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Augustus, Rome, Britain and Ireland on the Hereford *mappa mundi*: Imperium and Salvation

By Diarmuid Scully, University College Cork

The Hereford map (c. 1300) depicts the *orbis terrarum* of Europe, Asia and Africa – the three parts of the Earth’s known, inhabited circle of

lands – hugging the Mediterranean and surrounded by Ocean and its islands, most prominently Britain and Ireland. A representation of the Roman Emperor Augustus (r. 27 BC-14 AD) appears next to the archipelago in the map’s pictorial framework. Surveying the *orbis terrarum*, the map describes itself as an “*estorie*.”¹ It tells multiple stories, but one cartographical narrative, derived from Orosius, dominates: the providential, global, westward progression of spiritual, cultural and political authority, and enlightenment.² **(Figure 1)**

Orosius’s *Historiarum adversus paganos libri septem* responds to a request from Augustine (one of only two figures given a framed portrait on the Hereford map) to refute pagan claims

¹ S. D. Westrem (ed.), *The Hereford Map: a transcription and translation of the legends with commentary* (Turnhout, 2001), p. 11, no.15; hereafter abbreviated as *Hereford*, with images and legends cited by page and number. I am grateful to Dr Catherine Ware for her comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

² Westrem, *Hereford*, p. xxxii. S. McKenzie, “The westward progression of history on Medieval *mappaemundi*: an investigation of the evidence,” in P. D. A. Harvey (ed.), *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and their Context* (London, 2006), pp. 335-344. For Orosius’s impact on earlier English cartography, see M. K. Foy, “The Virtual Reality of the Anglo-Saxon *Mappamundi*,” in M. K. Foy, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon* (Gainesville, 2007), pp. 110-158; M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet (ed. and trans.), *Orose: Histoire (contre les païens)* 3 vols. (Paris, 1990-91), hereafter abbreviated as *Hist*; C. Zangmeister (ed.), Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri vii*, CSEL 5 (Vienna 1882); English translation from A. T. Fear (trans.), *Orosius: Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (Liverpool, 2010). On Orosian geography: Y. Janvier, *La Géographie d’Orose* (Paris, 1982); A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 35-99. After completing the present article, I received a copy of P. Van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford, 2012).



Figure 1 The Hereford map (c. 1300), oriented east-west, reveals the known world and its islands surrounded by Ocean. Photo: with the permission of the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust and the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral.

that the Gothic sack of Rome in 410 was a punishment for abandoning the gods and accepting Christianity.³ Orosius traces Roman and universal history in order to demonstrate that the Christian God has privileged Rome above all preceding empires (Babylon, Macedon and Carthage) and that Christian times have been the best in human experience.⁴ The map acknowledges Orosius, who begins with a survey of world-geography, as its essential textual source: “Orosius’s account, *De Ornesta Mundi*, as is shown within.”⁵ Considering the Hereford map’s response to Orosian providential history and geography, this paper suggests that it locates Augustus next to Britain and Ireland, and accords Rome great honor, in order to explore themes of *translatio imperii* and celebrate the islands’ place in the history of salvation centred on imperial and papal Rome.

The Location of Augustus, Rome, Britain and Ireland on the Hereford Map: Context and Implications

“Rome, head of the world, holds the bridle of the spherical earth.”⁶ Thus the Hereford map proclaims Rome’s continuing universal rule in this legend placed next to an architectural device representing the city. Virgil, writing in the age of Augustus, tells of its beginnings: how Aeneas fled the sack of Troy and finally reached Italy, where his descendants built “the high walls of Rome” and were destined to confront its rival, Carthage, “opposite Italy and the distant mouth of the river Tiber.”⁷ On the map, Rome is a tall, high-towered city on the Tiber,

³ *Hist.* preface; 7.43, 16-20; *Hereford*, p. 359, no. 918. The map (*Hereford*, p. 89, no. 183) also assigns a framed portrait to Abraham, father of the Jewish people (Genesis 12:1-3) and spiritual father of the new Chosen People drawn from Jews and Gentiles in the Christian dispensation (Galatians 6-29). This visual pairing of Abraham with Augustine, whose *De Civitate Dei* traces humanity’s pilgrimage to its eternal home, and its identification of Orosius as its historical source is a clear statement of the map’s concern with salvation history.

⁴ *Hist.* 2.1, 4-6; *Hist.* 7.43, 16-20.

⁵ *Hereford*, p. 7, no. 10. See p. 6 for Westrem’s analysis of “*Ornesta*.” The map’s reference to Orosius is located in the lower right pictorial framework, opposite the Augustus scene.

⁶ “*Roma, capud mundi, tenet orbis frena rotundi*,” *Hereford*, p. 271, no. 680.

⁷ “*altae moenia Romae*,” *Aen.* 1.7; “*Karthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe ostia*,” *Aen.* 1.13-14; English translation from D. West (trans.), *Virgil: The Aeneid* (Harmondsworth, 1990). The map’s largest towered city,

close to the Mediterranean and facing across that sea toward “*Cartago Magna*” in Africa.⁸ Warlike Troy, “*Troia civitas bellicosa*,” ancestral city of the Romans (and the founders of Britain too, as Geoffrey of Monmouth and his successors relate) lies in a straight line north-eastward from Rome to Asia Minor.⁹ The map depicts a flag drooping from the walls of this, the original city of “topless towers,” indicating its fall and the translation of its power to Rome under Aeneas’s descendants. Orosius and Augustine concluded that Rome’s destruction of Carthage marked a decisive and corrosive moment in its own rise; without Carthage to instill fear and discipline, the Romans became torpid: hence their weakness when the barbarians struck.¹⁰ The fall of Carthage, then, initially secured, but ultimately undermined ancient Rome’s *imperium*, which, after Orosius, was transferred first to the Frankish and then to the German monarchs, who held the imperial title when the Hereford map was made; this is a good reason for the map to draw attention to that African “*urbs antiqua*” facing Rome.

The theme of continuity and change in Roman *imperium* pervades the sources. The *Aeneid* proclaims that under Augustus, the “Trojan Caesar,” the Romans would enjoy dominion reaching to Ocean and stretching beyond the Garamantes and Indians, beyond the

Babylon, lies in a straight line directly east of Rome; the map legend’s source is Orosius, who depicts Babylon as the first empire, thus making this image evoke themes of *translatio imperii* (*Hereford*, p. 87, no. 181; *Hist.* 2.6, 8-10). The map’s architectural device suggests the Tower of Babel. Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei* 16.17 makes Babel/Babylon (“confusion”) the symbol of the earthly city and views pagan Rome as a second Babylon in the west (cf. 1 Peter 5:13).

⁸ Westrem, *Hereford*, p. 270, notes that map’s most important textual analogue, the *Expositio Mappae Mundi* discovered by Partick Gautier Dalché, locates Rome opposite Carthage.

⁹ *Hereford*, p. 153, no. 345; the map refers to Illium at p. 151, no. 344. Westrem, *Hereford*, p. 152, draws attention to the British link via Layamon’s *Brut*. Geoffrey traces the Britons’ Trojan origins in Book I of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, D. Reeve and N. Wright (ed. and trans.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain. An edition and translation of De gestis Britonum* (Woodbridge, 2007), hereafter *HRB*. For the Trojan legend’s impact on Geoffrey, see F. Ingledew, “The Book of Troy and the genealogical construction of history: the case of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*,” *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp. 665-704. For the legend’s wider impact, see M. Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: the Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven, 1993).

