitum Anselmi archiepiscopi, diffusam et necessariam historiam studiosis exhibuit. Ita praetermissis a tempore Bedae ducentis et viginti et tribus annis, quos iste nulla memoria dignatus est, absque litterarum patrocinio claudicat cursus temporum in medio;



unde mihi tum propter patriae charitatem, tum propter  
adhortantium auctoritatem, voluntati fuit interruptam  
temporum seriem sarcire, et exarata barbarice Romano  
sale condire. (3)

Later on in the conclusion of this same work, where  
he dedicates the volume to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, he  
makes the further assertion: "privatim ipse mihi sub ope  
Christi gratulor, quod continuam Anglorum historiam  
ordinaverim post Bedam vel solus vel primus." (4)

The success of any such endeavour depends on the  
degree of learning and skill which have been acquired by  
the author; and in William's case there is ample evidence  
of his breadth of knowledge and sound scholarship. The  
date of his birth remains uncertain, some authorities  
having placed it before the Conquest, (5) while others  
find proof which seems to indicate that he was born as  
late as 1090; (6) but apart from this bit of obscurity,  
it is clear that he spent most of his life at the already  
ancient Benedictine monastery of Malmesbury, with possibly  
a short interval at nearby Glastonbury. He tells us that  
as a boy he had been a diligent student and had studied  
literature, medicine, ethics, and above all, history "quae,  
jocunda quadam gestorum notitia mores condiens ad bona  
sequenda, vel mala cavenda, legentes exemplis irritat." (7)

Here is the first mention of William's view as to  
the practical purpose of history, a view which he reiterates  
elsewhere in the Historia Novella, the sequel to the Gesta  
Regum.

Quid enim plus ad honestatis spectat commodum, quid

conducibilius equitati, quam divinam agnoscere circa bonos indulgentiam, et erga perivros (sic) vindictam? Quid porro iocundius quam fortium facta virorum monumentis tradere litterarum, quorum exemplo ceteri exuant ignaviam, et ad defendendam armentur patriam? (8)

In addition to his own personal qualifications he had the advantage of living in surroundings which were exceptionally well furnished with

material of all kinds, documentary and traditional, for the early history of England; and from the number of authors with whom he shows himself acquainted, even in his early works, it is evident that, what with the libraries of these two houses (9) and his private means of procuring books, (10) he had, while still a very young man, access to a much wider field of reading than was open to most of his contemporaries. (11)

This wide reading included many classical authors, some of the early Fathers of the Church, as well as a number of early medieval philosophers. Among those to whom he makes reference are Plato, (12), Virgil, (13) Juvenal, (14) Livy, (15) St. Jerome, (16) Boethius, (17) and John Scotus, (18) and also his English predecessors, Bede, (19) Eadmer (20) and Asser. (21)

With regard to contemporary history, we find that Malmesbury, in William's day, was an important centre to which messengers frequently came from near and far. Miss Norgate pictures the community guest-hall as being

open alike to king and bishop, to Norman baron or English yeoman, to the high-born pilgrim who came back from a distant shore laden with relics and with tales of the splendours of Byzantium or the marvels of Holy Land, to the merchant who came to sell his curious foreign wares at the local fair and to pay his devotions. (22)

Furthermore, the Norman abbot, Godfrey, ranked among the

peers of the realm who sat as the king's advisers, in the Great Council. The vivid portraits of all three Norman Kings were almost undoubtedly drawn by William either from life, or from descriptions given him by his Abbot, and as Miss Norgate adds, "his portrait of Henry I was in all likelihood painted from life as the King paid his devotions before St. Ealdhelm's shrine." (23)

William's own excursions outside the monastery are indicated by his graphic sketches of town and country which are found in the Gesta Pontificum. (24) This remarkable work has elicited praise from historians in every age, and has caused Knowles to name its author as "the greatest of the English monastic historians." (25) So highly does Knowles place this twelfth century history of the English church that he has used its contents as source material for his own work.

We can do no better, he writes, if we wish to see the abbeys of England in their prime, than accompany Malmesbury in the brief survey, based often upon first-hand knowledge, which he gives of the country in the Gesta Pontificum. (26)

Galbraith points out that William's work as historian displays an unique degree of scientific research and critical judgement for his age, far surpassing anything coming before him. His extensive use of sources is never indiscriminate, nor a matter of mere transcription and compilation in order to produce a "jig-saw puzzle or patchwork quilt of carefully joined extracts from secondary authorities." (27)

Rather, his method was first to master the evidence as a whole and then "to make his own reconstruction, regrouping the facts, and stamping them with the impress of his individual outlook." (28) The result is, continues Galbraith quoting Darlington a "'synthesis in polished chapters designed for the cultured reader.'" (29) William writes as if Bede, Aldhelm, Eadmer, Alcuin and others are his loved and respected friends, a sure sign of the quality of his scholarship, since it must be the fruit of many years of devoted and untiring research. In the fifth book of the Gesta Pontificum, which is given to the history of Malmesbury Abbey, he portrays its founder, St. Aldhelm, not as a worker of miracles, but as the abbot and administrator of a family of religious houses, thus, showing his recognition of the necessary distinction between faith and critical history. The Vita Wulfstani is an exception to the truth of the above statement, but, as William makes very clear, in this work he intended only to produce a Latin translation of the old English life by Coleman. "Huius ego ut voluistis insistens scriptis, nichil turbavi de rerum ordine; nichil corrupti de gestorum veritate." (30)

The Abbot Godfrey gave William the task of building up the monastery library; and it was while he was engaged in fulfilling his duties as librarian that he was led to take upon himself the role of authorship as well. "Ab antiquo scriptis non contentus, ipse quoque scripturire incepti," (31) as he explains in the prologue to the second book of the Gesta Regum. He continues by stating the reason behind this

decision—"non ut scientiam meam, quae pene nulla est, proponerem, sed ut res absconditas, quae in strue vetustatis latebant, convellerem in lucem." (32)

The style of the Gesta has been likened by Potter to that of Herodotus because of its entertaining digressions and anecdotes. (33) Take for example his description of the porcupine sent to King Henry, (34) the story of the Aquitanian monk, and also the insertion of the investiture controversy in the section which describes Henry's children. (35) These, what may be termed irrelevancies, lead both Stubbs and Miss Norgate to criticize William as an historian. His arrangement of material in both the Gesta Regum and the Historia Novella is obviously awkward and confused; and for this reason they are both inclined to attribute much of the importance and interest of the Gesta Regum to its literary rather than to its historical value. In the second book it is noteworthy that William incorporates some of the earlier ballad literature of England which would have delighted his saintly predecessor Aldhelm. One such poem describes the coronation of Athelstan, grandson of Alfred. (37)

