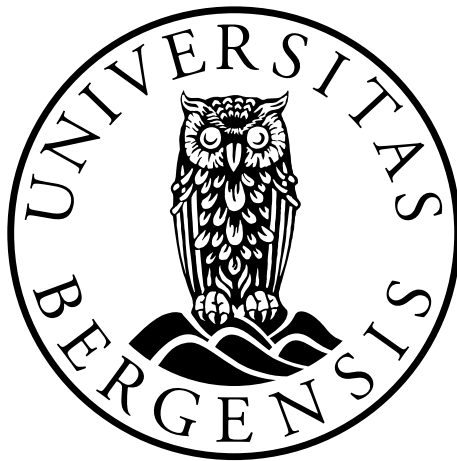


Writing the Order

Religious-Political Discourses in Late Anglo-Saxon England

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CMS - Centre for
Medieval Studies



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Abbreviations

Assmann	Assmann, Bruno (ed.), <i>Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben</i>
BL	British Library
CCCC	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College
CH I	Ælfric, <i>Catholic Homilies</i> , First Series
CH II	Ælfric, <i>Catholic Homilies</i> , Second Series
EETS	Early English Text Society
O.S.	Original series
S.S.	Supplementary series
Fehr	Fehr, Bernhard (ed.), <i>Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics</i>
Gneuss	Gneuss, Helmut, <i>Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts</i>
HE	Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Ker	Ker, N. R., <i>Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon</i>
LS	Ælfric, the <i>Lives of Saints</i>
Napier	Napier, Arthur (ed.), <i>Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit</i>
Pope	Pope, John C. (ed.), <i>Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection</i>
S	Sawyer, Peter H., <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography</i>
SEM	Studies in the Early Middle Ages

Note on Anglo-Saxon characters

Spelling of certain Anglo-Saxon characters and abbreviations used in medieval manuscripts varies in printed editions. I use consistent spelling in this thesis: ‘and’ for *amperagus* (7), ‘g’ for *yogh* (3), ‘w’ for *wynn* (p), and ‘þæt’ for *thorn* (þ) with a crossed ascender. Additionally, some of the edited texts reproduce acute accents (á), and the rest do not. These inconsistencies are in this thesis silently standardized to characters without accents.

1. Introduction

As the end of the first millennium approached, Ælfric of Eynsham, a homilist in the busiest stage of his writing career, encouraged his lay audience to live a righteous life with these words: ‘Now we must consider very carefully that our life is so ordered, that we will meet our end in God, from whom we received our beginning.’¹ The sentence is part of the beginning of a homily in the *Lives of Saints*, a tract that was meant to be read at any desired occasion, *Sermo de memoria sanctorum* (LS 16). Its message, which combines conceptions of a well-ordered life and religious authority, and which implicitly imposes a certain moral vision of correct Christian society, encapsulates the topic of this thesis. The main objective of this study is, namely, to examine the literary means with which conceptions of social order were authorized in the religious-political discourses of late Anglo-Saxon England. My approach to the topic is to examine the hagiographic, epistolary, homiletic, and legal writings of abbot Ælfric of Eynsham (ca. 950–1010) and Wulfstan, bishop of London and Worcester and archbishop of York (ca. 950–1023), from the viewpoint of religious rhetoric. By analyzing the religious models, norms and values inherent in the rhetoric of the texts, this study contributes to the discussion about the role of religion in the ways political and social order was conceptualized, interpreted and in some ways also promoted in late Anglo-Saxon England. The issue of how authority was created, maintained and defined in religious terms by the written word is therefore the main concern throughout this study. In this introductory chapter I will first give an overview of my research interests, discuss the issues connected to authority, religion and the written word, and examine the concepts of rhetoric and discourse in junction with how normative discourse can be produced. Then I will present my research objectives and the structure of the thesis in detail, and discuss the nature of the source material under examination. Finally I will review the methodological and

¹ ‘Nu sceole we hogian mid mycelne gymene, þæt ure lif beo swa gelogod, þæt ure ende geendige on god, þanon þe us þæt angin com.’ Walter W. Skeat, ed. *Ælfric's Lives of Saints: Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, EETS 76, 82, 94, 114 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1881), 2 vols., vol. 1, 336–337.

theoretical approaches used in this study. I will start with introducing the motives behind the topic.

1.1. Authority, religion and the written word

The relationship between secular and sacred, or lay and religious, has been a subject of scholarly interest for a long time, and justifying secular power on the grounds of religious views is usually seen to have been a prevailing practice in the Middle Ages. Understanding the connection between secular and sacred is not straightforward at all, as it appeared in different forms at different times, and comprised various motives, interpretations and implications. For the present purposes, the most prevalent issue that brings these two concepts together is authority, inherent either in the capability or in an attempt to impose normative concepts of what is right and how people should behave in their social surroundings. My interest in this topic started in a somewhat indirect way, at least when considering the Middle Ages. The existence of inequality in its many forms always troubled me, and I wanted to understand the ways people justify their power and superiority over others. In establishing continuous, approved, and legitimate authority it can be said that the pen is mightier than the sword. That is why I am especially interested in literary manifestations of authorizing social order. In this process, the working of religious rhetoric is an aspect which makes the topic even more interesting. Religious rhetoric draws on notions of truth and sacredness, which the audience is expected to share. Thus religious rhetoric uses arguments from spheres that cannot be disputed, changed, nor empirically validated, moving the whole discourse to the realm of sacredness. In terms of politics, this kind of argumentation has always been very effective. To understand how it works in practice, it is important to consider the issues connected to the written word, rhetoric and language in general.

To begin with, it should be noted that the written word had a special role as an authoritative tool in the Middle Ages, as it still does in many ways.² In the religious field, the word of God was considered to be sacred and to have absolute authority. There was no text as authoritative and

² George Hardin Brown, "The Dynamics of Literacy," in *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Nothcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. Donald Scragg (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 183–184.

unique as the Bible.³ The authority of the text had established itself as an inherent part of the Christian culture, and already from its outset Christianity was heavily concentrated on verbal formulation. The word of God, *logos*, was one of the central concepts in the doctrine from early on, and the written word constituted the basic element both in practice and premises. The importance of the written word was not confined to spreading the faith or to providing practical and liturgical regulations for the faithful, but it had more profound implications, which in turn played a part in authorizing religious-political discourse. Namely, the questions of interpretation and the representation of the religious truth were among the most essential philosophical issues in the Middle Ages when it came to estimating the authority of texts.

Behind the issue of interpretation lies the question of what constituted true and absolute knowledge and by what means humans could gain it. Absolute knowledge of God's meanings was considered to belong to the realm of the celestial, rather than the secular, and as such was regarded inaccessible by normal means. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who was a major authoritative figure for the writers of late Anglo-Saxon England, deals extensively with the interpretation of the Holy Scripture in his *De doctrina Christiana*.⁴ In book 2 he juxtaposes profane knowledge with sacred knowledge, and presents shortcomings of linguistic representation in terms of correct interpretation. The idea behind this is that ever since the sin of pride manifested in the tower of Babel, which confused and disintegrated the languages of men, the interpretation of the word of God has been subordinate to the restrictions of human language.⁵ Consequently the status of the Holy Scripture was in contrast with secular literature, which lacked

³ Friedrich Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significs and the Philology of Culture*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2–3; Robert Stanton, *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), 101.

⁴ Lynne Grundy has studied the impact of Augustine on Ælfric, and states that 'almost all the ideas contained within Ælfric's sermons are to be found in Augustine, who was either their originator or their refiner. [...] Equally importantly, Ælfric is the inheritor of a set of ideas which are recognizably Augustine's. In his own way, he is also the developer, nourisher and disseminator of these ideas[.]' Lynne Grundy, *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology*, King's College London Medieval Studies VI (London: King's College London, 1991), 7.

⁵ Chapters 2:4.8–2:5.9; 2:19.73–2:20.74. R. P. H. Green, ed. *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 60–61, 90–91.

the spiritual, hidden meanings of the word of God. Therefore the correct interpretation of the Bible was of utmost importance.⁶

Reaching the true knowledge required proper interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, which in turn required immense amounts of learning on how to interpret texts, language and rhetoric. The function of rhetoric was not only to make the text more beautiful, although beauty itself was seen strongly linked with divine. It must be seen as having been essentially linked with hermeneutics; rhetoric was an analytical tool for uncovering the hidden meanings of God.⁷ Especially allegory was an important rhetorical device which was thought to be essential in uncovering the message of the Bible. The prerequisite for this idea was that the Bible had layered meanings which were not immediately obvious to any reader, but had to be interpreted. Allegories were divided in three categories, typological, tropological and anagogical, and they corresponded with Christian history, its past, present and future.⁸ Therefore what characterized the religious culture of the Middle Ages was a constant drive for interpretation, which in theory was incompatible with the principle that sacred knowledge was unattainable with humane means. This dilemma was an essential factor in the biblical exegesis and the rhetorical studies in the Middle Ages

Interpretation was not the only issue that troubled the minds of medieval thinkers. With the aforementioned attitudes towards the shortcomings of human language, linguistic representation also became problematic. This was especially true of texts with which the correct Christian doctrine and the teachings of the Church were intended to be delivered, such as homilies and sermons, the main material of this study. As the goal of a Christian writer was seen to be the representation of religious truth in a clear manner, the judgement of how this truth could be presented in writing turned out to be problematic. For medieval thinkers this representation, both of the secular and with certain restrictions also of the sacred, was in any case thought to be possible. Not only could language refer to the worldly matters, but also to the holy, and thus to metaphysical and abstract truths. But, as a worldly medium, consequently being imperfect, language lacked capabilities to represent holy matters fully in the correct

⁶ Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 2–4.

⁷ Calvin B. Kendall, ed. *Bede: Libri II De Arte Metrica et De Schematibus et Tropis: The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, Bibliotheca Germanica, Series Nova. Vol. 2 (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 1991), 23–24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

way. The human language and the sacred it aspired to represent belonged to different ontological spheres, and this is why it was thought that, if necessary, one could use the best words and formulae available. Therefore, as Augustine wrote in *De doctrina Christiana*, if language lacked the precise words to describe the Christian message, it was fully acceptable to use the best possible words available in order to reach the most plausible meaning, providing that the content of doctrine was correctly learned. The most important goal was that the audience understood the message correctly, especially when delivering sermons.⁹ Narrative was thus a medium for symbolic representation; the essential thing (*res*), the divinity present in the world, belonged to a different realm than the linguistic representation of it (*verba*). Being part of two different spheres, the divinity was in principle impossible to validate with empirical means, and could be manifested by the grace of God only.¹⁰ Language, therefore, while being imperfect, was the only means with which humans could explore and expound on the spiritual meanings of sacred texts.

The subjects of language, interpretation and representation find their fullest significance as objects of historical research, when they are studied in conjunction with their implications in practice. In this instance it means acknowledging that the discourse of Christianity was closely tied to the development of political thought and history. The issues which might at first seem overtly theoretical are in fact essential lynchpins with which the discussion of authority, normative discourse and the late Anglo-Saxon writers can be started. In terms of notions of the order of society, the sacred truth and absolute knowledge form the background against which its human interpretations were contrasted. By acknowledging the absolute nature of sacred order on the one hand and attempting to interpret and imitate it on the other, medieval writers offer valuable material for gaining insight into late Anglo-Saxon religious, social and political thought. As Averil Cameron has shown in her study on the development of early Christian discourse, the form of discourse itself was a significant tool not only in creating authority for Christian doctrine but also to social order and morality. The stories Christian literature deployed served as tools in regulating the society at

⁹ Chapter 4:10.66–73. Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 224–229. See also Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9.

¹⁰ ———, *Sacred Biography*, 11.

large and thus functioned as 'structure-maintaining narratives'.¹¹ I assume that the most crucial authorizing idea at stake was the notion of 'the real life' after death, which represented everything that was right and real, as opposed to life on earth, which was in Christian views seen only as an in-between stage on the way to salvation. The narratives employed elements of the miraculous, and constructed a world view in which the invisible was always near, and in which actions in this life had immediate consequences, for good or bad, on the Day of Judgement. With this profound relationship between action and consequence, and with apparent knowledge of the hidden, Christian narratives can indeed be understood as regulating society starting from the grassroots level. In broader levels of societal structures, it also provided authorizing models for organizing political society.

To sum up the introductory account, the correctness and authority of the Christian doctrine was not easy to establish with words, and the medieval writers seem to have always been compelled to adjust to the requirements of both tradition and preservation on the one hand, and continual interpretation, translation and transmission of knowledge on the other. Authority, religion and the written word are thus the main elements that I grapple with throughout this thesis. As concepts they all intertwine with the principle that accords language and rhetoric an active role in the formation of normative values. There are several, often overlapping issues connected to the topic of this study, and I will address at least the most essential throughout this thesis. The ambivalent word of the title, 'order', is deliberately chosen to present two aspects of the issue at hand. First of all, it refers to the right order of the world, as a condition where people and things have their correct place, and where they perform their proper functions. Secondly, on a more abstract level, the word alludes to the order of God, in its authoritative, moral and spiritual meaning. As I propose in this study, these two aspects were inherent in the conception of order as promoted by the monastic and ecclesiastic writers of late Anglo-Saxon England. Before engaging with these themes, I will first specify the particular objectives of this study, review the nature of the source material, and then consider the methodological and theoretical premises of my research.

¹¹ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 92–93.

1.2. Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to determine in what way the main authors of late Anglo-Saxon England, Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulfstan of York, formulated their conceptions about religious and social order with their written works, adaptations and translations.¹² These formulations are read as having been part of a larger conceptual framework of how to constitute a proper Christian society on earth. Consequently, they tell of the concepts that were attempted to be imposed on people, and this feature makes the discourse in question normative and ideological. The goal of the analysis of Ælfric's and Wulfstan's discourse is to find out the expressions with which the prevailing discourse worked, the boundaries of this framework, and the preconditions to the rules by which religious language could be used to authorize these ideologies. Religious rhetoric that was used to categorize order in society aimed to establish rules, responsibilities and boundaries, which were seen as necessary on the way to salvation. This kind of rhetoric was not only confined to religious spheres, but, as it is seen in the course of this study, it aspired to extend to the whole society, and aimed to influence the secular sphere as much as the ecclesiastical.

The actual effects of this aspiration are of course hard—and in many case impossible—to ascertain, as the recipients themselves have not left much evidence of the success or failure of these attempts. Even if my purpose is not to estimate the effects or reception of these notions as such, it is, however, worth remembering that the interaction between the secular and monastic parts of society is known to have been quite active in Anglo-Saxon England.¹³ Especially homilies are thought to have reached much

¹² While acknowledging that the positions of and relations between gender is an essential part of social order, the issue is not engaged with in this thesis. It is important to note, however, that the discourse of the sources of this study was written in a way which assumed a male audience throughout, and in this anticipation of male groups and actors it also created restrictive social order in terms of gender. On gender issues concerning Anglo-Saxon England see Carol Braun Pasternack, "Negotiating Gender in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Carol Braun Pasternack (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003). See also chapter 5, "Chastity and Charity: Ælfric, Women, and the Female Saints" in Clare A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 133–153.

¹³ See especially John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 166–181, 279–285, 341–354.

broader parts of society than what the picture of the literate and secluded ecclesiastical elite of the Middle Ages would suggest.¹⁴ More important for the purposes of this study is to acknowledge the implications which the engagement with these kinds of research objectives induce.

When delving into concepts of the written word, religious-political discourse and social order, the essential starting point is to regard the aspirations in the texts as primarily ideals, which contrasted the practice and normativity in some degree. The normative notions were basically formulated by those who saw themselves as possessing proper knowledge and learning, making an attempt to impose their ideas onto the structures of the rest of the society. It should not at any point of this study be assumed that these views represent the notions of those who they were intended to, but of those in an authoritative position to dictate what was right and what was wrong. As such, the study offers a valuable viewpoint to examining the means with which this kind of authorization was attempted. Therefore, while it is acknowledged that the authors worked within the framework of tradition, both intellectual and literary, their own formulations, even though formulaic and conventional, are given full appreciation as expressions in their own surroundings.

Consequently, as the authors and their works are read in their own context, the necessary question that follows is: what were the authors *doing* when they formulated their conceptions of religiously correct order?¹⁵ Even though one can see commonplaces and literary tradition in the background of their statements, it is important to acknowledge them as genuine statements in their own settings. The notable feature in the discourse of Ælfric and Wulfstan is that they translated and transferred the notions of order into the vernacular. This expanded the sphere of influence these texts had, especially considering their nature as texts that were meant to be used by a range of other preachers in their pastoral care, delivering the Christian message for a wider audience. Essentially, then, Ælfric's and Wulfstan's normative discourse in their homiletic and other writings must be regarded as an attempt to legislate and to define what was morally and absolutely right—it inherently encompassed 'a wish to impose a particular moral vision

¹⁴ Jonathan Wilcox, "Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care," in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 53–59, 62.

¹⁵ Cf. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols., vol. 1: *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), vii.

on the workings of the social world'.¹⁶ And when imposing their moral conceptions, there was not much room for relativity, which impregnated a large part of later philosophy. It is important to note that for medieval thinkers the notion of absolute right was essential. The premise behind all attempts to legislate was the Christian conviction which denied the relativity of moral correctness. Therefore the moral grounds on which men should establish earthly societies, and which defined the actions of each people in it, were not, in theory, open for revision. Despite the varied customs in each society, the basis for establishing a Christian society was supposed to be the love of God.¹⁷

The chapters of this study are divided according to different aspects of the whole that comprises the religious-political discourse of Ælfric and Wulfstan, its premises, creation, transformation and transmission. While the main requisite for the division of chapters is thematic, based largely on the source material and the rhetorical features discussed in different chapters, the work follows also a loose chronological development. Chapter 2, 'Intellectual aspirations and political challenges at the turn of the millennium', gives the historical and intellectual context necessary to understand the discussion in the following chapters. The main issues that are examined here are the so-called Benedictine reform of the tenth century England, its main characteristics and ambitions, how it related to the development on the continent, and especially what were Ælfric's and Wulfstan's role in it as the second-generation members of the reform. In addition, the unstable political circumstances and the notorious Viking attacks, which Ælfric and Wulfstan witnessed during much of their lives, are discussed in this chapter. Chapter 3, 'Holy kings and the hagiographic homilies of Ælfric', examines the presentations of holy kings in Ælfric's hagiographical homilies and touches upon re-formulations of holiness in translations from Latin to Old English. The main interest is Ælfric's way of rearranging his Latin material, not only in terms of narrative order but also

¹⁶ This phrase, which I find extremely useful in the study of homiletic discourse, comes from Quentin Skinner. In this instance Skinner discusses his earlier assumption that evaluative terms have at one point a standard and generally accepted meaning, and acknowledges that such assumptions should be questioned. Such standardization of terms into their 'correct' use and meaning are therefore viewed as ideological. The quoted phrase is especially appropriate in case of late Anglo-Saxon discourse, since it defines the essential workings of authoritative texts. *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁷ Chapter 3:14.51–53. Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 154–155.

in terms of his conceptions of sanctity. In this chapter I also evaluate the role of royal hagiography in the interpretations of the ideals of kingship on the one hand and in assessing their function as moral models on the other hand. Chapter 4, 'Teaching the laity: Ælfric, secular aristocracy and proper order', examines Ælfric's moral teaching of the laity, as it is evident in his homiletic 'letters' addressed to members of the lay aristocracy, and comments on the transmission of the holy and true learning of the Christian doctrine from monastic to lay spheres. It also engages with Ælfric's conceptions of lay morality and social order. Chapter 5, 'Formulating the holy society: transmission and development', examines the textual relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan, and evaluates the nature of this transmission of ideas about social order. It focuses on the correspondence between Ælfric and Wulfstan and on Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, and discusses the ethical principles and the segregation of society. A case in point is an examination of the notion of the three orders of society, and how it was dealt with first in Ælfric's and then in Wulfstan's works. Lastly, chapter 6, 'Guilt atonement and legislation: Wulfstan's legal-homiletic discourse', examines the employment of religious and moral elements in the legal writings of Wulfstan, specifically the invocation of guilt and atonement. It discusses the concepts of law and morality, sin and guilt, and penance and atonement in the law codes which Wulfstan drafted first for King Æthelred II and then for Cnut I. These chapters all deal with and also argue for the essential point that forms the backbone of this study: the imposition of normative conceptions of religiously proper social order.

1.3. Source material

The works of Ælfric and Wulfstan have for long been among the core interests of Anglo-Saxonists, and their language, style and rhetoric have been studied and compared with each other in many instances. The amount of interest that the same Old English homiletic prose texts have received from the point of view of historical research has been significantly smaller. This results partly from the prevailing trends in the scholarly field and partly from the hindrances that the language of the sources presents. As one so often sees being mentioned, historical research on the political thought of the tenth and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England has not been as extensive as the study of continental material or the study of Anglo-Norman political thought. Most of the sources of Anglo-Saxon England in this period

were written in the vernacular, whereas the political thought on the continent and later in England can be examined predominantly with the help of Latin works. In addition, coherent, proper philosophical treatises of Anglo-Saxon England are few, and most of the comments which touch upon matters of political thought are found, instead, in the prefaces to law codes, in charters and in homiletic works.¹⁸ Especially the last point has proven to be even more overlooked than the question of the language of the sources. Homiletic prose texts have not traditionally been the most obvious source for historians, and also in literary studies they are not the first choice on the curriculum, whereas vernacular poetry has always presented itself more intriguing. It has also been assumed in a rather simplistic manner that the reason for the lack of historical study of Old English homiletic texts is that historians work primarily with ‘objective historical records’ such as chronicles, wills and charters, and are not interested in homiletic material which for the modern audience feels ‘strange’.¹⁹ Although these kinds of assessments of the situation with sources are slightly exaggerating and provocative—no serious historian would say, for instance, that chronicles, wills and charters are objective, or that ‘homilies do not provide anything like enough apparently “historical” information’²⁰—the point stands that homiletic prose texts are in need of more research also in terms of history and political thought.

The sources of each chapter of this study differ from each other in some degree, and are discussed in more detail in their appropriate places, but their general nature falls within homiletic prose. Anglo-Saxon homilies are

¹⁸ Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan: A Critical Study* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 164; Henry R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 83–84.

¹⁹ Mary Swan, “*Men ða leofestan*: Genre, the Canon, and the Old English Homiletic Tradition,” in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching*, ed. Paul Cavill (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 185.

²⁰ Swan asserts: “The historical canon accommodates far more Old English prose, but rarely homilies: other genres, such as chronicles, wills and charters, are read as records of historical events and circumstances, but homilies do not provide anything like enough apparently “historical” information for study by students of Anglo-Saxon England. Old English homilies, then, usually fail to qualify as either historical or literary texts, and so are kept out of sight of many undergraduate students. [...] [T]hey are not objective historical records; they are useful as examples of language or social reference, but not as much more than that—in fact, the real reason students are not asked to pay great attention to Old English homiletic prose is that it is so strange for modern readers, including their tutors.’ *Ibid.*

somewhat difficult to differentiate from sermons, and in a similar vein they usually treat some doctrinal or moral theme, or comment on the significance of a feast day or on a passage from the Bible.²¹ Most of what Ælfric wrote was homiletic; also his hagiographic translations studied in chapter 3 represent the same homiletic style he endorsed throughout his working career. The homiletic ‘letters’ of chapters 4 and 5 cannot be placed into strict categories, either, but their style follows the rest of Ælfric’s works. Wulfstan’s works—homiletic and political in chapter 5, homiletic and legal in chapter 6—have been equally hard to pinpoint into specific genres, and it is important to notice that the themes and style of both Ælfric’s and Wulfstan’s works are in many cases overlapping, making it hard to single out a ‘religious’ text from ‘secular’, or to designate what constituted a hagiographic, epistolary, a preaching or a legal text. The difficulty of modern categorization should therefore be seen as richness and a possibility for scholarly study. By running into problems of categorization we are forced to contemplate the premises behind our assumptions and expectations that we have towards the sources we use.

Most of what Ælfric and Wulfstan wrote, they wrote in their native language, but both of the men were also fluent in Latin. The texts studied in this thesis are mostly vernacular, and Latin writings are discussed mainly when considering the translation of hagiographies and the transmission of political thought. The question of language and interpretation is essential in determining the nature of knowledge, and therefore it should be noted that examining texts written in both of these languages is important, since concentrating in only one of them may lead to a too narrow view on the discourse of the time. Although the traditional emphasis in Anglo-Saxon studies to concentrate heavily on vernacular material at the expense of acknowledging the value of the contemporary Latin texts has recently started to shift, it is still visible in the scholarly field. The tendency to read primarily vernacular texts was firstly due to the fact that Latin knowledge in general did not meet the requirements of adequate Latin learning in late Anglo-Saxon England, and the contemporary complaints about illiterate priests confirm this picture.²² Secondly, the more visible role of vernacular

²¹ Mary Clayton, “Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Peritia* 4 (1985): 208.

²² For instance, in the Old English preface to his first series of homilies (*CH I*) Ælfric wrote that the lack of Latin learning has brought on many errors regarding Christian doctrine in many previous vernacular works, with the exception of those translated by King Alfred

texts in Anglo-Saxon studies was also due to scholarly interests, which focused more on probing the native English material that was regarded as more valuable for scholarly study. Even though appreciation towards Anglo-Latin texts has increased,²³ I still find the strict categorization problematic in some measure, because much of the research apparatus produced to help the scholar has been based on this linguistic division. For my purposes it is important to regard both Latin and Old English texts as part of the same intellectual discourse; they were both produced in the same environment,

and other men who knew Latin properly. Jonathan Wilcox, ed. *Ælfric's Prefaces*, Durham Medieval Texts 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, Department of English Studies, 1994), 108. The negative image of the contemporary priest was undoubtedly also exaggerated, especially by the reformers, who often presented the clergy in bad light. Not only their literary skills, but also their morality was severely questioned. Ælfric's Latin life of his teacher Æthelwold reads: 'At that time in the Old Minster, where the bishop's seat is situated, there were clerics living badly, possessed by pride, arrogance, and wantonness to such an extent that some of them refused to celebrate mass in their turn; they repudiated the wives whom they had taken unlawfully and married others, and continually devoted themselves to gluttony and drunkenness.' ('Erat autem tunc in ueteri monasterio, ubi cathedra episcopalis habetur, male morigerati clerici, elatione et insolentia ac luxuria preuenti, adeo ut nonnulli eorum dedignarentur missas suo ordine celebrare, repudiantes uxores quas inlicite duxerant et alias accipientes, gulae et ebrietati iugiter dediti.') Michael Winterbottom, ed. *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972), 22–23. Trans. Greenfield and Calder in Stanley B. Greenfield, Daniel G. Calder, and Michael Lapidge, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 69.