¹⁰ *Hist.* 4.23, 1-11; *De Civitate Dei* 1.30.

stars and sun.¹¹ Virgil's Jupiter promises Venus: "On them I impose no limits of time and place. I have given them an empire that will know no end."¹² These promises are echoed in Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the British origin legend. Diana promises the Trojan Brutus, who gives Britain its name, that he will win an island in the western Ocean where a new Troy will arise and his descendants produce kings "who will be masters of the whole world."¹³ Geoffrey describes the realization of this promise in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, demonstrating the imperial reach of Britain's early kings that culminated in Arthur's empire dominating the entire British-Irish archipelago and stretching across Europe to Rome itself, which Arthur was ready to conquer.¹⁴ The Anglo-Norman kings viewed themselves as the heirs to the *imperium* enjoyed by Britain's previous rulers, and in the age of the Hereford map, they invoked the rights and achievements of the Trojan Britons, when claiming dominion over the archipelago.¹⁵

Brutus's city of Troia Nova, its name corrupted to Trinovantum, was finally renamed London.¹⁶ In his early thirteenth-century *Otia Imperialia*, Gervase of Tilbury, expanding on Geoffrey, comments on the city's Trojan heritage; Brutus named it "to the keep alive the memory of the old Troy ... within it, he built a citadel like Illium ... where the Tower of London now is; it contained a palace enclosed by mighty fortifications, while around it

¹¹ *Aen.* 1.286; 6.795-98.

¹² "His ego nec metas nec tempora pono, /imperium sine fine dedi," *Aen.* 1.278-79. P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*, translated from the French by H. Leclerc (Ann Arbor, 1991).

¹³ "et ipsis totius terrae subitus orbis erit," *HRB* 1.16, 305-312.

¹⁴ *HRB* 9-10.

¹⁵ On insular *translatio imperii* to the Anglo-Normans, see, for example, Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* 1.4; 5, preface, in D. E. Greenway (ed.), *Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). On this theme in Geoffrey of Monmouth, see Ingledew, "The Book of Troy." Anglo-Norman claims to the entire archipelago will be examined in a separate study of Ireland and the Hereford map.

¹⁶ *HRB* 1.22, 490-503; 3.53, 370-379; J. Clark, "Trinovantum: the evolution of a legend," *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), pp. 135-151.

flowed the waters of the river Thames.”¹⁷ The map’s London resembles this vision of the city; situated on the Thames, it is the most elaborately turreted city in Britain and the archipelago, with one high tower rising above its walls.¹⁸ A straight line drawn from London to Rome would cut across Paris, represented on the map as a great towered city, too. Paris is the principal city of Francia, which, Gervase writes, is named “after King Francus, who fled from Troy, according to some sources, with Aeneas, and gave his name to his people.”¹⁹

Linking these cities pictorially, the map suggests their states’ and rulers’ interconnections and the origins of their inherited and evolving authority. Compare the *Otia Imperialia*, a textual counterpart to the map, in its attempt to convey all human historical, geographical and cosmographical knowledge. Gervase links the Trojan history of Britain and France with that of the Roman Empire, then incarnate in the German monarchy. Addressing the Emperor Otto IV, he says: “this Roman empire, over which you, most serene prince, hold dominion, and the kingdom of Great Britain which gave you birth ... and the kingdom of France, over which you have ruled ... all arose from the same destruction of Troy.”²⁰ Gervase testifies to Rome’s continuing *imperium* by quoting the same leonine hexameter that the Hereford map applies to the city: “*Roma caput mundi tenet orbis frena rotundi.*”²¹ The

¹⁷ “*Brutus ad veteris Troie recensendam memoriam condidit firmissimam urbem Trinovantum, in ipsa velut Illium ad orientem constituens, ubi turris Londoniensis est, firmissima munitione palatium circumseptum continens, aqua Tamasis fluvii ... in ambitu decurrens,*” *Otia Imperialia* 2.17 in J. W. Binns and W. J. Blair (ed. and trans.), *Gervase of Tilbury: Otia Imperialia. Recreation for an Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 398-401.

¹⁸ *Hereford*, p. 311, no. 799.

¹⁹ “*Francia est, a Franco rege dicta, qui de Troia, ut quidam dicunt, cum Enea fugiens populo nomen dedit,*” *Otia Imperialia* 2.10.

²⁰ “*et quoniam ex eodem Troiano excidio imperium Romanorum cuius tenes dominacionem, princeps serenissime, regnumque maioris Britannie ex cuius utero prodiisti ... regnumque Francorum ... dominium gessisti, prodire,*” *Otia Imperialia* 2.16; Gervase compares the three kingdoms to three sons, matching the number of the Trinity, and explains that Rome’s power passed to the “Allemani and the Gauls” after Gothic and Lombard assault and Otto inherited his own imperial authority from Charlemagne’s acceptance of the title of emperor and Augustus from Pope Leo (cf. 2.18-19).

²¹ *Otia Imperialia* 2.8.

German emperors themselves used that phrase on official seals to express their *romanitas*. In his *Chronica Maiora*, some fifty years before the map was made, Matthew Paris sketched and described one such seal featuring the phrase and styling Frederick II “by the grace of God, emperor of the Romans and eternal Augustus.”²² A second reference to “*Roma caput mundi*” in the *Chronica Maiora* suggests another interpretation of the phrase, which depends upon a further *translatio imperii*: from the emperors of ancient Rome to the popes as the spiritual successors of Peter and the temporal heirs of Constantine. In a commentary beneath the plan of Rome on his itinerary map, Matthew writes:

It was once the capital of the whole world when the great emperors were lords and governors over it, and conquered all the lands ... That is why the title which is on the seal of the Roman emperor reads: “*Roma caput mundi tenet orbis frena rotundi*.”

The holy apostles of God, Sts. Peter and Paul, converted it to the law [of] Jesus Christ and sanctified it with their holy blood. And as Rome had been the capital of all miscreance and error, thus God wanted it to be the capital of Christendom.²³

Matthew explains that, providentially, Romulus and Remus founded the city so that it could achieve this status. God put the pope there, with Peter’s privilege of binding and loosing souls, and it was Pope Sylvester who cured Constantine of leprosy, so that Constantine became Christian and defender of the universal Church.²⁴ Matthew alludes to the Donation of Constantine (exposed as a forgery in the fifteenth century), which imagines Constantine’s

²² Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16, fol. 126; see Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris* (London, 1987), pp.77-81.

²³ “*E fu iadis chef de tut le mund quant le grant empeur en furent sires e guvernurs e conquistrent tutes terres ... Pur co est le tittle tel ki est en la bulle lempereur de rume. ‘Roma caput mundi tenet orbis frena rotundi [in rubric]. Li seint apostle du deu seint pere e seint pol le cunvertirent a la lei Jesu Christ e la sacrerent de lur seint sanc. E si cum ele estoit avant chef de tut mescreance ed errur, si vout deus kele fust chef de la crestiente.*”; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 26, fol. 3r (itinerary from Pontremoli to Apulia). English translation cited in Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 344, Latin text cited at p. 505, n. 49. See further D. K. Connelly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris: Medieval Journeys through Space, Time and Liturgy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), in particular pp. 109-127.

²⁴ Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 26, fol. 3r, Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 344, 505, n. 49.

transfer of temporal imperial authority in the west to the papacy following his cure and baptism.²⁵ In the Donation, as a symbol of that transfer, Constantine gives his imperial insignia, including his diadem, to the pope. The thirteenth-century frescoes in the chapel of St Sylvester in the complex of Ss Quattro Coronati in Rome show the vital moment of *translatio imperii*; Constantine genuflects before the enthroned Sylvester and offers him the imperial diadem, now transformed into the papal tiara: compare the tiara worn by the Hereford map's Augustus.²⁶ Gervase of Tilbury spells out the Donation's implications to his imperial reader. Constantine ruled the kingdoms of the Franks, Germans and Britons, the whole west and the whole round world, but gave his *imperium* over the west to Peter, under Christ:

By the pope's gift, not her own, Rome regained the title of empire in the time of Charlemagne. By the pope's gift, the imperial sovereignty was conferred on the king of the Franks. By the pope's gift, the sovereignty is now due to the king of the Germans, not the king of the French. Nor is the sovereignty granted to whomever Germany chooses, but to whomever the pope has decreed it should be granted.²⁷

Considering the Hereford map's depiction of Augustus, Gervase's further comment is noteworthy: the pope alone bears the imperial insignia and proclaims himself lord of the city of Rome and of the capital of the empire.²⁸ Viewing the Hereford map in the context of Gervase, Matthew Paris and the Donation of Constantine, we see that it displays a world once dominated by imperial Rome and now by its Petrine successor, who holds spiritual and temporal supremacy. The map implies that, even in pagan times, and specifically under

²⁵ J. Fried, *Donation of Constantine and Constitutum Constantini* (Berlin and New York, 2007).