In defence of William's lack of order and clarity in Books IV and V a recent scholar has put forth a convincing case to show that his literary form in the Gesta Regum is modelled on the style of Suetonius' Vitae Caesarum, in which the material, being essentially biographical, is grouped not in simple chronological order but according to various headings—e.g. character, accomplishments, initia imperii, bella civilia,

res externae and so on. (38) Miss Schütt thinks that it is

doubtful whether William of Malmesbury was aware of all that his choice of the Suetonian form involved. He completely lacked the classical sense of proportion, and the linking of quite incongruous forms of narrative in one work does not seem to have jarred upon him.---

The modern criticisms of his work, however, seem to have sprung, in part at least, from a misunderstanding of his literary intentions. Though he was certainly not too much hampered by his form, it must have influenced the selection of his material, some things being definitely excluded, facts, for instance, of mere chronological importance, such as the exact time when and the place where the kings spent the festivals. (39)

This seems to apply to William, but it is also important to bear in mind Haskins' reminder in his work on the twelfth century Renaissance. In the chapter entitled "Historical Writing" he declares that although "Suetonius was copied in the twelfth century and was much cited by John of Salisbury" (40) in general the

Middle Ages cared little for the form of things Roman, and lacked the outlook on the world which was reflected in ancient historical writing; and when, as in the twelfth century, there was some revival of the sense of form, men preferred to clip phrases from the Roman poets, (41)

rather than to cultivate their style and make it their own. Here once again, we find William's genius as a stylist, far in advance of most of his contemporaries apart from the slightly younger John of Salisbury. He (Haskins) concludes, in agreement with other modern historians, that the antecedents of medieval historiography are to be found in Christian, not in pagan, Rome.

It is now necessary to ask what principles

Malmesbury laid down for himself as a guide in the collection and arrangement of historical data. Quite simply, his criterion is truth. It is universally agreed, however, that what is fairly clear and easy to define in theory may be obscure and difficult to attain in reality. What remains certain is that the attempt must be made; and in this respect William spared no pains in his endeavour to obtain accurate information and to relate it both clearly and correctly. In the case of the distant past it is impossible to verify the authority of what has already been written; and yet at the same time it is necessary to make use of this material for lack of other more reliable sources. In this event he frankly admits his inclusion of facts which cannot be proved.

Si quis vero, (42) ut ille ait, si quis haec quoque captus amore leget, sciat me nihil de retroactis praeter cohaerentiam annorum pro vero pacisci, fides dictorum penes auctores erit. Quidquid vero de recentioribus aetatibus apposui, vel ipse vidi, vel a viris fide dignis audivi. (43)

He uses similar language in the prologue of the first book of the De Gestis Pontificum:

Siquidem ibi aliquid de cronicis, quae prae me habebam, mutuatus, velut e sullimi specula fulgente facula, qua gressum sine errore tenderem, ammonerem. Hic autem, pene omni destitutus solatio, crassas ignorantiae tenebras palpo, nec ulla lucerna historiae praevia, semitam dirigo. Aderit tamen, ut spero, lux mentium, ut et integra non vacillet veritas, et instituta conservetur brevitatis. (44)

With regard to the history of his own times he begins the Historia Novella with a prayer for Divine aid:

"Itaque primo vocata, ut decet, in auxilium Divinitate, rerum veritatem scripturus, nichilque offense daturus aut gratie, ita incipiam." (45) Near the end of this book he explains his reasons for omitting certain events of the recent past:

Hec ideo sic in superioris anni gestis non apposui, quia clam conscientia mea erant: semper quippe horrore habui aliquid ad posteros transmittendum stilo committere, quod nescirem solida veritate subsistere. (46)

After relating a miracle attributed to St. Oswald, King and martyr, William takes care to point out that "ne autem haec videantur frivola, prohibet indubitata historici (47) auctoritas, simulque beatus episcopus Acca, relatoris symmistes." (48)

As well as informing the reader of the various sources from which he has obtained his information, and of the degree of its reliability, he also frequently includes documentary evidence. Some of this is in the form of letters, for example, the epistle from Pope Leo to Kenulf, King of Mercia which is in the first book of the Gesta Regum,<sup>(49)</sup> and another from Charlemagne to Offa in the same book. (50) The latter is in actual fact a peace treaty between the two rulers. The charter which Stephen granted at the time of his coronation is also given in full in the Historia Novella. (51)

In addition to William's unremitting search for truth, the views expressed in his writings leave no doubt as to their being the product of a mind in which insight





and balanced judgement, in other words the historical sense, predominate. Modern historians from Stubbs to Potter attest to his fairmindedness, the former, for instance, stating that William

tries----to be fair and equitable in the view of Dynastic parties; and he avails himself of the privilege of his mixed blood to take a somewhat neutral position in the rivalry of Norman and Englishman. He is a man of great reading, unbounded industry, very forward scholarship, and of thoughtful research in many regions of learning. If the result is not altogether adequate, it is at least nearer to the historic ideal than anything that comes before. (52)

The reason for the term "inadequate" is that there is a gap of eight centuries between William's day and our own, and as Galbraith points out, there was little scope in the Middle Ages "for that balanced judgment of the historian which we now demand." (53) Potter makes the valuable comment that in the Historia Novella William wisely gives no pretence of impartiality, (54) but that in his open admiration for the Earl of Gloucester he exhibits a high degree of "disinterested loyalty." (55) One proof of this fairness is shown in his tribute to Stephen in this same book:

Liceat enim mihi, pace mansuetissimi hominis, verum non occulere; qui, si legitime regnum ingressus fuisset, et in eo administrando credulas aures malivolorum susurris non exhibuisset, parum ei profecto ad regie persone decorem defuisset. (56)

The preface of Book Four of the Gesta Regum informs the reader that William is well aware of the difficulties which beset anyone who attempts to give a

faithful account of the events of his own time, for he says

Quocirca, illorum, qui mihi timent ut aut odiar aut mentiar, benevolentiae gratus, ita sub ope Christi satisfaciam, ut nec falsarius nec odiosus inveniar: sic enim bene et secus acta perstringam, ut, quasi inter Scyllam et Charibðim illaeso volante navigio, nil desit sententiae, et si aliquid deesse putetur historiae. (57)

One more quotation will suffice to show how seriously William laboured to see the good on both sides. After noting that both Normans and Englishmen have written about William the Conqueror and his sons from opposing points of view, he, on account of his mixed blood, feels that he has the obligation and also the necessary qualifications to steer a middle course:

