

"OVIDIUS" UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DOCTORAL STUDY FIELD: THEOLOGY

DOCTORAL THESIS
- SUMMARY -

**BEDE THE VENERABLE IN THE HISTORICAL,
CULTURAL AND MISSIONARY CONTEXT
OF THE 7TH - 8TH CENTURIES**

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CONSTANȚA
2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
Argumentum	6
Historiography.....	11
Problems encountered in the elaboration of this subject	22
The actuality of the subject.....	24
The significance of the study.....	25
The structure of the scientific approach.....	26
I. History and geography of Britain until the 8th century.....	28
1.1. The foundations of the future British society.....	28
1.2. The political-military turmoil of the British Isle.....	34
II. Christianization of Britain.....	42
2.1. The policy of the Roman Church regarding the Augustinian mission of Christianization of the British.....	42
2.2. The incursions of Celtic and Roman missionaries in the British land.....	49
III. Wearmouth-Jarrow monastery - spiritual cultural center of Northumbria.....	62
3.1. Benedict Bishop, founder and abbot of the Wearmouth - Jarrow monastery	62
3.2. Establishment of Wearmouth monastery.....	70
3.3. Establishment of Jarrow monastery	79
3.4. Ceolfrith, abbot of Wearmounth - Jarrow Monastery	85
IV. The personality of the Venerable Bede	94
4.1. The island of Britain, Bede's house.....	94
4.2. The administrative, cultural and spiritual context during the birth of Bede the Venerable	104
4.3. Date of birth of the Venerable Bede.....	111
4.4. Prayer monastery.....	115
4.5. Monastic formation	123
4.6. The Venerable Bede's ordination.....	126
4.7. His obedience during the monastic life	127

4.8. Occasional outings and presumed travels.....	131
4.9. Venerable Bede disciples.....	137
4.10. The Venerable Bede's passage to eternal life	142
4.11. Venerable Bede personality.....	149
V. The Venerable Bede's Work.....	165
5.1. Introduction to Bede's writing activity	165
5.2. Educational works	176
5.2.1. <i>De arte metrica</i> (On the art of versification)	182
5.2.2. <i>De schematibus et tropis</i> (On figures of speech and rhetoric)	184
5.2.3. <i>De orthographia</i> (On orthography)	188
5.2.4. <i>De natura rerum / De temporum ratione</i> (On natural phenomena)	190
5.3. Biblical Comments	198
5.3.1. Comments on Old Testament books.....	214
a. <i>In Genesim</i> (On Genesis)	214
b. <i>De mansionibus filiorum Israel</i> (About the resting places of children of Israel)	218
c. <i>De Tabernaculo</i> (On the Holy Tent)	219
d. <i>In primam partem Samuhelis</i> (On the first part of the books of Samuel)	221
e. <i>De Templo</i> (On the Temple)	223
f. <i>In Regum librum quaestiones XXX</i> (Thirty questions on the Book of Kings)	225
g. <i>Octo quaestionum liber</i> (Eight questions)	226
h. <i>In canticum canticorum</i> (On the Song of Songs)	226
j. <i>De eo quod ait Isaias „Et claudentur”</i> (About Isaiah XXIV, 22)	232
k. <i>In canticum Habacuc</i> (On the Prayer of Habakkuk)	233
l. <i>In Ezram et Neemiam</i> (On Ezra and Nehemiah)	235
m. <i>The Abbreviated Psalter</i>	237
n. <i>In librum beati Tobiae</i> (On Tobit)	238
5.3.2. Comments on New Testament books.....	239
a. <i>In Lucam</i> (On Luke)	239
b. <i>In Marcum</i> (On Mark)	242
c. <i>Expositio Actuum Apostolorum</i> (On the acts of the Apostles)	244
d. <i>In epistolas catholicas</i> (On the seven catholic epistles)	246

e. Collectaneum (Collections of excerpts from the works of Blessed Augustine on Paul's Epistles)	251
f. Expositio Apocalypseos (Commentary on the Apocalypse book)	253
5.3.3. Biblical miscellany	257
a. De locis sanctis (On sacred places)	257
b. Geographical works.....	259
5.4. Homilies, Hagiographies, Martyrologies, Poems, Letters.....	260
5.4.1. Homilies (Homeliae)	260
5.4.2. The histories of Saints.....	264
5.4.3. Martyrology Work (Martyrologium)	280
5.4.4. Sacred Poems (Hymni)	283
5.4.5. Instructional letters.....	292
5.5. Historical Works.....	293
5.5.1. Historia abbatum (The Lives of the Abbots of Warmouth and Jarrow Monastery)	295
5.5.2. The Chronicles (Chronica minora & Chronica maiora)	299
5.5.3. Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (Ecclesiastical History of the English people)	303
CONCLUSIONS	334
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	337

Argumentum

In Romania and anywhere in the world, a serious study, with the topic Bede the Venerable in the historical, cultural and missionary context of the 7th – 8th centuries must start with a short and concise question: *who is this personality?* Surprisingly, that is how the seed of curiosity awoke in me. While studying at the Faculty of Theology „Andrei Șaguna” in Sibiu, at the *Universal Church History* lecture, I read that: „However, the cultural fame of the Carolingian school was spread by the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin, formed in the Episcopal school in York of Bede the Venerable, ...”¹ (now, to be honest, there is another brief reminder at the beginning of the student textbook, in the subchapter „General Bibliography of the Universal Church History” which I missed during my student life, discovering it only now, during the doctoral period). I had read something about Alcuin of York (Tours), the idea of him being the mainstay of the „Renaissance” of Charlemagne (742-814) developing in my mind, but this is where my knowledge of this great theologian stopped. Only now do I have the right opportunity to investigate in more detail the illustrious scholar Bede the Venerable. Even the nickname „The Venerable” seemed interesting to me, making me undoubtedly think of the idea that this man is special, so I have to find out more about him.

Passionate about history and browsing the study of our great historian Nicolae Iorga, *Representative books in the life of mankind*, I came upon a chapter entitled „Bede”. At that moment I remembered my old desire to learn more about this grand personality, but unfortunately easily overlooked by our specialized literature. The work captivated me and ignited my desire to know his personality, and especially the legacy left for the posterity, knowing that this remarkable scholar has left his mark on the great achievements of Alcuin of York.

Then, during the master's degree in „Historical Theology” within the same faculty, I had to use the works of Ovidiu Drimba in the composition of the seminar papers. Thus, I discovered in „The history of culture and civilization” quite a few references to Bede the Venerable. The more I discovered information about him, the more questions arose in my mind, because Ovidiu Drimba made his portrait more through his contribution to the theology and culture of his time, thus keeping one's curiosity in a constant state of wakefulness.

Later on, in a discussion I had with Reverend Professor Nechita Runcan about my fascination with British civilization and its influence on the world, he drew my attention to the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons and gave me a volume² written by himself in which he painted the incredible personality of Bede the Venerable, „the father of English history” and „the teacher of the whole Middle Ages”³. Realizing this common passion, we started to deepen this topic, myself personally being very captivated and thirsty to find out as much as possible.

¹ Rev. Prof. Ioan Rămureanu, PH.D., Rev. Prof. Milan Șesan, PH.D., Rev. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, PH.D, *Istoria Bisericească Universală* [Universal Church History], vol. I, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1987, p. 552.

² Rev. Prof. Nechita Runcan, PH.D., *Studii de Teologie istorică și Patristică* [Studies in Historical and Patristic Theology], vol. I, Ed. Performantica, Iași, 2005.

³ George Hardin Brown, *A companion to Bede*, Ed. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2009, p. 1.

Towards the end of the discussion, the Reverend told me that it is an interesting research subject, because the Venerable Bede is a theological personality lesser known in our literature, although he shed light on a very dark period in the history of England. Developing a cultural picture of his legacy, we find that he succeeded in illuminating the Western European Middle Ages⁴. Thus, I came to research the personality and activity of this great holy father, who was very appreciated and revered in the West, but in a shadow cone in the East or at least in the Romanian area. After more careful research, I was very surprised by his contribution to Christian literature, which is not limited to the geographical area of Great Britain, instead covering the entire Western Christian space. His entire work can be honored with the works of Origen, Blessed Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Cassian, etc. The work of the Venerable Bede is vast, consisting of biblical commentaries, geographical works, hagiography, historical works, homilies, letters, hymns and poems, didactic works, scientific works. Obviously, the main recipients of his work were the English, but not only them. The Venerable Bede was a pioneer for English Christian literature, and through his work he was rightly named „the father of English history”⁵.

Thus, I decided that, under the auspices of Reverend Professor Nechita Runcan, I should carry out the doctoral thesis, wishing that through it, the Venerable Bede would become known to the Romanian reader, too. At first I was very euphoric and delighted with the opportunity that arose in my theological and cultural development, but then, trying to gather materials, I became aware of the difficult task that awaited me in conducting this study. The idea of being a sort of pioneer on this subject in the Romanian research area attracted me, but slowly the initial euphoric emotions were replaced with the concern about collecting and systematizing the scientific material for this work.

The good God, in all His love and knowledge, planned for me to have the opportunity to settle for a while in Paris, and there I found the material needed to be able to complete this scientific endeavor. With His help I managed to join several libraries, the most equipped with the necessary material for the subject being „*Bibliothèque Nationale de France François – Mitterrand*”, where in the research room I came upon several works on the Venerable Bede. Indeed, entire volumes have been written in the West about this holy father, but unfortunately this has not happened in our case, although he is undoubtedly one of the leading figures of Western Christianity, being honored as a saint both by the Orthodox Church (on May 27), as well as by the Roman Catholic Church (and the Anglican Church) on May 25.

That is how I started to deepen my French knowledge and improve my English, thanks to my research work. With a simple scan of the electronic catalogue⁶ of „*Bibliothèque nationale de France*”, we can find that there are 4,929 books containing the title „Bede”. From here at first sight we can conclude that the Venerable Bede was indeed very appreciated in the West, a lot of

⁴ Edward P. Echlin „Bede and the Church”, in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4 / 1973, Maynooth, p. 351.

⁵ N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede, The Ecclesiastical History in context*, Ed. Routledge, Londra, 2006, pp. 5, 28, 48; A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 231; George Hardin Brown, *A companion to Bede*, Ed. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2009, p. VII, 13.

⁶ This electronic catalogue can be accessed at <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/index.do>.

works and a lot of research work being dedicated to him. The proof of his importance for Christianity and especially the Western one is the nickname given by Pope Leo XIII, in 1899, of „*Doctor of the Church*”⁷, a very important status in the Western Church, being the only British to receive this distinction⁸. But first, due to his theological works, he was named „*Doctor Anglorum*”⁹, this also being the main merit for which he was canonized¹⁰.

His importance in the history of the Church also results from the care provided by J.P. Migne¹¹, who published between 1841 and 1855 his wonderful work „*Patrologia Latina*”, a collection of writings of the Holy Fathers and other ecclesiastical authors, in which six volumes¹² were allocated to Bede. Likewise, we can listen to Walter Goffart, who states about him that „he has a privileged and unequaled place among the first historians in Christian Europe”¹³.