²⁶ L. Barelli, *The Monumental Complex of Santi Quattro Coronati in Rome*, trans. C. McDowall (Rome, 2009), pp. 70-75; fig. 112. Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought*, p. 58, n. 15 suggests the *Golden Legend* as the source of the map's representation of Augustus; its account of St Sylvester refers to the Donation.

²⁷“*Petro Constantinus imperium occidentis dedit, cui servierat regnum Francorum, regnum Teutonicorum, regnum Britonum, quin imo totus occidens et totus circumfusos orbis. Hic Petro voluit sub Christo totum servire occidentem. Beneficio pape, non suo, Roma tempore Caroli nomen receipt imperii. Beneficio pape Francorum regi conferetur imperium. Beneficio pape regi nunc Teutonicorum et non Francorum debetur imperium. Nec cedit imperium cui vult Theutonia, sed cui cedendum decrevit papa,*” *Otia Imperialia* 2.19; cf. pref. (pp. 10-13); 2.8; 2.16.

²⁸ *Otia Imperialia* 2.18.

Augustus, the empire served God's purposes. It may also imply papal support for the English crown's imperial ambitions in the archipelago.

The map's pictorial framework depicts Augustus as a composite Roman emperor-pope. (Figure 2) He sits enthroned, wearing elaborate robes and an imperial-papal tiara surmounted by a cross; he hands a document, with a great seal attached, to three diminutive men. The map provides a textual commentary on this scene. Augustus's decree – its design and authenticating seal in conjunction with the tiara suggests an ecclesiastical document or



Figure 2 The Hereford map depicts Caesar Augustus as a composite emperor-pope and locates him next to Ireland and Britain at the north-western oceanic limits of the known world. Photo: with the permission of the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust and the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral.

papal bull – contains an order echoing Christ’s final commission to his disciples in Matthew 28:19: “Going therefore, teach ye all nations [*euntes ergo docete omnes gentes*]: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” Augustus orders: “Go into all the world and make a report to the senate on all its continents: and to confirm this [order] I have affixed my seal to this document.”²⁹ The seal declares: “+ The seal of the emperor, Augustus Caesar.”³⁰

A legend next to the three men names them as Nichodoxus, Theodocus and Policlitus.³¹ The upper left of the outer edge of the map’s pictorial framework refers to these men in connection with an earlier Roman mapping of the world. There, the text states that the *orbis terrarum* began to be measured by Julius Caesar and that Nichodoxus measured the east, Theodocus the west, and Policlitus the south. Julius Honorius’s fourth- or early fifth-century *Cosmographia Iulii Caesaris*, via Pseudo-Aethicus’s late seventh- or early eighth-century *Cosmographia*, is the map’s source, with Julius Honorius’s four surveyors being reduced to three, since the map follows Pseudo-Aethicus’s reckoning.³² Westrem observes that the map “thus tacitly gives to each man one of the three principal areas of the terrestrial landmass as defined during the Middle Ages.”³³ There may be an allusion here to the Noahide dispersion of Japheth to Europe, Shem to Asia and Cham to Africa, after the

²⁹ “*Te in orbem universum et de omni eius continencia referte ad Senatum. et ad istam confirmandum, huic scripto sigillum meum apposui.*” *Hereford*, p. 10, no. 13.

³⁰ “+ *SIGILLUM AUGUSTI CESARIS IMPARATORIS.*” *Hereford*, p. 10, no. 13.

³¹ *Hereford*, p. 11, no. 14. On Augustus’s document and its seal, see also V. Flint, “The Hereford Map: Its author(s), Two Scenes and a Border,” *TRHS* sixth series, 8 (1998), pp. 19-44, at 22; N. Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: the Hereford Paradigm* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 58-60.

³² C. Nicolet and P. Gautier Dalché, “Les “Quatres Sages” de Jules César et la mesure du monde selon Julius Honorius: réalité antique et tradition médiéval,” *Journal des Savants* (1987), pp. 157-218; T.P. Wiseman, “Julius Caesar and the Hereford World Map,” *History Today* (November 1987), pp. 53-57; Wiseman, “Julius Caesar and the *Mappa Mundi*,” in idem, *Talking to Virgil: A Miscellany* (Exeter, 1992), pp. 22-42; *Hereford*, pp. 2-3; note Westrem’s comments on pp. xxx and xxxiii-iv.

³³ *Hereford*, p. 3, nos. 1-4, with Westrem’s comments on p. 2.

Flood.³⁴ It is their descendants, the entire human race, that Christ's disciples were commissioned to teach and baptize in Matthew 28:18-20, a missionary enterprise ultimately under the authority of the Roman pontiffs, successors of St Peter, the rock on whom Christ built his church (Matthew 16:18).

To map the world is to dominate it. The late third-century panegyrist Eumenius invites Rome's rulers to imagine a great world-map displayed in a school to demonstrate the empire's universality: "it is a delight to see a picture of the world, since we see nothing in it which is not ours."³⁵ The Hereford map and its cosmographical sources function like Eumenius's imagined map, revealing Rome's global empire (spiritual as well as secular, from Hereford's perspective). Pseudo-Aethicus links Julius Caesar's measurement of the world to his victories extending to its oceanic limits.³⁶ The map may credit Julius Caesar with initiating this measurement, but it is emphatic that his successor Augustus completed the work. The legend placed directly over Augustus's cross-crowned head provides a precise timeframe: "Luke in his gospel [Luke 2:1]: There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be described."³⁷ In Luke's gospel, the Augustan description or enrollment of the world (depending on the translation of "*describeretur*") brought Mary and Joseph to Joseph's ancestral home of Bethlehem, where Christ was born (Luke 2:1-7). The Hereford map here conflates Augustus's census with his measurement of the *orbis*

³⁴ For Noah's sons on earlier English *mappae mundi* concerned with salvation history, see Marcia Kupfer, "The Noachide Dispersion in English *Mappae Mundi* ca. 960- ca. 1130" in the present volume.

³⁵ "*Nunc enim, nunc demum iuvat orbem spectare depictum, cum in illo nihil videmus alienum.*," *Pan. Lat.* IX (IV) 20.2; 21.3, C. E. V. Nixon and B. S. Rodgers (ed. and trans.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors. The Panegyrici Latini: introduction, translation and historical commentary with the Latin text of R. A. B. Mynors* (Berkeley, 1994).

³⁶ Wiseman, "Julius Caesar and the *Mappa Mundi*," p. 26. A follower of Pseudo-Aethicus, Lambert of St Omer, in the early twelfth-century *Liber Floridus*, dates Julius Caesar's measurement of the world to his return from the conquest of Britain, implying the conquest of the ends of the earth; see Gautier Dalché in Nicolet and Gautier Dalché, "Les 'Quatres Sages' de Jules César," pp. 203-204.