Latis superque sufficiunt qui genuino molari facta bonorum lacerent. Mihi placet provincia, ut male, quantum queo, sine veritatis dispendio extenuem; bona non nimis ventose collaudem. De qua moderatione, ut aestimo, veri qui erunt arbitri, me nec timidum nec inelegantem pronunciabunt. Hoc itaque non solum de Willelmo, sed et de duobus filiis ejus stylus observabit, ut nihil nimie, nihil nisi vere dicatur. (58)

Finally, he appeals to the reader to be attentive in order that he may ultimately judge for himself. (59)

As a native Englishman, it is only natural to see William of Malmesbury taking sides in the political controversies of his day. But what is of greater import is to see him as a Christian and a monk freely admitting his fundamental conviction that history reveals the unfolding of the Divine plan in the lives of men. In the present

age historians on the whole are inclined to belittle their medieval predecessors for what appears to them to be a failure to write history qua history. Bury, Shotwell (60) and others claim that the Christian interpretation of history is responsible for the introduction of a "pernicious principle" (61) into historiography since, whenever and wherever it appears, it means the overriding of history by dogma; and this according to Bury inevitably leads to the necessity of sorting and arranging facts in order to substantiate belief.

According to this widely prevalent view, where Christianity flourishes, the importance of history diminishes, because the eschatological doctrine of the Church directs the attention of the faithful beyond time to eternity. To say this is to forget that Christianity is itself an historical religion at the centre of which is the historical fact of the Incarnation. Those who insist that theology and history, and for that matter philosophy and history, must remain totally divorced from each other would do well to consider Toynbee's most recent conclusions. His present position is almost the reversal of his earlier stand in that, where he once felt that history could be grasped only by classifying all the facts and by putting them in appropriately labelled pigeon-holes, he now believes, to a certain extent at least, in the necessity of

comprehensiveness and unity as hallmarks of historical thinking. To use his own words - "when he undertakes the study of human affairs the historian commits himself, by the act, to becoming a theologian too." (62)

It is true that although in William there is no reference to Christian theology as such, nevertheless, we approach the crux of the problem in the realization that insight in any branch of learning is attained only as a result of careful consideration of two essential factors of which mention has already been made. The first requirement, therefore, is a detailed, and critical examination of the given data - this is the scientific element in which objectivity predominates; the second is the arrangement and presentation of the particular facts so that together they form a unified whole - this is the philosophical element, in which subjectivity plays an important role.

William of Malmesbury's work fulfils both these conditions, once allowance has been made for the limitations of his time and of the material at his disposal. He was, indeed, a religious who was for the most part confined to his monastery; but from the evidence given above it is clear that his Christian convictions did not detract from his eagerness to study and record the history of his fellow men. Nor was he inconsistent in this pursuit, for as Daniélou says, "all secular history is included in sacred history" (63) because the working out of salvation

is proceeding now in this world, in the course of historical time.

William frequently cites instances of Divine intervention in human affairs, thus showing that for him there is no doubt that in the end the power of God will prevail. In commenting on a conspiracy against William I, he explains why the plot was unsuccessful, "obsistebat eis Deus, omnes conatus eorum in irritum deducens." (64) Again, with respect to the internal revolts with which the Conqueror had to contend soon after his coronation, William says "urbem Exoniam rebellantem leviter subegit divino scilicet jutus auxilio." (65) Finally, he prefaces Book Three of the Historia Novella with a short statement which clearly expresses his view of the relationship between Divinity and history.

Anno incarnationis Dominice millesimo centesimo quadragesimo secundo inextricabilem laberinthum rerum et negotiorum que acciderunt in Anglia, aggredior evolvere; ea causa, ne per nostram incuriam lateat posteros, cum sit opere precium, cognoscere volubilitatem fortune, statusque humani mutabilitatem, Deo dumtaxat permittente vel iubente. (66)

If these events permitted or ordained by God were insignificant to the Christian, William would not have bothered to attempt the arduous task of disentangling and recording them. But it is precisely because men are neither puppets in the hands of a divine Prestidigitator nor quasi-deities and rulers over their own destinies, that history is of vital import to all humanity. Man is

engaged simultaneously both in making history and in writing it, and what becomes increasingly clear in the work of actor and author alike is the resplendence of the Divine call to share in the redemptive process.

William's view is thus essentially the same as that of Aquinas, (67) who stressed the dignity of human nature and the operation of man's rational free will as forces co-operating with God in determining historical events, with the obvious corollary that the final outcome is assured through the victory of the Cross.

Two forces can be seen at work in William's writings - they are a combination of his faith and of the spirit of the age in which he lived. As Richter (68) points out, there is the monk who as a loyal and obedient son of the Church sees both God and man at work in history; and there is at the same time the critical scholar whose submission to authority does not prevent him from plainly exposing good and evil wherever he finds them. For example, he does not hesitate to condemn his brother clerics who, before the arrival of the Normans

*litteratura tumultuaria contenti vix sacramentorum  
verba balbutebant: stupori erat et miraculo  
caeteris qui grammaticam nosset. Monachi, subtilibus  
indumentis et indifferenti genere ciborum,  
regulam ludificabant. (69)*

As C.C.J. Webb has pointed out (70) both philosophy and history are originally offshoots of religion. Their emergence is due to the fact of their being immanent in man's nature what the philosopher terms reason and what

the theologian calls the image of God. All of William of Malmesbury's writings witness to an underlying unity in which theology, philosophy and history come together as "una veritas (quae) in variis signis varie resplendet". (71)

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Elward or Ethelward, who lived towards the end of the tenth century, and abridged and translated the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle into Latin.
2. Historia Novorum, covering the period 1066-1122.
3. Gesta Regum Anglorum, prol., Lib. I, 957 A. All references for the Gesta Regum are taken from PL. Vol. 179.
4. Ibid., Lib. V. 1390 B.
5. K. Norgate: Angevin Kings, Macmillan, London, 1887. Vol. I, p. 83, and n. 1 on the same page.
6. V. Historia Novella, transl. and introd. K. Potter, Thomas Nelson, London, 1955, p. XI.
7. Gesta Regum. prol. Lib. II, 1053A.
8. Historia Novella, p. 1. V. above n. 6 for the edition used.
9. Glastonbury and Malmesbury.
10. Cf. Gesta Regum, prol. Lib. II, 1053A. "Itaque eum domesticis sumptibus nonnullos exterarum gentium historicos conflassem, familiari otio quaerere perrexi si quid de nostra gente memorabile posteris posset reperiri".
11. K. Norgate: "William of Malmesbury", in DNB, Vol. 21, P. 352.
12. Gesta Regum, Lib. V, 1392 A.
13. Ibid., Lib. II, 1087B.
14. Ibid., Lib. IV, 1287A.
15. Historia Novella, sec. 478, p. 34.
16. Vita Wulfstani, ed. R.R. Darlington, Royal Historical Society, London, 1928, Series 3, Vol. 40, p. 15. This is the edition referred to throughout.
17. Gesta Regum, Lib. II, 1083B.
18. Ibid., Lib. II, 1084A.
19. Gesta Regum, and Gesta Pontificum passim.