In the Middle Ages, the Venerable Bede enjoyed a special reputation. A very eloquent example in sustaining the appreciation he earned is his mention in the *Divine Comedy* of the illustrious Italian poet Dante Alighieri¹⁴, who places Bede (along with Isidore of Seville¹⁵ and Richard of Saint Victor¹⁶) among the blessed in Paradise¹⁷, thus being considered one of the main representatives of Western culture during the early Middle Ages¹⁸.

⁷ J. Campbell, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 245.

⁸ Anselm of Canterbury is also Doctor of the Church, but he is originally from Italy.

⁹ Due to his great intellectual prestige, he became known as a teacher of the English (*Doctor Anglorum*), compared to the most important Christian intellectual of all time, St. Paul the Apostle, teacher of peoples (*Doctor Gentium*), Assoc. Prof. Dorothy Whitelock, M. Brett, CNL Brooke, *Councils & Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, Vol. I, 871 - 1066 AD, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981, p. 445.

¹⁰ Benedicta Ward, *Bede the Theologian*, in Evans' volume, G. R. *The Medieval Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*, Ed. Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2001, pp. 57 – 64.

¹¹ J. P. Migne (1800 – 1875) was one of the greatest patrologists of all time. He has the most complete edition of patrology, entitled: *Patrologiae cursus completus*, the Latin series (*Patrologia Latina*) in 221 vol. and the Greek series (*Patrologia Graeca*) in 165 vol.

¹² *Patrologia Latina*, volumes 90 – 95; they can be downloaded in Latin on the site: <http://latina.patristica.net/> (accessed on 20.06.2014, 23.34).

¹³ Walter A. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A. D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*. Ed. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p. 236.

¹⁴ Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321) poet, philosopher and politician. He wrote the *Divine Comedy*, his masterpiece and one of the greatest works of universal literature, describing Dante's descent into Hell, his passage through Purgatory, and ascension into Paradise, in order to end with the apotheosis of his union with the Divinity. Dante called his work *Commedia*, and the attribute of *Divina* was given to him by Giovanni Boccaccio in his biography „*Trattello in laude di Dante*” (Treaty for the Praise of Dante) - Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, - Paradise X, 131, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2000, p. 33.

¹⁵ Isidore of Seville (570 – 636), Spanish bishop, one of the most learned people of the Middle Ages. His main work is *Etymologiae* in which the author introduces all the profane and religious knowledge of his time. For more details, see Arch. Prof. Constantin Voicu, PH.D., *Patrology and post-patristic literature*, vol. III, Ed. Basilica, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 150 - 156.

¹⁶ Richard of Saint Victor, doctor in theology, from the twelfth century. Main works: *Trinity* (the main work, in six books), *The Book of the 12 Patriarchs* or *Benjamin Minor* and *Mysticism* or *Benjamin Major*. Cf. Encyclopædia Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-of-Saint-Victor>, a site accessed on 18. 04. 2015, time 18.44; Rev. Prof. Ioan M. Bota, Ph.D, *Patrologia [Patrology]*, ed. II, Ed. Viața Creștină, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 349.

¹⁷ Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, - Paradise X, 131, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2000, p. 572; and in *Epistles XV*, 7, Dante mentions the Venerable Bede next to Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Ambrose, Blessed Augustine and Saint John of Damascus.

¹⁸ Ovidiu Drimba, *The history of culture and civilization*, vol. III, Ed. Științifică, București, 1990, p. 34.

We can discover his main purpose in life on the one hand at the end of his main work (*The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*), where he inserted a short autobiographical excerpt, in which he states that the simple pleasures of *learning, prayer and monastic life* were the foundation of his life¹⁹. From what he stated here, but also from what he said in the *Preface* of the book, where he is called „*famulus Christi, et presbyter*”²⁰, we are shown his true being, of subject of Christ, and then priest, writer, teacher, etc.

The legacy he left us throughout his work is very substantial. In addition to his maturity work, *The History*, Bede translated and commented almost the entire Holy Scripture (unfortunately some of these works were lost²¹), with both Eastern and Western Holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers helping with the commentaries on the Holy Scripture (Eusebius of Caesarea, John Cassian, John Chrysostom, Isidore of Seville, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Jerome, Pope Gregory I, Ambrose of Milan, Cassiodorus, Cyprian of Carthage)²². He made homilies on prayer, on the celebration of certain feasts - the Nativity of Jesus, the Resurrection of Jesus, etc., he wrote geographical works (about the Sacred Places, even *The History* can be seen as a book which has important geographical landmarks). He was also preoccupied with the lives of the saints, composing hymns, poems, and also a few letters.

Broadly speaking, these are the fields in which the Venerable Bede wrote, but he also penned scientific works, being passionate about education, astrology, art, etc.

Regardless of the inclinations or preferences of scholars, the work of the artistic maturity of the Venerable Bede remains, without a doubt, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, completed in 731. This work sheds light on a dark age of Britain, being considered, without any shadow of a doubt the work of a literary genius, leaving, however, the critics devoid of superlatives²³.

Even though the expression "Bede the Venerable" is used in the title of this paper, during the thesis I have also used other forms of naming this scholar: „The Venerable Bede”, „Bede” and „Bede the Venerable”, all referring to the same person. We resorted to this pattern both to avoid tedious repetitions, and because it was used by the authors of the researched works. Reverend Nechita Runcan uses „Bede the Venerable”²⁴; the J. P. Migne collection uses

¹⁹ Venerable Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Book V, Chap. XXIV

²⁰ Bedae Venerabilis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 95, edit. by J. P. Migne, Paris 1861, downloaded book http://books.google.ro/books?id=t37YAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y, accessed on 12.09.2013, time 15.43.

²¹ George Hardin Brown, *Bede, the Venerable*. Ed. Twayne, Boston, 1987, p. 42.

²² Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in Introduction Ed. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. XXV – XXVI; Benedicta Ward, *Bede the Theologian*, în Evans, G. R. *The Medieval Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*. Ed. Blackwell Publishing, Malden. pp. 57 – 64.

²³ Peter Hunter Blair, *Bede's „Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation” and Its Importance Today*, Ed. H. Saxby, Jarrow, 1959, p. 14; Stenton, F. M., *Anglo-Saxon England* (ediția a III-a), Ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1971, p. 187.

²⁴ Rev. Prof. Nechita Runcan, PH.D., *Contribuția lui Beda Venerabilul la dezvoltarea istoriografiei bisericești universal* [Bede the Venerable's contribution to the development of universal church historiography], in *Studii de Teologie istorică și Patristică*, Ed. Performantica, Iași, 2005.

„Venerabilis Bedæ” or simply „Bedæ”²⁵; Charles Plummer calls him „Venerabilis Baedae”²⁶; „Bede Venerabilis” is used in the CCSL collection²⁷; Diarmaid MacCulloch calls him simply, Bede.²⁸

For a better knowledge of Bede in the Universal Church History and in the Romanian area, a more in-depth knowledge of this more personality is absolutely necessary.

Historiography

Throughout history, Bede the Venerable has enjoyed a great recognition, ever since his lifetime, being appreciated to this day²⁹. His work is of indisputable value, being analyzed by many researchers. There have always been pros and cons to his activity, but the value of his works has never been disputed.

Each work is special and with an increasing value, culminating in the masterpiece of his maturity, namely „*Historiam ecclesiasticam nostrae insulae ac gentis*”, completed in the year 731.

He always enjoyed the recognition of his merits. The nickname *Venerable* was given to him, out of respect, soon after his death. The first attestation of this distinction happened during the Synod of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 836. He is the only Englishman to receive the title of *doctor of the church*. Due to his exceptional work in bringing to light a dark period in the history of England and as a general recognition of the value of his entire activity, but mainly of the value of his maturity work, „*Historiam ecclesiasticam nostrae insulae ac gentis*”, he was awarded the title of „*Father of English history*”.

In order to carry out a work with the theme that I stated in the title of the thesis, it is necessary to have an overview of his work and the stages through which it has been preserved to the present day.

In Romanian, the historiography of the Venerable Bede is more than insufficient. A first reference to him, in the works published in our country, I discovered in Dimitrie G. Boroianu, in his work „*History of the Christian Church From Its Beginning To Our Days*”, Ed. Tipolitografia Ed. Wiegand & C.C. Săftoiu, Bucharest, 1893, pp. 11, 224, 300 (especially note 1 on this page). However, the greatest contribution to knowing the Venerable Bede by the Romanians,

²⁵ Bedae Venerabilis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 95, edited by J. P. Migne, Paris 1861.

²⁶ BaedaeVenerabilis, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum*, *Historiam abbatum*, *Epistola ad Ecgberctum*, una cum *Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, ed. Charles Plummer, Ed. E. Typographeo Clarendoniano, Londra, 1896.

²⁷ Bede Venerabilis, *Exegetical works3. In Lucae evangelium expositio. In Marci evangelium expositio.*, ed. David Hurst, colecția „Corpus Christianorum Series Latina” (CCSL), no. 120, Ed. Brepols Publications, Turnhout, 1960.

²⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *History of Christianity - The First 300 Years*, trans. by Cornelia Dumitru and Mihai – Silviu Chirilă, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2011.

²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI spoke about Bede the Venerable in a sermon dated February 18, 2009, see http://ro.radiovaticana.va/storico/2009/02/18/benedict_al_xvi-lea:_la_audien%C5%A3a_general%C4%83_vorbe%C5%9Fte_despre_sf%C3%A2ntu/rom-267097, accessed on the 26.11.2013, 09.43 p.m.

as far as I could discover, belonged to the great Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga, who wrote several articles about him, in various works such as:

- *Scriseri Alese* [Selected Writings], vol. II, Ed. Albatros, Bucureşti, 1971, pp. 80 – 94;
- *Cărți reprezentative în viața omenirii*. [Representative books in the life of mankind], vol. 1: after shorthand notes, Ed. Tipografia „România Nouă”, Bucureşti, 1924, pp. 142 – 157;
- *Istoria Universală văzută prin Literatură / Simple note ale elevilor după lecțiile făcute la Școala de Misionare în anul școlar 1936 – 1937* [Universal History seen through Literature / Simple notes of pupils after the lessons taught at the Missionary School in the school year 1936 – 1937], ed. by M. Oprea and I. Frölich, 1939, chap. „Bede the Venerable, Alfred the Great, Medieval Epic Songs”, pp. 175 - 182.

For a long time, the Venerable Bede re-entered a shadow cone without arousing concrete interest for any researcher of our lands throughout the dark period of communism. Around the 1990s, writings about this great scholar slowly appeared. At the outset, I would like to mention Ovidiu Drimba with his extensive work "*The history of culture and civilization*", published at Ed. Științifică, in four volumes, 1984 - 1995, or at Ed. Vestala-Saeculum, in thirteen volumes, 1998 - 2003, in which he often mentions the Venerable Bede. Ovidiu Drimba also mentions him in his work in two volumes „*Istoria literaturii universale* [History of universal literature]”, Ed. Saeculum I.O. - Vestala.