³⁷ "*Lucas in evangelio: Exiit edictum ab augusto cesare ut describeretur huniversus orbis.*"

terrarum.³⁸ Bede, via Orosius, provides a further historical context for Christ's birth at this moment, namely Augustus's establishment of universal Roman rule, the *Pax Romana*, that made the census possible: "In the forty-second year of Caesar Augustus that is to say the year in which the movements of all peoples throughout the world were held in check, and by God's decree Caesar established genuine and unshakeable peace, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hallowed the Sixth Age of the world by his coming."³⁹

Orosius on Augustus, the Incarnation, and Britain in the Context of Roman Geography and Imperialism

Long before Orosius, Christian authorities believed that divine providence had ordained the empire's rise and synchronized Christ's birth with Augustus's establishment of the *Pax Romana*.⁴⁰ Exegetes believed that global Roman rule was designed to allow the rapid fulfilment of Christ's command to go and teach all nations.⁴¹ Orosius provides the most extensive and positive exploration of this idea, in terms of its implications for God's commitment to the empire. Thus, Augustus's achievement of a global Roman peace, ordained to prepare for Christ's coming, was heralded by signs and wonders in Rome itself.⁴² Roman authority was acknowledged in the north, south, east and west: the south (Africa) was pacified, ambassadors from Scythia in the extreme north and India in the extreme east came

³⁸ A manuscript of Lambert of St Omer (Gand, Universitätsbibl., 92) is the first to explicitly link Augustus's measurement of the world with the Lucan census, as Gautier Dalché establishes in Nicolet and Gautier Dalché, "Les "Quatres Sages" de Jules César," pp. 203-205.

³⁹ "*id est, eo anno quo compressis cunctarum per orbem terrarum gentium motibus firmissimam verissimamque pacem, ordinatione Dei, Caesar composuit, Iesus Christus filius Dei sextam mundi aetam suo consecravit adventu.*," *De Temporum Ratione* 66.971-8; Orosius, *Hist.* 6.22 (cf. Orosius, *Hist.* 7.2, 3), in T. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora Saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, iii, MGH AA 13 (Berlin, 1898), pp. 223-354, repr in C. W. Jones (ed.), Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 461-544; English translation from F. Wallis (trans.), *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, TTH 29 (Liverpool 1999).

⁴⁰ See the second-century Melito of Sardis, quoted in Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.26.7.

⁴¹ Ambrose quotes Matthew 28:19 to this effect in his commentary on Ps 45:10, "making wars to cease even to the end of the earth," *Ennarationes in Psalmos XII*, PL 14, 1142-43B.

⁴² *Hist.* 6.20,1-9.

as suppliants to Augustus in the extreme west (Spain) and universal peace was secured when the Parthians, too, sought a treaty with Rome.⁴³ The gates of the temple of Janus were closed, and Christ was born and enrolled on the Roman census as a Roman citizen.⁴⁴ The census demonstrated global power on a scale unmatched by any previous empire, including Babylon and Alexander's Macedon; appropriating the Virgilian Jupiter's prophecies, Orosius proclaims that it "marked out Caesar as the lord of all and the Romans as *masters of the world*."⁴⁵

In contrast, Orosius depicts the world before the incarnation and Augustan peace as a maelstrom of war and cruelty.⁴⁶ Given the Hereford map's indebtedness to Orosius, we see here a possible reason for its downplaying of Julius Caesar's role in the measurement of the world. The *Historia* shows that Caesar's endless wars never secured peace or universal Roman rule, and after his assassination there was yet more war, until Augustus's accession to power. Orosius uses Rome's first invasion of Britain to illustrate the violence of the pre-incarnational world, locating Julius Caesar's expeditions (55 and 54 BC) in a period when there was no Church to intercede for God's mercy.⁴⁷ Tremendous violence raged across the Roman world and its borderlands from east to west.⁴⁸ Orosius emphasises the bloodiness of Julius Caesar's British expeditions, the strength of British resistance and the severe storm damage that Caesar's fleet suffered at sea.⁴⁹

Orosius's presentation of Rome's encounters with Britain after the incarnation is very

⁴³ *Hist* 6.21,18-29.

⁴⁴ *Hist* 6. 22,1-9.

⁴⁵ *Hist* 6.22,6; *Aen.* 1.282.

⁴⁶ *Hist.* 5.1,8 in the context of 5.1,1-15.

⁴⁷ *Hist.* 6.1, 27.

⁴⁸ *Hist.* 6.12,7; 6.12,1-6.19,21.

⁴⁹ *Hist.* 6.9,2-9.

different. He depicts Caligula (r. 37-41) as one of Rome's worst rulers, but says that the emperor was unable to break the peace brought by Christ. The surrender of the exiled son of the Britons' king deprived him of any justification for a planned invasion of Britain.⁵⁰ Orosius's account of Claudius (r. 41-54) links his conquest of Britain to the foundation of the papacy and the continuation of peace. Because Peter arrived in Rome to preach salvation in Claudius's reign, and a Christian community was established there, divine grace made Claudius merciful and prevented civil war and rebellion. When Claudius invaded Britain, "in the words of Suetonius Tranquillus, *within but a few days he received the surrender of most of the island without having fought a battle and without any blood being shed.*"⁵¹ Orosius's use of Suetonius is selective: he suppresses Suetonius's account of two near shipwrecks that Claudius experienced in the Mediterranean on his way to Britain and Suetonius's dismissive comments on the campaign's significance.⁵² He invites the reader to contrast the British experiences of Julius Caesar and Claudius, and therefore to appreciate the extent to which Rome's past achievements were due to God's hidden providence:

Now let anyone who wants to do so, make a comparison concerning this single island between the one time and the other; between the one war and the other; and between the one Caesar and the other. I shall say nothing about the outcome, since the latter produced the happiest of victories, but the former the bitterest of disasters.⁵³

God's favor manifested in Claudius's British victory connects the first-century AD empire to that of Orosius's day; the *Historia* claims that God continues to care for Rome by granting her victories costing little blood.⁵⁴ But why does Orosius single out Britain to illustrate his

⁵⁰ *Hist.* 7.5, 5; cf. Suetonius, *Caligula* 44.2.

⁵¹ *Hist.* 7.6, 3-8; "ut verbis Suetonii Tranquilli loquar, sine ullo praelio ac sanguine intra paucissimos dies plurimam insulae partem in deditionem recepit," *Hist.* 7.6, 9; Suetonius, *Claudius* 17.2.

⁵² *Claudius* 17.1.

⁵³ "Confertur nunc si placet, sub una insula, tempus et tempus, bellum et bellum, Caesar et Caesar. Nam de fine nihil confero: quoniam hoc felicissima victoria, illud acerbissima clades fuit," *Hist.* 7.6, 9-11.

⁵⁴ *Hist.* 7.35, 6-9; 7.35, 19; 7.36, 12.

argument that God has shown special favor to Rome? The answer may be connected to the Hereford map's decision to locate Augustus next to Britain and Ireland. The implications of the archipelago's geographical location provide a key to understanding both issues. The legend "*Terminus Europe*" appears on the map's western Iberian coastline.⁵⁵ Britain, Ireland and their adjacent islands, including the Isle of Man, the Orkneys and Ultima Thule, lie in northwestern Ocean beyond Gaul, Iberia and the prominently displayed Pillars of Hercules (the ancient boundaries of civilisation and the world of men).⁵⁶ There is nothing beyond the archipelago except Ocean and the map's pictorial framework containing Augustus and his surveyors.

The map's depiction of the archipelago, though enriched by later sources and contemporary concerns, is fundamentally Orosian. Summarising Graeco-Roman geographical knowledge, Orosius describes Britain as an island of Ocean, notes its proximity to Gaul, locates the Orkneys to its north, Thule a vast distance northwards, the Isle of Man near Ireland, and Ireland itself between Britain and Spain.⁵⁷ The map's representation of Ireland reflects Orosius with particular force, emphasizing its geographical association with Britain and Spain, repeating Orosius's account of the mouth of the Shannon facing Spain and the Luceni and the Velabri occupying that region.⁵⁸ The map-designer's interest in Orosius's account of Ireland may reflect knowledge of the Irish origin legend found in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (*The Book of the Takings of Ireland* or *Book of Invasions*) and summarized in the *Historia Brittonum*, which traces the Hiberni (Irish) most immediately to Iberia in

⁵⁵ *Hereford*, p. 335, no. 863.