²³ Especially Michael Lapidge has concentrated in studying the Anglo-Latin literature. See for instance Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996); ———, *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993); ———, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Ælfric's and Wulfstan's Latin works have usually been less studied than their vernacular works, but recently they, too, have started to gain more interest in the scholarly field. For Ælfric, see Christopher A. Jones, "Meatim Sed et Rustica: Ælfric of Eynsham as a Medieval Latin Author," *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 8 (1998). For Wulfstan, see Thomas N. Hall, "Wulfstan's Latin Sermons," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004). On the Latin learning and its appropriation in various instances in Anglo-Saxon England see the articles in two volumes: Michael Lapidge, Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, and Andy Orchard, eds., *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). A good starting point for the study of Anglo-Latin literature, with a sufficient list of references, is Joseph P. McGowan, "An Introduction to the Corpus of Anglo-Latin Literature," in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

but with essentially different intentions. It is also equally important to discern a difference in their intended audience; in many cases the Latin texts assume a different audience than those written in the vernacular, and this is seen in the means with which the texts conveyed their messages, and consequently, in the means with which the authors aimed to transfer their ideas. This feature concerning the linguistic differences will be seen further in the course of this study, but at this point the question of intended audiences has some consequences also to the interpretation of the source material.

It has been pointed out that too often the issues of language in late Anglo-Saxon England have been reduced to evaluations of the effects of translation, and specifically to assessments of the linguistic skills and the Latin competence of the authors. By contrast, different approaches, like the symbolic statuses of these two languages, their competition for specific domains, and the consequences of the authoritative status of Latin as a sacred language, for instance, have received less attention.²⁴ Issues with language are especially important to take into account with homiletic texts, as the homilists' method of writing can be regarded much as an act of translation and interpretation. The purpose of much of the texts of this study, too, was to interpret and explain; their normative discourse springs up from a desire to advise, exhort, or explain.

Study of homiletic prose entails certain issues which have to be borne in mind when using them as historical sources. As Mary Swan has stated, their 'strangeness' is born largely from their mode of discourse; they are repetitive and derivative, paying much attention to tradition, often expressing their message in a highly committed, emotional and polemical way. The absolute, moral truths that they assert are often voiced abruptly in-between the homiletic narrative itself. They do not pay much attention to their own context—at least seemingly, although this assertion must be questioned with regards to large parts of Ælfric's and Wulfstan's discourse studied in this thesis. They had a ritual function and were in essence expressions of belief. Importantly, they assume an audience who shared the assumptions, faith and emotions they related; the preaching voice present in the homilies does not allow any disengagement from their community of

²⁴ Clare A. Lees, "Working with Patristic Sources: Language and Context in Old English Homilies," in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 168–169.

belief, but instead expect the reader to have been part of the same ideology.²⁵ The conventional, traditional nature of homiletic prose cannot be seen as meaningless. On the contrary, as Clare Lees has shown, the conventions which repeated the core principles of Christian doctrine were a means to constantly ratify and enact Christian belief in their own surroundings.²⁶ Homiletic texts are thus very much occupied with social ideals, and their exhortations engaged with desires to modify people's behaviour and to create a sense of community. Therefore, in Lees's words, 'homilies are fundamental evidence for the formation of the Christian as moral agent in the early medieval period'.²⁷

Also, despite their derivative nature, Lees has shown that in fact scholars have tended to give greater weight to the sources of the homilies than the homilists did themselves—so that while it is important to know and recognize the sources of a text, it is equally important to recognize the way they were used in different instances. This means that even though the late Anglo-Saxon homilies were largely based on older and traditional texts, often through Carolingian works, a large part of them formulated their issues in terms of present priorities. Especially Ælfric was always concerned about his textual and doctrinal sources, and placed much importance in stating the authority behind his own works, but his works show also a great concern for his own time.²⁸ Lees questions the exclusively retrospective nature of Old English homilies, and argues that while their exegesis was conservative, they simultaneously addressed contemporary concerns.²⁹ This characteristic of late Anglo-Saxon homily makes them more than qualified as historical sources, when the texts are read as implications of concerns about social order and morality.

When reading homiletic sources in their own surroundings, there are certain issues connected to determining their meaning and intentions. As their nature suggests, homilies were not strictly confined to monastic or ecclesiastical spheres of society; they were written with the *intention* to transfer knowledge about Christian doctrine to the lay people with the help

²⁵ Swan, "Men ða leofestan," 186–187.

²⁶ Lees, *Tradition and Belief*, 32–34.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁸ Malcolm Godden, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS, S.S. 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xxxviii, xlv.

²⁹ Lees, "Working with Patristic Sources," 173–174.

of preaching.³⁰ This intentionality is very apparent especially in Ælfric's homilies, which are much concerned with audience. This applies especially to sources used in chapter 3 (translated hagiography for the use of the laity), chapter 4 (homiletic letters for the laity), and chapter 6 (homiletic material used in legal tracts). The texts explain and expound on biblical stories, orthodox doctrine and the principles of faith in a manner that is clear and understandable, and were possibly intended to be delivered by priests to their congregations, and in this way they had the potential to reach perhaps the widest audience possible for any text in late Anglo-Saxon England.³¹

The wide circulation of homilies has been discussed in many instances especially by Jonathan Wilcox, who speaks in favour of multiple mixed audiences, constituting of lay, monastic and clerical people.³² More importantly, the nature of Anglo-Saxon homilies suggests that the audience which the homilists *expected to have* was indeed wider than what their contemporaries on the continent anticipated when writing their sermons and homilies. Mary Clayton has shown that Carolingian homiliaries were clearly intended for one of the three distinct contexts: they were either written as collections for monastic night office, for devotional reading, or as collections for preaching. Their content and style therefore implied three different audiences. Anglo-Saxon homiliaries such as those by Ælfric, instead, used characteristic features from all of these three styles, and showed concern for different audiences within one homily. They can thus be considered as genuinely appropriate for a mixed audience.³³ This suggests that the boundaries between secular and spiritual were indeed blurred, as in the Middle Ages in general, but also that the varied uses of religious discourse have implications to their assessment as sources. As interesting as it would be to know how homiletic discourse affected its audience, for the purposes of this thesis it is more important to note that the intentionality of the authors necessarily affected the way they conceptualized their notions of social and religious order in the texts themselves. Therefore the whole discourse can be seen as an outcome of a desire to reach and affect; the discourse itself becomes authoritative by nature when it tries to impose certain notions and ideologies on its audience. For this reason these texts

³⁰ Clayton, "Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," 220, 225, 229, 231–242.

³¹ Although, whether or not they actually functioned as scripts for preaching, is not determined.

³² Wilcox, "Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care," 54, 62.

³³ Clayton, "Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," 216–217, 230–242.

are important sources to be studied from the point of view of discourse, religion and authorized knowledge.

My primary interest is not to compare the conceptions of Ælfric and Wulfstan, but to study both of their texts in a complementary manner. Their works, while partly belonging to the same literary and religious milieu and tradition, were also in a direct interaction with each other, and give perspective to two different 'worlds', which overlapped in many ways. Ælfric can roughly be placed in the monastic world, while Wulfstan—even though also a part of the ideals of the Benedictine reformers—dealt more directly with the lay and ecclesiastical elites. With regards to the religious-political discourse of late Anglo-Saxon England, it is necessary to examine both of these sides of the ecclesiastical culture, and in this manner to concentrate on the 'whole picture'—by which I mean the wider discourse of the time, which should be viewed as a broader unit than rhetoric or language in a singular text. The source material therefore provides opportunities for gaining insight into different participants of the discourse, the diffusion and transference and possible transformation of the discourse, from the beginnings of Ælfric's career as a priest in Cerne Abbas, to the end of Wulfstan's life as a legislator.

1.4. Methodological and theoretical framework

When working with Anglo-Saxon homiletic texts, one necessarily comes across various issues of historical interpretation. The nature of the source material with its conventional modes of discourse is among the most important ones which have to be addressed. Furthermore, there are several complex questions connected to determining the intentions and meanings of a historical text. Here I will outline the methodological and theoretical considerations that are most relevant from the perspective of the source material and the research objectives of this study.

The theoretical discussion in the discipline of history has in recent years been much engaged with discourse and context. As the objective of this study is to situate the sources in their own surroundings and use that context as the point of departure in historical interpretation, it follows the contemporary trend in underlining the importance to contextualize the texts in order to understand them. The focus of interest is not on the origins of the textual, idealistic or doctrinal elements, which is often the concern of source studies, but it has to be acknowledged that identifying the sources of the

texts is always a prerequisite for contextualistic approach. The contextualistic approach, represented largely by Quentin Skinner and John Pocock in the field of political thought, has received quite an amount of criticism, especially concerning the status of ideas either as tightly dependent on each specific context or as transhistorical unchanging independent units.³⁴ With regard to homiletic texts, certain observations, especially those regarding intentionality, conventions and political discourse are worth contemplating.

To make a connection between texts and their wider social surroundings and to explain how these contexts might shape the interpretation of a text is the basic premise from which to approach the issues at stake.³⁵ This very general starting point could be said to be the basis for any kind of historical analysis, and for that reason it requires some further clarifications. First of all, what do we mean by context? In order to use the context as the ground for an argument, it has to be clear what is meant by it. Often the way we use the term implies something very general. For instance, the 'background', often compiled with the help of secondary material, can be used in support to contextualize the historical evidence found in the texts we read. In other words, the context appears as 'a stable material ground in which to anchor the difficult, slippery and ambiguous meaning of a text.'³⁶ Context, thereby, seems to be representing 'the whole' in contrast to the texts we study, and as such it is often used as a part of

³⁴ Skinner has been criticized especially for his denial of the existence of independent and ahistorical ideas as units in their own rights, but also for his generalizations, the lack of diachronic perspective and deterministic approach, for instance. Pocock has received similar criticism, especially in terms of being too deterministic and reductionistic, for employing concepts in a too ambivalent way, and for confusing the status of interpretation as method, whereas it can more rightly be seen as an argument *about* interpretation. See further Peter L. Janssen, "Political Thought as Traditionary Action: The Critical Response to Skinner and Pocock," *History and Theory* 24, no. 2 (1985); Leidulf Melve, "Intentions, Concepts and Reception: An Attempt to Come to Terms with the Materialistic and Diachronic Aspects of the History of Ideas," *History of Political Thought* 27, no. 3 (2006); Melvin Richter, "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner, and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," *History and Theory* 29, no. 1 (1990); James Tully, ed. *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

³⁵ Kieran O'Halloran, *Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Cognition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 2.

³⁶ Robert M. Stein, "Literary Criticism and the Evidence for History," in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), 77.

argumentation. The line of argumentation must be clear, however. There is certain ambivalence in how, on the one hand, 'context' can be used to support historical evidence, while, on the other hand, the historical evidence can be used to support the idea of the context. So the stableness of context may actually end up being dependent on the way we formulate our arguments.

There is a more specific way to define context, too. Robert Stein has defined it in a way which is rather suitable for the study of medieval texts, which are often written in a style that applies well to homiletic discourse: derivative, repetitive, dependent on textual authorities and literary tradition, and engaged with doctrinal issues. Also, the manuscript culture and the alterations the different stages of textual transmission produced are taken into account in this definition. There are three main factors which are included in the immediate 'context' of Stein, and to which the analysis of religious-political discourse can be tied. We should pay attention to a set of other texts which already circulated in the culture of the time under examination: 1) texts which supplied the writer with a conceptual apparatus and a way of speaking (and writing), 2) the sources the text under examination comments on and was dependent on, and 3) the reception of the text, which in turn was informed with other readings.³⁷ In opposition to the wide but vague concept of the context as everything else than the text itself, I find this definition more manageable and useful in the study of homiletic discourse, as its starting point is the textually oriented culture the medieval writers were part of, which, in the end, is the only channel by which we can approach the ideas of a medieval author. The last point, the reception of the text, while also acknowledging that the meaning of each text varies with time and situation, and gives the audience a large role in its assessment, is not developed in this study, but should deserve more attention in further research.

As Pocock has remarked, the concepts of thought, language and discourse bear implications to the way history is interpreted. He states that 'what was formerly, and as a matter of convention still is, known as the history of political thought is now more accurately described as the history of political discourse.'³⁸ This means that while it is acknowledged that the

³⁷ Ibid., 79.

³⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 87. The essay, "The Concept of a Language and the *métier d'historien*: Some Considerations on Practice," was first published in *The Languages*

authors were not void of thinking and thought, on the contrary, it is also realized that in order to study them, they must be regarded as part of activity, thus focusing more strongly on the context. To study the religious-political discourse, and not 'thought', of late Anglo-Saxon England, is to see the texts as results of activity of the authors, while taking into account the circumstances and conditions in which they were produced. One of the most important tasks is therefore to recognize the 'language', in Pocock's terms, which makes the utterances possible. Therefore, what concerns a study of this kind is engaging with idioms, rhetoric and modes of discourse, or ways of talking, which were created, diffused and employed in the religious-political texts.³⁹

As a principle, the homiletic discourse in our source material is read as acts with actual intentions, not merely as products of tradition, as independent ideals of social order, or as isolated textual performances without close connection to reality. Although, it has to be emphasized that texts are not only references to individual choices of the author, but they also reflect the historically variable value judgements which have a close relationship to social ideals of the time; therefore they often constitute the assumptions and values by which authority is maintained and exercised over others.⁴⁰ This is an essential point in my own premise for historical research. The explanatory factor in history, as I see it, cannot be reduced to either individual action or larger structures, but are constituted within a framework where individuals act according to the values, tradition, assumptions, modes of thought, knowledge, prejudices, attitudes and rules which are culturally and historically specific. Individual action is thus a part of the structure. Action is not predetermined, and it is not the necessary outcome of that particular time and culture. There can be discrepancies in individual action, when compared to other events of the time. In this case I speak of a discursive framework, within which religious rhetoric could be used in different ways to authorize notions of political order. Consequently, religious discourse is not a single, uniform and coherent entity, but a series of discourses in plural, that overlap and always adapt.⁴¹ This is an important

of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19–38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 87–89.

⁴⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 14.

⁴¹ Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 5.

point, as it takes as its starting point the variable nature of human action in history. The discourses within this framework often were similar, even if individually adjustable. Only when the discourse extends beyond the approved boundaries of the discursive framework, can we talk about change in history. The anomalies in history, so to speak, are thus agencies of change, when they extend the 'normal' discourse beyond these discursive frameworks, outside its boundaries.

Discourse cannot exist without interaction; its meanings are formed only when the discourse itself is manifested in a speech act or in writing, and also when the recipient participates in it. For example, the vast homiletic production of the late tenth century was a form of discourse in which the texts in question were used to shape and confirm the notion of the right order of the world. It is important to notice that discourse, or language, is often a matter of authority; in studying the modes and rules of discourse it is discerned how 'literate professionals have become involved in directing the affairs of others and have obliged others to discourse in the languages which they have evolved.'⁴² At the same time, it is also noticed how the same discourse can be appropriated and employed in different situations for different purposes. These observations are right to the point with regards to the topic of this thesis; the conceptions of the right order and normative discourse employed in the texts of Ælfric and Wulfstan can be regarded authoritative in the very meaning of the word.

The mode of discourse these homiletic texts convey was largely conventional and based on acknowledged authorities, using repetitive phrases, ideas, and formulations. The conventional nature of medieval discourse can be a frustrating factor in the process of historical interpretation. How do we discern the author and the textual conventions he or she has used? It has been suggested, rightly, that in order to reconstruct the context of our object of study, one ought to study as many contemporary texts as possible. Only in this way can we make an attempt at interpreting the intentions of the author, especially when it comes to delineating "political theory" amongst authors that never had any "intention" of writing political theory in the first place'.⁴³ This applies extremely well to the texts of Ælfric and Wulfstan, in which the ideas of social, political and religious order are often scattered throughout their homilies, letters and saints' lives.

⁴² Pocock, *Political Thought and History*, 91.

⁴³ Melve, "Intentions, Concepts and Reception," 383, 391, 401.

Most of the texts studied in this thesis do not present or even intend to present a coherent political exposition, with the exception of Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity*, which is an unusual presentation of political theory in this time.

This brings us to the last point of this brief disposition of theory and method, namely, the issue of intention and meaning. Partly this issue is a matter of definition. What is meant by meaning? Meaning can denote a linguistic correspondence, without references outside the text itself. Or, more often in contemporary philosophy of history, the meaning of a text is connected to the values of the author on the one hand, and to the values of the audience on the other. Thus, meanings are born anew in each situation. I will not delve into deciding what the texts meant for their audiences, which belongs more to reception theory, but in any case this distinction should be borne in mind throughout the study. Additionally, the meaning of a text is not detached or autonomous but closely connected to its context; it draws upon 'a series of pre-existent meanings, meanings of formulae, tropes, clichés, conventions, genres, taxonomies, myths, characters, histories, ideologies and other historical-cultural-semantic items.'⁴⁴ Without ascribing 'self-evident' meanings to the texts, the task of the historian to recognize all the pre-existing modes of discourse and then to place them in a specific situation is a daunting one, not least when dealing with medieval sources. The identification of meaning becomes problematic with old texts, written in a foreign culture, social surroundings, and language. In the scale that is possible within the bounds of a study like this, this issue is addressed by taking into account several texts of the authors, targeted to different audiences in different times of their writing careers.

What concerns the role of the authors themselves, their intentions form an important part as targets of interpretation. Their intentions were inherently part of their discourse, and can be seen as one of the most important factors in creating and consolidating the normative discourse. The intentions of the author are separated from the meaning of the text, if we think of the meaning as ascribed by the audience. Therefore the received meaning should be seen by its premise as different from the intended meaning, as they work on different temporal levels.⁴⁵ However, when thinking about late Anglo-Saxon writers—and I should assume that it

⁴⁴ Tim Murphy, "Discourse," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 2000), 398.

⁴⁵ Melve, "Intentions, Concepts and Reception," 388, 392–394.

applies also to other medieval authors—it is soon realized that they represent both intended and received meanings, depending on our object of interest. The main focus of the research is to scrutinize the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and to determine the ways they expressed their conceptions about social order. So their texts represent the intended meaning of the abbot and archbishop themselves. But, an extremely important part in their concepts was the way they *interpreted and translated* the patristic authors and biblical texts, so that while presenting them as authoritative, sacred and immutable truths, they also represent the received meaning of patristic sources. The late Anglo-Saxon discourse, within the same sources, represents these both sides of meanings, and should be taken into account in historical analysis. To conclude my position, the way discourse is used in different historical contexts tells of the ways knowledge was formed, conceptualized, and in what categories the ideas were placed. This is in my view a promising approach to gaining at least a partial understanding of the epistemological and social dimensions of historical texts.

2. Intellectual aspirations and political challenges at the turn of the millennium

The monastic movement in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England, often referred to as the Benedictine reform or monastic revival, must be regarded as one of the most significant background factors when studying the religious-political discourses of Ælfric and Wulfstan. The motives and intentions of both of these writers cannot be seen as separate from the aspirations of the movement, so in the following I will discuss the preliminaries that are essential in understanding the discourses examined in this study, starting with the reformed monasticism, its goals and achievements, and its connection with royal authority. Then I will present the main authors whose works are under examination in this study, Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulfstan of York. Lastly the political situation of Anglo-Saxon England is shortly discussed in junction with the prevailing Viking attacks and their outcome. As it will be seen, the period was highly rich in literary, religious and political terms, and this historical background will point out the complexities in late Anglo-Saxon religious-political discourses.

2.1. The Benedictine reform

2.1.1. The goals of the reform

The Benedictine reform has for long been recognized to have been an important feature in the cultural and ecclesiastical life of tenth century—even though the scale of its impact remains continuously under discussion. Three main figures of this movement, Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester (d. 984), Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury (d. 988) and Oswald of Worcester, Archbishop of York (d. 992), who all received saintly status soon after their deaths, were inspired by Cluniac ideas of reformed monasticism prevalent

on the continent at the time. The movement drew strongly on Carolingian texts and ideas, and this influence is seen clearly in Anglo-Saxon literature produced at this time. The movement, while not unambiguously unified, in any case influenced the current culture of Anglo-Saxon England at least at literary, scholarly and artistic levels, and created a new kind of relationship between the church and the state.⁴⁶

The reform was mainly based on the idea that a drastic change was in order to repair the current state of ecclesiastical and monastic life, and saw that the way to do this was to return to the strict Benedictine monastic rules and ideals. The rhetoric of reform played an important part in the literary works of the movement; one of its essential features was to depreciate the contemporary times and the recent past, and to glorify the more ancient past, especially that of sixth and seventh centuries. Nostalgic features and tradition played a part in the movement's rhetorical artillery: it aimed to 'restore' the former monastic episcopacy, which had prevailed in England in Bede's times, and took pride in the native, traditional element of the Anglo-Saxon monasticism in general.⁴⁷ With this rhetoric a concept of a certain golden age became an essential tool in emphasizing the currently degenerate state of the church. The reformers juxtaposed the contemporary, wrong conduct of impious priests with that of the golden age orthodoxy and correct conduct.⁴⁸ In practice it was not always easy for the reformers to justify their policies with authoritative texts, especially when it came to

⁴⁶ A rather comprehensive collection of articles which focuses on the reform is still David Parsons, ed. *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millenium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia* (London: Phillimore, 1975). As Nicola Robertson points out in her review, it represents a somewhat different approach to the movement than current scholarship, which focuses more on the texts of the reform. Nicola Robertson, "The Benedictine Reform: Current and Future Scholarship," *Literature Compass* 3, no. 3 (2006). Robertson gives an excellent account of the current scholarship (although at one point she mistakes St Wulfstan of Worcester for Archbishop Wulfstan), and the bibliography of her review is extensive. Also Catherine Cubitt's review article, although a bit older, is useful. Catherine Cubitt, "Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," *Early Medieval Europe* 6, no. 1 (1997).

⁴⁷ Christopher A. Jones, ed. *Aelfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England: 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42–43. See also Patrick Wormald, "Æthelwold and His Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ Antonia Gransden, "Traditionalism and Continuity during the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40, no. 2 (1989): 162–163.

canon law, which did not give full support for their actions.⁴⁹ Modern scholarship usually now recognizes that the past the reformers wanted to revive was largely a creation of their own time. Idealizing the past was in any case an essential part in the rhetoric of Ælfric and Wulfstan, as well. But the reformers not only idealized their native past; they had also other, more concrete means to impose change, which were mostly based on continental models.

The movement in England was from its outset inspired by similar developments on the continent. Dunstan, for instance, had been to one of the centres of the monastic revival near Ghent, before gaining the support and favour of King Edgar (959–975) and returning to England. Oswald, too, had spent time at Fleury, and the relationships between the English and continental monasteries are known to have been quite active at this time, resulting in interchange of ideas, books, and also people. The continental reformers looked back to the Carolingian reformers, especially those of Benedict of Aniane, Paul the Deacon, Haymo of Auxerre and Smaragdus, and both Ælfric and Wulfstan turned to these earlier authorities often in their own works.⁵⁰ Many of the newer important texts, on which the Benedictine reform leaned heavily, such as continental penitentials, the capitulary of Aachen, pseudo-Alcuin's *De divinis officiis*, and works by Theodulf of Orléans and Amalarius of Metz, were characterized by a common feature: a wish to regulate and define the right way of monastic life—and also the life of secular clergy.⁵¹ This feature is important to note here, as the religiously and morally proper order proved to be an essential guiding line in all of Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works.

Previously the continental impact was considered to have been rather pervasive at the expense of not recognizing the English precedents. Antonia Gransden, most notably, questioned the exclusive role of continental ideas, and showed that firstly, the reformers themselves were on the forefront to

⁴⁹ On the continent Bishop Burchard of Worms even made changes to texts to gain support for the reform from them. Eric John, "The World of Abbot Ælfric," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. Patrick Wormald, Donald Bullough, and Roger Collins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 303.

⁵⁰ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 5, 18.

⁵¹ Joyce Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context," in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Carola Hicks (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), 108–109. Other important and older texts were e.g. Rufinus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and *De ecclesiasticis officiis* and Carolingian homiletic material.

promote the view of their connections to the continent, and secondly, that the ideas of reform were not unknown in Anglo-Saxon England, either. She argued that the reform was based as much on the traditional ideas as on the continental influence.⁵² This image prevailed for long also for reasons of scholarly interest, which concentrated on detecting the Carolingian models and sources in the texts of the reform. While it is clear that the continental texts and ideas had a major role in the development of the movement in England, the ideas themselves are important to consider also from their own starting points, which I will do in this thesis for the part of Ælfric and Wulfstan. In other words, recognizing the literary influence and textual tradition does not reduce the importance of the ideas to those who used them, in this case the second-generation members of the reform.

One of the movement's objects was the advancement of education, learning, and literacy. This goal can partially be seen in the vigorous literary activities of the end of the tenth century and the beginning of the eleventh. The movement had a major impact on language, as well; especially Æthelwold's school at Winchester succeeded in producing a standardized vernacular literary language in the form of West Saxon.⁵³ The question of language is important to note already here as an essential aspect of the reform, since it will play an important part as an authorizing tool in the following chapters. The reform has been characterized to have been particularly interested in questions of language and "its manipulation as a means of creating difference."⁵⁴ It had three distinct means to create authority and exclusivity. Æthelwold's school particularly succeeded in replacing the traditional Anglo-Saxon script with Carolingian minuscule in manuscripts. Secondly, the hermeneutic Latin of the tenth-century reformers, which deliberately used neologisms and borrowings that were difficult to understand, created a division between the learned and unlearned.⁵⁵ This division was value-laden; those who could understand and interpret this language could claim certain authority over proper knowledge

⁵² Gransden, "Traditionalism and Continuity during the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism."

⁵³ See further Mechthild Gretsch, "Winchester Vocabulary and Standard Old English: The Vernacular in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 83, no. 1 (2001); Walter Hofstetter, "Winchester and the Standardization of Old English Vocabulary," *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988).