Then, I discovered two exceptional studies regarding the Venerable Bede, namely the study of Mrs. Dana Roxana Hrib, entitled „Bede the Venerable - forerunner of the Carolingian Reformation”, published in „*Theological Review*”, Sibiu, no. 1/1999, pp. 126 - 144; and the study of Reverend Professor Nechita Runcan, „Contribuția lui Beda Venerabilul la dezvoltarea istoriografiei bisericești universale” [The Venerable Bede's Contribution to the Development of Universal Church Historiography], published in „*Studii de Teologie istorică și Patristică*”, vol. I, Ed. Performantica, Iași, 2005, pp. 295 - 326.

Short references to the Venerable Bede can be found in other works in Romanian, such as:

- Nicolai Grămadă, *Contribuții la Istoria cărții și a scrisului în evul mediu* [Contributions to the History of the Book and Writing in the Middle Ages], Ed. „Glasul Bucovinei”, Cernăuți, 1928, pp. 59, 154;
- Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Universală sau Istoria Lumii După căderea Imperiului Roman de Apus*, [Universal History or History of the World After the Fall of the Western Roman Empire], vol. I, (476 - 1648), Ed. Așezamantul Tipografic Datina Românească, Vălenii de Munte, 1935, pp. 42, 75;
- Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Rămureanu, Rev. Prof. Dr. Milan Șesan, Rev. Prof. Dr. Teodor Bodogae, *Istoria Bisericească Universală* [Universal Church History], vol. I, Ed. IBMBOR, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 22 and 552;
- Al. Bărcăcilă, *Dacia și Dania în istoriografia și cartografia medievală* [Dacia and Dania in medieval historiography and cartography] in the magazine *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, vol. III, 1959, note 2 from p. 346;

- Răzvan Teodorescu, *Picătura de Istorie* [History glimpse], Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, Bucharest, 2002, p. 20.
- Vlad Benea, *Viețile sfintilor ortodocși din apus / Sfinții insulelor britanice* [The Lives of the Western Orthodox Saints / Saints of the British Isles], Ed. Renașterea, Cluj - Napoca, 2006, p. 63.

There are certainly other mentions of the Venerable Bede, but personally I have only found these ones. Regarding the historiography of the Venerable Bede in the universal literature we have a completely different statistical situation. We can find an entire panoply of his works and works about him.

Most medieval literary works were originally composed in Latin, but poets began writing in the vernacular (the common language of the people) as early as the seventh century. Vernacular literature was further popularized in Great Britain in the Kingdom of Wessex by Alfred the Great (871-899), in an attempt to encourage widespread literacy, and other nations followed his example.³⁰ The language in which Bede the Venerable wrote was Latin. All his works were written in Latin.

In order to conduct a study on Bede the Venerable it is imperative to refer to the important work *Venerabilis Baedae, Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, published in two volumes, in 1896 in London, in which Charles Plummer presented a rich introductory study and introduced the personality and historical work of Bede. For Bede the Venerable, however, there was an obvious interest, during the Carolingian period and throughout the Middle Ages, his codexes being circulated. After Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press³¹ in 1445, parts of Bede's works began to be printed.³² In 1563, in Basel, Johannes Hervagius³³ began editing and printing his entire work, in eight volumes, entitled *Opera Bedae Venerabilis presbyteri, Anglosaxonis, viri in divinis atque humanis literis exercitatissimi*.³⁴ The Royal Decree empowering the printing of this first edition was granted in 1558 by King Henry II of France (March 31, 1519 - July 10, 1559) to Bernard Brand, who was in fact a partner of Johannes Hervagius. Then this power was granted to Johannes Hervagius by Charles IX of France (June 27, 1550 - May 30, 1574), in 1561. The entire edition was dedicated to Prince - Bishop of Speyer Marquard Freiherr von Hattstein (1560 – 1581). In the preface to volume I (entitled *Epistola Nuncupatoria*) Johannes Hervagius states that he bore the cost of the edition more for spiritual reasons than for the expectations of financial gain; the pure and incorruptible doctrine of the

³⁰ See the last work of the great teacher Clive Staples Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

³¹ For more details on the appearance of the printing press, see the papers: Măriuca Radu, Angela Repanovici, *O istorie a tiparului și a tipăriturilor* [A history of the printing press and old publications], Ed. Universității Transilvania, Brașov, 2002 și Jacques Le Goff, *Evul Mediu și nașterea Europei* [The Middle Ages and the birth of Europe], Ed. Polirom, București 2005.

³² The first copy of the *History* was made by Heinrich Eggestein, între 1475 – 1480, in Strasbourg.

³³ Michael Gorman, „The glosses on Bede's *De temporum ratione* attributed to Byrhtferth of Ramsey”, în „*Anglo-Saxon England*”, vol. XXV, 1996, pp. 209 – 232.

³⁴ These volumes can be accessed online in electronic format, at https://books.google.ro/books?id=4x9-9XfrPOMC&hl=ro&source=gbs_book_other_versions, accessed on the 04.01.2017, 08.05 a.m.

Venerable Bede provided the most useful and profound answers to the explanation of the flourishing controversies of their times.³⁵ The Johannes Hervagius edition, in eight volumes, was in some respects incomplete, including works which later proved to have been unjustly attributed to the Venerable Bede. For example, this edition contains „*Expositio in Epistolas beati Pauli*”, which does not belong to Bede the Venerable.³⁶ This work has been assigned by Jean Mabillon³⁷ to Florus of Lyon.³⁸

In 1916 another edition of the complete work of the Venerable Bede was published in the German city of Köln. The edition consisted of eight volumes, following the same order of the texts as the edition of Johannes Hervagius, published in 1563, in Basel. Another, revised edition was also printed in Köln in 1688. Remi-Casimir Oudin published, in 1722, in Leipzig, the work *Casimiri Oudini Commentarius de scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, where in the chapter entitled „*Dissertatio de Scriptis Venerabilis Bedae Presbyteri, et Monachi*” makes a comment on the authenticity of the texts attributed to Bede the Venerable.³⁹

As an appreciation of his value or rather of the value of the legacy left, J. P. Migne (1800 - 1875), the greatest patrologist of Christianity published the complete work of Venerable Bede, in six volumes, in the series „*Patrologia Latina*”⁴⁰.

³⁵ „.... quibus hoc nostro seculo, in tanta diversitate opinionum, nihil exhiberi potest... magis utile, aut ponderatus, ad explicationem controversiarum, quae nunc inter doctos vigent” Bedae Venerabilis Presbyteri, *Anglosaxonis: Viri in Diuinis atque Humanis Literis Exercitatissimi: omnia in octo tomos distincta*, vol. I, ed. Joannes Hervagius, Basileae, 1563, „Epistola Nuncupatoria”.

³⁶ An analysis on this topic can be found in Venerabilis Bedæ, *Anglosaxonis Presbyteri, Opera Omnia, Ex Tribus Precipuis Editionibus Inter Se Collatis*, series „*Patrologia Latina*”, vol. XC, series edited by J. P. Migne; the paper can be accessed at: <http://patristica.net/latina/#t090>, columns 67 – 72.

³⁷ Jean Mabillon (23 November 1632 – 27 December 1707) was a Benedictine monk and a great French scholar. He entered the monastery of Saint-Rémi, Reims, in 1653 and became a Benedictine monk the following year. He was ordained a priest in 1660 at Corbie, before moving in 1664 to St. Germain-des-Prés, Paris, the headquarters of the Mauritians, a congregation of French Benedictine researchers. He worked there for 20 years, co-editing in 1667 the works of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and The Lives of the Benedictine Saints (in 9 vols., between 1668 and 1701). With the help of his colleagues, Jean Mabillon wrote *De Re Diplomatica* (1681, improved in 1704), in which he established the principles for determining the authenticity and data of medieval manuscripts. Practically, through the work *De Re Diplomatica*, the science of diplomacy was founded - the critical study of the formal sources of history - and practically Latin paleography was created - the fundamental science for European diplomats. Generally considered the greatest Maurist, Jean Mabillon died in the middle of the colossal production of the Benedictine Annals, finishing 4 volumes (between 1703 and 1707, volume 5 appeared posthumously, in the year 1713). Cf. *Encyclopædia Britannica* - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Mabillon>, site accessed on the 12.07.2017, 06.17 p.m.

³⁸ Saint Augustine, *Treatises on Various Subjects*, colecția „The Fathers of the Church”, vol. 16, ed. de Roy J. Deferrari, Ed. The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 185.

³⁹ Remi-Casimir Oudin „*Dissertatio de Scriptis Venerabilis Bedae Presbyteri, et Monachi*”, în *Casimiri Oudini Commentarius De Scriptoribus Ecclesiae Antiquis*, vol. I, Ed. Maur. Georg. Weidmanni, Leipzig, 1722, columns 1681 – 1712. The paper can also be seen online at https://books.google.ro/books?id=ZIgW44-g92MC&pg=PA1681&lpg=PA1681&dq=Dissertatio+de+Scriptis+Venerabilis+Bedae+Presbyteri,+et+Monachi&source=bl&ots=FxShz6ftev&sig=ACfU3U1wUFaNp1ES0AScToqYt5RsxF9PYQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiylOJktfiAhV_kSoKHXxyC_cQ6AEwAHoECAGQAQ#v=onepage&q=Dissertatio%20de%20Scriptis%20Venerabilis%20Bedae%20Presbyteri%2C%20et%20Monachi&f=false, site accessed on the 13.07.2017, 04.10 a.m.

⁴⁰ *Patrologia Latina*, volumes 90 – 95; they can be read in Latin at: <http://latina.patristica.net/> (accessed on the 20.06.2014, 11.34 p.m.)

John Allen Giles (1808 – 1884) also took care of an edition of the complete work of Venerable Bede. It was published in 10 bilingual Latin-English volumes, published between 1843 and 1844 and circulated separately in English, divided into specialized volumes.

The most current and interesting complete edition of the work of Venerable Bede appeared in the collection „Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina", in 12 volumes (CCSL 118A, 119, 119A, 119B, 120, 121, 121A, 122, 123A, 123B, 123C and vol. 175 entitled *Itineraria et alia geographica*, representing a compendium of the geographical works of several authors, while Johannes Fraipont was assigned the role of analyzing the geographical work of the Venerable Bede).

For the first time, the historical work of the Venerable Bede appears in a separate volume, in 1841, through the efforts of Joseph Stevenson (1806 - 1895).

George Forrest Browne (1833 – 1930) praised Bede a lot, publishing the book *The Venerable Bede* in 1879, dealing with both his life and his work. This book has been published in several editions.

In London, in 1876, a work appeared in which the poems of the Venerable Bede were published in English, under the auspices of Joseph Rawson. In 1886, a work by Thomas De Longueville, entitled *The Venerable Bede, Expurgated, Expounded and Exposed* appeared in New York. A book with only short writings of Venerable Bede was published in 1907 by Reverend Charles E. Ryder.

A series of martyrologies, based on the writings of Venerable Bede, appeared in Paris in 1908, the volume being coordinated by Henri Quentin, but also in New York, being coordinated by Edwin Hubert Burton and John Hungerford Pollen in 1914.

Of all the works of the Venerable Bede, only one became known all over the world, namely his basic work *Historiam ecclesiasticam nostrae insulae ac gentis*. The first printed edition appeared between 1475 and 1480, in Germany, being edited by Heinrich Eggestein. In 1544 an edition was printed in Paris, and in 1550, John Grave printed one in Antwerp, Belgium.