⁵⁶ *Hereford*, p. 427, nos. 1090-1091 (the Pillars); pp. 297-325, nos. 756-837 (Scotland, Man, England, Wales, Ireland); p. 195, no. 462 (the Orkneys); p. 195, no. 459 (Thule).

⁵⁷ *Hist.* 1.2, 76-82.

⁵⁸ *Hist.* 1.2, 80; the Shannon and the Velabri and Luceni facing Spain appear in *Hereford*, p. 325, no. 835-837.

response to Orosius and Isidore.⁵⁹ The Irish origin legend and its re-interpretation by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales played a fundamental role in legitimizing the English crown's claim to Ireland.⁶⁰ This claim was sanctioned by the papacy on the basis of the Donation of Constantine some one hundred and fifty years before the making of the Hereford map, with its figure of an emperor-pope, evocative of that particular *translatio imperii*, next to Ireland.⁶¹

The archipelago's size and location gave it an exceptional place in the classical and medieval imagination. The Hereford map follows tradition, when it depicts Britain and Ireland as the largest islands in the terraqueous world. Adomnán of Iona repeats an ancient belief when he refers to "Britain, the largest of Ocean's islands."⁶² Gerald of Wales, echoing Bede, does the same when he uses the phrase "Ireland, the largest of islands after Britain."⁶³ Lying beyond the boundaries of the *orbis terrarum*, the archipelago is the last habitable place in the vast and terrifying space of northwestern Ocean.⁶⁴ For the ancients, Ultima Thule (Furthest Thule) marked the beginning of the planet's frozen northern zone, and the Orkneys were therefore the furthest inhabited place north of Britain.⁶⁵ Catullus is representative, when

⁵⁹ J. Carey, "The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory," *Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1994); R. Baumgarten, "The Geographical Location of Ireland in Isidore and Orosius," *Peritia* 3 (1984), pp. 189-203.

⁶⁰ To be explored in a separate study of the map's representation of Ireland.

⁶¹ The papal decree, *Laudabiliter*, issued by Adrian IV to Henry II; M. P. Sheehy (ed.), *Pontificia Hibernica: Medieval Papal Chancery Documents concerning Ireland, 640-1261*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1962), pp. 15-16.

⁶² "omnium totius orbis Insularum maximam Britanniam," *Vita Columbae* 3.23, A. O. and M. O. Anderson (ed. and trans.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (2nd edn; Oxford, 1991); compare Tacitus, *Agricola* 10.3.

⁶³ "Hibernia, post Britanniam insularum maxima," *Topographia Hibernica* 1.1, J. F. Dimnock (ed.), *Giraldi Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica*, vol. 5 of *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera* (London, 1867) in *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 8 vols, Rolls Series; cf. Bede, *HE* 1.1, B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (ed. and trans.), *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), hereafter *HE*.

⁶⁴ On this part of Ocean: P. Gautier Dalché, "Comment penser l'Océan? Modes de connaissances des *fines orbis terrarum* du nord-ouest (de l'Antiquité au XIIIe siècle)" in M. Balard (ed.), *L'Europe et L'Océan au Moyen Age; contribution à l'histoire de la navigation* (Nantes, 1988), pp. 217-33.

⁶⁵ L. G. De Anna, *Thule: le fonti et le tradizioni* (Rimini, 1998); J. A. (D.) Scully, "The Atlantic archipelago from Antiquity to Bede: the transformation of an image" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University College

he refers to Britain itself as “furthest Britain” (“*ultima Britannia*,” a phrase that evokes Ultima Thule), and “the furthest island of the west” (“*ultima occidentis insula*”).⁶⁶ Antique sources also depict Britain as an *alter orbis*, another world entirely severed from the *orbis terrarum* by Ocean; Shakespeare serendipitously alludes to this topos in connection with Roman claims to the island in Augustus’s reign: “Britain’s a world by itself.”⁶⁷ Gerald applies similar classical topoi to Ireland; beyond it, there is “only Ocean to the west” and the island itself is “as it were another world.”⁶⁸

Rome claimed dominion not only over Britain, but also Ireland, the Orkneys and, poetically, Thule; it announced the conquest of unknown peoples, Ocean, and nature itself in the archipelago, reveling in its power over the world’s outer limits. It is noteworthy, then, that Orosius includes the Orkneys’s annexation in his celebration of Claudius’s conquest of Britain.⁶⁹ The sources link victory over the archipelago to victories over the world’s other cardinal points to demonstrate Rome’s universal rule. Thus, Pseudo-Hegesippus writes of east-west Roman rule from Britain to India, and Claudian of north-south Roman triumphs from frozen Thule, Britain, Ireland and the Orkneys to burning Africa.⁷⁰ Given the archipelago’s extraordinary location and role in Roman claims to global *imperium*, it is no

Cork, National University of Ireland, 2000), pp. 24-29.

⁶⁶ Catullus, 29.4; 29.13.

⁶⁷ *Cymbeline*, Act 3, Scene 1. For ancient sources using this topos: D. Scully, “Proud Ocean has become a servant: a classical topos in the literature on Britain’s conquest and conversion” in E. Mullins and D. Scully (eds.), *Listen, O Isles, unto me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in honour of Jennifer O’Reilly* (Cork, 2011), pp. 3-15; 313-318 at 315, n. 44. On Britain in the Graeco-Roman imagination: V. Santoro, “Sul concetto di *Britannia* tra Antichità e Medioevo,” *Romanobarbarica* 11 (1992), pp. 321-334; P. C. N. Stewart, “Inventing Britain: the Roman adaptation and creation of an image,” *Britannia* 26 (1995), pp. 1-10; D. Braund, *Ruling Roman Britain* (London and New York, 1996); Scully, “The Atlantic archipelago,” pp. 7-20; 30-56.

⁶⁸ “*solum oceanum ab occidente*”; “*quasi alter orbis*,” *Topographia Hibernica* 1.1; 1.2.

⁶⁹ C. Adams, “Hibernia Romana? Ireland and the Roman Empire,” *History Ireland* 4 (1996), pp. 21-25; Scully, “The Atlantic archipelago,” pp. 7-29. Orosius on Claudius and the Orkneys: *Hist.* 7.6,10, following Eutropius, *Brev.* 7.13.2-3.

⁷⁰ Pseudo-Hegesippus, *Historiae libri v* 5.15; Claudian, *Panegyricus de quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 24-40.

coincidence that Orosius uses Britain's conquest to support his argument that God has shown special favour to Rome since the incarnation. However, he makes no connection between Augustus and Britain at the moment of Christ's birth. The Hereford map seems to imply such a connection through its placement of the emperor and the accompanying legends next to the archipelago. The map may be responding to textual sources that link Augustus and Britain and claim that the emperor conquered the island. A number of these sources specify that this conquest occurred at the time of the incarnation and see a providential purpose at work there.

Imagining the Augustan conquest of Britain at the time of the incarnation.

The sixth-century British prophet-historian Gildas synchronizes the Roman conquest of Britain with the universal Augustan peace at the time of Christ's birth. Situating Britain in the extreme, wintry northwestern Ocean, he says that Rome conquered the island when "the Roman kings, having won the *imperium* of the world and subjugated all the neighboring regions and islands towards the east, were able, thanks to their superior prestige, to impose peace for the first time on the Parthians, who border on India: whereupon wars ceased almost everywhere."⁷¹ This dating allows Gildas to locate Britain's conversion within a Roman framework in the apostolic age; re-working Eusebius on the earliest gentile conversions, he claims that Britain became Christian under Augustus's successor Tiberius.⁷² Gildas's account of the Roman conquest responds to Orosius, who, as we have seen, hails Indian submission to Rome and emphasizes the first Parthian peace as the harbinger of the unprecedented Augustan peace embracing "every nation from east to west, from north to south, and all

⁷¹ "Et inem reges Romanorum cum orbis imperium obtinuissent subiugatisque finitimis quibusque regionibus vel insulis orientem versus primam Parthorum pacem Indorum confinium, qua peracta in omni paene terra tum cessavere bella," *De Excidio Britanniae* 6.2, M. Winterbottom (ed. and trans.), *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (Chichester, 1987).