⁵⁴ Cubitt, "Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," 89.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* See also Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066*, 105–149.

and doctrine. Thirdly, the way not only Latin, but also Old English was used imposed specific norms and standards to the written culture. Ælfric was the most visible proponent of this standardization, and he was well aware of the issues of interpretation connected to the use of the written word, as it will become evident later.

Ælfric and Wulfstan were not the only prose writers of this time, even though it sometimes might seem like that; other writers left their traces in books, too. Most of them remain anonymous, with the exception of Byrhtferth of Ramsey (ca. 970–1020), whose name can be identified with the help of signatures that he left in two manuscripts. He is most famous from his scientific work, *Enchiridion*, but he also participated contemporaneously with Ælfric and Wulfstan in writing homiletic discourse, broadly speaking, in his *vitae* of St Oswald and Ecgwine.⁵⁶ It should also be mentioned that all the four major codices that form the essential corpus of Old English poetry surviving to our days were produced at this time. This, too, is an indication of the large-scale literary activities of this period. Many other manuscripts were copied along with them, including important Latin works. Manuscript illuminations, ivory-carving, metalwork and sculpture flourished, as well.⁵⁷ In addition to these endeavours, which can be defined as cultural, the political part of literary and other activities did not fall much behind: the reign of Æthelred is unusually well represented by law codes, charters, and coinage. It is thus important to note this extremely rich activity in terms of both cultural and political and situate the development of the literary expressions of authority to this specific point.

The reform has been a subject of vast scholarly interest in the recent decades, and some assessments of its nature have been revised. The current scholarship has started to question the former suppositions of the unity of the movement, and the results of many recent studies suggest that all the three leaders of the reform had different approaches to it, as Catherine Cubitt noted in her review article on three volumes, *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, edited by Barbara York (1988), *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Influence*, edited by Nigel Ramsay (1992), and *St Oswald of*

⁵⁶ Printed in Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, eds., *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, EETS, S.S. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Michael Lapidge, ed. *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008). Byrhtferth was largely influenced by the learning of Abbo of Fleury during his visit to Ramsey in 985–987, and probably also by the reformistic ideas which Abbo's presence may have conveyed.

⁵⁷ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 2–3.

Worcester: Life and Influence, edited by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (1996).⁵⁸ After these volumes were produced, a substantial amount of research has been done which confirms this view, but a comprehensive study of the reform, which would deal with it from the point of view of understanding the movement as a whole, is still lacking. Furthermore, as Robertson remarked in a more recent review, there is now a tendency to treat each subject of the reform in relative isolation, so that while the individual texts and authors are studied in much detail with an emphasis on their originality, at the same time this is done with a general assumption that the reformers were working together to reach the same goals.⁵⁹ Often the texts of the reform are studied individually, and therefore the results are fragmentary. Despite this, new insights of the importance of the movement are necessary when estimating its role in Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works, too. The current scholarship has yet to determine what the concept of reform meant to the people in the tenth century. Current definitions and conceptions still suffer from the assumptions of the post-Conquest assessments, and it is naturally hard to rid oneself completely of this burden. I do not propose to offer an answer to the meaning of the reform, but wish to examine the discourse of Ælfric and Wulfstan as comprehensively from their own starting points as is possible within the restraints of a study of this length. Further research, in which the works of other authors would be taken into consideration, too, will be required to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the movement. It is clear, however, that the ideas of reform were a notable feature in the discourse of both of the authors, also when it came to political thought, to which I will turn next.

2.1.2. Reformed monasticism and royal authority

The revival of Benedictine monasticism greatly influenced the development of political thought in the late tenth century, and it is mostly through the ideas of the reformists that the views on monarchy are presented in the source material. The importance of the Benedictine reform for the development of secular institutions was greatly underestimated in previous scholarship, but has now been acknowledged, and the movement itself has gained recognition as more than 'an otherworldly monastic phenomenon

⁵⁸ Cubitt, "Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," 93–94.

⁵⁹ Robertson, "The Benedictine Reform," 292.

withdrawn from society and the governance of society.’⁶⁰ The political dimensions of the reform have been studied especially by Eric John, who pointed out that the reform also had political implications, and that it greatly benefited the king.⁶¹ While all of John’s arguments cannot be regarded as valid anymore, specifically concerning the idea that the reform was a uniform attack against the lay aristocracy, it remains an accepted notion that the alliance was mutually beneficial for both ecclesiastical and royal authorities.⁶²

The English reform differed from the continental movement specifically in this close relationship between the monks and the king. The key persons of influence of the reform, Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald, were closely tied to the king, and it was this relationship that gave the movement its special character in terms of religion and the ideology of kingship. The reformed monasticism enjoyed royal support especially during King Edgar’s reign (959–975), and the status of the king was in return enhanced with full religious imagery, rhetoric, and rituals. The king made it possible for the monasteries to exercise authority on their own behalf, which in turn reduced the power of the secular, local aristocracy to intervene in the affairs of monasteries.⁶³ Simply put, the movement strove for cultivation of royal over local aristocratic patronage.

With their connections to royal authority, the reformers authorized their attempt to impose Benedictine standards to all monasteries and insisted them to return to correct Benedictine ideals and practices. The reform wielded harsh polemic against secular clerks, which led to the expulsion of secular clergy from some monasteries. Since the reformers promoted the view of their authority and orthodoxy, and had connections to royal power, they could in some places authorize this conduct, and re-establish new reformed monastic communities in place of secular clergy. The policy to replace secular communities was also seen as part of an attack towards the power of secular aristocracy, who traditionally had hereditary rights over monastic offices and property.⁶⁴ Basically this not only provided

⁶⁰ Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087*, xv.

⁶¹ Eric John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966).

⁶² Cubitt, “Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England,” 86.

⁶³ John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* See specifically the chapter titled “The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation”, 154–180.

independence to monasteries, but also extended the authority of the king over larger stretches of land, forming a unified kingdom. In turn, the monasteries displayed allegiance to the king: prayers on behalf of the king and his family were included in the Benedictine office.⁶⁵ It is likely that the extent of this kind of expulsion was exaggerated already in its own times, and certain revisions have been done in recent research that question the scale of this practice. The consequences of the alliance cannot be regarded as too uniform and wide-ranging; undoubtedly some members of the secular aristocracy suffered from the establishment of new reformed monasteries when they lost land or estates to them, but this was not due to social ranks only. Recent research has shown that many reformed monasteries were connected with and dependent on the laity, also others than the king.⁶⁶ The role of the laity in the reform must be considered to have been more nuanced than was previously thought, and this will become evident especially with in chapter 4, which examines the relationship between Ælfric and the lay aristocracy, and illustrates the importance of lay piety in connection with the ideals of the reform.

The link between political power and the monastic reform movement was more than presenting the ideals in writing; it also manifested in actual policies, in which the discourse of reform must have played a significant part. Until King Edgar's reign the unity of the English kingdom was not taken for granted, but it appears that by the 970s certain conceptions of unity and

⁶⁵ 'He shall now go on to the second prayer in which he shall recite the next two Penitential psalms for the King, Queen and benefactors with this collect [...] After Nocturns they shall say two psalms, *Domine ne in furore tuo* and *Exaudiat te Dominus*, the first specially for the King, the other for the King, Queen and benefactors, with these collects [...] Lauds of the day follow, after which, in addition to the *Miserere*, they shall say two psalms for the King, Queen and benefactors: *Beati quorum* and *Inclina Domine aurem tuam*.' (Inde ueniat ad secundam orationem ubi sequentes duos dicat psalmos pro rege et regina atque familiaribus, cum oratione *Deus qui caritatis dona* [...] Peractis Nocturnis dicant duos psalmos, *Domine ne in furore tuo* et *Exaudiat te Dominus*, unum uidelicet pro rege specialiter, alterum uero pro rege et regina ac familiaribus, cum his collectis [...] Post hoc sequantur diei Laudes: post *Miserere mei Deus* addant duos psalmos pro rege reginaque et familiaribus, *Beati quorum* et *Inclina Domine [aurem tuam]*.) Thomas Symons, ed. *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 12–14. Trans. Symons.

⁶⁶ Cubitt, "Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," 86.

political whole had permeated the notions regarding the English state.⁶⁷ In his aspiration for unity Edgar strove to set all England under one rule. This aspiration encompassed not only territorial unity but also integrity in other activities, which can be connected with the council of Winchester and the Benedictine reform. The reform of the coinage was one of the displays of unified practice. Edgar's goal was to establish a production of standardized coins with set weight and similar design. All the coins from this period display the bust of the king on one side and a cross on the other, with the inscription *rex Anglorum*, previously used only rarely.⁶⁸

But the most important event which tells of Edgar's attempts to create a coherent kingdom, and which demonstrates the alliance between the king and the monastic parties, was the meeting at Winchester in about 970. It was agreed that the monastic custom was to be practised after a set of unified, standardized rules, and the most important literary outcome of this agreement was the *Regularis Concordia*, drafted by Bishop Æthelwold. It aimed to provide uniform guides for liturgy for all monasteries in England. As such it was more than a practical guide. Especially by its preface, as well as by some of its other parts, it is a witness of the religious and political ideology of the reform movement. In addition to the uniform observance of the Benedictine rule, the text illustrates all the aspirations of the movement in a clear way. According to Jones, the *Regularis Concordia* is an illustration of the intellectual rigour which the reformed bishops displayed in their attempt to standardize the movement in the best possible ways.⁶⁹

The preface to the *Regularis Concordia*, which starts with panegyric formulations about the king, states that King Edgar called the meeting at Winchester and 'moved by the grace of Christ, he urged all to be of one mind as regards monastic usage, to follow the holy and approved fathers and so, with their minds anchored firmly on the ordinances of the Rule, to avoid all dissension, lest differing ways of observing the customs of one Rule and one country should bring their holy conversation into disrepute.'⁷⁰ Remarkably,

⁶⁷ Simon Keynes, "The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon," in *The Return of the Vikings: The Battle of Maldon 991*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 82.

⁶⁸ Ibid. See also Mark Blackburn, "Æthelred's Coinage and the Payment of Tribute," in *The Return of the Vikings: The Battle of Maldon 991*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), 157.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Aelfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, 5, 10.

⁷⁰ 'Christi compunctus gratia monuit ut concordēs aequali consuetudinīs usu, sanctos probatosque imitando patres, regularia praecepta tenaci mentis ancora seruantes nullo

this agreement coincided with King Edgar's reform of the coinage and his belated imperial coronation in 973.⁷¹ It can be assumed that Edgar was first crowned king around 960, as was the custom, so his second coronation undoubtedly signifies celebration—and affirmation—of the king's rule over England which was now seen as a unified whole.⁷² The alliance and its displays were thus also symbols of power for the king and the unified kingdom.

King Edgar's death in 975 put an end to the golden days praised by the later authors. The king left two sons, Edward and Æthelred, and also a bunch of discontented and power-hungry followers. These formed loosely two opposing parties, which both promoted a different son to the throne. The elder son, Edward, was elected to the throne, Æthelred being just a few years old. Edward's reign was characterized by rivalling parties taking what they apparently thought they had been deprived of by King Edgar. The monastic writers refer to this with disapproval, and the time has later been regarded as an 'anti-monastic backlash' when the monasteries were in turn deprived of their lands and privileges. The version D of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, possibly related to Wulfstan, states: 'In his [Edward's] days because of his youth, the adversaries of God, Ealdorman Ælfhere and many others, broke God's law and hindered the monastic life, and destroyed monasteries and dispersed the monks and drove away the servants of God, whom King Edgar had ordered the holy Bishop Æthelwold to institute; and they plundered widows time and again. And many wrongs and evil lawless acts rose up afterwards, and ever after that it grew much worse.'⁷³ Also Wulfstan lamented the present days in contrast with King Edgar's time in his

modo dissentiendo discordarent; ne impar ac uarius unius regulae ac unius patriae usus probose uituperium sanctae conuersationi irrogaret.' Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, 2–3. Trans. Symons.

⁷¹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 5–6.

⁷² Keynes, "The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon," 82.

⁷³ 'On his [Eadweardes] dagum, for his iugode, Godes wiþærsacan Godes lage bræcon Ælfere ealdorman, and oþre manega, and munucregol myrdon, and mynstra tostæncton, and munecas todræfdon, and Godes þeowas fesedon, þe Eadgar kyning het ær þone halgan biscop Aþalwo<ld> gestalian, and wydewan bestryptan oft and gelome, and fela unrihta and yfela unlaga arysan up siððan, and aa æfter þam hit yfelode swiðe.' G. P. Cubbin, ed. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Volume 6: MS D* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 46–47, s.a. 975. Trans. Whitelock in Dorothy Whitelock, David C. Douglas, and Susie I. Tucker, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), 78.

Institutes of Polity: 'It is right that reeves zealously provide, and always rightfully gain for their lords: but now it has been altogether too much the case, since Edgar died, as God willed it, that there are more robbers than righteous; and it is a grievous thing, that those are robbers who should be guardians of a Christian people.'⁷⁴ It has been estimated, though, that the depiction is too biased in favour of the monastic part, and that the maltreatment of monasteries might have been in fact milder than what the sources lead us to believe. Rather it should be viewed as propaganda of one faction against another, and should not be regarded as a dichotomy between the laity and the monks, but as a primarily political dispute between the supporters of Edward and Æthelred, which consisted of monastic and secular aristocracy on both sides.⁷⁵ In any case the reign of Edward was not successful, since he was murdered only after two years on the throne in 978, possibly by the opposing parties who then promoted Æthelred to the throne. Æthelred's mother, Ælfthryth, was named by later writers as the agent behind the murder, in order to promote her own son to the throne. This interpretation cannot be confirmed with available sources, and was possibly influenced by the unfortunate fame that the reign of Æthelred gained after its known outcome.⁷⁶ The death of Edward was in any case the decisive factor in the accession of Æthelred, and he was now an undisputed heir to the throne. He gained the ecclesiastical affirmation for his rule when he was coronated in a ceremony by Archbishop Dunstan on 4 May 979.⁷⁷

Despite the political disagreements, which the leading monastic reformers were part of, the monastic revival continued to flourish under

⁷⁴ 'Riht is, ðæt gerefan geornlice tylian and symle heora hlafordan strynan mid rihte. Ac nu hit is geworden ealles to swyðe, syððan Eadgar geendode, swa swa God wolde, þæt ma is þæra rypera þonne rihtwisra and is earmlic ðing, þæt ða syndon ryperas þe sceoldan beon hyrdas cristenes folces.' Karl Jost, ed. *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical: ein Werk Erzbischof Wulfstans von York*, Schweizer anglistische Arbeiten 47 (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), 81. Trans. by Thorpe in Benjamin Thorpe, ed. *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* ([London]: 1840), vol. 2, 321.

⁷⁵ D. J. V. Fisher, "The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10, no. 3 (1952): 255, 259, 268–270.

⁷⁶ Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready", 978–1016: A Study in Their Use As Historical Evidence*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 168–174.

⁷⁷ ———, "Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready," in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750–1250: Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Sarah Hamilton, and Julia Crick (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 82–84.

Æthelred's early reign; the works of Ælfric, for instance, are an illustration of this success. The alliance between certain monastic parties and the king, which already predated Ælfric's and Wulfstan's times, is thus important to keep in mind when examining the religious-political rhetoric. By the time of King Edgar's coronation, both of them would have been young men in their early twenties, thus aware of the time before King Edward and Æthelred II. They both refer to King Edgar's times as another golden age, to which their contemporary, evil and miserable times are compared with striking contrast. Even if the Benedictine reformers did not necessarily gain a lasting impact, their aspirations are fully seen in Ælfric's, and also Wulfstan's, continuous strive for orthodoxy and order. Next I will examine these two figures in more detail, starting with Ælfric of Eynsham.

2.1.3. Ælfric of Eynsham

Ælfric, a priest at Cerne Abbas in the 990s, and abbot of Eynsham from around 1005 onwards, has for long been regarded as the most productive prose writer of the Anglo-Saxon period, and the most important one for modern research on Old English language and literature. Having been taught by Bishop Æthelwold at Winchester, Ælfric was an heir to the reformed Benedictine monasticism, and can be considered as member of the second generation of the reform. His role as a reformer was not, however, directly comparable to those of the previous generation. Recent research has shown that Ælfric did not silently conform to all the views of the reform, but corrected and altered them according to his own standards.⁷⁸ As Joyce Hill has argued, Ælfric's standards were in fact stricter than those of the first-generation reformers, and evidently he also identified himself as a reformer.⁷⁹ Therefore, his discourse cannot be treated as a direct continuum of the reform's ideologies, but must be regarded as meaningful in its own situation.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, 43. Referring to Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 260–265; Joyce Hill, "Reform and Resistance: Preaching Styles in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *De l'homélie au sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-a-Neuve: 1993), 33–38.

⁷⁹ ———, "Reform and Resistance," 32–34.

The most recent account of Ælfric's life and works is found in Joyce Hill's chapter in *A Companion to Ælfric*, a valuable collection of articles which provides an overview of the contemporary research on Ælfric.⁸⁰ Also Jonathan Wilcox provides a good introduction to Ælfric in his *Prefaces of Ælfric*,⁸¹ and Helmut Gneuss more briefly in *Ælfric of Eynsham: His Life, Times, and Writings*.⁸² Ælfric was born around 950, although the exact year of his birth is not known. The date is based on the first reference to Ælfric as being a 'mass-priest' (a properly ordained priest with the right to conduct masses, as opposed to clerics in minor orders), for which the age of at least thirty would have been required at the time. Wilcox has suggested that Ælfric may have been born already in 940 or 945, based on the reference to Dunstan as his teacher in Ælfric's *Grammar*.⁸³ The date of his death is not known either, but it has been estimated that he died around 1010. The events of his life can be estimated only through the references in his own writings, which can be frustratingly vague. It seems that his first experiences with education were not particularly satisfactory, as he states in the preface to the translation of Genesis, that he was taught by an unlearned priest 'at one time' (*hwilon*), who could understand only little Latin (*he cuðe be dæle Lyden understandan*). For this reason the priest did not understand the difference between the Old and New Testament properly, which resulted in wrong interpretation of doctrine.⁸⁴ Ælfric's later education, in contrast, appears to have been of completely different nature. He is connected with the most important persons of the reformed monasticism, especially Æthelwold. In several instances Ælfric mentions having been a pupil of Æthelwold of Winchester (refers to himself as *alumnus Aðelwoldi* in the preface to *CH I*, the preface to *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, the preface to his *Grammar*, and the letter to the monks of Eynsham), and writes occasionally about his experiences at Winchester.⁸⁵

From Winchester Ælfric was transferred to Cerne Abbas, where he wrote most of his work, the two series of *Catholic Homilies*, the collection of

⁸⁰ ———, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 35–65.

⁸¹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 1–85.

⁸² Helmut Gneuss, *Ælfric of Eynsham. His Life, Times, and Writings*, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 34 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009).

⁸³ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

saints' lives, a Latin grammar (the first one of its kind written in vernacular), the *Glossary*, and the *Colloquy*, also aimed for Latin teaching. According to a copy of the foundation charter, Cerne was founded or re-founded on an already monastic site by an aristocratic layman, Æthelmær, as a reformed Benedictine monastery in 987. The exact year of Ælfric's transfer is not known, but it is estimated that he was there by 990.⁸⁶ At the request of Æthelmær Ælfric moved to Cerne to teach and serve as a priest, as he states in the preface to the first series of *Catholic Homilies*.⁸⁷

Ælfric's later life and career were influenced by the political circumstances especially after 1005–1006. At that time his patron, Æthelmær, founded another monastery with royal privileges at Eynsham, Oxfordshire, and elected Ælfric as its abbot. These developments and Ælfric's relationship with the lay aristocracy are examined further in chapter 4. At Eynsham Ælfric is known to have written pastoral letters to the laity and for Archbishop Wulfstan. Ælfric apparently stayed at Eynsham until his death, around 1010.

To understand the premises behind Ælfric's discourse, not only the ideologies of the Benedictine reform, but also his general style of writing has to be first discussed. It is important to note that, firstly, Ælfric's literary production was extremely vast, and secondly, that the notion of textual and doctrinal authority was very important to him. A large part of his works can be regarded as loose translation or adaptation; Ælfric used a vast amount of authoritative texts in compiling his own works. His choice of medium was most often vernacular, and when he used Latin, he differed from the monastic reformers. Ælfric's Latin was clear compared to the hermeneutic Latin of the earlier reformers. As the notion of language, its potentials and dangers were intimately part of Ælfric's conceptions, I will next examine his premises behind the act of translation and writing.

Translations are paradoxical in nature, since at the same time they try to preserve the text, they inevitably displace it. When translating a text from one language to another, the translator does not merely pass on the knowledge contained in the text, but also interprets it at the same time, creating a new authoritative account of the text. Robert Stanton has argued that a certain interpretative model of knowledge formation differentiated Anglo-Saxon England from the continental areas. Stanton has described this

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

interpretative model as a 'culture of translation'. This means a hermeneutic tradition deriving from interpretive mentality, which was inherent within the elites already before the strong drive towards vernacular translations in the end of the ninth century, created by centuries-old Latin-based literary culture. Literary mentality was heavily influenced by Latin grammatical and metrical, as well as exegetical theories, which in turn influenced the nature of translations.⁸⁸ The nature of Ælfric's translations can thus be viewed against the long literate tradition among the Anglo-Saxon literate, mostly monastic elites.

Ælfric himself used the terms *interpretatio* and *translatio* in Latin, and *awendan* in Old English, when referring to his own works.⁸⁹ The modern English 'translation', when understood as a literal linguistic act, is not sufficient to explain the practice of medieval translation and interpretation, which encompassed the acts of transferring knowledge from one linguistic sphere to another. The Latin and Old English words *translatio* and *awendan*, however, both refer to carrying over, transferring, turning or changing the content into something new, and as such are completely sufficient in defining the medieval practice of translation.

As it was customary in the Middle Ages, Ælfric's translations were seldom literal, but more concerned about providing the contents of the Latin texts and the knowledge they contained in the vernacular language, making the act more that of explanation and interpretation than translation. Ælfric states his principles of translation in many of his prefaces, which make it clear that he was aware of the cognitive issues relating to the change of language in the translation process. Even if his statement that he did not translate 'word for word', but rather 'sense for sense' was itself a commonplace typical in medieval translations, deriving from classical tradition through Jerome's biblical translation, it was the principle behind his conceptualization of language and knowledge. In the preface to his most literal translation, the translation of Genesis, Ælfric discusses the problems of translation, especially the literal translations, which he calls 'naked' (*þa nacedan gerecednisse*).⁹⁰ The naked narratives were translations without commentary, and as such did not provide any explanations for the text, which Ælfric saw extremely important especially when translating sacred Scriptures. He states in the preface to the translation of Genesis that

⁸⁸ Stanton, *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England*, 9–10, 14–15, 25–26.

⁸⁹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 63.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 63–65.

translating the word of God requires literal translation, but that is impossible because of the vast differences in terms of idioms in different languages, and would cause serious misunderstandings without proper commentary.⁹¹ He did not see it possible that people could understand literal translations correctly as such because of differences in conceptualization when the text was removed from its original linguistic and consequently also from its cultural spheres. Ælfric himself was always aware of his audience, and changed culturally and historically specific terms in his works to those he thought his audience was familiar with. Thus, for instance, he replaced traditional examples in his *Grammar*, changing the Roman references (*Roma, Tiberis, urbs* and *flumen*) to more contemporary terms (*Eadgarus, Aðelwoldus, rex, episcopus*). Thus the connection between meaning and language was apparent for Ælfric, and for this reason he was especially concerned with the dangers of translation, as well.⁹²

Ælfric's motives for writing vernacular religious texts are seen already in his preface to the first series of *Catholic Homilies*. He emphasizes that the main reason for him to take up the task of compiling the series was that many vernacular books available to those who could not read Latin contained religiously erroneous material, and were heretical. He perhaps meant the earlier vernacular homilies, similar to those found in the *Blickling* and *Vercelli* books, which contained apocryphal material Ælfric disapproved of.⁹³ These anonymous collections of Old English homilies are very different from those by Ælfric. Their tone is more moral, whereas Ælfric's homilies provide doctrinal explanations. It is clear that these anonymous homilies were not as interested in the use of patristic and Carolingian material, as Ælfric was, but instead drew on more entertaining and effective themes, such as heaven, hell, or the Day of Judgement.⁹⁴ Orthodoxy and appropriate learning was, in contrast, Ælfric's greatest concern, and it becomes clear in comparison with the homilies he disapproved of. The view that he saw

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 23, 36–40, 63–65.

⁹³ Printed in Richard Morris, ed. *Blickling Homilies*, EETS O.S. 58, 63, 73 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); D. G. Scragg, ed. *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, EETS O.S. 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹⁴ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 19, 22. Referring to Milton McC. Gatch, "Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies," *Traditio* 21 (1965); Paul E. Szarmach, "The Vercelli Homilies: Style and Structure," in *The Old English Homily and Its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978).

learning an important feature in the saving of one's soul becomes apparent when he states that 'everyone may more easily withstand the future temptation through God's support, if he is strengthened by book learning, for they shall be preserved who continue in faith to the end'.⁹⁵ Ælfric also recounts the hardships of the time, and sees the world's end coming near; the world's imminent end and the apocalyptic expectations prevalent in this time stressed the importance of truthful faith even more.

The same concern is seen also in the *Lives of Saints*; in the *Life of St Mark the Evangelist* (LS 15) Ælfric referred to the Latin translation of the gospels by Jerome, and remarked that already when the true gospels were written, there were men who began to re-write them in their own way 'without the direction of the Holy Ghost and the Saviour, and according to their own will said as it seemed fit to them' (*butan þam halgan gaste and þæs hælendes wissunge, and be heora gewille sædon swa swa him geþuhte*), resulting in erroneous accounts of the faith.⁹⁶ Therefore, for Ælfric the written discourse represented a highly valuable medium in transmitting and keeping the message of God in a correct state.

It is important to note that the implication of this concern is that Ælfric saw himself as capable of translating the doctrine so that it would retain its orthodoxy. The concern with translating the sacred doctrine from Latin to vernacular was highly unusual at this time, as Jonathan Wilcox has pointed out. Wilcox has argued that throughout Ælfric's prefaces there is seen a certain imposition of authority which tells of the confidence to be able to correctly produce an authoritative body of doctrine with his own translations, and this is seen also in his strong refusal to associate his works with the earlier vernacular homilies. Instead he saw his work as continuing in the footsteps of the patristic and Carolingian writings.⁹⁷

At the same time Ælfric was cautious towards the translation act itself. In the preface of the *Lives of Saints* he stated his reluctance in taking up the task, and that he had yielded to it only because his patrons had insisted. Besides being a literary commonplace of a humble writer, the statement possibly contains a true concern about how the vernacular translations can

⁹⁵ '[G]ehwa mæg þe eaðelicor þa toweardan costnunge acuman ðurh goes fultum. gif he bið þurh boclice lare getrymmed. for ðan ðe ða beoð gehealdene þe oð ende on geleafan þurhwuniað.' Peter Clemoes, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, EETS, S.S. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 175.