The first printing of the *History* in English was made in 1643, translated by Abraham Whelock in Cambridge, being a bilingual edition, both in Latin and in English.

However, the most notable edition (in English) of the *History* is in the series by Charles Plummer, which includes all the historical works of Bede. Being fully commented upon, it became the cornerstone for the following studies on the work of Venerable Bede. This edition was revised and extended by Bertram Colgrave and Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors in their wonderful bilingual work *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969.

In other languages, the *History* was translated from English, as follows:

- into German, in 1866 by M. M. Wilden;
- in 1955, Leo Sherley-Prince translated it from Latin into contemporary English (the first translation into contemporary English, until then being used only the tenth-century English);
- in 1988 it was also printed in America;

- in 2003 it was translated into Russian by Vadim Erlikhman (although in Russia there was an old codex of the *History* that is known as *The Saint Petersburg Bede*);
- in 2005 it was translated into French by Andre Crepin;
- in 2008 it also reached Japan, being translated by Hirosi Takahashi;
- also in 2008 it was translated into Czech by Jaromir Kincl and Magdalena Moravova;
- and in 2009 it was translated into Italian, through the efforts of Paolo Chiesa.

Michael Lapidge created in Paris a bilingual (Latin-French) edition of the *History*, translated by Pierre Monat and Philippe Robin, entitled *Bède le Vénérable, Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais*. This edition appeared in three volumes, published by Editions du Cerf, in the year 2005.⁴¹

We can easily notice that the main work of Venerable Bede knows no borders, crossing the entire globe, which indicates its importance for Christianity everywhere.

In contemporaneity, Peter Hunter Blair, N. J. Higham, George Hardin Brown, and especially Benedicta Ward wrote about the life and work of Venerable Bede.

Regarding the systematization of Bede's works and their structuring in chapters, it does not belong to me, but it is approximately a universal structuring of the work of Venerable Bede (almost all the researchers of Venerable Bede divided his works in this way). I can strongly state that I had the most difficult task in terms of the first chapter, that is, *the historical personality of Venerable Bede*. There is very little information about his life, therefore, we can only refer to the short autobiography at the end of his magnificent work *Historiam ecclesiasticam nostrae insulae ac gentis*⁴² and to the letter on his death, addressed by his disciple Cuthbert⁴³ to Cuthwin⁴⁴. However, the work of Mrs. Benedicta Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (1998) and that of Professor George Hardin Brown – *Bede, The Venerable* (1987) were very helpful. Here I also used the introductions written by Charles Plummer (1896)⁴⁵, Bertram Colgrave and Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors (1969),⁴⁶ and also Johannes Quasten's wonderful book, *Patrologia*, vol. IV – *Del Concilio de Calcedonia (451) a Beda. Los Padres Latinos*.

To analyze the work of Venerable Bede, I used a modern edition of his works, but also at least an English translation of these texts.

⁴¹ I collected all this information on the editions of *History* from Bibliothèque Nationale de France François Mitterrand, where I wrote most of this paper.

⁴² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, with introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, Ed. George Bell and Sons, Londra, 1907, book V, ch. XXIV, pp. 448 – 449; book accessed online at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38326>, site accessed on the 04.01.2015, 10.07 p.m.; Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, book V, ch. XXIV, pp. 566 – 567.

⁴³ This Cuthbert was a disciple of the Venerable Bede; not to be confused with the saint whose life Bede wrote, both in prose and verse.

⁴⁴ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; The Greater Chronicle; Bede's Letter to Egbert*, ed. and introduction by Judith McClure and Roger Collins, Series „Oxford World's Classics”, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, „Letter on the Death of Bede”, pp. 299 – 304.

⁴⁵ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, ed. Charles Plummer, E. Typographeo Clarendoniano, Londra, 1896, pp. IX – XXXVI.

⁴⁶ Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, Ed. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. XVII – XXXVIII.

In the analysis of the *educational work* I used the book Bede, *Libri II: De arte metrica et De schematibus et tropis - The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, edited and translated by Calvin B. Kendall (1991); Beda Venerabilis, *Opera didascalica*, all three volumes, edited by Charles Williams Jones, Calvin B. Kendall, Margot H. King, Frances Randall Lipp (CCSL 123A, 1975; 123B, 1977; 123C, 1980); Bede, *On the Nature of Things and On Times*, edited by Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis (2010); Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, edited by Faith Wallis (1999); Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner, Henry Hall King's, *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts* (1943).

In order to write the subchapter on *biblical commentaries*, I used Beda Venerabilis, *Opera exegetica*, volumes of the CCSL series (118A, 1967; 119, 1962; 119A, 1969; 119B, 1983; 120, 1960; 121, 1983; 121A, 2001), edited by Charles Williams Jones, David Hurst, J.E. Hudson, Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner, Roger Gryson; Bede, *On Genesis*, translation, introduction and notes by Calvin B. Kendall (2008); Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, translation, notes and introduction by Arthur G. Holder (1994); Bede, *On the Temple*, translated by Sean Connolly (1995); Bede, *A Biblical Miscellany*, translation, introduction and notes by W. Trent Foley and Arthur G. Holder (1999); Bede, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, translation, introduction and notes by Scott DeGregorio (2006); Bede, *On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk*, translation by Sean Connolly (1997); Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels*, translation by Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, two-volume work (1991); Bede the Venerable, *Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine and the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*, edited and translated by David Hurst (1999); Bede The Venerable, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, translation and notes by Lawrence T. Martin (1989); Bede The Venerable, *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, translation by David Hurst (1985); Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, translation by Edward Marshall (1878); and also volume 175 of the series CCSL, entitled *Itineraria et geographica*, The Venerable Bede's part in this volume being edited by Johannes Fraipont.

For the subchapter dealing with *Homilies*, *Hagiographies*, *Martyrologies*, *Poems*, *Letters*, I used the following sources: Beda Venerabilis, *Opera homiletica. Opera Rhythmica*, ed. by David Hurst and Johannes Fraipont (CCSL vol. 122, 1955); Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospel*, translated and edited by Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst (1991); Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, vol. I, 600-899* (1996); Werner Jaager, *Beda's metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti* (1935); Bertram Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert* (1985); Jacques Dubois, Geneviève Renaud, *Éditionpratique des martyrologes de Bède, de l'anonymelyonnais et de Florus* (1976); Thomas F. Head, *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (2001); Arthur Sumner Walpole, *Early Latin Hymn* (1922); Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, translated and edited by Faith Wallis (1999).

In the subchapter regarding the *historical work* of Venerable Bede, I used the following works: Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum*, *Historiam abbatum*, *Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, ed. Charles Plummer (1896), Douglas Boutflower, *The life of Ceolfrid, abbot of the monastery at Wearmouth and Jarrow* (1991); James F. Webb, David Hugh Farmer, *The Age of Bede* (1983); James Campbell, *The ecclesiastical history of the English people: and other selections from the*

writings of the Venerable Bede (1968); Christopher Grocock, Ian N. Wood, *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (2013); Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people* (1969), Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, with introduction and notes by A. M. Seller (1907); Bède le Vénérable, *Histoire Ecclésiastique du peuple Anglais*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and translated by Pierre Monat and Philippe Robinde (2005).

In addition to these works, I have used many other articles, of which I would like to mention only that of Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner's „The Library of the Venerable Bede” published in the volume Alexander Hamilton Thompson, *Bede, his Life, Times, and Writings: Essays in Commemoration of the Twelfth Centenary of his Death* (1935, republished in 1969 - a volume that helped me a lot) and the volume edited by Gerald Bonner, entitled *Famulus Christi: essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the venerable Bede*, published in 1976, being a volume of exceptional articles, of great help for appreciating the personality of Venerable Bede as a whole.

Thus, in an attempt to write a paper on the Venerable Bede, it was necessary to turn to certain authors, who researched in detail the life of this great personality of Christianity. Of these, I would like to highlight only those who have personally marked my research work. By far, the most well-known and widespread work of the Venerable Bede remains *History*, his masterpiece, (although during the Middle Ages his most widespread works were the biblical commentaries⁴⁷). Charles Plummer's edition, along with his introductions and notations inside the text, certainly remains the most impressive work I have had the pleasure of using. Then, professors Bertram Colgrave and Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors also made an important contribution with their edition on *History* (based on the work of Charles Plummer, to whom they practically brought the due completions, due to the more modern research). One of the main editors of the „contemporary” Venerable Bede is undoubtedly Michael Lapidge, who has several volumes on this subject not only in English but also in French, Italian and a few articles published in German (a language in which much has been published about Venerable Bede). Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner was also a great researcher of the Venerable Bede, along with Alexander Hamilton Thompson, whose work, „The Library of the Venerable Bede”⁴⁸, broadens the reader's vision and understanding of the Venerable Bede. As stated above, Professor Gerald Bonner published an exceptional volume of studies, indispensable to the researchers who have studied Bede. Benedicta Ward is currently an authority on Venerable Bede, as is Professor George Hardin Brown, who has published several articles and books in this field, as well as Peter Hunter Blair.

⁴⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Bede-the-Venerable>, site accessed on the 02.03.2017, 01.18 p.m.

⁴⁸ Based on this paper, Professor Rosalind Love made some corrections and additions, publishing, in 2011, an article with the same title in the volume edited by Richard Gameson, *The History of the Book in Britain*, vol. I., Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 606 – 632.

And leaving what is most interesting at the end, I need to admit that I could not have done this work without the passion that I started to be filled with when I read the first article⁴⁹ about the Venerable Bede, belonging to the greatest Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga. This flame was undoubtedly fueled by my studying the article published by Reverend Professor Ph.D. Nechita Runcan⁵⁰, who then guided my steps, always watching over me, guiding me when necessary. The memories of the Venerable Bede by Ovidiu Drimba were also very helpful, but especially the chapter on Western science until the 10th century.⁵¹

I know that at present Rev. lect. Ph.D. Lucian-Dumitru Colda (my former professor at „Andrei Șaguna” Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu) is working on a translation of Homilies by Venerable Bede.

Problems encountered in the elaboration of this subject

The difficulty of the chosen theme was mainly due to the little information about the Venerable Bede in Romanian literature. His works have not been translated into Romanian (only part of his homilies were translated by Brother Seraphim at Oașamonastery⁵²), and concrete studies on him are few,⁵³ despite our approach to English literature and even Anglican Christianity.⁵⁴

The work of Venerable Bede has been translated into countless languages⁵⁵, but unfortunately, it seems that he did not attract the interest of any Romanian author who would deal with his personality and work explicitly.

⁴⁹ Nicolae Iorga, *Cărți reprezentative în viața omenirii*. vol. 1: *după note stenografice* [Representative books in the life of mankind. vol. 1: based on shorthand notes], Ed. Tipografia „România Nouă”, București, 1924, pp. 142 – 157.

⁵⁰ Nechita Runcan, „Contribuția lui Beda Venerabilul la dezvoltarea istoriografiei bisericești universale” [Bede the Venerable's contribution to the development of universal church historiography], in *op. cit.*, pp. 295 – 326.

⁵¹ Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria Culturii și Civilizației* [History of Culture and Civilization], vol. III, Ed. Științifică, București, 1990, pp. 187 – 190; Pages 188 – 190 are dedicated to the Venerable Bede.