⁷² *DEB* 8; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.2-3, which does not mention Britain.

around the encircling Ocean.”⁷³

Sources from the age of Augustus proclaim the extension of Roman hegemony to Britain. In the *Res Gestae*, the public record of his achievements, Augustus writes of two British kings coming to him as suppliants, while Strabo writes of British chieftains going to Rome, making offerings on the Capitoline and acknowledging Roman power. According to Strabo, Augustus did not consider an invasion of Britain worthwhile, but Dio describes him preparing for war there on three occasions.⁷⁴ The poets include Britain in their boasts of global *imperium*; Horace, for instance, displays the wildest barbarians from north, south, east and west marveling at Augustus, along with the great rivers and their father Ocean: “Ocean teeming with monsters, that roars around the distant Britons.”⁷⁵

In a particularly significant reference, given Gildas’s vision of Augustan *imperium* on an east-west axis, Virgil links Britain and India under Augustus. In the *Georgica*, he reveals Augustus’s universal empire by decorating an imagined temple in his honor with representations of Roman victories from east to west.⁷⁶ Virgil describes carvings on the doors of Roman wars in India and a curtain decorated with British figures: “The embroidered Britons raise the purple curtains.”⁷⁷ The Britons’ inclusion, indicating their subjection, is all

⁷³ “Caesar Augustus ab oriente in occidentem, a septentrione in meridiem ac per totum Oceani circulum cunctis gentibus una pacis compositis,” *Hist.* 6.22,1. Orosius also links the Parthian peace and the incarnation in *Hist.* 3.8,5-8; cf. *Hist.* 1.1,6; 6.21,29. F. Kerlouégan, *Le De Excidio Britanniae de Gildas: Les Destinées de la Culture Latine dans l’Île de Bretagne au VIe Siècle* (Paris, 1987), pp. 82-83 emphasises *Hist.* 3.5,8 as Gildas’s source. C. E. Stevens, “Gildas Sapiens,” *English Historical Review* 56 (1941), pp. 353-373 at 355 suggests *Hist.* 6.21,19-20; 22. On Gildas’s reading: N. Wright, “Did Gildas read Orosius?” *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 9 (1985), pp. 31-42, repr. in idem, *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West: Studies in Intertextuality* (Aldershot, 1995), paper IV; idem, “Gildas’s Reading: a Survey,” *Sacris Erudiri* 32 (1991), pp. 121-162 at 133-134, repr. in idem, *History and Literature*, paper V.

⁷⁴ *Res Gestae* 32 (the same entry records a Parthian visit and the preceding one an Indian embassy; cf. Orosius, *Hist.* 6.21,21); Strabo, 2.5,8; Dio 49.38,2; 53.22,5; 53.23,2.

⁷⁵ “beluosus qui remotis/ obstrepit Oceanus Britannis,” *Carm.* 4.14, 47-48, C. E. Bennett, (ed. and trans.), *Horace: Odes and Epodes*, LCL (Cambridge, Mass, 1927).

⁷⁶ *Georg.* 3.12-49; cf. *Aeneid* 6.794-97. On Roman claims to India: C. R. Whittaker, “To reach out to India and pursue the dawn: the Roman view of India,” *Studies in History* 14 (1998), pp. 1-20.

⁷⁷ “purpurea intexti tollant aulaea Britanni,” *Georg.* 3.25; “the figures rise as the curtain on which they are depicted rises, and they can be said to raise it,” R. A. B. Mynors (ed.), *Virgil: Georgics. Edited with a*

the more significant given Britain's status as another world in the *Eclogae*; in a phrase repeated by several Christian authorities including Origen, Jerome and Isidore, Virgil refers there to "the Britons entirely severed from the whole world."⁷⁸ Rome's empire has indeed reached the ends of the earth. The Hereford map eloquently conveys the ancients' sense of the British-Irish archipelago and India as the western and eastern limits of the *orbis terrarum*: a straight line drawn eastwards across the map from the archipelago would terminate in Sri Lanka, the Romans' Taprobane, and most likely one of Gildas's "eastern islands"; the words attributed to Alexander the Great's counsellors, gazing on Ocean beyond India, are apposite: "beyond all, Ocean; beyond Ocean, nothing."⁷⁹ Explaining Virgil's reference to the embroidered Britons, the late antique Virgilian commentator and grammarian Servius says,

The embroidered Britons raise the purple curtains. He spoke this according to history. After Augustus conquered Britain, he donated to theatrical ceremonies a great number of the captives whom he had brought. For he gave curtains, that is veils, on which he had painted his victories and in this manner the Britons, themselves donated by him, carried these same curtains, which indeed were accustomed to carry them; which matter he expressed with marvellous ambiguity, saying 'woven, they raise'; for they were embroidered on those very curtains, the same curtains which they carried.⁸⁰

In Britain, the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* also interpreted Virgil's words to mean that Britain was subject to Augustus. When Octavian Augustus held the monarchy of the whole world, he alone accepted tribute from Britain: "as Virgil says: 'the embroidered Britons raise

Commentary (Oxford, 1990), p. 183.

⁷⁸ "et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos," *Ecl.* 1.66; Origen, *In Lucam Homilia* 6; Jerome, *Ep.* 46.10; Isidore, *Etym.* 9.2,102.

⁷⁹ "post omnia Oceanus, post Oceanus nihil," Seneca, *Suasoriae* 1.1; cf. 1.10-11,16. Sri Lanka on the Map: *Hereford*, p. 67, no. 138, where it is called Taphana.

⁸⁰ "Hoc secundum historiam est locutus. Nam Augustus postquam vicit Britanniam, plurimos de captivis, quos adduxerat, donavit ad officia theatraia. Dedit enim aulaea, id est velamina, in quibus depinxerat victorias suas et quemadmodum Britanni ab eo donati eadem vela portarent, quae re vera portare consueverant; quam rem mira expressit ambiguitate dicens intexti tollant; nam in velis ipsi erant picti, qui eadem vela portabant." G. Thilo and H. Hagen (eds.), *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Virgilio Bucolica et Georgica Commentarii*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1887; repr. Hildesheim, 1961), p. 276.

the purple curtains'.⁸¹ The *Historia Brittonum* is an essential source for the *Historia Regum Britanniae* on the Britons' Trojan and Roman links, and it is no coincidence that Geoffrey of Monmouth, who ignores Gildas's reference to an Augustan conquest, nevertheless indicates a peaceful and friendly British recognition of Roman *imperium* at the time of the incarnation, with the Britons voluntarily paying Rome a tribute that they could have withheld, and Kimbelinus (Shakespeare's Cymbeline) being reared and war-trained in Augustus's own household.⁸² Geoffrey, too, shares the providential Orosian vision of a world at peace under Rome at the time of Christ's birth, and wishes to associate Britain with it; he later depicts the island becoming Christian via contact with Rome: King Lucius obtains missionaries from Pope Eleutherius.⁸³

The late antique exegete Apponius, who celebrates Christ as the means of universal salvation, gave a providential interpretation to the claim that Augustus had conquered Britain. Citing Livy's authority on Augustus announcing the conquest of the world in Rome, following his return from the conquest of Britain, Apponius synchronizes Augustus's announcement of universal peace with Christ's birth in fulfilment of Psalm 71:7: "In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace." This is a peace of souls – peace between God and man – and the *Pax Romana*:

For from that time, it was shown to the world that not only did the peace of souls illuminate the world but triumphed over public and civil matters, and with the Roman empire exalted, war laid to rest and peace of all barbarian races obtained, peace triumphed, and the whole human race, in whatever place it dwelt, from that time was bound by a chain of peace. On the day of his appearance, which is called Epiphany, Caesar Augustus during public shows, as Livy tells us, announced to the Roman people, that having returned from the island of Britain, all the world is subdued as much as by war as by the

⁸¹ "ut Virgilius ait: *Purpurea intexti tollunt aulea Bryttani*," *Historia Brittonum* 9, D. N. Dumville (ed.), *Historia Brittonum: the Vatican Recension*, (Cambridge, 1985).