⁹⁶ Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 328–329.

⁹⁷ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 1, 19.

convey the same message as the sacred Latin ones. Ælfric wrote that in his opinion not everything should be translated to be available to the laity, because of the danger of misunderstanding: 'I do not promise, however, to write very many in this tongue, because it is not fitting that many should be translated into our language, for fear that the pearls of Christ would by accident be held in disrespect. And therefore I keep silent about the book called *Vitae Patrum*, which contains many subtle points that are not appropriate to be revealed to the laity, nor am I even able to fulfil them.'⁹⁸

The reluctance to bring knowledge available to the laity underlines Ælfric's attitude towards interpretation. Spiritual knowledge was the property of the clergy. Every order had its place and different function in the society. Therefore, the translations should only be limited to certain texts, and not risk the possibility that laity would form heretical opinions about spiritual matters. The fact is that Ælfric did take up the task of compiling so many works in the vernacular; thus, the confidence in his own abilities to convey the true doctrine in translations must have overridden these concerns in the end. The method which he saw as most efficient in conveying the message as loyally as possible was to cut down the unnecessary textual features that did not add to the true account. In the opening words to the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric states that the nature of translation is to be simple enough and open to those who read or listen to them. Further, he made it clear that he had deliberately abridged the longer passages, so that they would not be too tedious.⁹⁹

Ælfric's method of translation follows his overall style in writing; it is clear, condensed, and matter-of-fact. The restrained style is in contrast with both Latin prose and earlier vernacular homilies. Ælfric preferred precise and clear discourse to the flourishing, ornamental rhetoric that can be seen so clearly in other works of his time. He aimed at exact expression which did not convey with itself any confusing or contradictory messages.¹⁰⁰ This feature of his language can be seen as a part of his overall approach to

⁹⁸ 'Nec tamen plura promitto me scripturum hac lingua, quia nec conuenit huic sermocinationi plura inseri; ne forte despectui habeantur margarite christi. Ideoque reticemus de libro uitae patrum, in quo multa subtilia habentur quae non conuenit aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere.' *Ibid.*, 119.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 199–120.

¹⁰⁰ Malcolm Godden, "Aelfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," in *The Old English Homily and Its Background*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 109–110.

learning, orthodox faith, the right conduct of the liturgical year, and also of his insistence on the right order of the society. After the two series of homilies, Ælfric's style developed into a form which combined prosaic and poetic elements. The alliterative rhythmical prose with pairs of two-beat phrases resembles the rhythm of oral performance. The choice that Ælfric made in using this kind of rhythmic style in this particular collection is probably due to his intentions of presenting the work to lay audiences. The style could provide more effectiveness and receptiveness among an audience who would have been familiar with listening to texts being read aloud in public and with the tradition of oral poetic performances.¹⁰¹ It is also plausible to assume that this kind of style would be very effective in delivering homilies. At the same time, Ælfric's prose is highly literary, using sentence structures as rhetoric devices, and both figures of thought and figures of speech to convey the point.¹⁰²

Although the scholarly focus on Ælfric has been mostly linguistic and literary, also his theological notions have received attention. Especially the work by Milton Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England* (1977),¹⁰³ opened the floor for this kind of discussion. Later the work by Lynne Grundy, *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology* (1991), showed the full spectrum of Ælfric's coherent theological thought, which both theologically and politically speaking, was intimately based on Augustine. It is now usually recognized how innovatively Ælfric used his sources to formulate solid and pointed theological notions, instead of just recycling worn-out commonplaces without contributing anything new.

Also Ælfric's position with regard to the political circumstances of his time has lately gained much scholarly attention, much more than it used to. The earlier image of Ælfric has gone through changes, as it is now recognized that he was not an isolated monk confined within monastic walls, but an active agent in the society, with important relationships with some of the most influential persons in power at the time. Ælfric's role in this

¹⁰¹ Gabriella Corona, "Ælfric's (Un)Changing Style: Continuity of Patterns from the *Catholic Homilies* to the *Lives of Saints*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 107, no. 2 (2008); Gneuss, *Ælfric of Eynsham. His Life, Times, and Writings*, 20–21; Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric's Changing Vocabulary," *English Studies* 61 (1980).

¹⁰² Roy M. Liuzza, "Religious Prose," in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Trehearne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 244–245.

¹⁰³ Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

environment become evident through his writings which he aimed at the laity; this is dealt with more closely in chapter 4, which examines his role in teaching the secular aristocracy.

It is clear that with a body of works as vast as Ælfric's, certain criteria have to be applied with regard to what to use as source material. Therefore, each chapter focuses on a specific group of texts, which are then supplemented with other material when necessary. In the next chapter the focus is on the hagiographical translations of the two royal saints, and in the two following ones on Ælfric's letters written for the laity, and on texts written for Wulfstan respectively. This being said, my interest is to consider Ælfric's discourse as comprehensively as possible, and not only to examine individual texts in isolation. Accordingly, texts that deal with similar issues raised in each chapter are included in the analysis. As I have in this chapter given a general account of Ælfric's works, the texts that are examined in more detail are introduced more comprehensively in the beginning of each chapter.

2.1.4. Wulfstan of York

Wulfstan of York represents a somewhat different side of the Anglo-Saxon society than Ælfric. As a figure holding the highest religious authority and as an adviser to the kings, Wulfstan represents both the ecclesiastical and secular worlds, whereas Ælfric's realm was almost wholly monastic. Wulfstan was bishop of London (996–1002) and Worcester, and held the office of bishopric of Worcester simultaneously with archbishopric of York from 1002 until 1016. After that he gave up Worcester and remained as archbishop of York until his death in 1023. Besides Ælfric, he is one of the two best-known Old English prose writers. In addition to vernacular homilies, his works include law codes, Latin sermons, letters, two poems occurring in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the *Institutes of Polity*, which is hard to fit into any well-established literary genres of the time. Similarly, a series of texts have been identified as his works, but cannot be classified easily—they have been characterized as legal treatises, homilies, or notes for future references.¹⁰⁴ Not much is known of Wulfstan's early life. Even his

¹⁰⁴ Renée R. Trilling, "Sovereignty and Social Order: Archbishop Wulfstan and the *Institutes of Polity*," in *The Bishop Reformed: Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. John S. Ott and Anna Trumbore Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 61.

religious affiliation is unknown, but it is likely that before becoming the bishop of London he was a monk. There is only post-Conquest evidence which states this, but as Dorothy Whitelock already pointed out, it is hardly conceivable that a secular priest would have been appointed to the bishopric of Worcester or to the archbishopric of York at this time when the ideals of the reform were seen partly also in the wish to impose monastic standards to episcopal office.¹⁰⁵

The image of Wulfstan has usually remained that of a moral homilist who was very skilled in using forceful rhetoric on the one hand and as a statesman on the other. Wulfstan was, even more than Ælfric, an integral part of the influential aristocracy of his time. He attended the king's meetings, and as archbishop of York held the highest power in the ecclesiastical spheres. He was also a prominent adviser of Kings Æthelred II and Cnut, and he drafted law codes for Æthelred from 1005 onwards and for Cnut after his accession to the throne in 1016. Previously Wulfstan was regarded as a minor, although verbally powerful figure in the late Anglo-Saxon England, and he is still best known for his rhetorically strong, reprimanding sermon *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (1014), which is held in esteem especially as a witness to the severe Viking attacks in this time. As said, Wulfstan's role as a homilist and statesman has also for long been recognized, but these roles have usually been studied separately. Patrick Wormald, however, combined these two aspects in his research on Wulfstan, and placed him 'in the front rank among early medieval state-builders'. He wanted to show that the previous picture we had of Wulfstan did not take into account 'the source of power that drove him', that is his vision of a holy society. Wormald's views are greatly aligned with my interests, as they bring into discussion not only the essential and various questions of holiness in a secular society, but also the questions of how Wulfstan himself viewed his written treatises being capable of bringing this holiness closer to the society he lived in. As Wormald has stated, Wulfstan was more than a skilled homilist who 'happened to draw law-codes.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Dorothy Whitelock, "Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (1942): 35. See also Cubitt, "Review Article: The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," 84–85; Joyce Hill, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer?," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 311–312.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society," in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. David A. E. Pelletier (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 192.

While the previous picture of Wulfstan as a statesman and a homilist can be considered to be correct, Joyce Hill has pointed out that the reformist impulse which is conveyed in much of Wulfstan's works should be considered together with the functions of law-making and homiletic writing. She has shown that the way Wulfstan used the resources available to him, in content, style and in their 'mental outlook' can be connected to the ideals of the reform.¹⁰⁷ While it is unclear whether or not Wulfstan was educated in one of the reformed Benedictine monasteries, it can be seen that the works which he wrote during his bishopric convey a strong reformist message. The previous picture of Wulfstan has been that of a homilist and a statesman, following Whitelock's seminal research,¹⁰⁸ but his role as a reformer has usually been more neglected. Hill has recently reviewed Wulfstan's role more comprehensively in relation to the reform. Hill's article is part of the most recent comprehensive collection of articles concerning the study of Wulfstan, *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, edited by Matthew Townend, which offers a relatively good overview of the current study on Wulfstan. Wulfstan's reformist intentions become apparent specifically in chapters 5 and 6, which deal with his ideas about social order.

Compared to Ælfric, Wulfstan's homilies are more exhortatory in tone and less explanatory in content.¹⁰⁹ The earlier homilies of Wulfstan concentrate heavily on eschatological material, and are as such described as reflecting the interests of young Wulfstan. Later his emphasis turned clearly more towards practical laws and moral exhortation, in the form of drawing rules and law collections for the use of clergy, although, as Joyce Lionarons has shown, eschatological concerns are still shown in Wulfstan's later production and apparently continued to vex his mind until the end of his life.¹¹⁰ Wulfstan's prose is highly rhetorical, and his language has received some attention from scholars, but as Richard Dance has remarked in his article on Wulfstan's language, in comparison with Ælfric the scholarship

¹⁰⁷ Hill, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer?," 324.

¹⁰⁸ Whitelock, "Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman."

¹⁰⁹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 19–20.

¹¹⁰ Joyce Tally Lionarons, "Napier Homily L: Wulfstan's Eschatology," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

has not been as extensive.¹¹¹ In the article Dance reviewed the state of research on the linguistic features of Wulfstan's writings and concluded that although his language can be classified as late West-Saxon, in general it differs from the 'self-consciously scholarly tradition' which the Winchester school and Ælfric's language can be said to represent. Compared to Ælfric Wulfstan's style can at first seem uninteresting and colourless, but as Dance stresses, it becomes interesting when examining what it was used for. The most characteristic feature seen in Wulfstan's attitude towards language is a strong will to relate his message as clearly and accurately as possible.¹¹²

In this sense Wulfstan resembles Ælfric, whose discourse was also characterized by clarity, although in a somewhat different way. The most notable difference in their attitudes towards language and discourse is perhaps seen in their own positioning towards the literary and scholarly tradition, as well as in their consciousness of linguistic representation. Whereas Ælfric was always concerned of textual and doctrinal authority, and placed himself within the patristic tradition by references and comments, Wulfstan's texts do not tell of similar priorities. It almost seems as if the message itself which Wulfstan wanted to bring forth in an intensive manner overwhelms any references to his textual antecedents, which have been discovered only by modern source analysis.¹¹³ As Hill has stated, Wulfstan's self-identification is not similar to that of the principal figures of the reform, since his works are not presented in a dialogue with their sources, even though he clearly has used them in composition. This method separates the textual sphere from the lived reality in a more significant way than that of Ælfric's.¹¹⁴ Despite the lack of references in the texts *per se*, most of Wulfstan's writing was altogether dependent on previous authorities, especially Carolingian ones.

Partially because of his strong rhetorical style, Wulfstan's homiletic writings have been the centre of attention of philological research, whereas his legal tracts and the *Institutes of Polity* have belonged to the realm of historians. This disciplinary division of interest was perhaps for a time a

¹¹¹ Richard Dance, "Sound, Fury, and Signifiers; or Wulfstan's Language," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 29.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 61.

¹¹³ In this respect the most important work was done by Karl Jost, *Wulfstanstudien*, Schweizer anglistische Arbeiten 23 (Bern: A. Francke AG Verlag, 1950).

¹¹⁴ Hill, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer?," 310–311.

factor in making the image of Wulfstan hard to evaluate. Lately a more comprehensive approach has been more characteristic for Wulfstan-studies, and my own study follows this line, as I am examining both genres which Wulfstan produced, although it is already worth mentioning that there can hardly even be seen any real differences that would justify labelling his writings in different genres. This feature is discussed especially in chapter 6 when examining the homiletic discourse in Wulfstan's legislation.

2.2. Viking attacks and political disorder

The period of intellectual activity, reformist ideology and literary production was coincidentally afflicted with political hardships and eventually military defeat. From the 980s onwards the Viking raids intensified after almost a century of relative peace. At first, the impact of the raids was presumably not as dire as after 991, when the raids were conducted by a more cohesive army. According to Simon Keynes, the period from 991 to 1005 should be regarded as a single period when a single army ravaged the coasts of England. But it was only with the two successive raids, first in 1006–1007 and then again in 1009–1012, that the Viking raids reached their peak in terms of scale and severity. These raids, the first one led by Tostig, the second by Thorkell the Tall, broke the English resistance, and created internal dissension among the leaders of England. In turn, this eased the following large-scale invasions first by the Danish king Sweyn Forkbeard in 1013 and then by his son Cnut in 1015.¹¹⁵

It was unfortunate for King Æthelred II that most of his reign (978–1016) was characterized by the problems caused by these raids. Æthelred is indeed infamous for failing to ward off the Vikings. His reign was afterwards judged unsuccessful and unfortunate, and Æthelred himself as an incompetent king with treacherous subjects. This reputation is largely the result of the eleventh and twelfth century writers, who needed a scapegoat to explain the defeat of the Anglo-Saxons to the Danes.¹¹⁶ It is now understood that the label of a weak and powerless king that Æthelred has

¹¹⁵ Keynes, "Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready," 80–81, 86, 88, 95.

¹¹⁶ ———, "The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready," in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. David Hill (Oxford: BAR British Series 59, 1978), 227–243; Pauline A. Stafford, "The Reign of Æthelred II: A Study in the Limitations on Royal Policy and Action," in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. David Hill (Oxford: BAR British Series 59, 1978), 37.

received is somewhat overstated, and that the circumstances, especially the Viking attacks during the last decade of his reign, were too much to be dealt with even for a more powerful king. In addition to the Viking attacks, there were serious internal disputes which afflicted the political situation.

It should be noted that the knowledge of the Viking attacks is largely based on the anonymous entries for the period from 983 to 1016 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The entries have been recognized to have been written soon after Æthelred's death in 1016, and they show signs of interpretation of events seen from the perspective of someone who knew their disastrous outcome.¹¹⁷ Therefore the knowledge of the details of the attacks should be regarded with reservation. Although the reputation of a weak king was constructed largely after the actual reign, when the defeat and its political outcome already influenced the interpretation, some of the writings of the contemporaries admittedly reflect the grim circumstances. Keynes has demonstrated this with the writings of Ælfric and Wulfstan after the turn of the millennium, and reflected them to the major attacks of 1006–1007 and 1009–1012.¹¹⁸

The increasingly difficult times brought on by the Viking attacks are reflected in both Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works, but most notably in Wulfstan's fierce rhetoric in the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, dated to 1014.¹¹⁹ Malcolm Godden has examined the eschatological expectations in light of the Viking attacks in his article 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', and shown that the way Ælfric and Wulfstan grapple with this issue is tightly connected to their theological conceptions of morality, and also to the conception of Christian history, which was coming to an end.¹²⁰ This means that, firstly, they saw the Viking attacks as a punishment from God for the sins of English people, and secondly, that the attacks were also a sign of the Apocalypse and the coming of the Antichrist. The first notion was common material in the literature of the British Isles, starting from Gildas's sermon titled *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, where the Saxon invasion

¹¹⁷ Keynes, "Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready," 84–85.

¹¹⁸ ———, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12," *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007): on Ælfric specifically, see 160–170.

¹¹⁹ Dorothy Whitelock, ed. *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 2. ed., Methuen's Old English Library B. Prose selections (London: Methuen, 1952).

¹²⁰ Malcolm Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E. G. Stanley*, ed. Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray, and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

was depicted as a punishment from God for not following the laws and customs of Christianity.¹²¹ Bede continued with promoting Gildas's views in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.¹²² Later on Alcuin took up the same theme, when he commented on the sack of Lindisfarne in 793 as a sign of divine judgement (*iudicium divinum*) in his letter to King Æthelred I of Northumbria. Alcuin's reproach is specifically targeted to the lifestyle and the sins of the nobility, the king included. He frowns upon the nobility who have started to dress up like the pagans, cutting their hair in their fashion and abandoning the customs of their forefathers.¹²³ Interestingly and in a similar vein with Alcuin, Ælfric refers to some people adopting the customs of the Danish in one of his short texts, *De sanguine*, which discusses prohibitions on the eating of blood and exhorts people not to abandon the native customs on behalf of the Danish ones, and then requests a 'brother Edward', whom the text addresses, to try to put an end to a 'shameful habit' of drinking and eating in the outhouse, which some of the countrywomen practiced at beer parties.¹²⁴ He condemns practicing the heathen customs but does not in this instance link it to the circumstances that faced people at that time. Elsewhere the internal sins and customs are more clearly connected to an external threat as a form of punishment, but as Mary Clayton pointed out, the similarities between the times which Alcuin describes and those of Ælfric must have been apparent. It is fully possible that Ælfric knew this particular letter, and similar references can be read in Wulfstan's work, too, the *Canons of Edgar* and his *Canon Law Collection*, in specific.¹²⁵

¹²¹ The theme of sin and punishment, the wretched state of the Britons, and their contempt towards God's laws of which the conquest was the consequence, is a recurrent theme throughout the whole work. Printed in Michael Winterbottom, ed. *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (London: Phillimore, 1978).

¹²² Bede draws on Gildas in his description and interpretation, and uses a biblical quotation (4. Reg. 25:8-10) to emphasize the nature of God's punishment. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, eds., *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 52-53.

¹²³ Ernest Dümmler, ed. *Epistolae Karolini Aevi 2: Alcuini Epistolae*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 42-44.

¹²⁴ Mary Clayton, "An Edition of Ælfric's *Letter to Brother Edward*," in *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 280-283.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 269-273.

The unstable political situation, and the Viking attacks, which grew stronger from the 980's onwards, might have been the cause for many nostalgic praises for more successful and pious kings, especially with respect to King Edgar, who was connected to the monastic reformers, and thus enjoyed good prestige among the ecclesiastical elites. A contrast between the times of Edgar and Æthelred is made by Ælfric in two pieces of the *Lives of Saints*. In the *Life of St Swithun* Ælfric praises Edgar, and refers to his days as a blessed and delightful time, when King Edgar advanced Christianity, peace prevailed, and people did not hear about Viking armies ('The time was blessed and delightful in England when King Edgar advanced Christianity and established many monasteries; and his kingdom was flourishing in peace, so that one never heard of any Viking army, except for those of the people themselves who live permanently in this land').¹²⁶ Another similar contrast is made in a piece for mid-lent, the *Prayer of Moses* (LS 13). The land used to dwell in peace, and the monastic orders were held in honour. Ælfric laments that afterwards men rejected monastic life, and held God's services in contempt. As a consequence pestilence, hunger, and the heathen army were inflicted upon people (*Hu wæs hit ða siððan ða þa man towearp munuc-lif and godes biggendas to bysmore hæfde buton þæt us com to cwealm and hunger and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmre*).¹²⁷ The Viking attacks are presented as a punishment for neglecting the spiritual side of the society, and consequently abandoning the social order set by God.

Certain analogies to the current times can be seen also in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, written during the early stages of the Viking raids in the 990s. In the lives of Kings St Edmund and Oswald, these analogies have been interpreted to be rather clear. Both of the holy kings died in the hands of pagans, Oswald in combat, and Edmund without a fight. Both of them can be seen to have failed to protect their people. Despite this paradox, there is a tendency to state that protection of the people was crucial. This feature, as well as the idea of a just war becomes evident in several passages, especially in St Oswald's case. It is stated that the king was killed for his people's

¹²⁶ '[S]e tima wæs gesælig and wynsum on Angelcynne, þa ða Eadgar cyning þone Cristendom gefyrðrode and fela munuclifa arærde; and his cynerice wæs wunigende on sibbe, swa þæt man ne gehyrde gif ænig sciphære wære buton agenre leode þe ðis land heoldon.' Michael Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4.ii: The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 590–591, 606–607.

¹²⁷ Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 294–295.

protection/defence (*he ofslagen wearð for his folces ware*).¹²⁸ Compared to Ælfric's source, Bede, the passage is one among the passages which are rewritten and reorganized. The weight which can be given to this kind of evidence is not easy to determine on the basis of the homily alone, since Bede also states, briefly, that Oswald was killed fighting for his fatherland (*pro patria dimicans a paganis interfectus est*).¹²⁹ St Edmund is also depicted as dying for his people, as it was seen previously. In his case the death is voluntary, and at first seems incompatible with the image of a warrior king dying for his people. But taken together with other texts, where the protection becomes the matter of utmost importance, it can be suggested that it played a part in Ælfric's choices of presenting the saint-kings as they were. Perhaps Ælfric saw the appalling outcome of the Viking raids after 991 and wanted to accentuate this feature in his writings, even if their purpose was not primarily political, but religious. The more 'political texts' show a firmer approach, and they repeat the more conventional rhetoric on the secular aspects of ruling, as well. The specific context of Ælfric's texts becomes evident, for instance, with references to the tumultuous times of the Viking attacks, which are reflected also in religious writings. It should be noted that at the time when Ælfric composed his *Lives of Saints*, the impact of the Viking activities was not as severe as it was to be later after the turn of the millennium. Additionally, it is harder to find references to the hardships of the time in Ælfric's works than in Wulfstan's pounding rhetoric later. Therefore the Viking attacks cannot be regarded as the sole factor in influencing Ælfric's tone and choices of topic. A more pressing matter might be the policy of buying off the enemy, which, as Keynes has reminded, can never have been very popular, even though it was not unique, either.¹³⁰

Ælfric and especially Wulfstan drew largely from the same line of thought as Gildas, Bede and Alcuin, when they wrote about the state of society in their time. They both seem to adopt a stance of advice and reproach, with which they tried to save the things that were possible to save. In their works they give advice to all parts of society, including the king and his council. Their attempt to fix the state of society is thus done with writing the order, which did not just mean the order of society in this world, but also in the next. These authors lived in a time when, the turn of the millennium

¹²⁸ Geoffrey I. Needham, ed. *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1966), 35.

¹²⁹ Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 242–243.

¹³⁰ Keynes, "The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon," 99–102.

approaching, strong eschatological expectations prevailed—which in Wulfstan’s case did not end in 1000, but continued long after that, as it was mentioned above. The belief that the world was coming to an end meant that even if the good conduct of life and proper moral order would be achieved in this world, and even if the Viking attacks would cease, it still did not save people from the coming of Antichrist. The nature of all this aspiration for order must thus be seen as being theological, as much as it was political. Political and social order was pursued with an eternal salvation in mind.

In 1013 Æthelred was forced into exile in Normandy with his family. On Christmas day 1013 Sweyn was declared the king of England, but in February 1014 he suddenly died, resulting in the decision of the leaders of England to invite Æthelred back from his exile, ‘if he would govern them more justly than he did before.’¹³¹ This statement is a sign of dissatisfaction that prevailed at least in the closing years of his reign, and the king’s return was apparently tied to certain conditions, in which promises of loyalty and improvement of rule were made. In the spring 1014 Æthelred returned to England; on this occasion his presumably last law code, known as VIII Æthelred, was drafted by Wulfstan. Until 1016 Æthelred continued to battle with the Danish army, with Cnut as their leader now. In April 1016 Æthelred died of illness, leaving his son and successor Edmund Ironside to defend the country. The final struggles were complicated by internal dissension, and especially by the treacherous acts of Ealdorman Eadric of Mercia, who opportunistically changed sides to Cnut’s party. Eadric Streona had risen rapidly in power after 1006, already then apparently by some kind of scheming, and at some point he also married King Æthelred’s daughter Edith. Because of his repeated betrayals, he has gained reputation as an arch-traitor in the pens of later chroniclers and historians. After Cnut’s accession he was restored as ealdorman of Mercia, but was then executed by Cnut, in fear of further betrayals.¹³² It was apparently the desertion of Eadric which finalized the defeat of the English in the battle of Assandun in October 1016. Edmund and Cnut agreed to divide the kingdom so that Edmund would rule Wessex and Cnut Mercia, but Edmund died soon after his defeat, already in November 1016, making it possible for Cnut to seize power over

¹³¹ ‘Þa ræddon þa witan ealle, gehadode and læwede, þæt man æfter þam cyninge Æþelrede sende, and cwædon þæt him nan hlaforð leofra nære þonne hyra gecynda hlaforð, gif he hi rihtlicor healdan wolde þonne he ær dyde.’ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1014. Also in manuscripts C and E.