20. V. quotation on p. 29 and Gesta Regum and Gesta Pontificum, passim.
21. Gesta Regum, Lib. II, 1083 B.
22. K. Norgate: England under the Angevin Kings, Vol. I, p. 91-2.
23. Ibid., p. 92.
24. Or Gestis Pontificum Anglorum. All references are to the edition in the Rolls Series entitled Rerum Britannicorum Medii Aevi Scriptores, no. 52, ed. N.E.S.A. Hamilton, London, 1870. Two illustrations of this are found in a) Lib. V, sec. 216, p. 361, where he says plainly "vidimus"; and in b) Lib. IV, sec. 172, p. 307, where the detailed description implies familiarity.
25. D. Knowles: The Monastic Order in England, University Press, Cambridge, 1950, p. 176.
26. Loc. cit.
27. V.H. Galbraith: Historical Research in Medieval England, the Creighton Lecture in history, Athlone Press, London, 1949, p. 46. p. 15.
28. Ibid., p. 16.
29. Ibid. The quotation is from R.R. Darlington: Anglo-Norman Historians, (inaugural lecture, 1947) No place.
30. Vita Wulfstani, p. 2. In this introductory passage William appears to make two contradictory statements. First, the words to follow are not his own; and secondly, Coleman's account (although it contains a number of miracle stories) is based on indubitable evidence, as he was a trustworthy man. Thus, here his critical judgement seems to be in abeyance.
31. Gesta Regum, prol. Lib. II, 1053A.
32. Ibid.
33. Historia Novella, p. XIV.
34. Gesta Regum, Lib. V, 1364 C. "animal quod hystrix vocatur."
35. Ibid., Lib. V, beginning 1374D.
36. K. Norgate: DNB, Vol. 21, p. 353.
37. Gesta Regum, Lib. II, 1098 B and C, 1099A.

38. M. Schütt: "The Literary Form of Malmesbury's 'Gesta Regum'" in EHR, Vol. 46, 1931, pp. 255-60.
39. Ibid., p. 260.
40. C.H. Haskins: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1927, p. 226.
41. Loc. cit.
42. A quotation from Virgil, Ecl. VI, 9.
43. Gesta Regum, prol. Lib. I, 958 C.
44. Gesta Pontificum, prol. Lib. I, p. 4.
45. Historia Novella, prol. Lib. I, p. 1.
46. Ibid., sec. 514, p. 70.
47. Bede.
48. Gesta Regum, Liv. II, 1194B.
49. Ibid., Lib. I, 1040D.
50. Ibid., Lib. I, 1043C.
51. Historia Novella, Lib. I, sec. 464, p. 18.
52. W. Stubbs: preface to his edition of the Gesta Regum (1887) , p.x. quoted in Haskins, op. cit., p. 248.
53. V.H. Galbraith: "Good Kings and Bad Kings", in History, Vol. 30, 1945, p. 120.
54. Historia Novella, p. xiii.
55. Ibid., p. XIV.
56. Ibid., Lib. I, sec. 465, p. 20.
57. Gesta Regum prol. Lib. IV, 1269C - 1270B.
58. Ibid., prol. Lib. III, 1212A.
59. Ibid., 1212B, "Sed de talibus tempus erit cum lector arbitretur."
60. J. Shotwell: The History of History, Columbia University Press, New York, 1939, Vol. I, p. 329.

61. J.P. Bury: The Ancient Greek Historians, Lane Lectures Harvard 1908, Dover Publications, New York, 1958, p. 238.
62. A.J. Toynbee: "The Historian's Struggle with Religion" in Horizon, Jan. 1961. Vol. 3, no. 3, pp57-65.
63. J. Danielou: The Lord of History transl. N. Abercrombie Longmans, London, 1958, p. 24.
64. Gesta Regum, Liv. III, 1237 A.
65. Ibid. 12310.
66. Historia Novella, prol. Lib. III, p. 46.
67. V. supra p. 23.
68. H. Richter: Englische Geschichtschreiber des 12 Jahrhunderts, Druck: Triltsch und Huther Berlin O 17, 1938, chapter on "Wilhelm von Malmesbury".
69. Gesta Regum, Liv. III, 1229A.
70. In an article in R. Klibansky and H.J. Paton (eds.), Philosophy and History, essays presented to Ernst Cassirer, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1936.
71. Nicholas of Cusa in the introduction of Philosophy and History, (vide supra, note 70), p. VII.

CHAPTER III  
ORDERICUS VITALIS

The Historia Ecclesiastica of Ordericus Vitalis is a work which stands in marked contrast to the preceding study with regard to style, form and scope. But, despite this clearly recognizable dissimilarity, what is far more striking is the resemblance between the two authors, the more significant because the more fundamental. Hence, in comparing Ordericus with William of Malmesbury, we find two men who are outwardly of quite different temperament and character, but who are inwardly firm adherents of the same basic convictions. Thus, divergence of method, in these two medieval writers at least, is reconciled in unity of purpose.

The personality of "Orderic the Englishman" ("Ordericus Vitalis Angligena", (1) as he calls himself) is clearly revealed in the pages of his work. Dean Church calls him "not a thinker or teacher" (2) but a monk "full of his profession, and made sympathetic, tender-hearted, and religious by it." (3) Indeed the impression given is that of a gentle, lovable and devout person who is at the same time a scholar cherishing "a scholar's ideals". (4) There is no uncertainty as to the main events in his life since he has recorded them himself at various intervals during the course of his lengthy narrative. Thus, at one point he tells us that he was born near Shrewsbury in

1075; (5) and, to continue in his own words:

Undecimo autem aetatis meae anno pro amore Dei a proprio genitore abdicatus sum, et de Anglia in Normanniam tenellus exsul, ut aeterno regi militarem destinatus sum. (6)

The monastery to which he was sent was the Benedictine abbey of Ouche founded by St. Evroult, which before his arrival possessed a flourishing school and well-furnished library, providing a not unworthy comparison with the more renowned Bec. Orderic's historical research and writing began under obedience, and was at first limited in its scope to being a chronicle of local monastic history such as were frequently kept in many a twelfth century scriptorium. In tones of deep sincerity and humility he tells us of his allotted task.