⁸² *HRB* 4.64,271-77.

⁸³ *HRB* 4.72, 400-433, without acknowledging Bede, *HE* 1.4.

abundance of peace to alliance with Roman *imperium*.⁸⁴

Considering the Hereford map in the light of the sources cited above, Augustus's placement next to the British Isles might reflect the map-designer's providential understanding of history: by associating Britain with his world-rule at the time of the incarnation, the map connects Britain's history to the greatest moment in the history of salvation, and implies that God permitted Rome to conquer the island so that it could become an integral part of the worldwide Christian community. Compare Henry of Huntingdon in the twelfth century, reading the *Historia Brittonum* and Virgil on Augustus and Britain in the light of scriptural prophecy:

Augustus succeeded Julius Caesar and held the monarchy of the whole world. He surveyed the entire globe and took tribute from the Britons as from his other kingdoms. As Virgil says: "Embroidered Britons raise up purple tapestries [*Historia Brittonum*. Vat., c 9; Virgil, *Georgics*, 3.25]." He did this in the forty-second year of his imperial rule, when the True Light was born and shone on earth [cf. John 1:9-10], by which all the kingdoms and islands of the world, which were hidden in darkness, knew that there is one God [cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29], and saw him who created them.⁸⁵

Henry of Huntingdon's words reveal him as an attentive reader of classical, patristic and Insular sources on the Roman conquest and conversion of the archipelagic ends of the earth. His reference to islands knowing God is particularly relevant to Britain, since exegetes

⁸⁴ "Nam, ex quo facto est et mundo ostensa, non solum animarum pax illuminat mundum, sed publica, etiam civilia, romano imperio exalto, bella sopita, pace omnium gentium barbarorum reperta, exsultat; et omne humanus genus, quocumque terrarum loco obtinet sedem, ex eo tempore, uno illigatur vinculo pacis. In cuius apparitionis die, quod Epiphania appellatur, Caesar Augustus in spectaculis, sicut Livius narrat, romano populo nuntiat, regressus a Britannia insula, totum orbem terrarum tam bella quam amicitias romano imperio pacis abundantia subditum," B. de Vregille and L. Neyrand (eds.), *In Canticum Canticorum Expositionem*, CCSL 19 (Turnhout, 1986), 12.798-807 (cf. Apponius on *Cant.* 7:1 at 10.62-65). See T. E. Mommsen, "Apponius and Orosius on the Significance of the Epiphany," in K. Weitzman (ed.), *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honour of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 96-111. Investigations of Apponius's reference to Livy include T. E. Mommsen, "Augustus and Britain: A Fragment from Livy?" *American Journal of Philology* 75 (1954), pp. 175-183; N. Reed "Three Fragments of Livy Concerning Britain," *Latomus* 32 (1973), pp. 764-785; CCSL 119, lxxiiv. Apponius's reference, if genuine, belongs to a lost section of Livy's work.

⁸⁵ "Augustus Julio Caesari succedens monarchiam totius mundi tenuit: descripsit autem universum orbem, et a Britannia, sicut ab aliis regnis, census accepit, ut Virgilius ait: Purpurea intexti tollunt aulea Britanni [*Hist. Britt.* Vat., c 9; *Georg.* 3.25]. Hoc autem fecit anno imperio eius quadragesimo secundo, quando lux vera mundo nato innotuit, per quem omnia regna mundi et insulae caligine oppressae cognoverunt Deum unum esse, et viderunt qui creavit eos", *Historia Anglorum* 1.16.

associated scriptural promises of salvation reaching even the remotest gentile islands with the British-Irish archipelago, on the basis of Genesis 10:1-5, which connected Noah's son Japheth and his descendants with islands.⁸⁶ The *Historia Britonnum* integrates Britain's Trojan history into this tradition, ultimately tracing Brutus's ancestry to Japheth, via his son Javan.⁸⁷ The Lambeth *mappa mundi*, illustrating a manuscript of the *Historia Britonnum* and dating from the same period as the Hereford map, provides a visual expression of the providential theme underlying the text's integration of Trojan and scriptural British foundation legends and enumeration of the peoples of the world descended from Noah's sons. The Lambeth map depicts the *orbis terrarum* as the body of Christ, resembling the eucharistic host, with Jerusalem almost at its centre as Christ's navel, and the world's most significant places named within a series of circles radiating from the center.⁸⁸ At the furthest possible point westward from Jerusalem, above Christ's right foot, lie the Orkney islands, the archipelago's remotest outpost, facing India in the furthest east. The Atlantic Isles and the rest of the world are literally incorporated into the body of Christ in a cartographical demonstration of Paul's words in Ephesians 5:30 -- the Church is Christ's body, and we are its living members.

Papal Rome Supersedes Imperial Rome

Henry of Huntingdon's choice of scriptural quotations on universal salvation in the *Historia Anglorum* recalls Pope Vitalian's letter to King Oswiu of Northumbria, included in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which celebrates the archipelago's conversion in a chain of

⁸⁶ J. O'Reilly, "Islands and idols at the ends of the earth: exegesis and conversion in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*" in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le Vénérable: entre tradition et postérité. The Venerable Bede: Tradition and Posterity* (Lille, 2005), pp. 119-145 at 119-122.

⁸⁷ *Historia Britonnum*, Vat., c 7; Genesis 10:4.

⁸⁸ Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 371. fol. 9v; see the discussion in S. D. Westrem, "Geography and Travel" in P. Brown (ed.), *A Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 195-217, at 206-209, with the map reproduced at 209, figure 12.2.

quotations from Isaiah evoking images of light, darkness, islands and universal gentile salvation.⁸⁹ Vitalian wrote to Oswiu in the context of Northumbria's acceptance of the Roman dating of Easter in 664; he declared in Pauline language that Oswiu as "a member of Christ" must obey "the holy rule of the chief of the apostles in all things."⁹⁰ Vitalian's connections between salvation, orthodoxy, Rome and the archipelago are tremendously developed in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede makes no reference to a providentially ordained imperial Roman conquest of Britain at the time of the incarnation. Instead, he emphasizes that, directly and indirectly, salvation came to the Britons, Irish, English and Picts from papal Rome, the guarantor of orthodoxy and head of the universal Church.⁹¹

As Jennifer O'Reilly has shown, Bede and other patristic and early Insular authorities believed that the conversion of Britain and Ireland -- undertaken in obedience to Christ's command to preach to all peoples -- fulfilled prophecies of the extension of salvation from Jerusalem to the furthest gentiles in the last days, represented in microcosm the conversion of the whole world and prepared the way for the Second Coming: the very scene that dominates the lunette of the Hereford map.⁹² Bede establishes Christ and not any Roman emperor as the islands' true and eternal ruler. His *Historia Ecclesiastica* makes it clear that, for all their boasts, the Romans never subdued all of Britain, let alone Ireland, and the ancestors of his own English people had lived unconquered beyond the empire's Continental frontiers.⁹³

⁸⁹ *HE* 3.29; Henry mentions the letter in *Historia Anglorum* 3.46.

⁹⁰ "*Quamobrem oportet vestram celsitudinem, utpote membrum existens Christi, in omnibus piam regulam sequi perenniter principis apostolorum,*" *HE* 3.29.

⁹¹ Britons: *HE* 1.4; Irish: *HE* 1.13; English: *HE* 1.23; 2.1; Picts: *HE* 3.4.