¹³² Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “the Unready”*, 211–215.

all England. To secure his power he disposed of people who might challenge his rule.¹³³

We do not know how Ælfric would have reacted to the political outcome of the Viking raids and the subsequent invasion of England, since he presumably died before 1013, when Sweyn Forkbeard managed to invade the country. Wulfstan continued to act in the ecclesiastical and political milieu, and we can read some of his response in the law codes and homilies which he produced at the end of his life. These will be dealt with in more detail in chapters 5 and 6. The change of dynasty from Æthelred to Cnut did not bring on so many changes in the ideology of monarchy. It has been often stated that after his succession to the throne Cnut proved to be 'more English than the English'.¹³⁴ After some initial hostility among ecclesiastical and aristocratic circles, Cnut seems to have adopted the Christian ideologies of kingship very quickly, and to have built on these notions to consolidate his legitimate authority, and the kingdom in his reign is usually regarded to have been relatively powerful and united, when compared with the difficulties Æthelred faced during his reign. Although, this kind of image we have of Cnut might be a result of the nature of sources we have on our disposal; the ecclesiastical writers, with whom Cnut had good relationships, may as well have influenced the later assessments of his reign.¹³⁵ It is notable that in Wulfstan's treatment the change of rule appears not as much as an abrupt and illegitimate change, but more of one which was justified, or even deserved. His legal tracts continue the same principles and rhetoric which he had developed during Æthelred's reign. It is certain, therefore, that for Cnut Wulfstan proved to be an extremely helpful actor in establishing the rights for rule also in practice, when they were largely dependent on the written word and the normative discourse, consisting of Wulfstan's formulations of a righteous, religious-political order which a Christian society should adhere to.

¹³³ Ibid., 226–228; ———, "The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon," 95.

¹³⁴ Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087*, 81.

¹³⁵ M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London: Longman, 1993), 125–146.

3. Holy kings and the hagiographic homilies of Ælfric

This chapter engages with vernacular hagiography on saint-kings in the *Lives of Saints* of Ælfric. The focus is on two texts in the collection, the *Life of St Oswald* (LS 26, August 5) and the *Life of St Edmund* (LS 32, November 20). Both of these are adaptations from Latin, and both deal with Anglo-Saxon martyr kings whose cults were prominent in late Anglo-Saxon England. The *Life of St Oswald* is a major adaptation, based on Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (ca. 731). The *Life of St Edmund* has a shorter history, and it is adapted and shortened from Abbo of Fleury's (ca. 940–1004) *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, which was written in 987–988, only a few years before Ælfric's vernacular version. The fact that both of the texts are translations, or more properly adaptations, enables the comparison between the rhetoric in the Latin originals and the rhetoric in Ælfric's own works. A special emphasis is given to the notion of order as an authorizing feature in Ælfric's texts. I argue that the vernacular depictions of the holy kings deviated from the Latin ones by presenting a more standardized presentation of the royal saints by highlighting the universal nature of sanctity and by rearranging the narrative order. I would also like to suggest that instead of seeing these texts primarily as political tools in enhancing the royal authority by religious assimilation, they are best understood in relation to the ideals of the Benedictine reform on the one hand, and to the moral and social thought of Ælfric on the other hand. Ælfric's thought encompassed much more than presenting the ideals of kingship in the lives of royal saints. In the following I examine the discourse of Ælfric in relation to the Latin models he used and to the political context of the late tenth century. I begin with discussing the issues with the source material. After that, I discuss the arrangement of narrative in relation to the concept of sainthood. Then I move on to deal with assimilative rhetoric in detail, where the earthly power is compared with its heavenly counterpart, and finally end with a discussion about imitation, moral models and social order in Ælfric's discourse. Thus the main interest in this chapter is how the religious discourses on holy kings act in

relation to the overall notions of political power of the time, and how this pursuit for order relates to the interpretations of royal sainthood in late Anglo-Saxon England.

3.1. Royal saints and vernacular hagiography

3.1.1 The royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England

The royal saints of Anglo-Saxon England have been a popular subject of study, almost as popular as were their cults in the Middle Ages. Anglo-Saxon England is indeed particular in this respect—there were more royal saints than in any other place in early medieval Europe, and the cults appeared with a special emphasis on martyred and murdered kings. They have maintained their popularity up to this day, as the newly published books on St Oswald (1995), St Edmund (2009) and St Edward the Confessor (2009), and the theme issue of *The Heroic Age* on St Oswald (2006) reveal.¹³⁶ The origins of these cults are usually interpreted to have been connected to politics and their promotion of the church policy. The work of Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (1988), is especially important in providing a comprehensive analysis of both male and female royal saints, although as the title of the book indicates, Ridyard does not deal with Northumbrian cults, such as the cult of St Oswald.¹³⁷ The works of David W. Rollason and Alan Thacker, which focus more on the early development of the cults especially in Northumbria and Mercia, incline to the political interpretation of these cults, too.¹³⁸ According to the generally accepted view, one of the

¹³⁶ Anthony Bale, ed. *St Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009); Kent G. Hare, "Heroes, Saints, and Martyrs: Holy Kingship from Bede to Ælfric," *The Heroic Age*, no. 9 (2006); Richard Mortimer, ed. *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009); Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, eds., *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995).

¹³⁷ Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹³⁸ D. W. Rollason, "The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983); ———, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Alan Thacker, "Kings, Saints, and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia," *Midland History* 10 (1985).

most important motives in promoting the cults was a desire to discourage royal murders by condemning the killers, and consequently to prevent civil strife on the one hand, and to strengthen the religious grounds of monarchy on the other.¹³⁹ The exception in interpreting the reasons for the cults of holy kings is Catherine Cubitt, who has suggested a popular, lay origin for certain cults of murdered and martyred kings.¹⁴⁰ The saint-kings have indeed received much attention, and the cults have been studied in the light of the development of the cult of saints and ecclesiastical policies, the formation of the Anglo-Saxon kingship and state, or as representations of an ideal, Christian king.

It should be noted, that being the only royal hagiographies dating to the pre-Conquest era, the texts examined in this chapter form only a small part among the extant Old English vernacular prose saints' lives (2 %).¹⁴¹ According to *A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints* by John Blair, the number of kings and princes among the saints was only six, with respect to pre-Conquest evidence. Additionally, there are four uncertain ones. In total the saint-kings form only approximately three percent of all the saints venerated in Anglo-Saxon England are taken into account.¹⁴² In many instances the veneration of saint-kings and the production of their hagiography are attested only after the Conquest. Both of these figures show that there is reason to be reserved about a specifically important category of saint-kings at this time. Especially when taken into account the categorization the Benedictine reformers made in terms of sanctity—they classified saints into apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins—it is important to read royal hagiography as part of larger framework of sainthood rather than an exclusive category on its own.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Rollason, "The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England," 16.

¹⁴⁰ Catherine Cubitt, "Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 1 (2000).

¹⁴¹ Calculated from the list of Old English prose saints lives in E. Gordon Whatley, "An Introduction to the Study of Old English Prose Hagiography: Sources and Resources," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 4–7.

¹⁴² Calculated from all the pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon saints in John Blair, "A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints," in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 495–565.

¹⁴³ Alan Thacker, "*Membra Disjecta*: the Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 125. Referring to *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, ed.

Traditionally the vernacular translated prose texts have been studied from a literary and philological point of view. They have often been observed in their pre-textual environment, as a result of a long literary continuum. My interest in these texts is historical, not just literary. What I am interested in lies in the uses of seemingly conventional forms in a specific historical and social context. The late stages of Anglo-Saxon culture are often read through its end and afterlife in the Anglo-Norman literature and history. This seemingly abrupt division between the two eras, which the Norman Conquest symbolizes, is deeply rooted in our perceptions of the eleventh century, and affects also interpretations of the role of saint-kings in Anglo-Saxon England. As it is known, the Norman Conquest brought many changes to the structures of the Anglo-Saxon state and monasteries, and the resentment towards the Anglo-Saxon saints by the Normans is a well-established conception. The cults of the royal saints did not, however, meet their end with the Conquest. The continuity of the cults, even though politically different, is attested in several instances, as Susan Ridyard has shown.¹⁴⁴ Considering the visible role of the saint-kings in Latin literary culture as well as in scholarship, I would like to think that the workings of vernacular religious rhetoric in relation to the ideology of social order need to be examined starting from their own setting, as part of the historical context before the wider conflict about the roles of secular and ecclesiastical powers during the Investiture Controversy. The issue should also be approached without assumptions about an existing phenomenon of 'holy kingship', promoted by the scholarly tradition.

Much of the previous research has concentrated on determining the nature of kingship that the cults of royal saints seem to promote. Susan Ridyard wrote that '[t]he Lives of the royal saints, it is clear, are wholly representative of early medieval thought on the nature of kingship: they are indeed one of the most important sources upon which analysis of that thought can and should be based'.¹⁴⁵ I cannot completely agree with the assumption that the royal saints' lives are 'wholly representative' sources on which to base the interpretations of Anglo-Saxon kingship, but would like to review some of the implications this assumption has had to the study of political thought of the era in question. Surely Ridyard's own formulation of

Michael Lapidge (HBS 106, London 1991), 1-61, esp. on pages 25-33, and E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford 1918), 137-164.

¹⁴⁴ Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, 6-7, 171-175, 226-233, 251-252.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

saints' lives as 'one of the most important' saves a lot of criticism, but it is characteristic to read them as exclusive sources of political thought. The political aspect of the cults has indeed received so much attention that they rarely have been discussed together with other saints' cults or in conjunction with Ælfric's other works or his overall concept of social order. My approach to this issue will also take into account the prevailing ideals of kingship, especially as they were connected to the interests of the Benedictine reform, but will not treat them as a sign of a phenomenon that is usually coined as 'holy kingship'. Instead, with regard to these particular texts, I would rather see them as part of Ælfric's—and in some way also the monastic reformers' in general—religious-political discourse, which was concerned with the whole society from a theological point of view. The difference to previous research is therefore that I do not want to treat the royal saints in isolation, but as part of a more general conceptualization of the order of the world. This emphasis will become clear in the following chapter, but should be kept in mind throughout the whole work, as well. Therefore, I will next engage with the issue of royal saints in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* from the perspective of translation, and treat them as part of his wider interests in a particular historical context.

3.1.2. Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*

The *Lives of Saints* dates to the period when Ælfric was residing at Cerne Abbey, and it is thought to have been compiled between 994 and 998, some texts of the collection earlier than others.¹⁴⁶ The lives of St Oswald and St

¹⁴⁶ Clemoes and consequently many other Anglo-Saxon scholars assign the date of the collection more broadly to 992–1002. Peter Clemoes, "The Chronology of Ælfric's Works," in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1959), 222, 244; Joyce Hill, "The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*: A Preliminary Survey," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 236. For a more narrow dating see Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, 577. The date 994–998 is based on charter evidence, according to which Archbishop Sigeric, to whom *CH II* was dedicated, died in 994. This dating assumes that Ælfric started writing *LS* only after the completion of *CH II*. Ælfric's dedicatee of *LS*, his patron Æthelweard died around 998, before which the collection must have been completed. See Mechthild Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16, n. 71; 21, n. 11; 157–158; Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready"*, 192, 251–253. On evaluating the place of

Edmund were probably among the earlier ones Ælfric composed. All texts in the *Lives of Saints* are composed in rhythmical prose style which Ælfric used increasingly from his second series of homilies onwards. The collection or parts of it are extant in seven manuscripts, and are situated mostly among other homilies, including many by Ælfric.¹⁴⁷ No authorial copy, however, remains from this set of texts. The earliest copy (London, BL, Cotton Julius E. vii) dates to the early eleventh century.¹⁴⁸ Despite its title, the collection contains also material that is not strictly hagiographical. It comprises pieces that deal with saints, doctrinal issues, and Old Testament stories, arranged according to the liturgical year. Also, there is not always a clear-cut distinction between a homily and a saint's life in Old English literature; both of them were used for explaining biblical lessons, and often the structure of a saint's life was very similar to that of a homily.¹⁴⁹ Thus they shared a similar function as well as form.

composition, see Gneuss, *Ælfric of Eynsham. His Life, Times, and Writings*, 5–6. Gneuss points out that Ælfric was sent to Cerne in about 987 to teach, but contrary to the traditional opinion, which assumes that he stayed there for the period before he was appointed the abbot of Eynsham in 1005, there is no evidence that he stayed there for a longer period. It is possible that he returned to Winchester. The wide reading, which his writings implicate, would have required using a substantially large library, which Winchester could have provided.

¹⁴⁷ Cambridge, Queen's College, (Horne) 75 (fragments) (Ker 81; Gneuss 146); Gloucester, Cathedral Library 35 (fragments) (Ker 117; Gneuss 262); London, BL, Cotton Caligula A.xiv, fols. 93–130 (St Martin, St Thomas, an anonymous life of St Mildred) (Ker 138; Gneuss 310); London, BL, Cotton Julius E.vii (Ker 162; Gneuss 339); BL, Cotton Otho B.x (Ker 177; Gneuss 355); BL, Cotton Vitellius D.xvii, fols. 4–92 (many lost and fragmented) (Ker 222; Gneuss 406); BL, Royal 8.C.vii, fols. 1–2 (fragments) (Ker 260; Gneuss 476). What complicates the circulation of the royal saints' lives further is that they appear also in manuscripts not otherwise associated with the *Lives of Saints*. The *Life of Edmund* is extant in its full in Cotton Julius E.vii, but also in Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley 343 (Ker 31), and partly in Cambridge, University library MS li.1.33 (Ker 18). The *Life of St Oswald* is complete in Cotton Julius E.vii and Cambridge, University library MS li.1.33, and partly in BL, Cotton Vitellius D.xvii.

¹⁴⁸ The problem with the later manuscripts is that they do not represent the original contents of this collection. Already the earliest surviving copy is altered and it contains some non-Ælfric items that have been recognized as someone else's works only much later (Seven Sleepers, Mary of Egypt, Eustace, Eufrasia/Euphrosyne). Further, Julius E.vii is not the source from which all other copies of the items in it derive. Hill, "The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," 235–236; Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, 577.

¹⁴⁹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 17.

The collection was compiled at the request of Ælfric's lay patrons, ealdorman Æthelweard of Wessex and his son Æthelmær, and was dedicated to them. Ælfric states both in the Latin and the vernacular prefaces to the work that he wished to provide for the lay audience the lives of those saints who were venerated among the monks, but not among the laity.¹⁵⁰ For this reason it has been assumed that the collection was intended as pious narrative reading for laymen.¹⁵¹ The contents of the collection suggest that this might not have been the only interest Ælfric had. The themes that repeatedly occur in the *Lives of Saints* actually suggest a broader connection to the contemporary political situation. Namely, besides the history of English monasticism and some doctrinal pieces on the interpretation of dreams, the texts are preoccupied with the doctrine of justified warfare, royal and military saints' lives, the kings of the Old Testament, as well as with the problems caused by the Vikings, and the pagan gods of the Danes and ancient Romans. In this respect the collection as a whole differs from the previous two collections of homilies, and can be situated in both lay and monastic surroundings.

It is noteworthy that the lay and monastic parts of society were not strictly separated in practice, and that there are good grounds to believe that the homilies Ælfric wrote at Cerne actually reached both the laity and the monks. It has been discovered that the monastery church at Cerne served as a place of worship for the surrounding lay community until ca. 1300, when the first separate parish church of St Mary outside the monastery was built.¹⁵² Therefore the audience to whom Ælfric would have anticipated the homilies to be read at services should be considered to have been mixed, constituting both of laymen and monks.¹⁵³ This was especially the case with the *Lives of Saints*, as they were specifically targeted to make the laity aware of the saints that were previously known only within monastic communities. The role of monasteries interacting with the larger communities was rather large in Anglo-Saxon England in general, as noted in the introduction, but Ælfric's intentions with writing the collection should not be estimated to have been too widespread, either. Most probably the laity he had in mind

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 119–120.

¹⁵¹ Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England*, 17, 48–49.

¹⁵² Wilcox, "Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care," 58. Referring to J. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, 3rd ed. by W. Shipp and J. W. Hodson, 4 vols. (1861–74), vol. 4, 29.

¹⁵³ ———, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 12.

consisted of the higher parts of the secular society, with which he is known to have been in frequent contact.

The subsequent reception of the *Lives of Saints* suggests a mixed audience of both lay and monastic, too. The audience that has been estimated for the texts is far from straightforward, and cannot be simply reduced to either secular or monastic environment, as the manuscript evidence demonstrates. Jonathan Wilcox has pointed out the puzzling circulation of the *Lives of Saints* with his study on a fragmentary manuscript of unknown origin.¹⁵⁴ He concludes that the uses of the *Lives of Saints* were manifold. He finds evidence of private reading by the literate and pious aristocracy, such as Æthelweard and Æthelmær, but also of its use in the episcopal household and monastic communities, and of reading the texts to a village community by an isolated priest.¹⁵⁵ The circulation of the text in such wide and varied parts of society in turn raises the question of the function of the royal saints' cults in the vernacular environment, and points out the differences in the Latin and vernacular literary cultures. Therefore, too narrow definitions as to which genre these texts belong to do not work in this case. Both texts are hagiographical, but not intended to be read aloud in the liturgy. They are also homiletic, but not intended to be read aloud in preaching. And lastly, whatever the intended audience was, the reception of these saints' lives could of course change the author's intended meaning. The transmission of the text reaches beyond the initial intention, or it can change a course depending on copying. Without assigning too restrictive categories for them, it is clear that the discursive field of these pieces extends beyond the monastic environment, but is at the same time closely tied to the religious interests of the Benedictine reformists and their successors.

Since the collection comprises such a wide scale of different pieces of texts, and since it cannot be placed in just one environment, certain questions rise about the role of the royal saints' lives. How closely, if at all, can they be seen to represent political interests? In what way were ideas

¹⁵⁴ London, BL, Cotton Caligula A.xiv (Ker 138; Gneuss 310). The manuscript dates to mid-11th century, and includes two saints' lives (St Martin and St Thomas) by Ælfric, as well as an anonymous life of St Mildred.

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan Wilcox, "The Audience of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and the Face of Cotton Caligula A. XIV, Fols. 93–130," in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. A. N. Doane and Kristen Wolf (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 240, 244, 258–259.

about holy order of society constructed in these texts? Does the Christocentric image of the saint-kings relate to the current image of an ideal king? Are the changes seen in Ælfric's adaptations relevant in the analysis of the religious-political discourse? In order to contemplate these questions, I will next deal with both lives of the saint-kings and estimate their role in Ælfric's collection.

3.1.3. St Oswald

The two martyr-kings who make the subject of Ælfric's writings in this chapter have many features in common. Most importantly, both kings were faced with pagan enemies, and met their end in the hands of pagans. This feature was emphasized in all texts, both Latin and vernacular, and is indeed an interesting one, as the current society in Ælfric's time was also greatly troubled with external, pagan Viking incursions. Although the actual religious situation among the Viking raiders was not so simple, and many raiders were most probably Christians, too, the monastic writers were specifically concerned with describing the Vikings as pagans. Therefore there is a possibility that the enemies of the saint-kings could invoke assimilation with the current situation, and some studies have indeed accentuated this similarity.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, another common feature in the lives of St Oswald and St Edmund is somewhat paradoxical; both of the saint-kings can be seen to have failed to protect their people from the attacking enemies. In both of the legends, the kings are decapitated by the heathens. In St Oswald's legend the dismemberment of the body was more important and proved to be an important element in his cult from a practical point of view, too, because it affected the dispersal of his relics.¹⁵⁷ Quite conventional ideals are presented of the kings: each is a devout and righteous Christian, resolute in his faith, well-mannered, humble, generous to his subjects, but firm in rule and vigorous in warfare.¹⁵⁸

While alive, royally born of the house of Bernicia, Oswald was the king of Northumbria in ca. 634–642, and died in the battle of Maserfield against the heathen king Penda of Mercia. His martyrdom and the role he had in

¹⁵⁶ See especially Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 133–142.

¹⁵⁷ Thacker, "Membra Disjecta," 112–113.

¹⁵⁸ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 70–73.

Christianizing Northumbria played an important part in his cult. He was one of the first Anglo-Saxon saints, and his cult gained wide popularity also in continental Europe and Scandinavia.¹⁵⁹ The legend of Oswald was first compiled by Bede in *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede presented Oswald clearly as a sanctified ruler, but did not denote him a martyr. It was, however, exactly the *Historia ecclesiastica* which sealed the long life of Oswald's cult, at least in part. Bede's St Oswald is regarded as an image of an ideal Christian ruler, in whose reign the aspects of both spiritual and secular power combine effectively. St Oswald's conversion to Christianity, his education as a young man at Iona, the achievement of gaining the Northumbrian crown as a successful warrior, *miles Christi*, the accomplishment of converting his subjects with the help of Bishop Aidan, and the characteristics of an ideal king (pious, humble and generous to the poor); all these qualities of the king are loaded with religious imagery of authority. With these features Bede laid the foundations for later presentations of Oswald.

Various adaptations and translations of Oswald's martyrdom were made throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁶⁰ Different presentations of St Oswald served different purposes. Depending on the context, at times he was viewed as a person contributing to the foundation of the Northumbrian, or even the whole English church, other times as a patron of foreign Christians, as a crusader, as a hero of vernacular romance, or even as a person responsible for good harvests, fertility and health. The latter part has raised some interest among scholars in a possible connection between the cult and popular practice of religion, in which similarities to the worship of Woden,

¹⁵⁹ He was venerated in the Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, parts of Eastern Europe, northern Italy, Scandinavia and Iceland. Annemiek Jansen, "The Development of the St Oswald's Legends on the Continent," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 230.

¹⁶⁰ Continental texts include, for instance, sermons and a *vita* by Drogo of Saint-Winnoc (ca. 1050), a twelfth-century poem situated in court circles, connected to Munich and Vienna, and a text by Reginald of Durham (1165), who depicts Oswald as a king of the golden, almost mythical age with abundant crops and fertility. Jansen distinguishes two kinds of texts based on Oswald's cult: a group of texts meant for liturgical and monastic purposes, e.g. Drogo of St-Winnoc's sermons and life, and a group of texts that emerged after ca. 1100, in which the king is depicted as a hero of romance. Peter Clemons, "The Cult of St Oswald on the Continent: The Jarrow Lecture 1983," in *Bede and His World: The Jarrow Lectures 1979-1993* (Aldershot: Ashgate: Variorum, 1994); Jansen, "The Development of the St Oswald's Legends on the Continent," 230, 235-237.

for instance, have been perceived.¹⁶¹ The cult, although being strongly a combination of political and religious interests, spread also among the laity, and gained many popular features. For the present purposes, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that the cult was never unchanging and stable. The various representations of Oswald's cult underline the point of departure of this study, and remind that it is the perception of the cult and the saint that provides the most fruitful material for historical assessments. Just as the cult of Oswald had different meanings in different contexts in the Middle Ages, Ælfric's adaptation of it must also be regarded in its own surroundings.

The cult was already several hundred years old when Ælfric wrote his *Lives of Saints*. In the late tenth century the cult of Oswald was greatly revived by the Benedictine reformers, possibly because of the general interest in royal martyr cults. Reformist centres, such as Ramsey and Worcester, are noted to have been the main actors in the revival of the royal martyr cults, including St Edmund, and the princes Æthelred and Æthelberht, Wystan and Kenelm. There is evidence of a widespread liturgical cult of St Oswald by the late tenth century, and he appears in all but one of the calendars and in several litanies that survive from the pre-Conquest era.¹⁶²

It is quite certain that Ælfric used the Latin *Historia ecclesiastica* for his translation, and there is no reason to believe that he used the Old English version. Even though Ælfric certainly knew the Old English translation of the work, quite possibly even had a copy in his use, all the passages examined here are so different from the vernacular *Historia*, that it seems they derive from the Latin original. However, the idea of using an already translated version would not have been completely strange to him, since there are obvious borrowings from Bede's *Historia*, Old English translation of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, and the Old English Boethius in his earlier homilies. But it seems that when working with the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric was using only the Latin texts.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, "Introduction," in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 1–2.

¹⁶² Thacker, "Membra Disjecta," 124–125.

¹⁶³ Ælfric mentions the translation of Bede in *CH* II.9 (*St Gregory the Great*). The OE translation was used as a source in this homily, and possibly also in *CH* II.10 (*St Cuthberth's depositio*) and *CH* II.20 (*Item in letania maiore, feria tertia; Fursey's vision of the*

3.1.4. St Edmund

The second saint of this chapter, St Edmund, was a king of East Anglia who was killed by the Vikings in 869. Historically, not much is known of Edmund.¹⁶⁴ He was venerated as a saint not long after his death. The surroundings of the cult were not restricted to East Anglia, and curiously, coins labelled with St Edmund's name were struck during the Viking regime, between 890 and 910. Possibly the popularity of the cult of the East Anglian king was one form of reconciliation between the two traditions among the newly converted Scandinavians in the area, as suggested by Marco Mostert.¹⁶⁵ The cult of St Edmund was an interesting feature in the legitimation of power among the ninth- and tenth-century rulers. It has been suggested, although not ascertained, that both King Alfred of Wessex, and his son, Edward the Elder, promoted the cult of Edmund. In the case of Edward it is interesting that the promotion was probably connected to the conquest of East Anglia in 917, and that he also named his son Edmund.¹⁶⁶ Because of the lack of written sources, the first context of the cult is regarded to belong to oral surroundings.¹⁶⁷ Edmund was also widely venerated in late Anglo-

afterlife). There is 'a clear borrowing of a sentence from the Pastoral Care' in one of his homilies (*CH* II.28.106–109), and another one from either the same book or the OE Boethius (*CH* II.23.186–194). Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, lxii.

¹⁶⁴ On the historical and critical evaluation of the *Passio*, see Antonia Gransden, "Abbo of Fleury's 'Passio Sancti Eadmundi'," *Revue Bénédictine* 105 (1995).

¹⁶⁵ Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1987), 41.

¹⁶⁶ Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 89. More about the cult of Edmund, see Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, 61–69, 211–233; Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*, 155–157. On the development of the legend see Thomas Arnold, ed. *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1965), xv–xix; Dorothy Whitelock, "Fact and Fiction in the Legend of St Edmund," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* 31, no. 3 (1969).