⁵² Sfântul Beda Venerabilul, *Omulii la Evanghelii I* [Saint Bede the Venerable, Homilies to the Gospels I], translated into Latin by his brother Seraphim (Thomas Steingasser) from Monastery Oașa, Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2017, 300 p., with an introductory study by Pr. Lect. Dr. Lucian Dumitru Colda.

⁵³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Nechita Runcan, *Contribuția lui Beda Venerabilul la dezvoltarea istoriografiei bisericești universale* [Bede the Venerable's contribution to the development of universal church historiography], în *Studii de Teologie istorică și Patristică*, Ed. Performantica, Iași, 2005, pp. 295 – 326; Dana Roxana Hrib, *Beda Venerabilul – precursor al Reformei Carolingeiene* [Bede the Venerable - forerunner of the Carolingian Reform], „Revista Teologică”, Sibiu, nr. 1/1999, pp. 126-144; Nicolae Iorga, *Scrisori Alese* [Selected Writings], vol. II, Ed. Albatros, București. 1971, pp. 80 – 94.

⁵⁴ Anglicanism is a national, independent religious body, with autonomous churches around the world, evolving in this form after the Reformation in England, breaking with Catholicism. The Anglican community is under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury, recognized as the senior bishop and leader of the Church. It has more than 78 million members in the 21st century, ****Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Ed. Encyclopaedia Britannica, INC, Londra, 2006, p. 57;

⁵⁵ In 1475, *History* is printed in Germany, in 1643 in Belgium, in 1643 - 1644 appears the first bilingual edition (Latin and English), in 1988 in America, in 2003 in Russia (although there was an old manuscript of *History* here

Another point of view regarding the difficulty of the theme is represented by the quite divided visions on the objectivity of Venerable Beda mainly on *History*, hence, being outlined its value diminished by some authors, but somewhat restored by more recent authors. However, although there have been authors who have appreciated Bede less, there have always been writers who have held his standards high, from his times to the present.⁵⁶

I could add to the category of difficulties the lack of information on the life of Venerable Bede. The data on this subject are very few, limited only to data from his writings (a rather small number of autobiographical data), and another source of less importance about Bede was written by his disciple Cuthbert, namely a letter about the death of Venerable Bede (May 26, 735) addressed to Cuthwin and two or three recollections of episodes in his life from several relatively contemporary people. This field is unquestionably complemented by the impressive volume of works left by the Venerable Bede of Christianity and beyond⁵⁷.

In an attempt to compensate for the lack of information on the life of Venerable Bede, we also used various events in which he is mentioned, events considered by some writers as legends without seeds of truth, and by others as purely historical truth. In these circumstances, I will try to keep the balance of objectivity as much as possible by presenting each author with his/her for and against arguments.

The contribution of the research consists in treating these directions in order to achieve the main objective which is the presentation of the man Bede and his work, as a necessity in a better knowledge of the Universal Church History and of the writings from the patristic period. Also, the research on Bede's life and activity highlights the fact that Eastern spirituality, doctrine and patristic were known and lived in the West of the first Christian millennium, being the foundation of the Christian life there.

In order to be able to complete this objective, it is necessary to investigate very carefully the socio-political-cultural context of the time and the qualities of Bede as a monk, historian, geographer, pedagogue, poet, and last but not least a rather rare identity of that time, namely as a scientist. In perceiving these problems as accurately as possible, the *History* of the Venerable Bede helps us, clarifying all the contexts. *The social context* of that time must be viewed from two perspectives, namely the society in general and the monastic society to which Bede the Venerable belonged. Although it would seem at first sight detached from the social context (here applying even the political context), reading *History* and taking a closer look we realize that the Venerable Bede is a man very connected to society, a man with a real vision of what surrounds him, being aware of both the needs of the common man and those of the lord of the court and of course the needs of monastic life. The *political context* of that time can be easily imagined, being a Britain divided into several parts, with internal struggles for power, but also with struggles for expansion on the part of some rulers. The venerable Bede tried as much as possible and seems to

called *The Saint Petersburg Bede*), in 2005 in France, in 2008 in Japan, in the Czech Republic in 2008, in Italy in 2009, etc.

⁵⁶ Let us not forget the title of Doctor of Theology and the fame he enjoyed in the Middle Ages.

⁵⁷ Venerable Bede must be viewed not only as a theologian, but also as a historian, geographer, teacher, scientist, etc.

have managed to have had no special connection (although some authors claim that Bede himself would be of noble birth) with worldly leadership, recognizing it and following the Savior's command „So give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's” (Matthew, 22:21), and dedicates the History of King Ceowulf to him, as a recognition of his worldly authority, signing at the same time, Bede servant of Christ and priest, thus emphasizing his supreme devotion to the Church of Christ. Regarding the cultural context, this is a very simple matter, because we are talking about the early Middle Ages, a period when monasteries were actual cultural centers, or better said, the main cultural centers. All these aspects will be analyzed, the emphasis being on the man Bede and his work in the history of Christian literature and the Universal Church.

The actuality of the subject

Mentioning the name of such a prominent figure several times in the Universal Church History and in a few sentences in the Patrology textbooks does not only result in tarnishing his personality, but also in accepting an incomplete Christian and patristic history. Even the simple mentioning in the Romanian treatises, without the possibility of access to an analysis of Bede's life and work in Romanian, hinders the understanding of the patristic and historical aspects of theology.

The society has always prospered through special characters, through iconic characters, who have done something special, who have left a legacy for the future. One such man is the Venerable Bede. Making a comparison between Nathanael's question, „*Can Nazareth be good?*” (John 1:46), and the question of many: „*Can there be anything good in Britain?*”, appears the unexpected answer that is embodied in one of the most impressive personalities of the eighteenth-century Patristics.

Looking at his forever actual Bible comments and researching their value and inspiration⁵⁸ that helped him writing them, we can say without exaggeration that they are necessary and a real help in understanding the Holy Scripture.

We cannot limit the significance of his work only to biblical commentaries and History (the importance and value of which no one disputes), but it must be seen as a unitary whole so current and necessary in order to have an overview of the eighth century period. This importance stems from the prestige enjoyed by the Venerable Bede throughout the Middle Ages⁵⁹ and later on.

⁵⁸ He had knowledge of the patristic literature of both Western and Eastern culture, knowing the writings of Pliny the Elder, Virgil, Lucretius, Ovid, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Casian, Blessed Augustine, Blessed Jerome, etc.

⁵⁹ We cannot fail to mention the praise attributed to him by Dante Alighieri in his masterpiece entitled *Commedia* (receiving the attribute of *Divina* from the great Italian writer Boccaccio), but especially the importance it had in the rebirth of Europe through the Carolingian Reform, through Alcuin, an apprentice trained at the school founded by the Venerable Bede in Britain.

The approach of this subject offers the possibility of a better knowledge of the Universal Church History, by highlighting an important author of Christianity in Great Britain, author who has an impressive volume of works, both theological and historical, geographical, didactic and scientific.

The significance of the study

So far, we can signal a low interest among Romanian theologians for the theology and history of the Venerable Bede. The subject has never been fully explored, given the large volume of his work. It has been studied only in general, being in principle part of other works or subjects.

However, the subject of the current thesis has a major significance for any theologian; the work of Venerable Bede can be successfully studied together with the work of other Patristic Fathers.

The value of Bede's work is indisputable and easy to notice. By placing the works in categories, it is very easy to see his contribution to the patristic treasury, to the church history and to the culture of the English people. In the first instance, Bede made a special contribution to the development of the history of English Christianity, bearing the well-deserved name „*Father of English History*.“ His merits must not be reduced to Great Britain. Regarding the biblical commentaries (he translated and commented on the entire Holy Scriptures), we can say that they are current and useful.

The main purpose of the scientific approach is to discover in more detail the life and work of Bede in Romanian historiography and patrology, where they were very little known. Bede is a complex author, with implications in many fields of study, giving us a considerable legacy both through his works and the school that he inspired, a school from which many important names of medieval culture arose.

Until the beginning of the twelfth century, theology was understood as *speculatio*, meaning only a search for God, being, in principle, a religious exercise. At the end of the same century, speculative theology (theology also promoted by Bede through his works) was liberated from all elements, becoming a concern of the human spirit, in which religious sentiment had only a more modest place. Even though theology became a queen of all sciences at the University of the Middle Ages, the separation between contemplation and abstract thinking of academic nuance was already accomplished. Thus, the importance of this subject is not only theological, we must not overlook the works written by the Venerable Bede in other fields, such as art, teaching, geography, history and last but not least the value of scientific works. It must be emphasized that the scientific spirit of theology cannot be abandoned, because theology would then become a private home discourse. The science of theology is necessary precisely to help the

Church communicate with society and culture, which was successfully accomplished by the Venerable Bede, but this movement had begun slowly since the time of Origen.

The venerable Bede is a complex author, with implications in many fields and with a considerable legacy both through his works and through the school that left him behind, a school from which many important names arose.

The structure of the scientific approach

The scientific approach, the subject of the elaboration of the doctoral thesis, is structured over the course of five ample chapters, with their own sub-chapters.

In Chapter I, entitled „The History and Geography of Great Britain” we presented the foundations of the future British society and the political-military turmoil of the area during the emancipation of the population, which later led to the formation of several independent kingdoms, which were to unite as a powerful Empire.

In the second chapter, called „Christianization of Britain”, we have shown in two sub-chapters how Christianity made its way throughout the British lands. Many historians believe that there is no other moment in the history of the British people that is of comparable importance to that of the mission of St. Augustine⁶⁰ of which we can find very little in contemporary written sources. However, I sought not to focus on St. Augustine's work in Canterbury, but to see Pope Gregory the Great's commitment to the mission and the context in which it took place. The subject related to the history of Christianity in England, was of most concern to Bede. He did not have much data. In 725, when he wrote *Cronica maiora*, he had no exact data on the time of St. Augustine's mission to Britain. His missing data comes to surface only after an English priest (Nothelm) went to Rome a few years later to search the papal register for documents related to the mission.⁶¹ Pope Gregory's Italy was a territory almost exhausted, first by the wars of Justinian, who had tried to save it from Gothic rule, then from the desolation caused by the Lombard invasions. However, he fought tirelessly to eradicate paganism in Spain

⁶⁰ St. Augustine (of Canterbury), not to be confused with Blessed Augustine of Hippo n. 13 November 354 - † 28 August 430 AD. St. Augustine of Canterbury (born in Rome in the first half of the 6th century - † May 26, 604/605, Canterbury) was the first archbishop of Canterbury, and was considered the apostle of the English, as he was the founder of the Christian church in southern England. The venerable Bede considers Pope Gregory the Great to be the apostle of England because he organized the expedition. St. Augustine probably had aristocratic origins. Being at the Benedictine monastery of St. Andrew in Rome, Pope Gregory sent him and forty monks to Christianize Britain, which was largely pagan. He is celebrated on May 26 by the Orthodox Church (cf. *Calendar of All Saints over the year and places in Italy where their relics can be honored 2014*, made with the blessing of Bishop Siluan of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Italy, Rome, 2014, p. 77) the same being true for the Anglican Church, and in the Roman Catholic Church on May 27. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article accessed online at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Augustine-of-Canterbury>, on 03.08.2017, 17.48.