In relatione, quam de restauratione Uticensis coenobii, iubente Rogerio abbate, simpliciter prout possum facere institui, libet veraciter tangere nonnulla de bonis seu malis primatibus hujus nequam saeculi. (7)

Since he was chosen from among his brother monks to be the community historian, Orderic must have given evidence of his ability to perform this function well. Medieval historiographical research in this particular area has been greatly advanced by the scholarly work of the nineteenth century French historian Delisle, whose introduction to the Historia Ecclesiastica includes a twelfth century catalogue of the books in the library of St. Evroult, as well as a list of the books to which Orderic refers. Among the latter are included both epic and romance literature as well as the classics. The fact that he was conversant with the works of

many ancient pagan writers and early Christian fathers does not, of course, mean that he had a first hand knowledge of their writings. However, the host of authors whom he quotes gives some indication of the breadth of his reading. Among these are Aristotle, (8) Josephus, (9) Philo, (10) Cicero, (11) Sallust, (12) Virgil, (13) Horace, (14) Tertullian, (15) St. Jerome, (16) St. Augustine, (17) St. Gregory (18) and Isidore of Seville. (19)

During the course of his research and writing, Orderic was able to consult a large number of the historical works available at the time. This was due to the zeal of the first abbot of St. Evroult, Theodoric, to whom Orderic gives high praise.

Nam ipse scriptor erat egregius, et inclyta insitae sibi artis monumenta reliquit Uticanis juvenibus. Collectaneum enim et Graduale ac Antiphonarium propria manu in ipso coenobio conscripsit. A sociis etiam suis,---pretiosos divinae legis codices dulcibus monitis exegit.---

Praefatus itaque Pater per supradictos et per alios, quos ad hoc opus flectere poterat, antiquarios, octo annis, quibus Uticensibus praefuit, omnes libros Veteris et Novi Testamenti, omnesque libros facundissimi papae Gregorii Uticensium bibliothecae procuravit. Ex ejus etiam schola excellentes librarii, id est Berengarius---, Goscetus et Rodulfus, Bernardus, Turchetillus, et Richardus, alique plures processerunt; qui tractatibus Hieronymi et Augustini, Ambrosii et Isidori, Eusebii et Orosii, aliorumque doctorum bibliothecam Sancti Ebrulfi repleverunt. (20)

Since Orderic, unlike William of Malmesbury, commences his history with an account of the life of our Lord and of the Apostles, he makes frequent reference to the New Testament. The catalogue of the library of St. Evroult, already mentioned above, listed both Bede (i.e. the Ecclesiastical

History) and Paul the Deacon, the former being named by Orderic as the chief authority for the early part of his work.

Hucusque chronographiam Anglici Bedae secutus sum, qui scripsit usque ad 734 ab Incarnatione Domini annum. Ipse nimirum Beda presbyter et Paulus Cassiniensis, religione monachi, eruditione magna imbuti, inter caetera bona studia historiam suae gentis quinque libris ediderunt. (21)

In fact, seven chapters of the first Book are borrowed in toto, with only a few minor alterations, from Bede's volume entitled De Sex Aetatibus Mundi. He also mentions having had access to the works of Gildas, (23) and among contemporary writers, Florence of Worcester (whom he mistakenly calls John) (24) and also William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges "qui de gestis Normannorum studiose scripserunt, et Willelmo jam regi Anglorum favere cupientes praesentaverunt." (25)

Orderic's praise of the Chronicle of Florence is based on its fair-minded and honest account of the Conqueror and his sons (26) which he was able to read for himself during a stay with the monks of Worcester. He does not make any subsequent use of the Chronicle in his own writing apart from including a list of its main contents followed by a word of commendation to the interested reader.

Haec ideo huic chartae gratis indidi ut istos codices avidi lectores inquirant sibi, quia magnum sapientiae fructum ferunt et vix inveniri possunt. (29)

This was by no means the extent of Orderic's travels in search of historical records and documents. In

the fourth book of the Historia Ecclesiastica he mentions a visit to Croyland Abbey, which was at the time under the rule of Abbot Geoffrey formerly a monk of St. Evroult. As a result, he was able to make notes from some manuscripts which contained the life of St. Guthlac, and these he incorporates into his own work. (28) He also makes a passing reference to having seen a copy of the Chronicle of Sigebert of Gembloux at Cambrai. (29) His vivid account of the council of Rheims (1119) points to the likelihood of his having been in attendance and busily engaged in recording all that was discussed. (30) We are on more certain ground in asserting that Orderic was present at a great monastic assembly gathered at Cluny in 1132.

Haec idcirco securus edo, quia gaudens interfui, et tam gloriosum agmen in Christi Jesu nomine congregatum vidi; atque cum eis de basilica Sancti Petri apostolorum principis Dominico processi, et per claustrum in aedem Virginis matris ingressus oravi. (31)

In comparison with his English counterpart, William, Orderic stands out as a man who has travelled even further afield in the interests of historical research.

However, as in the case of the abbey at Malmesbury, very often history itself knocked at the door of the monastery of St. Evroult. On many a page of his work, Orderic gives us glimpses of the frequent visitors who found their way to the convent, bringing news of the outside world. At this time there were Norman kingdoms in southern Italy and Sicily as well as in England, and St. Evroult held land in the latter and had sent monks to establish new houses in the



former.

Travellers of all sorts---were wont to stop at St. Evroult - bishops and abbots, priests and monks, pilgrims and crusaders, adventurous knights ready to break a lance in almost any service, way faring merchants, minstrels and jongleurs. No better place for gathering news from as far East as the Holy Land could have been found than St. Evroult, and Ordericus was alive to his opportunity. (32)

The visit of Henry I to the abbey in 1113, (33) and the growth in influence of the monastery under Mainier the fourth abbot (34) may be cited as illustrations.

As well as being an assiduous collector of source material, Orderic was a wise and careful scholar, a man of integrity, who selected and arranged his data in order to give as clear, accurate and unbiassed an account as possible. Not only does he constantly name the authority by whom a particular event was related to him, or the manuscript from which an episode was taken, but he also usually gives some indication of the credibility of his sources.

Thus, in his account of St. Evroult he discusses the reliability of the information at his disposal.

Lectiuncula siquidem reperitur apud Resbacum, quam non satis approbo, edita nimirum ab auctore ignaro, cui non plene, ut opinor, patuit rerum et temporum certitudo. Oportet ergo ut, dum alterius relationi non acquiescam, illud quod a senioribus indigenis Utici didicerim, evidenti scripto detexam, qualiter et quando Francigenae pretiosam venerabilis Ebrulfi obtinuerint glebam. (35)

Another evaluation of evidence in connection with St. William Courtnez is interesting for its added comment on the severe climatic conditions by which Orderic's

perseverance may justifiably be termed heroic.