¹⁶⁷ Catherine Cubitt has briefly dealt with oral features in *Passio Eadmundi*. She questions the historical value of Abbo's account on authorizing the text with oral tradition, a view that has prevailed in the scholarship since Whitelock. Instead, she sees it as a literary convention similar to Notker's *Gesta Karoli Magni*. She also suggests that the 'Ramsey/Worchester school of hagiography may have been particularly sympathetic to local stories', whereas Ælfric, "with typical tartness", was not fond of using oral tradition as a source for his writings, thus representing more elitist context. See Catherine Cubitt,

Saxon England, and his name occurs in many litanies and calendars. St Edmund's cult seems to have been more local than St Oswald's, but liturgical sources suggest that the cult enjoyed some popularity in later medieval Scandinavia.¹⁶⁸ The cult was also recognized by King Cnut, who was possibly involved in the establishment of a reformed Benedictine monastery at Bury-St-Edmund in 1020. This is an interesting event in terms of his establishment of authority; as an act of reconciliation and atonement, promoting the cult of St Edmund would have been a powerful display of submitting to the accepted norms of Christian kingship.¹⁶⁹

The first account of Edmund's martyrdom, apart from a short mention in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MS A, 870) and an appearance in Asser's *Life of King Alfred* (ch. 33), was written more than a century after his death, when Abbo of Fleury wrote the *Passio Eadmundi*.¹⁷⁰ Abbo compiled the local legend at the request of the monks of Ramsey Abbey, where he stayed (as an 'exile', after failing to be elected the abbot) during 985–987.¹⁷¹ Whether he wrote the *Passio* already during the visit, or after he returned to the abbey of St.-Benoît-sur-Loire (Fleury) and was appointed the abbot is a matter of debate. Marco Mostert previously suggested a dating that falls after the time Abbo had already left Ramsey—between King Hugh's coronation in autumn 987 and Archbishop Dunstan's death in May 19, 988—but later revised his estimation of the date to the time Abbo was still at Ramsey.¹⁷² In any case the prefatory letter is addressed to Archbishop Dunstan, who died in May 988, soon after Abbo left England, which sets the *terminus ante quem* of the text.

"Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History," in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretto (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 196–198, 203–204, 220. On the possible lay origins of the cult, on the grounds of characteristic motifs from popular religion, see ———, "Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints," 63–65.

¹⁶⁸ John Toy, "The Commemoration of British Saints in the Medieval Liturgical Manuscripts of Scandinavia," *Kyrkohistorisk årskrift* 1 (1983): 96–97; ———, ed. *English Saints in the Medieval Liturgies of Scandinavian Churches* (London: Boydell, 2009), 117–128.

¹⁶⁹ Lawson, *Cnut*, 140–146.

¹⁷⁰ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 67–68.

¹⁷¹ Aimoinus, *Vita S. Abbonis*, Patrologia Latina Database: vol. 139; Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, 40.

¹⁷² Cf. ———, "Abbo of Fleury," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 3; ———, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, 45. Antonia Gransden has argued that the *Passio* was written already at Ramsey. Gransden, "Abbo of Fleury's 'Passio Sancti Eadmundi'," 47–56.

Nevertheless, the lack of an exact date blurs the interpretation of the discourse in that the years 987–988 undoubtedly influenced Abbo's position in political terms, and may thus have influenced his motives for choosing the literary features in *Passio*. Abbo's concern for his monastery was closely tied to the change of dynasty, since before his death in 986, King Lothair had exercised complete authority over Fleury, and when Hugh Capet took on the throne in June 987, the questions of monastic independence rose to the surface. The desires of the movement had namely arisen out of 'feudal disintegration', so an alliance with a strong ruler who could protect the monks was crucial for Fleury.¹⁷³ The issue was all the more important since one of Hugh's most important advisers was Arnulf, the bishop of Orléans, with whom Abbo had had a series of conflicts already previously.¹⁷⁴ The political views that are more clearly underlined in Abbo's later works, *Collectio Canonum* and *Liber Apologeticus*, written for the kings Hugh and Robert, are thus situated in different frameworks than the *Passio*, especially when assuming that it was already written in England.

It has been attested that Abbo's visit to Ramsey influenced his writing about the earthly rule. At Ramsey he would have encountered settings in which the reformative Benedictine monks had already for a generation dealt with the relationship between monastic life and secular realities, building a balanced alliance with royal power.¹⁷⁵ Difficulties with the lay and the older ecclesiastical elites would have resulted in the construction of a new literary image of kingship, in which the religious aspects were emphasized, as a kind of defence of the monastic claims, and as an underlining of their close bond with the king, now presented as the 'vicar of Christ' and the protector of monks.¹⁷⁶ The *Regularis Concordia*, the customary sanctioned by the council of Winchester in about 973, makes the relationship clear, emphasizing prayers for the king and the royal family.¹⁷⁷ Thus the image of a humble and steadfast king who ruled primarily by the power of his faith, highlighting the

¹⁷³ Pauline A. Stafford, "Church and Society in the Age of Aelfric," in *The Old English Homily and Its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 13.

¹⁷⁴ Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury*, 36–37.

¹⁷⁵ Frederick S. Paxton, "Abbas and Rex: Power and Authority in the Literature of Fleury, 987–1044," in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe, 950–1350*, ed. Robert F. Berkhofer III, Alan Cooper, and Adam J. Kostó (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 200.

¹⁷⁶ John, "The World of Abbot Aelfric," 300–316; Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*; Stafford, "Church and Society in the Age of Aelfric," 15.

¹⁷⁷ Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, 5, 13, 14, 16, 21, 22.

view that the king was accountable only to God, is seen from the monastic side as an affirmation of authority. From another point of view, the *Passio* has also been seen as a stage of development in the ‘evolution’ of the sanctity of kingship which had long roots already, and which at the turn of the millennium succeeded in the form of the cult of dynastic saints.¹⁷⁸ Any exclusive explanations are of course not necessary, and both personal and political motives as well as factors of literary tradition, hagiographical modes of writing, and aspects of mentality are all part of the settings. Any simplification in interpreting the explanatory factors offers a one-sided view on the topic, and it is this feature that is in part the starting point of this chapter.

For instance, as political as Abbo’s motives might have been, his writing contained much more than just transfer of political ideologies onto parchment. The literary framework, his education and his sources must also be recognized in order to make any attempts at historical interpretation. Abbo’s text consists of numerous references to classical authors, such as Horace, Vergil and Persius. It also contains several biblical and Patristic passages (Isidore, Sulpicius Severus), and the narrative as a whole is obviously influenced by these references. It is clear that Abbo intensely used—if not the whole works—at least *dossiers* with collected passages, and he is known to have started compiling one himself after his appointment to the abbacy of Fleury. It is also known from the same source, his biographer Aimoin, that he had studied rhetoric, among other, various subjects.¹⁷⁹ Therefore his text might at times seem like a patchwork compilation of well-known commonplaces gathered from numerous other texts.

Because the two texts, Abbo’s and Ælfric’s, were both part of the intellectual milieu of the Benedictine reform, a comparison between their treatment of the saint-king is important, and in some ways revealing, considering the different intended audiences the Latin and vernacular texts had. The comparison allows one to contemplate the choices Ælfric made, and review the representativeness of Ælfric compared to the other major figures of the reform. The homily is considerably shorter than Abbo’s original, and rhetorically different. It is clear that the discourse of a translated text is essentially different than the discourse of the original, since the rhetorical tools and the semantic field change substantially, and

¹⁷⁸ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 62–63.

¹⁷⁹ Aimoinus, “Vita S. Abbonis”, ch. 3, col. 0390C.

consequently the meaning of a text changes at the same time. This fundamental feature of translation is self-evident, but it has also other implications for interpretation. There is a considerable difference in reading a hagiographical text as a result of the literary tradition, and reading it as part of its author's wider interests in a particular historical context. In many cases analysis of hagiography from this point of view is not even possible, since a large amount of saints' lives has remained anonymous. Luckily in Ælfric's case this does not apply, and therefore it is possible to consider his hagiographical production together with his other—theological and social—interests. Next I will turn to a more detailed analysis of the changes in Ælfric's adaptations, starting with patterns of standardization in both narrative and hagiographic terms.

3.2. Standardization of narrative

It is notable that almost all of Ælfric's works, in one way or another, reflect an attempt to achieve a certain pattern and order. The structure of his three major collections of homilies and saints' lives (*CH* I and II, *LS*), as well as his other works on computation (a translation of Bede's *De temporibus*), on the daily conduct of monastic life (an abridgement of Æthelwold's *De consuetudine monachorum*), and even his manual of Latin conversation (the *Colloquium*), can be read in a way that betrays a certain pursuit of order, in writing and with regard to the hierarchical roles of different people in society. The birth of these texts lies in Ælfric's wish to provide a comprehensible account of the Christian liturgical year, both for the use of monasteries, but also to instruct the laity. As Michael Lapidge has pointed out, this fundamental aspect has often been overshadowed by other scholarly interests, which many times have concentrated on lexical, stylistic or source analyses.¹⁸⁰ Next I will demonstrate how Ælfric's royal saints were re-composed into conventional models of sainthood; thus detaching sainthood in general from the specific historical and political contexts. At the same time the texts provide an ideal, ahistorical account of the sainthood that is eternal and orderly, and which the contemporary audience of Ælfric should strive for with the help of written examples.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Lapidge, "Ælfric's *Sanctorale*," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 115–116.

When comparing the narrative order of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and Ælfric's *Life of St Oswald*, it seems that Ælfric's construction of narrative reflects his orderly fashion of conceptualizing sainthood, as well. Bede's text is adapted and changed considerably by Ælfric, and the order of narration is modified. Ælfric's organized mind can be seen at work in the quite strict and fundamental re-organizing of the *Life* into a more conventional narrative, in the order that it 'should be' from the hagiographical point of view. Most of the accounts of Oswald in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* are situated in the beginning of book 3. Further remarks are found in a few places in book 2 (*HE* 2.5, 2.14, 2.20), and once in book 4 (*HE* 4.14).¹⁸¹ Ælfric has almost completely reworked and rearranged the material Bede provided into an appropriate story that is formed of Oswald's earthly career, his martyrdom, and the miracles after his death.

Ælfric's story of St Oswald begins with contextualizing King Oswald to Northumbria, which back then consisted of Deira and Bernicia, and tells about Oswald's baptism in the Scottish kingdom of Dál Riata where he spent his youth as an exile. When King Edwin of Deira and his two followers were killed by a British king Cadwallon, Oswald returned from Scotland to meet Cadwallon in battle—the first element of importance concerning Oswald's saintly status. The description of the battle of Heavenfield, which is situated close to the modern-day Hexham, carries both political and religious significance. King Oswald, now a righteous Christian, raised a cross to the field before the battle to honour God, and prayed with his men to gain God's help. Subsequently, they won the battle in the next morning. To strengthen the religious importance of the battle, a miracle-story which tells of the healing powers of moss scraped from the cross raised on the battle field, is included in the story. After winning the battle Oswald could claim the throne of all Northumbria, and started to convert his people to Christianity.¹⁸²

It is important to note that the political and religious significance that this story had in Bede's situation was very different from that of Ælfric's. Originally this narrative could not be seen separate from the political consequences of uniting Deira and Bernicia under one king, Oswald, nor from the religious consequences of the conversion of Northumbria to Christianity. This element is strongly emphasized in Bede's *Historia*, but hardly in a similar vein by Ælfric. For instance, Bede states that earlier

¹⁸¹ Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 150–151, 186–187, 202–205, 212–255, 376–381.

¹⁸² Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 27–30.

Northumbria was divided in two, and that before King Oswald, no sign of Christianity, no church or altar had been raised in the whole Bernicia, stressing the role of the king in the conversion process.¹⁸³ The king's role in the unification and conversion of the kingdom is further emphasized, when Bede writes that the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira were 'peacefully united and became one' by the efforts of King Oswald, who was an heir of King Edwin both in terms of religion as well as political power.¹⁸⁴ In Ælfric's version the unity of the kingdom does not play much part, and even though conversion is an essential theme, it is not connected with its political implications. The focus in Ælfric's homily on St Oswald is on the king's faith. He stresses the omnipotence of God as the origin of everything, and as the true object of all action in the world, and repeats and insists on it by adding conventional phrases like 'God united the kingdoms for the merits of Oswald, who always honoured him'¹⁸⁵ or 'King Oswald held his kingdom gloriously for the world, and with great faith, and in all his deeds honoured his Lord'.¹⁸⁶ These passages do not originally contain the conventional additional clauses in these specific sentences, but underline the point that all authority derives from God, and by honouring God a part of it can be gained on earth, too. The substance of these additions is not, however, incompatible with the original Latin ones, but the same emphasis to God's authority is seen in Bede, as well. As such the earliest implications of conversion and political unification are in Ælfric's treatment transformed into a standardized narrative of a saint's life, interested mainly with the spiritual implications of conversion.

Additionally, the elements in the narrative are often placed in a different order than in the original. Ælfric has constructed the story based

¹⁸³ '[N]am in has duas prouincias gens Nordanhymbrorum antiquitus diuisa erat. [...] nullum, ut conperimus, fidei Christianae signum, nulla ecclesia, nullum altare in tota Berniciorum gente erectum est, priusquam hoc sacrae crucis uexillum nouis militiae ductor, dictante fidei deuotione, contra hostem inmanissimum pugnaturus statueret.' Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 212, 216.

¹⁸⁴ 'Huius industria regis Derorum et Berniciorum prouinciae, quae eatenus abinuicem discordabant, in unam sunt pacem et uelut unum conpaginatae in populum. Erat autem nepos Eduini regis ex sorore Acha, dignumque fuit ut tantus praecessor talem haberet de sua consanguinitate et religionis heredem et regni.' Ibid., 230.

¹⁸⁵ 'Swa swa se ælmihtiga God hi geanlæhte to ðam for Oswoldes geearnugum *þe hine æfre wurðode*.' (Adapted from HE 3.6) Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 32.

¹⁸⁶ 'Oswold cyning his cynedom gehold hlisfullice for worulde and mid micclum geleafan *and on eallum dædum his Drihten arwurðode*.' (Adapted from HE 3.9) Ibid., 35.

mainly on the order of Bede, but at intervals includes additions from other parts of the book. Naturally the story is shortened considerably, and this already affects the choices Ælfric had to make when arranging his text. This results partly from the different purposes of the two texts. Ælfric has remodelled a historical narrative into a hagiographical one. All the historical scenes which do not deal with Oswald himself are omitted. In contrast, of the accounts that deal with the saintly status of the king, almost all elements are included. Most noticeably, Ælfric has written the king's martyrdom into a more coherent story than what can be gathered from Bede's account.

In Ælfric's story the martyrdom of the king is placed roughly in the middle of the narrative, combining passages from three different places in Bede's *Historia* (3.6, 3.9, and 3.12). Ælfric, therefore, composed a coherent scene of the king's martyrdom of the elements that were scattered in different places in Bede's story. The king's martyrdom took place in the battle of Maserfield against King Penda of Mercia, in the ninth year of Oswald's reign (in 642). King Penda 'knew nothing of Christ' (*ne cuðe be Criste nan þincg*), neither did his people. Without giving any details of the battle, Ælfric states briefly that they fought until the Christians fell, and realizing his death being imminent, Oswald prayed for his people before his head and right arm were struck off and placed on a stake as a mark of victory.¹⁸⁷ In this scene the elements of date, place and the opponent, the prayer-moment before the king's death, and the dismemberment of the king's head and right arm are smoothly written in chronological order.

In Bede's text, however, all three elements appear in different places of the narrative, and in different order. The dismemberment of the limbs appears first in Bede's *Historia* in a passage which tells of a prophecy of Bishop Aidan (chapter 6). Because the king showed remarkable generosity on an Easter Day by offering his own bountiful meal along with a silver dish as alms to the poor, the bishop blessed the right hand of the king, and said: 'May this hand never decay.'¹⁸⁸ Bede tells that this prophecy was fulfilled later, when the king was killed and dismembered in a battle, and that his hand and arm had remained uncorrupted 'to this day' (*hactenus incorruptae perdurent*).¹⁸⁹ Then Bede relates other things for several chapters' length, until he returns to the king's martyrdom again (chapter 9). At this point he

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 35–36.

¹⁸⁸ 'Numquam inueterescat haec manus.' Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 230.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

writes about the place of the battle, and about the miracles associated either with the physical existence of the battlefield itself or with dirt dug up from the site, and tells that ‘sick men and animals are even today healed in this place’.¹⁹⁰ After telling about two particular healing-miracles—healing a sick horse and a paralyzed girl—and about the holiness of the dirt removed from the site, Bede writes about the transfer of the saint’s relics, which was also associated with signs from heaven. Further references to the healing powers of the saint’s relics follow, and finally after several tales of wonders Bede comes back to the king’s death again, and writes about the prayer-event during the battle (chapter 12).¹⁹¹

This kind of radical rearrangement makes Ælfric’s narrative quite different from the original, and naturally cannot be treated as a direct translation. It is noteworthy that Ælfric has succeeded in keeping the contents of the story rather faithful to Bede’s *Historia*, even if he has shortened and simplified it quite remarkably. This indicates Ælfric’s overall attitude towards textual authorities: even though certain changes are made which affect the interpretation of the text, the essential material has been preserved to form a coherent saint’s life.

If we then turn to look at Abbo’s *Passio Eadmundi*, and compare it with Ælfric’s translation, it is seen that Ælfric’s way of translation has a particular connection with the interpretation of sanctity. This becomes evident particularly with the arrangement of the narrative in two parts, the deeds of the king in life, and the miracles after his death, divided by a depiction of the king’s martyrdom. Martyrdom functions as the dividing line in the narrative, as the moment of gaining sanctity: the kings in Ælfric’s texts are called saints only after this event. As Ælfric’s translation of Abbo’s text is more straightforward than that of Bede’s, their structure and choices of translation can be compared in a more direct manner.

Ælfric’s translation of Abbo’s *Passio* contains all the relevant elements of the story. It begins with a remark that he has translated a text of ‘a very learned monk’, who visited Archbishop Dunstan three years before he died (988), and who wrote the story of the saint as Dunstan had heard it in his youth from King Æthelstan’s sword-bearer.¹⁹² The beginning of the story is a conventional account of the pious attributes of an ideal Christian king:

¹⁹⁰ ‘Namque in loco ubi pro patria dimicans a paganis interfectus est, usque hodie sanitates infirmorum et hominum et pecorum celebrari non desinunt.’ *Ibid.*, 240–242.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁹² ‘Sum swyðe gelæred munuc’. Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 43.

'Edmund the blessed, king of East Anglia, was wise and honourable, and worshipped always with noble customs the almighty God. He was humble and virtuous, and persisted so resolute that he did not yield to shameful vices, nor did he turn astray to either way in his customs, but was always mindful of the true doctrine.'¹⁹³ This depiction follows the more prosaic preface, and starts the proper life of Edmund. It freely adopts the familiar rhythm of a vernacular performance, and stresses the words blessed (*eadig*), honourable (*wurðful*), noble (*æþel*), and humble (*eadmod*). At the same time, the stressed words repeat the ideal features of a king familiar from other literary depictions. The effects of this style would be the greatest when read aloud. This short and conventional depiction of the king's virtues is greatly summarized, and if compared to Abbo, it can be seen that Ælfric emphasizes loyalty to the true faith above all. All his choices are connected to being a true Christian, and he did not include the more conventional epithets from secular royal biography, even if Abbo had clearly done so. Ælfric omits from the start the emphasis on the king's origins (*ex antiquorum Saxonum nobili prosapia oriundus; atavis regibus aeditus*), the outward appearance of a noble king (*erat ei species digna imperio*), and even the king's reluctance to wield power, which is betrayed by the choice of words: the king did not desire earthly power, but was rather dragged off to perform his duties (*omnium comprouincialium unanimes fauore non tantum eligitur ex generis successione quantum rapitur ut eis praeesset sceptrigera potestate*).¹⁹⁴ The opening lines of the *Life of St Edmund* reveal the overall interest of Ælfric in the whole meaning of holy kings; the right and true Christian conduct was the key to order that originated from God.

Generosity, sense of justice and loyalty to Christianity pave way to the event which led to the king's death. Danish raiders had been harassing the king's land widely, killing people 'as their custom is' (*swa swa heora gewuna is*). The leaders of the Danish, named Hinguar and Hubba (Ívarr and Ubbi in Old Norse) and 'united by the devil' (*geanlæhte þurh deofol*), had landed in Northumbria, and 'gained victory with cruelty' (*gewunnenum sige mid wælhreownysse*).¹⁹⁵ Hinguar then proceeds to East Anglia and continues his

¹⁹³ 'Eadmund se eadiga, Eastengla cynincg, wæs snotor and wurðful and wurðode symble mid æþelum þeawum þone ælmihtigan God. He wæs eadmod and gepungen and swa anræde þurhwunode þæt he nolde abugan to bysmorfullum leathrum, ne on naþre healfe he ne ahyldde his þeawas, ac wæs symble gemyndig þære soþan lare.' *Ibid.*, 43–44.

¹⁹⁴ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 70.

¹⁹⁵ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 44–46.

evil habits of killing and torturing innocent Christians, women and children 'like a wolf' (*swa swa wulf*). Sending a messenger to King Edmund, Hinguar demands Edmund's submission to the Danes, and tries to claim him as his underking. King Edmund refuses to submit to the pagans, and decides to stay resolute, even if his bishop advises that the king should leave his country to save his own life. Keeping his mind resolute and refusing to leave like a coward while his people are being slaughtered, the king is then confronted by Hinguar, not in a battle but in his own hall. There is no depiction of any kind of resistance, but the king is tortured and killed by the Vikings, his head cut off and concealed in the bushes so that he could not receive a proper burial.¹⁹⁶

The rest of the story relates the miracles associated with the saint. The first miracle is an account of miraculously finding the king's head: the head calls out to the people searching for it, and is found protected by a wolf that guards the head until it is properly carried to a church nearby. When the saint's relics are later moved to another place, it is noticed that the remains are incorrupt and the neck healed. Another miracle tells about nine thieves who attempt to steal the church's treasures, but who are struck immobile by the powers of the saint, and are caught red-handed the following morning. The last miracle is an admonition and warning, and tells about an aristocratic man called Leofstan, who was ignorant towards God and the true faith, living an immoral life. In his arrogance he questioned the saint's incorrupt state and demanded to see the relics, but at the moment he laid his eyes on them, the layman 'cried out monstrosly, and miserably suffered an evil death.'¹⁹⁷ As in the case of St Oswald, the elements Ælfric uses in writing the life of St Edmund are all found in Abbo's *Passio Eadmundi*. Ælfric's faithfulness to the contents of the story is specifically highlighted in his comment that there are also other miracle stories about the saint in the popular discourse, but that he is not going to put them in writing, 'since everyone knows them.'¹⁹⁸ The structure and contents of Ælfric's translation therefore resemble Abbo's narrative in general. The differences are, however, seen in the details of vocabulary and rhetoric.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 46–51.

¹⁹⁷ 'Ða awedde he sona and wælhreowlice grymete[de] and earmlice geendode yfelum deaðe.' Ibid., 56.

¹⁹⁸ 'Fela wundra we gehyrdon on folclire spræce be þam halgan Eadmunde, þe we her nellað on gewrite settan; ac hi wat gehwa.' Ibid., 57.

In the rhetoric of Abbo, it is clear that repetition plays an important part, since in his text the phrase *sanctus rex et martyr* is repeated with variations 17 times.¹⁹⁹ Repetitive allusions to sanctity gain more impetus when the adversary of Edmund, the Viking chief Hinguar is described as impious (*impiissimus Hinguar, impius dux*) son of the devil (*filius diaboli*), tyrant (*tyrannus*), and unarmed of Christ's principles (*Christi institutis inermis*).²⁰⁰ Bede, when writing about St Oswald, was remarkably more limited in depicting sanctity, and used the word *sanctus* only in four instances when referring to King Oswald.²⁰¹ Even though Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* cannot be regarded strictly as hagiography, of course, it is in any case noteworthy that Oswald is the only figure who Bede unambiguously presents as saint while being a successful king.²⁰² Ælfric deviated from both of these texts, and did not repeat the same pattern, and did not refer to either of the kings as 'holy' in passages that concern the time they still lived. Instead, he used the title only when writing about the accounts and miracles after their martyrdom.

In both cases the first instance where the kings are described as 'holy' in Ælfric's texts is the exact moment of death or shortly preceding it. King Oswald is called 'saint' for the first time just as he is about to die in the narrative: "They both came then to fight to Maserfield and joined together [in battle] until the Christians fell there and the heathens approached holy Oswald. Then he saw his life's end approaching [...]. Then the heathen king commanded to strike off his head, and his right arm, and to set them up as trophy."²⁰³ Similarly, King Edmund is called 'saint' in a comparable situation:

¹⁹⁹ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 67, 68, 70, 74, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, *impiissimus Hinguar, filius diaboli, Christi instituti inermis*: 76, *tyrannus, impius dux*: 78.

²⁰¹ *HE* 3.7: *sanctissimus ac victoriosissimus rex Nordanhymbrorum Osualdus*; *HE* 3.10: *sanctor cetero vir*; *HE* 3.11: *sanctus; uir sanctus*; *HE* 3.13: *rex mirandae sanctitatis*.

²⁰² Stancliffe, "Oswald, 'Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,'" 41.

²⁰³ 'Hi comon þa to gefeohte to Maserfelda begen and fengon togædere oð þæt þær feollon þa Cristenan and þa hæðenan genealæhton to þam halgan Oswolde. þa geseah he genealecan his lifes geendunge [...] þa het se hæþena cyningc his heafod of aslean, and his swiðran earm, and settan hi to myrcelse.' Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 35–36. Cf. the martyrdom of St Alban in *LS* 19, a similar scene-type: The judge becomes angry about the martyr's resoluteness in his faith, orders him to be whipped, the blessed man is strengthened by God, the judge sees he could not turn the martyr from Christ, and commands to kill him by decapitation. Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 418–419.

'While Edmund still called out to Christ, the heathen dragged the holy man to his death, and with one stroke struck off his head, and his soul journeyed happily to Christ.'²⁰⁴ Before this, the kings had been depicted with more mundane terms.

The figure on the next page shows how the Latin word *sanctus* and the Old English *halig* occur in Abbo's *Passio* and in Ælfric's royal saints lives respectively. The purpose of the diagram is to illustrate in a concrete way the narrative order in terms of sanctity. The upmost graph depicts the length of Abbo's *Passio Eadmundi*, and the two graphs below it depict Ælfric's adaptations of the lives of St Edmund and St Oswald. As it was said above, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is by its structure very different from both Ælfric's adaptation on the one hand and from other conventional hagiographies on the other, so a similar linear presentation cannot be presented in the same way here, as the material Ælfric used for his adaptation of St Oswald was drawn from several different parts of Bede's original. It should be remembered, however, that there are only four instances in Bede's account in which King Oswald is called 'saint', and compared to Ælfric, it thus represents a very different kind of hagiographical text. As it can be seen in the figure, the length of Ælfric's adaptations is about half of Abbo's *Passio*. The martyrdom of the kings in all three accounts happens more or less in the middle of the narrative, dividing the narrative in two parts, and this is depicted with black arrows in the figure below. The first part, on the left in the figure, comprises the events while the kings were still alive, practising piety and devoting themselves to prayers and to God, and the latter part, on the right, consists of the miraculous accounts that were reported to have happened after the martyrdom at the hands of the heathen. The black lines in the figure are placed on each occurrence when the king is called 'saint'. As it can be seen, Ælfric has systematically used the Old English word *halig* starting only from the middle of the narrative, at the time of the kings' martyrdom. In St Edmund's case, there is an additional occurrence of 'saint', in Latin, in the preface. Compared to Abbo's narrative, it is visible that even though the usage of *sanctus* becomes more common in the latter part, he has used it five times also when writing about the king's deeds in life; therefore it can be suggested that Ælfric has systematically omitted these occurrences when translating the saint's life.