⁶¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, *Introduction*, p. 7.

and Gaul. The earliest direct evidence of the reasons that led Pope Gregory to send a mission to England is found in two of the letters of praise given to missionaries for use in the journey from Gaul. In one of these, the Bishop of Rome states: „And so I learned that, by the mercy of God, the English people sincerely want to convert to the Christian faith, but that the priests in the area are indifferent and do nothing to stimulate their desires through their sermons.”⁶² There is no other contemporary evidence relating to the foundations of the English mission, except for a comment by Pope Gregory in a letter he wrote to Syagrius, bishop of Autun, in July 599. Referring especially to the hierarchical relations of the functions in Autun and Lyons, Gregory thanks Syagrius for his help when, after much deliberation (*diu cogitans*), he decided to take on the task of preaching the gospel to the English „through Augustine who was then abbot (*praepositus*) of my monastery, and now he is our brother and bishop”.⁶³ The fragment is valuable in that it informs us of the past of the man chosen by Gregory to lead the mission. The monastery whose abbot Augustine had become by 596 was located on Clivus Scauri, a slope on the eastern slopes of Mons Caelius in the southern part of Rome.

Roman participation in the Christianization of the English kingdoms did not start or end with Augustine's mission, which operated only in the south. In England, Christian missions started both in Rome and from other peoples who had known the Christian way of life. In fact, at the arrival of Augustine, there was a Christian way of life in this area since the Roman period, but not well organized and not in total dogmatic, liturgical and canonical harmony, neither between the kingdoms of the area nor with the rest of the Church. In addition to the missions coming from Rome directly or indirectly, the Celts from the northern part had a special contribution in the Christianization of the area.

A valuable source of information on the Christianization process is found in the *Church History of Venerable Bede*. Christian missions in Britain increased in size in the first 60 years of the seventh century (Augustine had arrived in Canterbury in 597 - seven years after Gregory the Great ascended the episcopal chair of Rome). Of particular importance during this period is the Columbian mission in Lindisfarne and the work of the Irish clergy among the English. These resulted not only in the growth of the missionary effort in hitherto pagan areas, but also in the resolution at the Whitby synod⁶⁴ of liturgical differences related to Roman and Celtic practices.

⁶² Kevin Madigan, *Medieval Christianity: A New History*, Ed. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015, p. 62.

⁶³ Gregorii I Papae, *Registrum epistolarum*, Tomus II, Libri VIII – XIV, ed. Paul Ewald and Ludo Moritz Hartmann, „Monumenta Germaniae Historica”, Ed. Weidmannos, Berlin, 1991, book IX, epistle 222.

⁶⁴ At Whitby there was a Northumbrian synod convened in 664 by King Oswiu of Northumbria mainly to discuss the date of the Passover. The Synod decided that the date of Easter should be held according to the Western rite (according to the decision of the First Ecumenical Council) and not according to that of the Irish monks (who celebrated Easter according to the Jewish calendar). In Bede's *History* (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by AM Sellar, book III, chap. 25, pp. 239 - 247) we find the main documentary mention of the synod with *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi* (hagiographic work made in the early 8th century by Stephen of Ripon, also known as Eddius Stephanus - Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, text, English translation and notes by Bertram Colgrave, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985). For a better understanding of this subject see Richard Abels, „The Council of Whitby: A Study in Early Anglo-Saxon Politics” in the *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1/1983, pp. 1 – 25.

Augustine and probably most, if not all of his companions were Roman in the literal sense, that is, they came from Rome. Parts of the church in Ireland had already conformed to Rome a whole generation before the Whitby Synod, and to that extent their clergy were both Irish and „Roman.”⁶⁵ Some Englishmen went north to be educated by Irish scholars, and among them may have been „Romans”. The British territory was blessed by God with missionaries dedicated and devoted to their mission. These missionaries did not remain to Christianize only a region or a kingdom, but went like the Holy Apostles, from kingdom to kingdom, putting their lives in the service of the preaching of Christ. Such missionaries were Columba, Aidan, Sigebert, Felix, Birinus, Agilbert, Wilfrid, and so on.

Chapter III, - „Wearmouth Monastery - Jarrow Northumbria's cultural-spiritual centre” - presents the house of Venerable Bede, the place where he spent his entire existence. This chapter also presents the first two abbots of the monastery, namely Benedict Biscop (founder of the monastery) and Ceolfrith his successor. These are the people who marked the life of Venerable Bede.

The founder of Wearmouth Monastery, and later of Jarrow, was an English nobleman, Benedict, born in Northumbria, who, while in the service of King Oswiu, had received his fair share surmounting to a small fortune well suited for his rank as the king's personal adviser. Unfortunately, we do not have exact information about his place of birth or the location of his domain. The date of his birth was not recorded in any early source and so we do not know how old he was when he died on January 12, 689. At about 25 years old, he cuts any connections with the secular world and goes on a pilgrimage to the resting places of saints from Rome.⁶⁶ For the next fifteen years, Benedict paid no less than five visits to Rome. Although we can broadly follow the course of his travels, we still miss the chronological details. However, it is very clear that the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow enjoyed closer relations with Rome than any other community in the English church.

On his return from Rome, Benedict paid a visit in 673 to King Ecgfrith of Northumbria (b. 645 - † May 20, 685), in which he recounted his experiences from the time he left his homeland and to whom he showed the books and smells he brought with him from his last trip. He received as a gift land for the purpose of erecting a monastery on the northern bank of the River Wear, not far from its meeting with the North Sea. This gift of seventy households according to one source (or fifty households initially, but which multiplied, according to another source⁶⁷) was part of the king's domains. The earliest information on the beginnings of Wearmouth Monastery is the anonymous volume *Life of Ceolfrith*, from which we learn: „They began building a monastery near the mouth of the River Wear in the 674th year of our Lord's

⁶⁵ Richard Sharpe, „Some problems concerning the organization of the church in early medieval Ireland” in *Peritia / Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*, vol. 3, 1984, pp. 230 – 270.

⁶⁶ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum*, *Historiam abbatum*, *Epistola ad Ecgberctum*, una cum *Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, Ed. Oxonii, E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1896, „Historia Abbatum auctore Baeda”, ch. I – II, pp. 364 – 365.

⁶⁷Idem; Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum*, *Historiam abbatum*, *Epistola ad Ecgberctum*, una cum *Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Vita Ceolfridi Abbatis Auctore Anonymo”, ch. 7, p. 390.

Incarnation, being the second *indictio*⁶⁸ and the fourth year of King Ecgfrith's reign.”⁶⁹ In 674 the actual erection of the buildings had begun. The formal founding of the monastery, from which the years of perseverance were calculated, took place in 673.⁷⁰ The work progressed so rapidly that within a year of the foundation, the roof was laid and the liturgy was celebrated in the building, although work still needed to be done. Then Benedict needed glass-makers who, according to Venerable Bede, did not exist in Britain at the time and were brought from Gaul. The glass-makers not only completed the work they had come to do, but also trained a few Englishmen in the craft of glass-making. Other items needed for the church, such as holy vessels, the clothes which could not be procured from the island were also brought from the mainland. At the end, the church was dedicated to St. Peter, but the exact date of the consecration is not known, because there is no lettering left in Wearmouth for the inscription that records the patron saint of St. Paul's Church in Jarrow. The year of consecration may have been 675 or 676. At the end of the church's construction and after the rigorous organization of the monastery's life, Benedict set out again for Rome, this being his fifth visit and the fourth time he had travelled directly from England. The importance of this journey stems from the fact that Bede mentions it both in *Ecclesiastical History* and in the *History of Abbots*.⁷¹ This is remarkable both for its spiritual charge and for the goods brought on this occasion. The most precious item brought from this trip was a letter from Pope Agathon, granting certain exemptions from burdensome taxes, the monastery being placed under the direct patronage of Rome. On their return to England, the travelers were accompanied by John the great singer (protopsalt) of St. Peter's Church in Rome

⁶⁸ *Indictio* is a fifteen-year time cycle used to date medieval documents throughout Europe. *Indictio* was originally used as a landmark for an agricultural tax at the end of the third century in the region of Roman Egypt. Initially there were five-year cycles starting with 297 AD, and then from 314 AD the fifteen-year cycle appeared. For official documents in order to collect taxes, this dating appeared around the middle of the 4th century. The first day of the cycle was considered September 23, the birthday of Augustus, and by the end of the fifth century (about 462 AD) it was moved to September 1, as it remained throughout the Byzantine Empire. Justinian legislated through Novella 47 that all landmarks include *indictio* and so the Byzantine year began on September 1. As for the Western Empire, according to the Venerable Bede, the first *indictio* day was on September 24, and then December 25 or January 1, according to the papal *indictio*. For more details see Leo Depuydt, „A.D. 297 as the Beginning of the First Indiction Cycle”, in *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* (BASP), vol. XXIV, no. 3 - 4/1987, 137 - 139, the article can be accessed online at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/basp/0599796.0024.003/51:7?page=root;rgn=full+text;size=100;view=image>, accessed on 20.04.2016, 14.18; Yiannis E. Meimaris, in collaboration with K. Kritikakou and P. Bougia, *Chronological Systems in Roman-Byzantine Palestine and Arabia. The Evidence of the Dated Greek Inscriptions*, in the collection „Meletemata” vol. 17, Ed. De Boccard, Athens, 1992, chap. II, pp. 32 - 34, the paper can be accessed online at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/61189661.pdf>, accessed on 20.04.2016, 19.18.

⁶⁹ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Vita Ceolfridi Abbatis Auctore Anonymo”, ch. 7, p. 390.

⁷⁰ Douglas Samuel Boutflower, *The Life of Ceolfrid: Abbot of the Monastery at Wearmouth and Jarrow*, Ed. Llanerch Press, Sunderland 1991, pp. 93 – 94.

⁷¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, book IV, ch.18, pp. 310 – 312; Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Historia Abbatum auctore Baeda”, ch. 6, pp. 368 – 370.

and abbot of the Roman monastery of Saints Martin and Peter.⁷² When Abbot John arrived in Wearmouth, he taught the singers the ceremonial way of singing, which he himself had practiced in St. Peter's Church in Rome, but also the way of reading aloud. In addition, he had undertaken to write down everything needed to celebrate the holidays throughout the church year. The travelers had brought with them a large number of books, a collection of icons and holy relics, for Wearmouth Monastery and other English churches. The sources do not specify which relics, nor do they name the books, but the icons were mentioned. *Ceolfrith's life* refers to Benedict's desire to obtain from Rome „iconographic representations of the histories of Holy Scripture worthy of honor”⁷³, without specifying what was actually brought.