Vulgo canitur a jocularibus de illo cantilena, sed jure praeferenda est relatio authentica, quae a religiosis doctoribus solerter est edita, et a studiosis lectoribus reverenter lecta est in communi fratrum audientia. Verum, quia portitor festinabat adire, et brumale gelu me prohibebat scribere, sinceram abbreviationem, sicut tabellis tradidi compendiose. (36)

For the history of the First Crusade he relies on several authorities whom he considers trustworthy.

Fulcherius Carnotensis,---qui laboribus et periculis praedicabilis expeditionis interfuit, certum et verax volumen de laudabili militia exercitus Christi edidit. Baldricus quoque, Dolensis archiepiscopus, IV libros luculenter conscripsit, in quibus integram narrationem ab initio peregrinationis usque ad primum bellum post captam Jerusalem, veraciter et eloquenter deprompsit. (37)

Orderic's use of contemporary records is apparent by the fact that he acknowledges his debt to William of Poitiers for the latter's biography of the Conqueror; (38) but he makes it clear elsewhere that he has not copied William, whose work is more panegyric than historical in the hope of securing the royal favour. (39) Finally, Orderic's frequent use of letters, charters and other documents, of which he often inserts the complete text, is a further proof of his own high standard of accuracy. (40)

The above quotations and references provide a sound basis for Leclerq's statement that "in every period the monk-historians gave proof of the scientific spirit." (41) At the same time it must be borne in mind that medieval writers cannot be expected to employ the critical methods of our day;

and also it must be admitted that there were some cases of exaggeration and of fabrication.

Orderic's personal bias, like that of William of Malmesbury, was coloured by the fact that he had links on both sides of the Channel; and since he always refers to himself as an Englishman (42) although he spent all but the first ten years of his life in Normandy, his anglo-philous utterances are seemingly more frequent and more passionate. For instance, wherever he inserts any of his own necrological verse, he signs himself "Vitalis Angligena." (43) Also, in his autobiographical conclusion at the end of his work and near the end of his life he still refers to his beloved brethren as "exteri"; (44) and in the same paragraph he speaks of himself as "aestus et frigora, pondusque diei perpressus in vinea Sorech." (45) On the other hand, he speaks as a Norman in his loyalty to Duke William (46) whom he considers the rightful successor to Edward the Confessor; and in his condemnation of the "temerarium invasionem quam Heraldus fecerat." (47) Nevertheless, in pronouncing a final judgement Orderic does not allow his feelings nor the desire for any "temporali mercede" (48) to supplant his overwhelming zeal for truth. Take, for example, his summary of the character of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and the Conqueror's enigmatic brother who still causes lively discussion among historians today.

Permista, ni fallor, in hoc viro vitia erant cum virtutibus; sed plus mundanis inhaerebat actionibus

quam spiritualis theoriae charismatibus. Coenobia sanctorum valde conqueruntur quod multa eis Odo detrimenta fecerit; et fundos, sibi antiquitos datos a fidelibus Anglis, violenter et injuste abstulerit. (49)

Henry I also received fair treatment at the hands of

Orderic:

Ipse interea ducatum Normanniae cum regno Angliae fortiter gubernavit; et usque ad vitae suae finem semper paci studuit, atque, jugi felicitate politus ut voluit, nunquam a pristino robore, justitiaeque severitate decidit. Egregios comites et oppidanos et audaces tyrannos, ne rebellarent, callide oppressit; placidos vero et religiosos, humilemque populum omni tempore clementer fovit atque protexit.---Divitiis deliciisque affluens, libidini nimis deditus fuit, et a pueritia usque ad senectutem huic vitio culpabiliter subjacuit, et filios ac filias ex pellicibus plures genuit.---Curiosus perscrutator, omnia investigabat, et audita tenaci memoriae commendabat.---Diligenter revolutis antiquorum historiis, audacter assero quod nullus regum in regno Anglico, quantum pertinet ad saecularum fastum, fuit ditior, seu potentior Henrico. (50)

The historical accuracy of Orderic is somewhat marred by the confusion and lack of order which is found in his writings. A cursory reading does not reveal the wealth of information that appears to be scattered pell-mell throughout the thirteen books. As Church remarks,

he is clumsy, disorderly, full of rambling digressions, with one portion of his account in one place, and the rest of it in another; he does not always remember what he has said - (51)

but this lack of co-ordination and therefore of clarity, while it must be recognized, needs to be seen in its proper perspective. One reason for it can be traced to the style and form which were in vogue in Orderic's day, and which he as a discriminating scholar sought to emulate. In actual

fact his style is far from consistent, with a resulting increase in difficulty for the reader.

It would seem just to say that he is more self-conscious of his style than is William of Malmesbury, for the classical influence appears greater. This is evidenced in his frequent allusions to both Greek and Roman writers of pagan and Christian antiquity, (52) whose words he introduces "awkwardly like ready-made phrases learned in school." (53) Admiration is presumably the result of knowledge in his praise of William of Poitiers for imitating Sallust. "Hac usque Guillelmus Pictavinus historiam suam texuit, in qua Guillelmi gesta, Crispi Salustii stylum imitatus, subtiliter et eloquenter enucleavit." (54) Leclercq comes to the conclusion that an examination of St. Bernard and of Orderic reveals what can truly be called a monastic style. His definition shows the blending of two distinct elements: the pagan classical culture of the West with the Christian tradition, the emphasis being placed on the latter. Thus

the monastic humanists are not like those of the Renaissance, torn between two cultures. They are not partially pagan. They are wholly Christian, and in that sense, are in possession of the sancta simplicitas. (56)

Another classical touch is the insertion of Latin verse, which in Orderic includes epitaphs (some of these his own); (57) and in several cases a short portion of the narrative itself is written either in Latin hexameter

after the classical model or in medieval rhymed couplets. An example of the former is found in the description of the wreck of the Blanche-Nef given in Book Twelve. (58) Orderic at times becomes very pedantic in his application of Roman military titles to persons mentioned in his narrative - e.g. in calling the officers in the army of William Rufus "tribunis et centurionibus." (59) Again, like most classical writers he frequently puts his own words into mouths of his characters as in the case of William I's discourse on his death-bed. (60)

Medieval epic and romantic literature also have a place in Orderic, for he includes in his work the legend of the giant Bohemond, (61) extracts from the prophecies of Merlin (62) and a medieval vision of purgatory. (63)

When Church remarks that the Historia of Orderic is "as lively as real life, and also as confused and unassorted" (64) it is because, in both form and content, his work is so all-inclusive. It is at once a history of natural phenomena, of customs and transactions of the age, a stirring account of the Norman invasion of England, a gallery of portraits of peasant, baron and king, of monk, abbot and bishop, a miscellany of local anecdotes, of tales of chivalry, of lives of the saints, interspersed with a detailed history of his own monastic community. And, as we have already noted, from one chapter to the next the language may vary from the rhetorical and grotesque to that of simple clarity.