⁹² J. O'Reilly, "Introduction" in S. Connolly (trans.), *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. xiii-lv, at xxxiii-li); O'Reilly, "Islands and idols"; O'Reilly, "The multitude of isles and the corner-stone: topography, exegesis, and the identity of the *Angli* in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*" in J. Roberts and L. Webster (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Trace*, (Tempe AZ, 2011), pp. 201-227. *Hereford*, 6-7. A version of the succeeding paragraphs appears in D. Scully, "The Third Voyage of Cormac in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*: Analogues and Context," in J. Roberts and A. Minnis (eds.), *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Eamonn Ó Carragáin* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 209-230 at 220-221.

⁹³ D. Scully, "Bede, Orosius and Gildas on the early history of Britain" in S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, O. Szerwiniack

When Rome finally conquered the English, it was a spiritual conquest: the late sixth-century Christian mission initiated by Pope Gregory I, the successor of St Peter, not Augustus. For Bede and other early Insular writers who followed patristic traditions that diverge from an Orosian reading of history, imperial Rome's failure to conquer the entire archipelago and its peoples demonstrated that only Christ's spiritual empire, centered in papal Rome, could claim true universality.

Thus, Columbanus tells Pope Boniface IV that, although the Irish are aware of Rome's imperial greatness, for them the city's true glory comes from its association with the Chair of Peter, the source of Irish Christianity (a reference to Palladius's mission, sent by Pope Celestine in the early 430s); writing about Ireland's conversion in words reminiscent of imperial proclamations of triumph over Ocean and world-rule from east to west, he depicts the apostles Peter and Paul drawing Christ's chariot across vast Ocean to the world's western limits.⁹⁴ He does not need to state the obvious to Boniface: no Roman emperor ever matched this achievement. The pope's predecessor Leo I and the chronicler Prosper of Aquitaine, who recorded the Palladian mission, made that point in the fifth century. They describe the faith winning territories beyond the boundaries of the empire and declare that Rome's greatness lies in its apostolic primacy, rather than earthly dominion.⁹⁵

(eds.), *Bède le Vénérable*," pp. 31-42; D. Scully, "Location and Occupation: Bede, Gildas and the Roman vision of Britain" in Roberts and Webster (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, pp. 243-272.

⁹⁴ *Ep. 5*, G. S. M. Walker (ed. and trans.), *Sancti Columbanus opera*, SLH 2 (Dublin, 1957); D. Bracken, "Authority and duty: Columbanus and the primacy of Rome," *Peritia* 16 (2002), pp. 168-213 at 175-177.

⁹⁵ Leo, *Tractatus* 82; Prosper, *De Vocatione omnium gentium* 2.16. T. M. Charles-Edwards, "Palladius, Prosper and Leo the Great: mission and primatial authority" in D. Dumville (ed.), *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493-1993* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 1-12; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 202-214; D. Bracken, "Authority and duty."

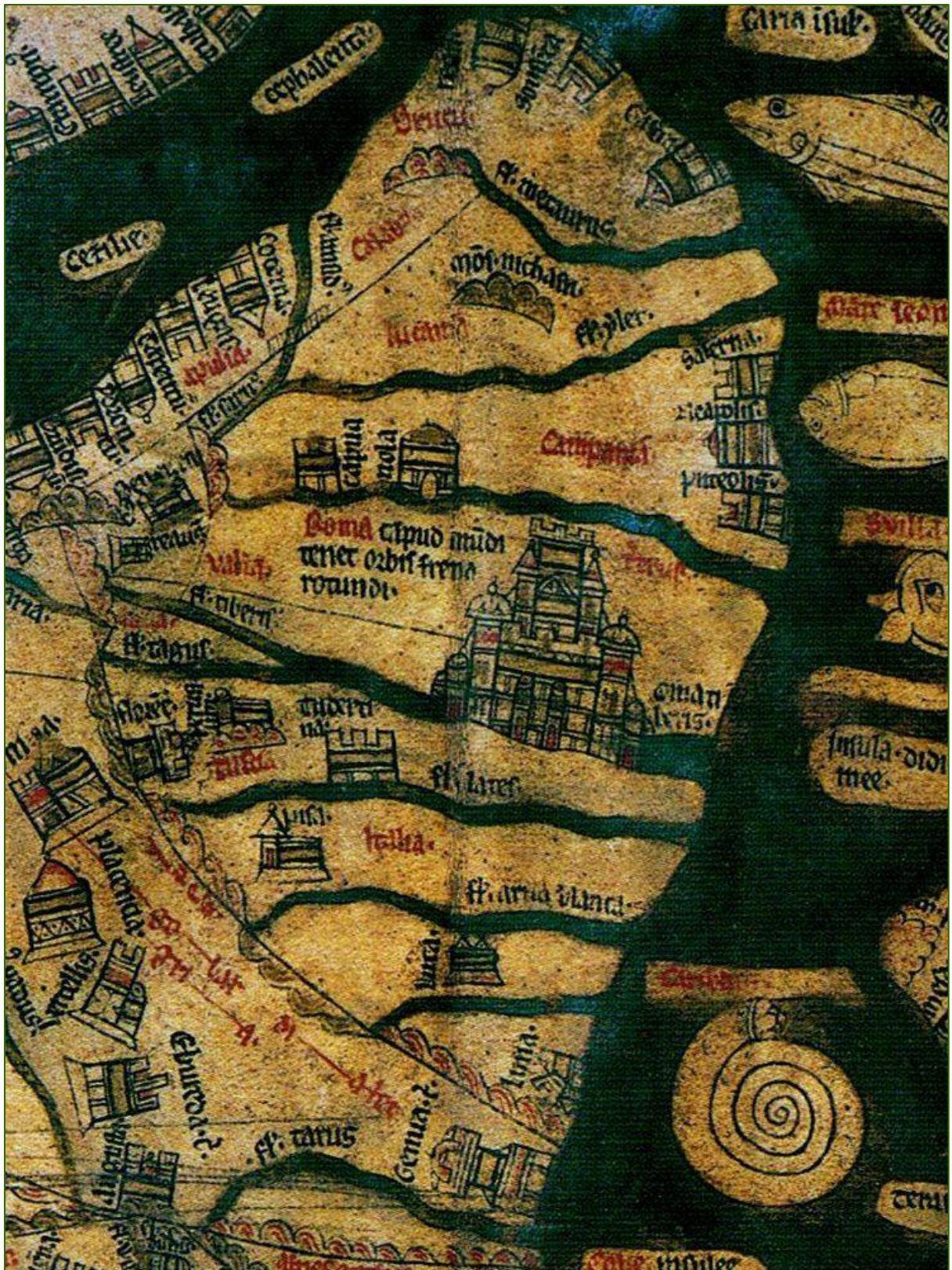


Figure 3 The Hereford map asserts Rome's continuing world-rule as spiritual capital of Christendom: 'Roma caput mundi tenet orbis frena rotundi.' Photo: with the permission of the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust and the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral.

The Hereford map may share this understanding of papal Rome and its relationship with the archipelago. The map can be read in several ways at once. It associates the archipelago with an Orosian narrative of providential Roman global *imperium* at the time of Christ's birth, but its positioning of Augustus as composite emperor-pope next to the archipelago, and most closely Ireland, simultaneously asserts the primacy and true universality of papal Rome. To adapt Matthew Paris's words, the "the capital of Christendom" has replaced the pagan capital of "all miscreance and error." The post-imperial conversion of the unconquered Irish and English peoples under papal Roman direction is proof of the claim advanced by Matthew, Gervase of Tilbury and the Hereford map: "*Roma caput mundi tenet orbis frena rotundi.*"⁹⁶ **(Figure 3)**

⁹⁶ Matthew Paris: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 16, fol. 126; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 26, fol. 3r; Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia* 2.8; *Hereford*, p. 271, no. 680.