²⁰⁴ 'Betwux þam þe he clypode to Criste þagit, þa tugon þa hæþenan þone halgan to slæge, and mid anum swencge slogon him of þæt heafod, and his sawl sipode gesælig to Criste.' Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 50.

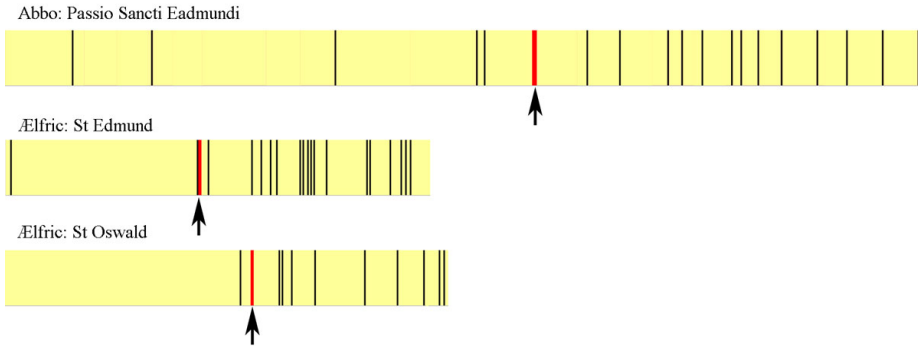


Figure 1: The occurrence of words ‘sanctus’ and ‘halig’ in Abbo’s and Ælfric’s texts. Black lines depict the words and arrows the place of the martyrdom. The scale of the diagram is based on the number of lines in printed text.

This feature shows the importance of textual authority to Ælfric. His presentation of sainthood is not haphazard or random. But, is there more than this in the strict avoidance of the word ‘saint’ regarding kings? When looking at other saints’ lives in the same collection, we can see that their pattern of sainthood is not similar to the one in the case of royal saints. All but four items in the collection are written in the manner that the saints are already called ‘holy’ while they are living. Those who are not, in addition to the saint-kings, are *St Æthelthryth* (LS 20) and *St Maurice and his companions* (LS 28). In the case of *St Maurice and his companions*, the word *halig* is used fairly early, but it still appears for the first time shortly before the martyrs’ death, in a sentence that refers to killing: ‘Then Maximian was inflamed with great anger, and told the heathen go and slay the saints’.²⁰⁵ As far as I can see, this is the only case, with many of the early Christian martyrs in the collection being called saints throughout the narrative. For instance, St Martin is presented as a ‘saint’ already before converting to Christianity and while still being a soldier (LS 31).²⁰⁶ In accordance with this, there is no clear pattern of denoting sanctity in Ælfric’s writings. Since all the deviating lives, with the exception of *St Maurice and his companions*, deal with later, Anglo-

²⁰⁵ ‘Maximianus wearð þa mid micclum graman ontend, and het þa hæþenan faran and þa halgan ofslean.’ Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 162–163.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 224–225.

Saxon native saints, it could be interpreted as a conscious choice in some degree, and could be connected to Ælfric's general notions about the nature of Christian history and sainthood; there are indications that his conceptions about sainthood were tied to the notions about salvation history, and that the outright acceptance of the sainthood of living persons was acceptable only when talking about the early Christians.

In principle the problem of sanctity became more acute when depicting saints of a more recent past. Ælfric seems to have thought that physical wonders had ceased to occur with time, and did not happen anymore. He states this in his homily for the Ascension Day (*CH* I.21), which is concerned with explaining the differences between literal and moral interpretation of the Scripture, and with the miracles connected to the Ascension of Christ and those performed by his followers. Although he followed Gregory of Great in much of what he wrote about miracles, the idea that physical miracles have ceased to happen, was apparently his own, as Malcolm Godden has stated.²⁰⁷ In the text, Ælfric contrasts the present day miracles, which are by nature spiritual, affecting the moral self, with the older ones, which affected the body. He says that the physical miracles were a necessity in the beginning of Christendom, since they were needed to persuade and convert people in the pagan times. After the Christian faith had spread over the world, the physical miracles were not needed anymore. Instead, spiritual wonders continued to exist, and were equivalent to the visible wonders of the previous times. Spiritual wonders were even greater than physical ones, since they healed the soul, whereas the older miracles healed only the body.²⁰⁸

Similarly, Ælfric states that when Christianity was still young, God had performed miracles through living saints; today the miracles occurred on the tombs of saints. Most of the early Christian saints in the *Lives of Saints* indeed perform miracles and are called 'holy' during their lifetime. Those who are not called saints are assigned only post-mortem miracles.²⁰⁹ This division was not as simple as it might sound here; this pattern is broken immediately when looking outside the *Lives of Saints*. For instance, in the

²⁰⁷ Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles," *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 83–84.

²⁰⁸ Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 345–353, on pages 350–352.

²⁰⁹ There are depictions of miracles concerning St Swithun, as well, but the piece is particular in that there are no records of Swithun's own life, only the accounts after his death.

Latin *Life of St Æthelwold*, Ælfric describes miracles that happened during his own lifetime.²¹⁰ There is an inconsistency in Ælfric's treatment of miracles, and it is obvious that it posed a serious dilemma for him, as Malcolm Godden has shown.²¹¹ It is relevant and noteworthy in this instance that the contemporary miracles were miracles performed by God—not by the saints themselves as miracle-workers—and were always shown to testify about God's power and mercy. A kind of 'personal holy power' was not regarded by Ælfric to exist in his own days.²¹² The presentation of sanctity in the *Lives of Saints* can be thought to belong to the same line of thought. The construction of the narrative and the construction of sanctity within the narrative could be linked to ideas according to which humans could not any longer perform saintly miracles while still being alive. This idea also puts emphasis on the thought that a living king cannot yet be holy, but is given his heavenly crown only after death. This in turn leads to larger frameworks of Ælfric's moral and social thought discussed in the following chapters—frameworks within which he was always concerned about how to live a good life on earth in order to receive spiritual rewards.

The arrangement of narrative and the concept of sainthood are closely related to each other in both cases of the royal saints. It seems that like in the case of other saints' lives, also with regard to the royal saints, Ælfric skilfully restructured his adaptation of his Latin sources, moulding them into conventional, structured hagiographical accounts. Additionally, as I see it, the standardization of narrative was not only external, but converged with the internal ideals of sanctity. Sanctity was seen as ultimately singular and eternal, and it could be manifested in individuals, but their individuality was not as important as the sanctity itself. For Ælfric this singular sanctity was important, since it was ideal, striving towards God. A similar tendency can also be seen in his treatment of religious analogies between the king and Christ, to which I will turn next.

3.3. Sanctity and society

Now that it is clear that Ælfric had a penchant for adapting his sources into a standardized form, it is necessary to look at how it affected—if we assume

²¹⁰ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 17–29.

²¹¹ Godden, "Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles," 84–85 and *passim*.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 85.

that it did at all—his conceptualization of social order. As I suggested in the preceding section, Ælfric’s way of reorganizing the narrative was related to his conceptions of sanctity, or at least to his conceptions of what the literary manifestations of sanctity should be like. As the main objective of this study does not only concern narrative structures, I will now turn to examine what implications Ælfric’s rewritings conveyed in terms of his ideas about social order. The main point of what follows is to estimate the role of royal saints within the framework of Ælfric’s political thought. Often royal saints’ lives are read as expressions of the ideals of medieval kingship, as analogies of Christ the king, and similar interpretations have been made of Ælfric’s royal saints’ lives as well.²¹³ I would like to suggest that instead of mere tell-tales of a Christocentric concept of kingship, Ælfric’s adaptations of royal saints conveyed also a different message with them, closely connected to his theological notions about social order and good life. But first, to understand the rationale behind the judgements and interpretations made upon Ælfric’s royal saints, it is necessary to explain what kind of baggage the assimilation between kings and Christ carried with it.

3.3.1. Similitude and the Christocentric image of kingship

It is somewhat common to regard early medieval kingship as Christocentric. Christocentric kingship is usually interpreted as referring to hierarchical equivalence of earthly and heavenly rulers, in a framework of ideology which saw the earthly power as an imperfect equivalent of Christ’s rule in heaven on the one hand, and the king as the representative of Christ’s power on earth on the other. Christian imagery that presented the ruler as a good shepherd, the man as the image of God, or God as king, was common language already in Antiquity, and already then it reached back to earlier theories of kingship. Christian writers employed assimilative imagery very effectively in establishing imperial rule together with ecclesiastical organization in late Antiquity, but it was the Carolingians who developed the ideology of kingship in its full theocratic measures. Assimilative discourse was characteristic for the development of Christian political culture, and was

²¹³ E.g. John, “The World of Abbot Ælfric,” 309; Carl Phelpstead, “King, Martyr and Virgin: *Imitatio Christi* in Ælfric’s *Life of St Edmund*,” in *St Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint*, ed. Anthony Bale (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), *passim*.

one of the ways to sacralize political power.²¹⁴ The status of an earthly ruler was not, however, unproblematic. Saint-kings in particular can be considered somewhat paradoxical, since the two categories which saint-kings combine were in theory incompatible, especially in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. According to early Christian thinking earthly power was by default seen as negative and false, in accordance with the idea that earthly life was imperfect and faulty, and consequently saints were indeed seen as superior to earthly rulers. Early Christian literature emphasized the essential difference between earthly and heavenly kings, and at times even questioned the authority of earthly lords altogether, as they were often juxtaposed in order to downplay secular power.²¹⁵ By the ninth century, when Christian ideology was securely adopted in political culture, the issue of saint-kings had clearly changed, and the disagreement about the justification of earthly power had waned. By contrast, assimilation and parallels between earthly and heavenly rulers were now often used as political tools to emphasize the spiritual origins of secular, albeit Christian, power. Carolingian writers, among others Sedulius Scotus and Smaragdus in specific, who were among the most important sources for Ælfric and Wulfstan, combined Christian theology with the ideals of kingship, making the previous disagreement basically non-essential. Secular rulers gained power, according to Carolingian political thought, from God, and acted in his place on earth.²¹⁶ In this kind of setting assimilative rhetoric worked well to strengthen the authoritative notions of secular power.

It does, therefore, merit repetition to note that this kind of political thought, which the Carolingian writers passed on, was the ground for late Anglo-Saxon thought, as well. Not only did Anglo-Saxons read Carolingian works, but they also produced a fair share of works of their own which display a similar attitude towards secular power. In this regard the most noteworthy are the products of the Benedictine reformers. King Edgar's charter in which he re-founded and granted privileges to the New Minster,

²¹⁴ Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 125, 132. Referring to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London, Duckworth 1981), 394 ff.

²¹⁵ Such as the *Life of Anthony*, which states that Christ is the only king (V. Ant. 81). Ibid., 127.

²¹⁶ Walter Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London: Methuen, 1969), 59–61. There are some, although few, signs of Sedulius Scotus's *De rectoribus Christianis* in both Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works, specifically in the way the king is called 'the vicar of Christ'.

Winchester, dated 966 (BL Cotton Vespasian A.viii, Gneuss 382), displays the king saturated with religious imagery. In the preface of the text the king is illuminated in a full-page miniature standing between the Virgin Mary and St Peter, presenting the establishment charter to Christ above. The text describes the king as working on behalf of Christ on earth, and shows at the same time the absolute source of his authority and the ecclesiastical framework within which the king was supposed to act.²¹⁷ Also King Edgar's coronation ordo of 973 and the *Regularis Concordia* from the same era are among works which bear witness to strong advocacy for political theology, as was discussed already in chapter 2. It is no wonder to see the king referred to as *pastor pastorum*, *Christi vicarius*, or to be described to have been anointed after the example of Christ, considering the ideologies of the reformers. In Æthelwold's case it is even expected. It is also conceivable, as M. J. Silverman has pointed out, that Ælfric was familiar with these works, and would have been accustomed with assimilative rhetoric, too.²¹⁸

Given all these references that preceded Ælfric's time, it is therefore somewhat curious that Ælfric himself used this kind of assimilative rhetoric explicitly only in one of his texts, in a homily written in 1002–1005, the *Homily for Sunday after Ascension* (Pope 9). In this text Ælfric discusses the responsibilities of a king, saying that he is 'the representative of Christ himself' (*Cristes sylfes speligend*).²¹⁹ Silverman has argued that this reference should be read in the light of the reformers' ideologies, as an indication of the developments of the political thought of the time.²²⁰ While this is undoubtedly true in a larger scale, it seems that Silverman—as other scholars have done, as well—reads Ælfric too much as a direct continuation of the reformers' ideologies, not regarding Ælfric's text in its own rights. As Joyce Hill has shown, Ælfric's works cannot be treated as conforming fully to

²¹⁷ The text is printed in Dorothy Whitelock, ed. *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I, A.D. 871–1204*, 2 vols., vol. 1: 871–1066 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 119–133. The charter might be written by Æthelwold afterwards, and not exactly in 966. A digitized image of the miniature (but not the whole manuscript) is available at the Digitised Manuscript site of the British Library:

<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2011/06/the-new-minster-charter.html>

²¹⁸ M. J. Silverman, "Ælfric's Designation of the King as 'Cristes Sylfes Speligend'," *The Review of English Studies* 35, no. 139 (1984): 333.

²¹⁹ John C. Pope, ed. *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), vol. 1, 380–381.

²²⁰ Silverman, "Ælfric's Designation of the King as 'Cristes Sylfes Speligend'," 334.

the ideologies of his teachers.²²¹ The only explicit evidence that Ælfric used this phrase occurs in a text from his later career, while in the case of royal saints this kind of assimilation is hardly present.²²² The most apparent parallel between the king and Christ in the *Lives of Saints* is stated in the preface, in which Ælfric compares the earthly king and his thegns to God and his 'holy thegns', saints: 'An earthly king has many servants and diverse stewards; he cannot be an honoured king unless he has the state which befits him, and as it were serving-men, to offer him their obedience. So likewise is it with Almighty God who created all things; it befits him that he should have holy servants who may fulfil his will.'²²³ As the issue seems to be so ambivalent, the assimilative rhetoric in the *Lives of Saints* has to be evaluated, especially since royal saints' lives have so often been regarded to be expressions of political thought and its religious implications.

In the case of the reformers' ideology and also Carolingian political thought, the authority of the earthly kings was in some degree justified with religious assimilation between the king and God. Assimilation between these two types of kingship was both conceptual and rhetorical. Technically speaking, the rhetorical tool which asserts similarity is called *similitude* (*parabole*). *Similitude* aims to establish credibility and it naturally would have no effect if the comparison was not based on an already established authority. This is why religious analogies are most effective within social groups that share the same conceptions of the sacred, and have no effect on audiences that are indifferent about the principles of the faith. When the two

²²¹ Hill, "Reform and Resistance," 33–34.

²²² Notably, the date of Pope 9 coincides exactly with Ælfric's correspondence with Wulfstan. Wulfstan has a similar phrase in the earliest version of the *Institutes of Polity* and in a law code from 1014 (VIII Æthelred): 'Cristenum cyninge gebyrað swiðe rihte, þæt he sy on fæder stæle cristenra þeode and on ware and on wearde Cristes gespeliga, ealswa he geteald is,' (Polity I) and 'Forðam Cristen cyning is Christes gespelia geteald' (VIII Æthelred). Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 40. This reference is usually ascribed to Sedulius Scotus (86.6) as Wulfstan's source, but the connections between Ælfric and Wulfstan must be kept in mind, as well, when considering the immediate sources and the line of transmission of thought. In this instance this idea must be left on the level of speculation, although I will return to the relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan in chapter 5 with regard to other texts.

²²³ 'An woruldcynincg hæfð fela þegna and mislice wicneras: he ne mæg beon wurðful cynincg buton he hæbbe þa geþincðe, þe him gebyriað, and swylce þeningmen, þe þeawfæstnysse him gebeodon. Swa is eac þam Ælmihtigan Gode, þe ealle þincg gesceop: him gerisð þæt he hæbbe halige þenas, þe his willan gefyllað.' Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 121.

parts in *similitude*, such as a king and his heavenly counterpart, Christ the king, are closely associated, the argument is clear and requires no explanation.²²⁴ In this case the assimilation is the hierarchical equivalence of earthly and heavenly authorities. The authority of the one in the narrative is actually gained *through* the authority of the one to whom the assimilation is made. If the power of the one who is alluded to is recognized as accepted truth, the analogy *per se* requires no justification or explanation. In this kind of setting, it can be agreed that secular leaders could use the analogy to enhance their power, as was the case with Abbo's works. But when examining the usage of *similitude* in Ælfric's works, it reflects another kind of relation to the sacred. In order to make this argument clear, it is essential to discuss in detail the discourse of Ælfric's translations.

Ælfric uses assimilation in the lives of saint-kings in a way which has different implications than the ones in Abbo's work. As it was mentioned before, the *Lives of Saints* represents a late text in the stages of the Benedictine reform. The time was crucial in political as well as in religious terms. The ideology of the earlier phase of the Benedictine reform had stressed the common interests of royal and monastic parties, and opposed some of the rights of the lay aristocracy. A new, religiously saturated image of kingship was constructed in the literary products of the early stages of the reform. The king was now presented as the 'vicar of Christ' and the protector of monks.²²⁵ The image of a humble and steadfast king who ruled primarily by the power of his faith is clearly connected to monastic interests of gaining the approval of royal authority for their cause. The ideology can be detected, for instance, in the *Regularis Concordia*, a customary sanctioned by the council of Winchester in about 973. It emphasized prayers for the king and the royal family on several occasions.²²⁶

Abbo's account of St Edmund followed the grand stages of the reform about a decade later (ca. 987), but it is still much in concordance with the views of the English reformers. The work barely precedes Abbo's appointment to the abbacy of Fleury, and as do his other works (especially

²²⁴ On *similitude* see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: a Foundation for Literary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), §§ 422–425. The following is based on definitions in this book.

²²⁵ See e.g. John, "The World of Abbot Ælfric," 300–316; Paxton, "Abbas and Rex," 200; Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*; Stafford, "Church and Society in the Age of Aelfric," 15.

²²⁶ Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, 5, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 23.

Collectio canonum and *Liber Apologeticus*), it pleads to the ideals of kingship for the benefit of the reformed monasticism. Ælfric's vernacular homily on the passion of Edmund follows somewhat later (992–998), when the political situation had changed considerably. The relationship between the church and the secular powers had deteriorated after the death of King Edgar in 975, who was the main ally with the reformers during his reign. The succession dispute between Edward the Martyr and Æthelred II after Edgar's death, and the murder of Edward three years later in 978, had indeed been dividing factors in internal political and monastic relationships. Many 'anti-monastic' setbacks as well as re-assertions of aristocratic privileges—which in some cases resulted in the control over monastic estates—had all changed the relationship.²²⁷ When viewed against this development, it has to be reviewed whether Ælfric's texts on royal saints reproduce these concepts of Christocentric ideals of kingship, as well.

St Oswald can surely be regarded to represent a certain kind of an ideal king in Bede's text. The ideal role of the king in *Historia ecclesiastica* is based primarily on the king's role in the conversion of Northumbria, but in Ælfric's adaptation it plays only a little part. There is, however, a certain element in Ælfric's text, as well, which can be analyzed in terms of assimilation, but not between the king and Christ, but between the king and priest. The king's priestly role is perceivable in two instances. The first reference appears in a passage where the king has asked the Scots to send a bishop to the Northumbrians, who then send Bishop Aidan to him. Since the bishop did not know the language of the Northumbrians well enough, the king himself interpreted the word of God to his counsellors (*wita*, cf. Bede's *duces et ministri*): 'It happened that the believing [i.e. Christian] king explained to his counsellors in their own language the bishop's preaching, rejoicing, and was his interpreter, since he knew Irish well and bishop Aidan could not yet bend his speech to the language of the Northumbrians.'²²⁸ This passage conforms quite faithfully to the one in *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.3, re-arranging only the order of the elements, and reducing Bede's 'interpreter of the heavenly word' (*interpres uerbi [...] caelestis*) into an 'interpreter'

²²⁷ See e.g. Fisher, "The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr."

²²⁸ 'Hit gelamp þa swa þæt se geleaffulla cyning gerehte his witan on heora agenum gereorde þæs bisceopes bodunge mid bliþum mode and wæs his wealhstod, for þan þe he wel cuþe Scyttisc and se bisceop Aidan ne mihte gebigan his spræce to Norðhymbriscum gereorde swa hraþe þagit.' Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 30–31.

(*wealhstod*).²²⁹ When the king is depicted as an interpreter and mediator of the word of God, it associates him with the tasks and privileges of the clergy, even though he does not act as priest himself. The function of interpretation however embodies the king with certain sphere of sanctity, when it is taken into account that the word of God as such was assumed to be holy; the king himself does not create anything, but mediates the ‘true’ learning and knowledge to the audience, making it seem like he had a privileged access to divinity.

Another passage indicating the priestly assimilation relates the conversion of the West Saxon King Cynegils: ‘Then he [Bishop Birinus] came to Wessex that was still heathen, and converted King Cynegils, and all his people with him, to believe [in Christ]. It happened that the believing [i.e. Christian] Oswald, king of Northumbria, had come to Cynegils and took him to baptism [i.e. acted as his godfather], glad of his conversion.’²³⁰ Whereas the previous passage does not differ much from Bede’s story, this one is somewhat abridged, but not in a way which would alter its rhetoric considerably. The passage is only a little more elaborate in Bede, and Ælfric has removed the attributes *sanctissimus* and *victoriosissimus* (replaced with *geleafful*), and the remark that Oswald married Cynegils’s daughter (Cf. *HE* 3.7): ‘As he [Birinus] preached in the aforesaid province, the king himself, having been taught in religion, was baptized together with his people, it happened that Oswald, the most holy and victorious king of the Northumbrians being present, received him as he came forth from baptism, and by an alliance most pleasing and acceptable to God, first adopted him, thus regenerated, for his son, and then took his daughter in marriage.’²³¹ The omissions, therefore, do not imply any connection with the ideology of

²²⁹ Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 220–221.

²³⁰ ‘Þa becom he [Birinus] to Westseaxan þe wæs ðagyt hæþen, and gebigde þone cynincg Kynegils to Gode, and ealle his leode to geleafan mid him. Hit gelamp þa swa þæt se *geleaffulla* Oswald, Norðhymbra cyning, wæs cumen to Cynegylse and hine to fulluhte nam, fægen his gecyrrednysse.’ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 34. Italics mine.

²³¹ ‘Itaque euangelizante illo [Birino] in praefata prouincia, cum rex ipse cathecizatus, fonte baptismi cum sua gente ablueretur, contigit tunc temporis *sanctissimum ac uictoriosissimum* regem Nordanhymbrorum Osualdum adfuisse, eumque de lauacro exeuntem suscepisse, *ac pulcherrimo prorsus et Deo digno consortio, cuius erat filiam accepturus in coniugem*, ipsum prius secunda generatione Deo dedicatum sibi accepit in filium.’ Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 232–233. Italics mine.

Christocentric kingship, only an omission of narrative elements which Ælfric might have considered to be 'irrelevant' in the composition of the saint's life in a shortened vernacular version.

Based on the comparison between Ælfric's source text and his adaptation, there is little grounds to draw conclusions about the role of St Oswald in assimilative terms. Ælfric's treatment of Bede is faithful when it comes to the contents of the saint's life, despite the heavy rearrangement of narrative elements. Assimilative rhetoric which could be seen as a sign of Christocentric image of the king is restricted. The king as a participant in the heathen king's conversion admittedly occurs as an assimilating scene that has certain religious dimensions, but only in terms of priestly function and even in the translated passages this function is not lavishly elaborated.

In order to make my argument about Ælfric's restrictive rhetoric more solid, I would like to draw attention to other adaptations of Bede's St Oswald. As I mentioned in chapter 3.1.3., Bede's *Historia* served as a model for several accounts of St Oswald's martyrdom throughout the Middle Ages, and certain elaborate stories about Oswald were written roughly at the same time with Ælfric on the continent, too. These legends were also based on Bede's *Historia*, but they were developed in another direction than the life by Ælfric. They present Oswald as a person contributing to the foundation of the Northumbrian, or even the whole English church, as a patron of foreign Christians, as a crusader, as a hero of vernacular romance, or as a person responsible for good harvests, fertility and health. In these stories Oswald goes through intriguing and imaginative adventures, aided by powerful miracles and deeds performed by God in the king's favour.²³² In one continental Latin sermon St Oswald is even presented, not only as an ideal king, like 'David, playing his harp and dancing before the Ark of the Covenant', but also praised as a model for priesthood, like Melchizedek.²³³ Whereas other versions of Oswald's martyrdom tended to place more emphasis on the narrative and entertainment by focusing on human agency, elaborate miracles, the fear of sin or condemnation, it seems that Ælfric's intention was to turn the attention to God and to affect people's morality in a more restrictive manner. This emphasis is visible to an even greater extent in Ælfric's other adaptation of royal hagiography.

²³² Jansen, "The Development of the St Oswald's Legends on the Continent," 230, 235–237.

²³³ Clemoes, "The Cult of St Oswald on the Continent," 6.