Until recently there was general agreement that the ill-arrangement of facts in the Historia was due in part to a second reason, namely the change in motive or commission behind Orderic's work. Delisle and Kingsford (65) both see a tripartite development parallel to the growth in quantity of historical information which the eager historian amassed. As the bulk of evidence increased in size, so did his purpose enlarge in scope, until what had originally begun as a simple continuation of the local monastic annals of St. Evroult, became a history of the Norman church and finally an universal history covering the period from the Incarnation to the author's own day. Father Wolter sees no such change in intention nor any abandonment of the original plan, but rather a continuing emphasis centred on the growth and development of St. Evroult, with a constantly recurring lesser theme drawing attention to the rich intellectual and cultural material of the early twelfth century. (66)

Whichever view may prove the more reasonable, the fact remains that the thirteen books included in the Historia were not written in the order in which they were finally bound. Critical investigation has led historians to conclude that Orderic began by writing the third and fourth books between the years 1123 and 1125. From then on, for the next eighteen years, he was continually engaged in the composition of his monumental work, apart from short periods of enforced rest due to the severe winter weather. (67)

As Haskins notes, "the universal chronicle is a conspicuous feature of historical writing in the twelfth century." (68) He continues by pointing out that in this period

we witness a revival in France at the hands of Robert of Torigni and Ordericus, and in Italy in Romualdus of Salerno, while in Otto of Freising the German historiography of the Middle Ages reaches its highest point. (69)

What Otto is to medieval Germany, Orderic is to France of the same period. Both produced what may be called a total history, the distinguishing characteristics of which, as in Augustine, are the clearly specified terminus a quo and terminus ad quem. Within the framework of this all-encompassing plan all nations are included, because the

humani acumen ingenii semper indiget utili sedimine competenter exerceri, et, praeterita recolendo, praesentiaque rimando, ad futura feliciter virtutibus instrui. Quisque debet quemadmodum vivat quotidie discere et fortia translatorum exempla heroum ad commoditatem sui capescere. Plerumque multa, quae velut inaudita putantur, rudium auribus insonant, et nova modernis in repentinis casibus frequenter emanant; in quibus intellectuales inexpertorum oculi, nisi per revolutionem transactorum, caligant, studiosi ergo abdita investigant, et quidquid benignae menti profuturum autumant, pie amplexantes, magni existimant.---

De humano statu lapsuque, de labentis saeculi volubilitate, et praelatorum principumque nostrorum vicissitudine; de pace seu bello, et multimodis, qui non deficiunt, casibus terrigenarum, cuilibet dictanti thema scribendi est copiosum. (70)

In addition, there is a second edifying aspect to the study of history; in its pages man may see the revelation of the marvellous workings of Divine Providence so that;



de cursu---saeculi et rebus humanis veraciter scribendum est, atque ad laudem Creatoris et omnium rerum justis gubernatoris chronographia pangenda est. Aeternus enim Conditor usque modo operatur et omnia mire disponit. (71)

This is Orderic's attitude to history, his philosophy of history; and his understanding of the purpose of historical study is clearly one with that of William of Malmesbury.

Orderic's aim in undertaking the task assigned to him by Abbot Roger is well expressed in the introduction, which was not written until the time of the succeeding Abbot Guérin (72) and therefore presents a comprehensive view.

Decet utique ut, sicut novae res mundo quotidie accidunt, sic ad laudem Dei assidue scripto tradantur; ut et, sicut ab anterioribus praeterita gesta usque ad nos transmissa sunt, sic etiam praesentia nunc a praesentibus futurae posteritati litterarum notamine transmittantur.

De rebus ecclesiasticis, ut simplex Ecclesiae filius, sincere fari dispono; et priscos patres pro posse moduloque meo nisu sequens sedulo, modernos Christianorum eventus rimari et propalare satago. Unde praesens opusculum Ecclesiasticam Historiam appellari affecto. (73)

Like his English contemporary, Orderic was always an obedient son of the Church; but he too does not hesitate to be critical when honesty requires it. This is the case, for example, when he discusses ecclesiastical promotion.

Plerumque leves et indocti eliguntur ad regimen Ecclesiae tenendum, non pro sanctitate vitae, vel ecclesiasticorum eruditione dogmatum, liberatiumve peritia litterarum, sed nobilium pro gratia parentum et potentum favore amicorum. (74)

However, this sad state of affairs has an underlying significance to Orderic in that it serves to show that, for the believer, all things work together for good.

In his own words:

Quibus ita promotis clemens Deus parcit ac miseretur;  
eisque postmodum supernae ubertas gratiae infunditur,  
et coelestis sophiae per eos luce Dei domus illuminatur,  
et utilibus studiis plures salvantur. (75)

This cannot be taken to mean that man has no part to play in human history. What it does mean is that for Orderic, and William of Malmesbury and for medieval historians in general, the end is certain and fixed; but there are a number of ways leading to it which vary according as man does or does not co-operate with the Divine Plan.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Historia Ecclesiastica, heading above Pars I, Lib. I. et passim. All references to this work are to be found in PL, Vol. 188.
2. R. Church: St. Anselm, Macmillan and Co., 1871, p. 95.
3. Ibid.
4. J.W. Thompson: A History of Historical Writing, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1942, p. 240.
5. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. V, cap. 1, 374 C.
6. Ibid., Lib. V, cap. 1, 375 B.
7. Ibid., prol., Lib. I, 15 B.
8. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 10, 327 B. (Plato is mentioned at 326D).
9. Ibid., Lib. II, cap. 3, 111A.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 10, 327 B.
12. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 11, 330 B.
13. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 12, 334 B.
14. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 7, 247 A.
15. Ibid., Lib. II, cap. 3, 110 B.
16. Ibid., Lib. IX, cap. 15, 696 C.
17. Ibid., Lib. II, cap. 14, 158 D.
18. Ibid., Lib. VI, cap. 7, 475 C.
19. Ibid., Lib. I, cap. 18, 66 C.
20. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 7, 249 B.
21. Ibid., Lib. I, cap. 24, 87 D.
22. According to the numbering in PL these are caps. 17-24 inclusive.
23. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. XII, cap. 22, 919A.

24. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. III, cap. 21, 302B.
25. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 12, 261 C.
26. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 21, 302 B.
27. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 21, 303 A.
28. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 20, 357 A.
29. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 21, 303 A.
30. Ibid., Lib. XII, cap. 9 and 10.
31. Ibid., Lib. XIII, cap. 4, 935 B.
32. J.W. Thompson: op. cit. p. 239.
33. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. XI, cap. 21, 844 D.
34. Ibid., Lib. V, cap. 15, 415 B. "Bona famam religionis eorum Uticenses ubertim nobilitavit, et multos potentes atque mediocres ad amorem eorum provocavit. Plures ad eos cucurrerunt, ut eis societate necterentur, et beneficiorum participes erga Deum fieri mererentur."
35. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 10, 484 C.
36. Ibid., Lib. VI, cap. 2, 452 B.
37. Ibid., Lib. IX, cap. 1, 648 A.
38. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 2, 330 C-D.
39. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 12, 261 C.
40. For example, the acts of the Synod at Lillebone in 1080 are given in Lib. 5, Cap. 6, 381 D - to 385 B. Also see Lib. XII, Cap. 16, 897 D - 898 B for a letter from Abbot Roger of St. Evroult to Henry I.
41. J. Leclercq: The Love of Learning and the Desire for God, transl., C. Misrahi, Fordham University Press, New York, 1960, p. 198.
42. V. supra., p. 53.
43. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. V, cap. 19, 432 D.
44. Ibid., Lib. XIII, cap. 22, 982 C.
45. Ibid., 982 D. The reference is to Judges, XVI, 4, where Samson falls in love with Delilah, a foreigner of the valley of Sorek.
46. Ibid., Lib. III, cap. 17, 283 C.

47. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. III, cap. 17, 284 B.
48. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 16, 344 A.
49. Ibid., Lib. IV, cap. 12, 333 A.
50. Ibid., Lib. XI, cap. 11, 818 D - 819 A.
51. R. Church: Saint Anselm (Sunday Library for household reading). Macmillan and Co., 1871, p. 110.
52. V. supra, p. 55.
53. J. Leclerq: op. cit., p. 161.
54. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. IV, cap. 11, 330 B. A case could be put forward that Orderic was also a follower of Sallust.
55. In agreement with H. Weisweiler: "Das Schrifttum der Schule Anselms von Laon und Wilhelms von Champeau" in Deutschen Bibliotheken. Münster 1936. pp. 244-47.
56. J. Leclerq: op. cit., p. 184.
57. V. supra, n. 43.
58. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. XII, cap. 14, 891 D.
59. Ibid., Lib. VIII, cap. 14, 598 A. Another display of his erudition is seen in his occasional use of Greek words - e.g. charisma, soma. V. Delisle's introduction in the Bohn Library edition of the Historia Ecclesiastica, Vol. IV, p. XXXVIII, n. 3.
60. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. VII, cap. 12, 544 B - 552 A.
61. Ibid., Lib. XI, cap. 9, 808C - 809C.
62. Ibid., Lib. XII, cap. 22, 918D - 921A.
63. Ibid., Lib. VIII, cap. 17, 607A - 612C.
64. R. Church: op. cit., p. 112.
65. V. Vol. IV of the Bohn Library edition of the Historia Ecclesiastica, p. XXXIX, for Delisle's view, and DNE Vol. XIV, p. 1136 where Kingsford gives his view in his article on Orderic. Thompson (op. cit.) is of the same opinion. V. p. 239.
66. Unfortunately, I have had access only to the review of Wolter's book, Speculum, Vol. 32, 1957, p. 215-16, where M.W. Baldwin discusses H. Wolter; Ordericus Vitalis:

Ein Beitrag zur kluniazensischen Geschichtsschreibung,  
Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1955.

67. "Nunc hiemali frigore rigens, aliis occupationibus  
vocabo, praesentemque libellum hic terminare fatigatus  
decerno." Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. IV, cap. 25,  
372 C.
68. C.H. Haskins: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,  
Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1927, p. 237.
69. Ibid., pp. 237-8.
70. Historia Ecclesiastica, Lib. VI, cap. 1, 449B - 450C.
71. Ibid., 451 A.
72. Ibid., prol. Lib. I, 16 B.
73. Ibid., 15 B - 16 A.
74. Ibid., Lib. X, cap. 2, 722 B.
75. Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR  
JOHN OF SALISBURY

Orderic's work is undoubtedly the finest example of Norman historical scholarship in the twelfth century; (1) but, unfortunately, after his death it was lost to sight; for there is no record of any other medieval chronicle making use of him. John of Salisbury, on the other hand, was widely read, both in his own day and throughout the later Middle Ages. Also, there is an abundance of recent material on many aspects of his life and writings, so that it will be needful to bear in mind that this study is confined to an investigation of his work as an historian.

What is especially interesting to modern scholars is that John of Salisbury was a man of wide culture and accomplishment, versatile in the Renaissance sense of the word. He was in fact, to quote Stubbs, "the central figure of English learning" (2) in his day. His actual historical research and writing occupied only a short period, in a long and multifarious career, which included a number of years as student and teacher, followed by a responsible position as secretary and confidant both at the English Primatial Seat and at the Roman Curia, and finally his election to the episcopal chair of Chartres. This last appointment was a return to the scene of his student days which had been divided between Paris and this old cathedral city not far to the south west. He tells us in the Metalogicon of his first trip abroad.

Cum primum, adolescens admodum, studiorum causa migrassem in Gallias, anno altero postquam illustris rex Anglorum Henricus, leo justitiae, rebus excessit humanis contuli me ad peripateticum palatinum; qui tunc in Monte Sanctae Genovefae clarus doctor, et admirabilis omnibus praesidebat. (3)

The "peripateticus palatinus" is Peter Abelard, teacher of dialectic; but according to John (4) he soon departed, and Alberic of Rheims and Robert of Melun became his next masters. Then followed a period of about three years in Chartres (5) under William of Conches whom he calls "grammaticus post Bernardum Carnotensem opulentissimus." (6) On his return to Paris John heard lectures from Gilbert de la Porree, Robert Pullen, Adam du Petit Pont and others. Thus, with the help of these, among the most brilliant minds of the twelfth century, "he became thoroughly grounded in the literary and dialectical Trivium, and learned something of the mathematical and scientific Quadrivium", (7) and finally absorbed the required theological teaching in preparation for his ordination to the priesthood.

Notwithstanding this wide range of studies which in the case of John occupied twelve years, (8) history as a subject was not included in any twelfth century curriculum. As Mrs. Chibnall points out, however,

John of Salisbury lived at a time when historical writing throughout western Europe achieved more varied forms and finer expression than at any other period in the Middle Ages.----It is not surprising, then, that----the most widely-read man of his age, should have made at least one venture into the field of history. (9)

Like the other scholars of his time John shows a strong classical influence, the result of his extensive