The zeal displayed by Benedict Biscop and the clear success of his monastery at Wearmouth encouraged King Ecgfrith to start a second foundation. For this purpose, he offered Benedict a place a few miles from Wearmouth, on a small hill at the confluence of the Don and Tyne. Here the large areas of land that appeared during the ebb tide were called Jarrow, and offered a possibility for boarding. At the beginning of the new foundation was a group of monks from Wearmouth with Ceolfrith as abbot. *Ceolfrith's life* says there were 22 in total, but only 10 of them had taken the oath. Bede remembers 17 and it is quite possible that, when he was 9 or 10 years old, he was among those who moved to the new foundation. Jarrow's evolution followed roughly the same path set at Wearmouth. Ecgfrith's gift came eight years after work began on Wearmouth Monastery.⁷⁴ First the monastic cells were erected and „after a year” Ceolfrith and his companions moved. „In the third year since the founding of the monastery”⁷⁵ the construction of the church began, which was completed in two years. Fortunately, we know beyond a doubt the date of the consecration of the new church at Jarrow. It was recorded in the inscription contemporary with the consecration, from which we learn that the ceremony took place on April 24 in the 15th year of King Ecgfrith and the fourth of the abbot Ceolfrith.⁷⁶

Bede presents the connection between the two monasteries (Wearmouth and Jarrow) by analogy with man. Just as the body cannot be separated from the head through which it breathes, nor can the head ignore the body without which it cannot live, so is the relationship between these monasteries.⁷⁷ However in the early years of their common existence, the two monasteries

⁷² Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Ed. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998 p. 16 and note 1.

⁷³ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Vita Ceolfridi Abbatis Auctore Anonymo”, ch. 9, p. 391.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 391 – 392.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 392. Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Historia Abbatum auctore Baeda”, cap. 7, pp. 370 – 371.

⁷⁶ Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition, with an introduction by Simon Keynes, Ed. Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2003, p. 156.

⁷⁷ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, „Historia Abbatum auctore Baeda”, ch. 7, pp. 370 – 371.

were ecclesiastically and geographically autonomous from each other, with Benedict Biscop as abbot of St. Peter of Wearmouth, and Ceolfrith as abbot of St. Paul of Jarrow.

In the fourth chapter, entitled „*The Personality of the Venerable Bede*”, I tried to outline the few chronological data we have about this great celebrity of Christianity. This task proved to be very difficult because information about his life is almost non-existent. We have the only concrete data from the short autobiography, which Bede made at the end of *History*. I began this chapter with a brief vision of Venerable Bede on the British Isles. Then I analyzed the administrative, cultural and spiritual context of Bede's birth. After that, I actually focused on his personality from the issue of his date of birth to his transition to the eternal ones. Biographical data are very few, and even these are quite ambiguous. The time of his birth was placed by some researchers even up until 677 AD, but this error arose from the fact that the last two or three pages of the small chronological summary⁷⁸ of the area, later attached to the *Ecclesiastical History* by another person, were not analyzed or understood. The words of Venerable Bede seem to be decisive in determining the date of his birth: „This is the present state of Britain, about 285 years after the coming of the Saxons, and in the seven hundred and thirty-first year of our Lord's incarnation.”⁷⁹ Thus, given the date of his birth, I place myself between the years 672/673, being in agreement with more recent researchers, the situation remaining somewhat ambiguous.⁸⁰ His birthplace is mentioned by the Venerable Bede himself as being in the territory that would later belong to the twin monasteries of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, at Wearmouth and Jarrow.⁸¹ We have no mention of his parents. He tells us, in his short autobiography,⁸² that he was given, at the age of seven, into the care of the abbot Benedict, of the monastery of Wearmouth.⁸³ Here he spent the rest of his life. For a young man with a predilection for study and a tireless diligence, like the Venerable Bede, there was no place in Britain at that time more suitable for his training than the monastery where he grew up and the blessed environment here. His thirst for study no doubt found a suitable ground here. The spring from he drank was such a large and valuable library as no other existed on the island of Britain, perhaps not even in other Benedictine centers of the time.

⁷⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England* revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, Ed. George Bell and Sons, Londra, 1907, book V, chapter 23, pp. 438 - 444, book accessed online at Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38326>, accessed on 04.01.2015, 22.07.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, carta V, ch. 23, p. 444.

⁸⁰ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, p. XI; Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, Ed. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. II – IV; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, p. 18; George Hardin Brown, *A companion to Bede*, „Anglo – Saxon Studies” collection, vol. XII, Ed. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2009, pp. I, Benedicta Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, „Cistercian Studies” collection, Ed. Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, 1998, p. 3, John Allen Giles, *The Biographical Writings And Letters Of Venerable Bede*, Ed. James Bohn, 12, King William Street, Strand, London, 1845, pp. XVII – XXI, etc....

⁸¹ Venerabilis Baedae, *Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, edited by Charles Plummer, p. XI,

⁸² Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, book V, ch. 24, pp. 448 – 449.

⁸³ *Idem*, p. 449.

The Western Church has established that the rank of deacon be granted from the age of twenty-four, so that the candidate can have a broader vision of life and the maturity necessary to help him fulfil this vocation. However, the Venerable Bede in his short biography tells us: „At the age of nineteen, I received the deacon's order; and at the age of thirty, that of the priesthood, both being bestowed on me by the service of the beloved Bishop John, and by the support of the abbot Ceolfrid.”⁸⁴ Such an exception to the general rule on the age of ordination to a deacon is in itself evidence of a particular appreciation of the young candidate. Like the year of birth, on which the researchers disagreed (672 or 673) so on the year of his death there are different opinions. Most scholars agreed that the year of Bede's passing to the Lord was 735. There were also differing views on this event. The world has made great strides in many ways since the time of Bede. If he could walk the Earth today, he would find a part of the beloved church at Jarrow still standing; but the monastic buildings are almost completely destroyed. No matter how much society has changed, I do not think it is anything more precious than the Christian life that Venerable Bede lived and the Christian death that he enjoyed.

Chapter V is the most comprehensive, dealing here with the „Work of the Venerable Bede.” Bede had at his disposal an exceptionally well-equipped library. While his abbots purchased selected books, which the monastery's clerk copied, he was provided with a source of basic texts, very important for the research, writing and realizing of his work.⁸⁵ His monastic life can be considered very energetic judging by the long list of works he attaches to the end of his short autobiography at the end of *History*. In the church, as Alcuin of York attests, he established a reputation as a devoted monk who always participated in the church reading for divine service.⁸⁶ In the script, his productivity was extraordinary.⁸⁷ Not only did he compose the texts,

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁵ See Dorothy Whitelock, *After Bede*, Jarrow Lecture Collection, Ed. Parish of Jarrow, 1960, pp. 13-14, republished in Michael Lapidge, *Bede and His World: The Jarrow Lectures*, vol. I - 1958 - 1978, Ed. Variorum, London, 1994, pp. 47 - 48. The library at Wearmouth - Jarrow Monastery, although impressively well stocked, does not seem to rival the Canterbury Library, which was under the care of Theodore and Hadrian. One can also see the own statement of the Venerable Bede in History, book IV, chapter 2 and the article by Michael Lapidge, „The School of Theodore and Hadrian” published in *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. XV, 1986, pp. 45-72; Michael Lapidge „The Study of Greek at the School of Canterbury in the Seventh Century” in Michael W. Herren, *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: The Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, the collection „King's College London Medieval Studies” vol. II, Ed. King's College London, London, 1988, pp. 169 - 194; Bernhard Bischoff, Michael Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, collection „Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England” vol. X, Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995; Michael Lapidge, *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, collection „Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England” vol. XI, Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005.

⁸⁶ Alcuin de York addressed a letter to the monks of Wearmouth (translated by Charles Plummer in *Venerabilis Baedae, Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistola ad Ecgberctum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, vol. I, p. XII – XIII) in which he states: “It is said that our master and your protector, the blessed Bede, said: „I know that angels visit canonical hours and meetings of the brethren. What if they don't find me there among them? Won't they say, where is Bede? Why didn't he come to the necessary prayers for the community?” The Latin text of this letter can be found in Arthur West Haddan, William Stubbs, *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. III, Ed. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1869, p. 470 – 471, paper accessed online at <https://archive.org/details/councilsandecl04unkngoog>, site accessed on 12.03.2016, 13:15.

but for a long time he also made copies. He wrote to the bishop and his close friend Acca, „I am at the same time my own dictator, stenographer, and copyist.”⁸⁸ The venerable Bede also composed didactic works for the first two and probably even for all three basic disciplines: grammar, *computation* and music. Grammar was necessary to understand the text of Holy Scripture; *computation*⁸⁹ necessary to calculate the time for the liturgical calendar; and music to learn the various types of songs that were sung in the choir at the liturgical service. The educational textbooks of the Venerable Bede emphasize the collective legacy of the late Roman education, the patristic education, but also the early medieval education.⁹⁰

The main objective of his life was the study of the Bible and the integration of its morals into the Christian life. All the others were subordinated to this. He states, „I have spent my whole life in the monastery, devoting myself entirely to the study of the Scriptures.”⁹¹ He affirms his intention to „follow in the footsteps of the Fathers”⁹² in bringing the truth of Scripture into its time and place, being fully aware that he was interpreting Holy Scripture using authoritative models.⁹³ Following his patristic predecessors, he offers both literary and allegorical

⁸⁷ To see the works of the Venerable Bede in the context of the entire history of Latin ecclesiastical writers see the work of Roger Gryson, *Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques latins de l'antiquité et du Haut Moyen Âge*. vol. I, *Introduction, répertoire des auteurs A - H*, Ed. Herder, Freiburg, 2007, pp. 327 – 334.

⁸⁸ Beda Venerabilis, *Opera exposita 3. In Lucae evangelium expositio. In Marci evangelium expositio.*, ed. David Hurst, „Corpus Christianorum Series Latina” collection (CCSL), no. 120, Ed. Brepols Publications, Turnhout, 1960, p. 7: „Ipse mihi dictator simul notarius et librarius existerem.” As proof of the appreciation that Venerable Bede had for Bishop Acca, we have five comments dedicated to him. More details on this subject can be found in Michael Lapidge's article, „Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the Old English Martyrology” in *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 123, no. 1 / 2005, p. 66.

⁸⁹ Pr. Lec. Univ. Dr. Lucian Dumitru Colda in the introductory study of the book *Saint Bede the Venerable, Homilies to the Gospels I*, trd. This lb. Latin by Brother Seraphim (Thomas Steingasser) from Oașa Monastery, Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2017, uses the term of „computer science”, see p. 10.

⁹⁰ For the tradition of training in the knowledge of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, Ed. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1976, Introduction and part. I; Henri-Irénée Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, Ed. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1982, part. III; Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny*, Ed. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1977, especially part. III; Maurice Roger, *L'enseignement des lettres classiques d'Ausone à Alcuin*, Ed. Alphonse Picard et Fils, Paris, 1905, pp. ch. I and IV, the paper can be accessed online and at <https://archive.org/details/lenseignementde02rogegoog>, site accessed on 17.03.2016, time 21:17.

⁹¹ Bertram Colgrave, Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, book V, ch. XXIV, p. 567.

⁹² See Roger Ray, „Who Did Bede Think He Was?” in Scott DeGregorio, *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, Ed. West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, 2006, pp. 11 – 35, these ideas can be found at 11 – 19. This phrase is repeated during the works of Venerable Bede: Beda Venerabilis, *Opera exposita 2A. De tabernaculo. De templo. In Ezram et Neemiam.*, ed. David Hurst, „Corpus Christianorum Series Latina” collection (CCSL), nr. 119A, Ed. Brepols Publications, Turnhout, 1969, p. 191; Beda Venerabilis, *Opera exposita 2B. In Tobiam. In Proverbia. In Cantica canticorum. In Habacuc.*, ed. de David Hurst, J. E. Hudson, „Corpus Christianorum Series Latina” collection (CCSL), no. 119B, Ed. Brepols Publications, Turnhout, 1983, p. 180; Beda Venerabilis, *Opera exposita – Expositio Actuum apostolorum. Retractatio in Actus apostolorum. Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus apostolorum. In epistulas VII catholicas.*, ed. curated by Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner and David Hurst, „Corpus Christianorum Series Latina” collection (CCSL), no. 121, p. 3; etc...

⁹³ „Sequens vestigial patrum” is a leitmotif of Bede's entire exegetical work.

interpretations of the text of Holy Scripture.⁹⁴ He began his exegetical exercises on the books of the New Testament, after which he focused on the books of the Old Testament. He composed ten commentaries on the Old Testament making an interesting mix: About Genesis, About Samuel, Thirty Questions about Kings, About the Holy Tent, About the Temple, About Ezra and Nehemiah, About Proverbs, About the Song of Songs, About Avacum, About Tobit. To the list must be added the three short questions of the work „Eight Questions” which correspond to the Old Testament (two from the book of Samuel II and one on the word *ignitum* in Psalm 118 and the Proverbs of Solomon 30),⁹⁵ the work on the resting places of Israel and its wandering deserts; another work on an excerpt from Isaiah 24:22 and the Short Psalter made as a prayer textbook. He also composed a set of descriptive titles for sections of the Old Testament, which in his bibliography at the end of *Ecclesiastical History* he called the *capitula lectionum*. These have recently been largely analyzed by Paul Meywaer.⁹⁶

The commentaries on the New Testament of the Venerable Bede are six in number: On Luke and Mark, On the Acts of the Apostles, *Collectaneum* on the Pauline Epistles, On the Seven Catholic Epistles, and On the Apocalypse. In addition, there is the *Capitula Lectionum* for the New Testament.

In addition to his biblical commentaries, he provided some auxiliary texts to help the disciple perceive sacred history and geography.

For the Venerable Bede, the homily that teaches the meaning of Holy Scripture, understood theologically, and the moral piety have a special meaning, even sacramental. Preachers are the successors of the prophets and apostles. Bede was seriously dedicated to the work of catechesis, as evidenced by his collection of sermons in the Gospels, famous and widely used in the Middle Ages. He composed fifty homilies, gathered in two books of twenty-five each, arranged after the great holidays and important Sundays of the liturgical year of Western practice.

The works on the lives of the saints are mentioned by Bede at the end of *Ecclesiastical History* (V, 24) as follows: „... the history of saints: a book about the life and passions of Saint Felix the Confessor, which I put in prose from the metrical version of Paulinus; a book about the life and passions of St. Anastasia, which was mistranslated from Greek by an ignorant person, which I corrected as well as I could to clarify its meaning. I also described the life of Holy Father Cuthbert, a monk and bishop, first in verse and then in prose.”⁹⁷ He unleashed his poetic

⁹⁴ For the successful use of both literary and allegorical interpretations of the text of Holy Scripture by Bede, see Calvin B. Kendall's excellent analysis of „The Responsibility of *auctoritas*: Method and Meaning in Bede's Commentary on Genesis,” Published in Scott DeGregorio, *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, Ed. West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, 2006, pp. 101 – 119.

⁹⁵ Text edited by Michael Gorman in “Bede's *VIII Quaestiones* and Carolingian Biblical Scholarship” from *Revue Bénédictine*, vol. 109, no. 1 – 2 / 1999, pp. 32 – 74, (text is edited in Appendix, pp. 62 – 74. Michael Gorman erroneously states on page 33 that „six are from the New Testament and two are from the Old,” but in reality five belong to the New Testament and three belong to the Old Testament.

⁹⁶ See Paul Meyvaert's meticulous work „Bede's *Capitula Lectionum* for the Old and New Testaments”, published in *Revue Bénédictine*, vol. 105, no 3 – 4 / 1995, pp. 348 – 380.

⁹⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, book V, 24, p. 451.

inclinations not only in versified expositions of the lives of the saints but also in two collections of poems, called „A book of hymns in different meters and different rhythms. A book of epigrams in heroic and laudatory forms.”⁹⁸ These two works have not been preserved in their entirety after the Middle Ages,⁹⁹ with the exception of a number of poems preserved to date.

The venerable Bede is known today especially as a historian, although in the Middle Ages he was first recognized as a biblical exegete and rightly so, because he spent most of his activity, carefully commenting on the books of Holy Scripture. His historical works are special. Especially the *Church History of the English people* is unique. Without these historical works, centuries of early English history would have been unknown, or only partially known. They represent the highest quality of writing of that period. I am the mature product of his knowledge and his entire activity. In them are combined both his vision of sacred and profane history, and his reforming idealism, all exemplified by the drawing of good or bad leaders and faithful or agnostic peoples.

Conclusions

Any attempt to know Christianity in the far north-west of Europe, respectively in the English islands today, goes through the hard work of a humble monk and great man of culture, living of the monastery Wearmouth – Jarrow, Bede the Venerable. Without the work of this monk, one could not know the beginning of the life and the political-administrative organization of the land and especially the beginning of Christian life here. The very activity of the Roman Church through missionaries such as Columba, Augustine, Paulinus or Birinus would not be known completely without Bede. If we add the special contribution of Bede's work to the

⁹⁸ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, revised translation, introduction and notes by A. M. Sellar, book V, cap. 24, p. 452.

⁹⁹ Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner and Henry Hall King were misled in their paper *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts*, when they stated: „None of these collections of poems has survived, but according to John Boston de Bury, the library of Bury St Edmunds, in the early fifteenth century had a *Liber hymnorum* and *Liber epigrammatum* bearing the name of the Venerable Bede” (Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner, Henry Hall King, *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts*, ed. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1943, pp. 122). Richard H. Rouse, in his article *Bostonus Buriensis and the Author of the Catalog Scriptorum Ecclesiae*, proved that Bostonus Buriensis was only the scribe of the catalog, and in fact Henry de Kirkestede, the institution's deputy and librarian, was the author. However, Rouse said that Kirkestede's list was not a concrete catalog of the works in the library. It was a bibliographic union catalog containing an outline of all the books of licensed and approved authors that Kirkestede knew and wanted to purchase if they were not yet in the library (Richard H. Rouse, *Bostonus Buriensis and the Author of the Catalog Scriptorum Ecclesiae*” in *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, vol. XLI, no. 3/1966, Ed. The University of Chicago Press Chicago, pp. 471 - 472 and pp. 493 - 494). It is relatively clear that Kirkestede learned about the works of Venerable Bede from his bibliography, which he copied in the same order and form found in *History* V, 24. In fact, neither Bury St Edmunds, nor the Franciscan monasteries or neighboring monasteries possessed the poems of the Venerable Beda. This can be seen from the fact that Kirkestede could not provide a concrete and explicit quota for the works, nor a reference number for their location (see pp. 496, paragraphs 40 and 41). The misunderstanding of Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner and Henry Hall King regarding the nature of the list led to Michael Lapidge's statement in the article „Some Remnants of Bede's Lost Liber Epigrammatum” in *The English Historical Review*, vol. XC, no. 375 / Oct. 1975, Ed. Oxford University Press p. 798, according to which a copy of the epigram book „was known to Henry de Kirkestede ...”.

Carolingian renaissance and its influence on Western Christianity and Western culture, we note with pleasant surprise the special role that this British monk had and still has in not only British culture and spirituality but also Europe.

He is the greatest European historian of his time and even of many centuries after him. With special skill he knew how to choose documents from various sources and arrange them in a chronological order, highlighting through aspects of religious and moral nature a lot of information about the history and general geography of the area.

Without a rich biography, he shines through the ages through the fruit of his intellectual and spiritual work in the service of Christ, and through Christ in the service of men in general and his people in particular.

The Monastery Wearmouth - Jarrow was for Beda the spiritual, cultural and informational laboratory. The monastery was a real source from which could be drunk both the living eager for a special life through the ordinances of prayer, and those who, in addition to these ordinances, wanted a deeper knowledge of the teaching in whose name such an establishment was founded.

He had a special concern for the moral life of the Church. All his comments are put to the service of Christian edification and behavior. Exegesis is a tool for moral and social reform, as well as for the perception of biblical and ascetic mysteries. Although all his exegetical works manifest pastoral concerns and moral exhortations, his attention to the need for reform of the clergy and to the training of the laity in the English Church is becoming more and more prominent in his works. Through the Bede we know the range of Eastern patristic writers of the first six centuries and their importance in Western Christianity. In true modesty and sincerity, Beda does not assume undeserved merits. He remembers in homilies with Christian pride and humility, those from whom he was inspired, whether they are Easterners or Westerners, of Greek or Latin language. Following the saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianz or Origen with chosen mastery, he also uses the writings of ancient philosophers in his work.

Like all great historians, Venerable Bede polishes his materials in a careful and thorough form. He is a master of the construction and highlighting of a person or events, as well as of discreet silence, of omission that sends a person or event into oblivion.

Due to a wise understanding of the unifying authority of the Church of Canterbury and York, as predicted by Pope Gregory the Great, Venerable Bede had the early vision of a single nation in a country that in reality was and remained for a long time. after him a conglomeration of Anglo-Saxon tribal divisions.

Although composed almost 1300 years ago, I believe that the History of the Venerable Bede relates events through a modern filter of history. This sense was formed through the rigorous study of the Holy Scriptures, of the Holy Fathers, through the Church and the Holy Liturgy. His Christian scriptural vision holds that there is a close and continuous connection between eternity and time, that is, time at a certain time creates a distance between past and present, but can also unite the two, and this time marks the continuity of God's people in eternity. The preference for the calculation of time in his History since the incarnation of the Savior is

absolutely appropriate because it allows him to express the linearity of time related to the central event of the birth of Christ.

Moreover, the historical feeling of Venerable Bede includes both human and divine causality, the ordinary vision of God's plan, man's contribution to history for good and evil, but also the miraculous, the supernatural.

In compiling his works, he had in mind the cultural development of both his generation and future generations, confessing his pleasure to learn, to teach and to write.

From what has been said so far, I consider that the Venerable Bede was the undisputed and always current teacher of many centuries that have passed, until almost today, representing an eminence in the landscape of the eighth century.

I cannot say that by working on this thesis I have completely exhausted the research and presentation of the life and activity of this great personality. Each category of works and even many of his works, separately, could be the subject of a doctoral dissertation in Theology or Letters. The exegesis of the texts of the Holy Scripture of the Old or New Testament, History, treatises on the technique of poetry, educational works, homilies, chronicles, each can be subjects not only for studies and articles but also for large-scale works. And this is due to the fact that the data presented with a special artistic and scientific refinement arouse the interest for the study and analysis of them and of the epoch in which they were written. What I have tried to achieve is the widening of the area of light in a lesser known and treated period and area of Universal Church History as well as the presentation of a great personality from the extreme northwest of Europe, for the interested public in Romania.