Returning to the life of St Edmund, we see more religious analogies than in the case of St Oswald. Perhaps the strongest rhetorical element when considering the religious dimensions is the assimilation between Christ's passion and Edmund's way of death. In Abbo's text the king's fate is described in accordance with Christ's passion. In the narrative, Edmund indicates that he wants to follow in Christ's footsteps, and says he is ready to die at the hands of the pagans. He states this to the Viking chief Hinguar's messenger, who has come to demand King Edmund's submission to the Danes. Edmund replies to the messenger: 'Certainly you would be worthy of slaughter now, but I do not want to defile my clean hands with your vile blood, because I follow Christ, who has set us an example, and I will gladly be killed by you if that is what God preordains.'²³⁴ Whereas Abbo employs an impersonal clause (if it should happen), Ælfric emphasizes God's will (if that is what God ordains).²³⁵ The story of St Edmund's martyrdom continues; the messenger leaves, and the Danes advance to Edmund, but he does not fight back. Instead, the king follows Christ's instruction to Peter to put away his sword when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus (Cf. John 18.1-11): 'King Edmund, against whom Hinguar advanced, stood inside his hall, and mindful of the Saviour, threw out his weapons. He wanted to match the

²³⁴ 'Witodlice þu wære wyrðe sleges nu, ac ic nelle afylan on þinum fulum blode mine clænan handa, forðan þe ic Criste folgie, þe us swa gebysnode, and ic bliðelice wille beon ofslagen þurh eow gif hit swa god foresceawað.' Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 48–49.

²³⁵ Cf. Abbo: '[Edmund] said: Soaked with the blood of my people, you appear to be worthy of suffering death; but, clearly, I follow the example of Christ, and do not want to defile my clean hands, [but] in the name of [Christ], if it should happen, I am ready and willing to meet my death in your spears.' ('Madefactus, inquit, cruore meorum mortis supplicio dignus extiteras; sed, plane Christi mei exemplum secutus, nolo puras commaculare manus, qui pro eius nomine, si ita contigerit, libenter paratus sum uestris telis occumbere.') Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 76, cap. 79. This observation should be studied in more detail in other occasion in order to make the results clear. The choice of translation can naturally be only a minor change in the overall atmosphere, and possibly nothing to draw further conclusions from, but the way *foresceawian* is used in other pieces in the collection (*St Maurice and his companions, the Prayer of Moses, Auguries, St Æthelthryth, Abdon and Sennes, the Maccabees, St Martin, St Vincent*) shows a similar trust in predestination by God. If the changes in the translated text can be read against this observation, the divine foreknowledge of one's fate, and the death predetermined by God, bring the core concepts of religious authority to the surface.

example of Christ, who forbade Peter to fight the cruel Jews with weapons.’²³⁶

Abbo’s version does not explicitly refer to this parallel with St Peter, but generally places more emphasis on the Christological aspects of Edmund’s behaviour than Ælfric, directly comparing the fates of the king and Christ. Edmund is captured and taken as an innocent victim before the impious Viking chief, just like Christ was taken before Pilate (*innocens sistitur ante impium ducem, quasi Christus ante Pilatum praesidem, cupiens eius sequi uestigia qui pro nobis immolatus est hostia*).²³⁷ Ælfric, for his part, does not include this comparison. More parallels between the passion of Christ and the king’s martyrdom follow. The Viking soldiers mock Edmund, like the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus (Cf. Mt. 27.31). He is tied to a tree which is a probable association either to the cross or the column at which Jesus was flagellated.²³⁸ The depiction of the king’s martyrdom, by Abbo especially, can be read as strongly manipulating the emotions of the audience (*pathos*) by images of violence and physical torture. There is some indication of Abbo’s rhetorical education, for instance in the use of *anaphora*, repetition and *antithesis* in the text, but also in the habit of argumentation, which is used to direct the audience’s empathy towards the

²³⁶ ‘Hwæt þa Eadmund cynincg mid þam þe Hingwar com, stod innan his healle þæs Hælendes gemyndig, and awarep his wæpna, wolde geæfenlæcan Cristes gebysnungum, þe forbead Petre mid wæpnum to winnenne wið þa wælhreowan Iudeiscan.’ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 49. Ælfric uses the simile with St Peter also in another homily of his, with almost the same words. Cf. a similar scene-type in *St Maurice and his companions* (LS 28): ‘Hwæt þa mauricius se mæra godes ðegn and exuperius mid eadmodnysse afyllede tihton heora geferan þæt hi unforhte wæron and bædon þæt hi awurpan heora wæpna him fram, and for cristes geleafan heora cwellerum onbugon bliþe to slæge, swa swa he sylf gebysnode, þa þa he het petrum behydan his swurd.’ Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 162–163. Italics mine.

²³⁷ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 79, cap. 10.

²³⁸ Ibid. The term in this passage is *arbor*, rather than *columna*, which would have borne more apparent associations to Christ’s passion. In Ælfric’s adaptation, however, the term is *treow*, a living tree, emphasized with ‘earth-bound’: ‘[The soldiers] swa syððan læddon þone geleaffullan cynincg to anum eorðfæstum treowe.’ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 49. In other vernacular texts, especially in poetry, the word was used to refer to the cross, too.

saint.²³⁹ The king is presented as an innocent victim, accepting his fate as inevitable.

To the same rhetorical field belongs Abbo's comparison of the fates of Christ and Edmund with the help of *ille-iste* alignment:

Departing from this life in this manner, following in the footsteps of his Lord and Christ, the king fulfilled that death on the cross which he had suffered continuously with his body. The one [ille. i.e. Christ], who certainly was pure from sins, was tied to a column, and as a sign of his scourging he bled his blood, not for himself but for us; the other [iste i.e. Edmund], to obtain unfading glory, surrendered to similar punishments by a blood-stained stake. The one [ille, i.e. Christ] who was impeccable in life, in order to purify the stains we have made, in his immense kindness endured the bitterness of nails in his hands and feet; the other [iste, i.e. Edmund] for the love of our Lord, his whole body pricked full of painful arrows, and the fierceness of tortures shredding him in pieces from the inside, persisted patiently in the avowal of faith, which he, welcoming his death sentence, embraced up to the end.²⁴⁰

In the passage above the juxtaposition between the king and Christ is apparent and efficient, and demonstrates the rhetorical skills of Abbo. The king suffers repetitive physical torture, and even the phrase, *crucis mortificatio*, taken from the collect for Luke the Evangelist, associates the torture to the crucifixion of Christ. The comparison done with the help of the pronouns *ille - iste* twice in the text reminds the audience first about the flagellation of Jesus tied to a column, and then about Edmund's similar fate. And in the same way that Christ bled for the people, Edmund bled for the

²³⁹ This is the function that the rhetorical theories assign to defensive argumentation. It is of course good to acknowledge at the same time that the emotional response of the audience is not assumed to be uniform in every instance.

²⁴⁰ 'Taliq̄e exitu crucis mortificationem quam iugiter in suo corpore rex pertulit, Christi Domini sui secutus uestigia, consummauit. **Ille** quidem purus sceleris in columna ad quam uinctus fuit sanguinem non pro se sed pro nobis flagellorum suorum signa reliquit; **iste** pro adipiscenda gloria immarcescibili cruentato stipite similes poenas dedit. **Ille** integer vitæ ob detergendam rubiginem nostrorum facinorum sustinuit benignissimus immanium clauorum acerbitem in palmis et pedibus; **iste** propter amorem nominis Domini toto corpore grauib̄us sagittis horridus et medullitus asperitate tormentorum dilaniatus in confessione patienter perstitit, quam ad ultimum accepta capitali sententia finiuit.' Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 79.

love of Christ.²⁴¹ Abbo has elaborated his literary eloquence by including a verse line from Horace's Odes (*integer vitae scelerisque purus*). This is by no means the only quotation from Horace or some other classical author; the whole text is filled with them. Significantly, the explicit assimilation which Abbo elaborates in his text is completely absent in Ælfric's version.

The martyrdom of St Edmund has been regarded somewhat paradoxical regarding his role as a king. Ridyard has suggested that Abbo, in the first place, did not intend to present Edmund specifically as a peace king, since 'to die fighting the heathen was an adequate claim to sanctity.' She believes that Abbo's narrative reflects more realistically a situation where there was actually no battle between Edmund and the Vikings. Therefore, the depiction of Edmund's death as an unresisting victim would be based on a true story.²⁴² To complement this interpretation, it is worth acknowledging the lengthy contemplations of St Edmund in Abbo's text, where the king faces the options of fighting, fleeing, submitting and dying. Of all these options military resistance is silently left out, and the question in the end is, whether to submit or die. Edmund chooses death, as a sacrifice for his people. Edmund says that he will not yield to serve two masters, and will only serve Christ, and that he would only submit to the Danes if they converted to Christianity.²⁴³ The whole point of the king's death is probably an allegory of a resolute, Christian king, firm in his faith. To yield to the Vikings would be the same as to surrender to the Devil. Abbo had depicted the Vikings as the tools of the Devil, and even though Ælfric did not follow this imagery as vehemently, but presented the Vikings in a more humane way, it can be thought that the martyrdom of the king would read as an allegory of Christ's sacrifice for the people. In accordance with this, the king's death would buy peace. The depiction of his voluntary death might well be a novelty drafted by Abbo, connected to the ideals of the monastic

²⁴¹ There are similar elements elsewhere in Ælfric's works, too. Cf. for instance the end of the homily on Kings Abdon and Sennes (*LS* 24), which relates a story of two pious kings who choose death over submitting to the heathen emperor Decius: 'Now you have heard how the holy kings renounced their kingdom because of their faith in Christ and gave up their own lives for him. Take example of this, so that you do not turn away from Christ for any difficulty, so that you may have eternal life. ('Ge habbað nu gehyrod hu ða halgan cyningas heora cynedom for-sawon for cristes geleafan. and heora agen lif forleton for hine. Nimað eow bysne ne ðam. þæt ge ne bugon fram criste for ænigre earfoðnyse. þæt ge þæt ece lif habbon.')

²⁴² Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, 66–67.

²⁴³ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 74–78.

reformists, but judging from the omissions Ælfric made, this aspect did not play as big a part in the Old English version than it did in the Latin original.

Carl Phelpstead has recently argued that Ælfric's text on St Edmund is 'deliberately modelled more closely on [the portrait] of Christ's self-sacrificial death,' than that of a fighting warrior-king, and as such would convey the political theology of the Benedictine reform. Phelpstead suggests that the image of Edmund as a non-violent martyr submitting voluntarily to death without engaging in battle with the Vikings differs from the image of Edmund that had prevailed in earlier traditions.²⁴⁴ There is no evidence of any differing image, since the first written account remains that of Abbo's, but it is not impossible to imagine a tradition into which the monastic reformists would have added features of a pious, ascetic peace-king. The problem with the argument is not thus the view that the non-violent, Christ-like image was a new development, but the claim that it was Ælfric who modelled this kind of portrait deliberately. This can be countered on the basis that the passages on St Edmund's martyrdom are in fact more suppressed concerning the assimilation between Christ and the king.

In principle the parallel with Christ would imply that the texts in which assimilative rhetoric appears would function as a legitimating force, and would similarly authorize the king with religious arguments. This kind of rhetoric could be used as a political means in situations where there were struggles for power between dynasties. The religious arguments were efficient because as such they could not be countered. Accordingly, the parallels were not tools for sanctifying kingship as such, but for authorizing the texts and the arguments in them. The assimilative function in Ælfric's hagiographic homilies on saint-kings is based strongly on the conventional and restricted model of presenting a saint as an ideal Christian, the image of Christ. The model does not actually depart from the other hagiographic homilies, since they do not deal with kings as specific saints in their own rights. After all the ultimate model for a saint was Christ and his life, and thus the references to the passion of Christ could be connected to this allusion rather than reading them as proof of the king's saintly status (on the basis that he was a king). Instead the sanctity of the kings is suppressed compared with their Latin counterparts. The orderly presentation of sanctity and the suppression of the secular features from the narrative presuppose an order of which the society, both secular and spiritual sides,

²⁴⁴ Phelpstead, "King, Martyr and Virgin," 31–36, 43–44.

consists. This feature of Ælfric's writing, which can be seen as an overall intention in his works, is examined in the next section.

The meaning and interpretation of saint-kings cannot therefore be reduced to just one explanation. It is clear that the issue of royal saints was much more variable and tied to specific occasions, cults and political as well as ecclesiastical circumstances, than what is commonly understood when talking about royal saints as a phenomenon. Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* is a case in point. The two lives of saint-kings demonstrate that their meaning must be evaluated in more complex terms than only as indicators of assimilation which testifies about Christocentric ideology of kingship. The assumption behind the evaluations of assimilation is that the analogy between king and Christ is by nature authoritative, so that it implies a certain mystical sphere of sanctity which the kings in general were part of. This assumption turns out to be at the very least vague and non-analytical, when we look at the way Ælfric handled his sources. It is hard to find implications this kind of premise in the sources, which could be regarded as evidence of advocating the ideology of Christocentric kingship. At first thought—if we regard the nature of royal hagiography as expressions of political thought—the royal saints' lives should provide ample evidence of the assimilative rhetoric which other texts of the time did. Given the evidence this cannot be said without reservation about Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. Instead, the omission made with regards to assimilation is clear especially in the case of St Edmund, in which Ælfric has decided not to translate the flourishing rhetoric of Abbo. The Christ-like death of the saint is similarly suppressed and the explicit assimilation between the king and Christ omitted. A possible solution is that in Ælfric's sanctorale, although depicting a fair number of different kinds of saints and also different types of sanctity, royal saints did not enjoy special treatment, meaning that the message of Ælfric's hagiography was not to exalt the status of kingship but that of Christian good life. The royal saints would thus not function as indications of Christocentric kingship within the ideology of late tenth century, but as moral models not only for kings but for other people, too. So, another point of view on saint-kings would be to see them as moral examples, as objects of imitation, in line with other hagiography. This, too, has been a judgement that Ælfric's saint-kings have received. Next I would like to evaluate this interpretation in the light of Ælfric's discourse.

3.3.2. *Imitatio Christi*, saint-kings and the order of society

If Ælfric's discourse of assimilation cannot be regarded solely as an authorizing feature, it is possible to view it in the light of *imitatio Christi*, a characteristic of medieval hagiography often seen as a universal trait similar to all saints' lives. In recent scholarship the universality of saints' lives has been showed to be more nuanced, however, and the locality of cults and their different functions have been noted to be more varied than what the concept of *imitatio Christi* as a universal characteristic would at first suggest.

In relation to the interpretation and meaning of Ælfric's royal saints, I would like to draw attention to Patrick Geary's essay 'Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal', in which Geary questions and almost outright denies the intentions of hagiography as targets of imitation.²⁴⁵ The basic point which Geary makes is plausible: firstly, that each hagiographic text must be read and interpreted in its own surroundings, in relation to other texts and contexts, not only to the hagiographic genre as literature, and secondly, that hagiographic texts cannot be regarded primarily as witnesses to somewhat general and elusive abstractions such as the values of their contemporaries, their societies, their age, or least of all of the 'medieval mind'.²⁴⁶ He emphasizes the intentionality of each writer and copier and downplays the importance of 'timeless views of Christian perfection' and even the ideals of sanctity.²⁴⁷ In his view the purpose of most hagiographers (comprising authors, copiers and disseminators) was not to provide models for imitation, but for admiration. Geary states: '[Saints' lives] glorify God; they do not provide models for mortals.'²⁴⁸ Even though such statements at times seem somewhat exaggerated, I agree that all hagiographic texts should be studied without presuppositions like this, without assumptions that they all indeed were intended for this purpose. It is true and consistent with reasonable historical methods that each text must be considered within its own context. In Ælfric's case, however, it is exactly his own context, his other

²⁴⁵ Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), passim, esp. 18–23.

²⁴⁶ In this instance Geary criticises the concepts which Caroline Walker Bynum, Joseph Claude Poulin, Michael Goodich and Thomas J. Heffernan have used in their studies. *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

writings, his audience and patrons, and the relationship between his hagiographic texts and other genres which provide reasons to review Geary's critique.

First it has to be emphasized that context was indeed important in changing the meaning of a text that was adapted into vernacular from a much earlier Latin one in a different political and religious environment. A telling example of the importance of each context of each hagiographical story in terms of interpretation and meaning is Ælfric's omission of a specific political issue in St Oswald's legend. The cult of St Oswald was, if not indisputably from the very beginning, at least very soon after Oswald's death, tightly connected to the politics of Mercia and Northumbria. One of the disputes between the lords of these areas was the control of Lindsey, over which Mercia finally claimed control by military victory in about 679. A scene in St Oswald's legend, in which the remains of St Oswald were moved from their original resting place in Oswestry to the monastery of Bardney in Lincolnshire, south of Humber, tells of the hostility in this area. Oswald had already been venerated in Northumbria for around 50 years, and parts of his body had been enshrined in Bernician royal centres, Lindisfarne and Bamborough.²⁴⁹ According to the story, when Oswald's niece tried to do the same to his relics in Bardney, the monks did not want to accept them. Initially in Bede's text, the monks refused to receive the bones because Oswald was from another province and had previously conquered them under his rule, and the monks still maintained the old hatred towards him. Bede writes that they refused the relics even if they knew he was a saint (*etsi sanctum eum nouerant, tamen quia de alia prouincia ortus fuerat et super eos regnum acceperat, ueteranis eum odiis etiam mortuum insequabantur*).²⁵⁰ The following night a sign from Heaven, a column of light, made it apparent to the monks that the relics should have been received. In the morning the monks realised their mistake and eagerly accepted the relics, says Bede (*HE* 3.11).

Ælfric, with his abbreviated version of the deposition of St Oswald's bones in Bardney, does not include the political dimensions to the story. The old political squabbles over Lindsey were certainly not relevant to the contemporary people, and consequently the scene is expectedly changed. But the reason behind the monks' refusal of the relics is also somewhat

²⁴⁹ Thacker, "Kings, Saints, and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia," 2–3.

²⁵⁰ Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 246–247.

different in Ælfric's text. Where Bede makes a point about the local disputes, and says that it was enough to refuse the relics of an already known saint, Ælfric writes differently. He says that the monks did not want to accept the bones because of human error (*ac þa mynstermenn noldon for menniscum gedwylde þone sanct underfon*).²⁵¹ Nothing is said about the saint being a king of a foreign province, nor of the monks' hatred towards him. Instead, the heavenly light that appeared on the bones the following night, testified that he was truly a saint (*hwæt þa God geswutelode þæt he halig sanct wæs*).²⁵² Ælfric seems to shift the grounds for the refusal from political discord to universal human error. In the original the monks knew that he was a saint, but still did not accept the relics, while in the vernacular Oswald's saintliness became clear only after the miracle. As the earthly, political duties of the king are not emphasized as much as the universal saintly qualities, Ælfric's choices of translation end up presenting the royal saint largely in conventional terms. In this example Ælfric's way of translation changes the emphasis of the text from political to spiritual. Therefore the 'timeless views of Christian perfection' which Geary questioned, become more important in the context of Ælfric than in the context of his Latin source. It is an illuminating example of a change of meaning in the process of translation and rewriting. The different situation of the late tenth century and specifically the different person writing about the saint make all the difference in assessing the meaning of the cult, and shows in a clear way that one saint's cult necessarily had multiple meanings and implications in different stages and places of Anglo-Saxon England.

After this example of the importance of the context and its influence on meaning, I will return to the concept of *imitatio Christi*. It is true that royal saints' lives have often been interpreted as political and tied to royal interests, especially in terms of functioning as mirrors for princes. This function would make them essentially moral models, exactly the function Geary was reserved about. As I understand it, the main problem in this issue is how to determine what moral models of hagiography exactly meant. If hagiographic texts are read literally as models for exact imitation in terms of specific actions, or as blueprints for earthly society, then the criticism towards interpretations of imitative models is indeed in place. Literal reading is probably the reason for the assertions that saints' lives do not

²⁵¹ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 37.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 37–38.

represent the ideals of society as such. But when read not as literal, but moral (or tropological, as also Ælfric himself differentiated between these ways of reading) models, and when taking into account the specific circumstances and Ælfric's general interests in other texts of the time, we must accord them a certain intention of imitation, as well.

Historical interpretation might sometimes feel like an attempt to uncover something hidden in the midst of the text, something between the lines, so to speak. In the case of royal saints' lives, a quest for finding specific evidence of the political circumstances of the time might also sometimes fade out the other elements of the text. When looking at the essentials of the texts and not specifically for something uncommon, it is notable that both the lives of St Oswald and Edmund display a strong moral interest in Christian virtues. One might object to this by noting that this is nothing special—all hagiography does it. This objection does not, however, diminish the importance of the fact that Ælfric chose to write his adaptations in this way, and that the elements he chose to reproduce or omit must be treated as his choices of interest and as indicators of his intentions. Also, there is no sound reason to question Ælfric's own words in providing reasons for writing the saints' lives; he stated that he wished to provide edification of these specific saints for the laity, in order to improve faith. The Latin preface to the *Lives of Saints* begins:

*We have also translated this book from Latin into the ordinary English language, desiring, by edifying in the faith through the reading of this narrative, to profit any others whom it pleases to give their attention to this work either by reading or listening, for I do not reckon it to be disagreeable to the faithful. For I remember having set forth in two previous books the passions and lives of those saints which this people commonly honour with the veneration of a feast day and it has pleased us in this little book to arrange the passions and lives of those saints which the monks and not the laity honour with offices.*²⁵³

²⁵³ 'Hunc quoque codicem transtulimus de Latinitate ad usitatum Anglicam sermocinationem, studentes aliis prodesse edificando ad fidem lectione huius narrationis, quibuscumque placuerit huic operi operam dare, sive legendo seu audiendo, quia estimo non esse ingratum fidelibus. Nam memini me in duobus anterioribus libris posuisse passiones vel vitas sanctorum ipsorum quos gens ista caelebre colit cum veneratione festi diei, et placuit nobis in isto codicello ordinare passiones etiam vel vitas sanctorum illorum

Throughout the life of St Oswald the king's devoutness and piety is repeatedly present. True faith, which is commented upon in a very commonplace manner, seems to be the most important feature characterizing the life of a successful king. King Oswald, who 'believed greatly in God' (*gelyfed swyþe on God*),²⁵⁴ began his reign in the battle against King Cadwallon. Despite of enemies who outnumbered his army, Oswald, 'strengthened by his faith and with the help of Christ, slew his enemies' (*his geleafa hine getrymde and Crist him gefylste to his feonda slege*),²⁵⁵ 'and on account of the king's faith, God granted him victory in battle' (*and gewunnon þær sige swa swa se Wealdend him uðe for Oswoldes geleafan*).²⁵⁶ Oswald had a successful reign, during which 'the almighty God united four kingdoms because of the merits of the king, who always honoured him' (*se ælmihtiga God hi geanlæhte to ðam for Oswoldes geearnungum þe hine æfre wurðode*).²⁵⁷ The king 'held his kingdom in a renowned manner in terms of worldly matters and also with great faith, and in all his acts always honoured his Lord, until he was slain for the protection of his people (*Oswold cyning his cynedom geheold hlisfullice for worulde and mid micclum geleafan and on eallum dædum his Drihten arwurðode oð þæt he ofslagen wearð for his folces ware*).²⁵⁸ All these emphases on the king's faith are more essential than any political nuances in Ælfric's text. Acting piously in this life brings rewards both after death, but also in this life, as the example of Oswald's victory shows. The expressions do not as such differ from Bede's original, but Bede additionally placed more importance on the conversion of Northumbria and political circumstances than Ælfric, as was discussed in the previous section.

Directly from Bede comes also a phrase which Ælfric employed in the end of the text, and which, as I see it, really explains Ælfric's own comprehension of the meaning and purpose of royal king's lives: 'Now, the holy Bede, who wrote this book, said that it is no wonder that the holy king heals illnesses now that he lives in Heaven, since he wanted to help and

quos non vulgus sed coenobite officiis venerantur.' Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 119, 131. Trans. Wilcox.

²⁵⁴ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 27.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

provide for the poor and weak already when he was here in life.’²⁵⁹ This is substantially the message that runs through all of Ælfric’s discourse: actions in this life are fundamentally important in reaching salvation. Expectations of the eventual Day of Judgement steer Ælfric’s writing, so that the discourse on social order and a good life becomes normative. This means that by defining the terms for good life, Ælfric becomes involved with social and political thought on a deep level. The saints’ lives were part of his overall interest in pastoral care and improving conditions so that the people around him could better perform their Christian duties on earth.

Among the moral virtues, exemplified in the lives of royal saints, are humility, devoutness, generousness, justice, wisdom, honour and steadfastness in faith. In the life of St Edmund his good Christian characteristics are listed right at the start, with certain omissions about the king’s royal stock, as discussed in the previous section. To emphasize the point that those in power should be humble, Ælfric employs Abbo’s quotation from Ecclesiasticus 32.1: ‘Are you set as a leader? Do not raise yourself [above others], but be among men like one of them.’²⁶⁰ As good deeds are also depicted frequent praying, establishing churches and monasteries. All of them were common virtues of Christian kings, but not exclusively so. The characteristics of saint-kings presented in good light are not tied specifically to royal office, and the royal nature of the saints is not highlighted. The virtues of this kind could be said to have been common in depicting any pious Christian, with the exception of the establishment of

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 42. Cf. Bede, who makes the same comment in two places in a more verbose manner: ‘Nor is it to be wondered at that the sick are cured in the place where he died, for while he was alive he never ceased to care for the sick and the poor, to give them alms, and offer them help. [...] It is not to be wondered at that the prayers of this king who is now reigning with the Lord should greatly prevail, for while he was ruling over his temporal kingdom, he was always accustomed to work and pray most diligently for the kingdom which is eternal.’ (‘Nec mirandum in loco mortis illius infirmos sanari, qui semper dum uiueret infirmis et pauperibus consulere, elemosynas dare, opem ferre non cessabat. [...] Nec mirandum preces regis illius iam cum Domino regnantis multum ualere apud eum, qui temporalis regni quondam gubernacula tenens magis pro aeterno regno semper laborare ac deprecari solebat.’) Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede’s Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 242–243, 250–251. Trans. Colgrave & Mynors.

²⁶⁰ ‘þu eart to heafodmen geset? Ne ahefe þu ðe, ac beo betwux mannum swa swa an man of him.’ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 44. Abbo quotes the Bible: ‘Principem te constituerunt? Noli extolli, sed esto in illis quasi unus ex illis.’ Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints*, 71.

religious communities, which was an action exclusively restricted to the higher strata of society.

Prayer plays an essential part as a virtue especially in the life of St Oswald. The king is depicted as a devout and humble Christian, praying to God before engaging in battle, asking for God's favour for his just battle against pagans.²⁶¹ But as importantly, praying to God is emphasized as a continuous action; the king sought God's mercy in everyday-life, and regarded the eternal issues to be more important than the worldly, transitory things in life. Ælfric writes: '[King Oswald] laboured for the heavenly kingdom with continuous prayers much more than he was concerned about how he could possess temporary honour in the world, which he loved little.'²⁶² Again the emphasis is on spiritual rather than secular purposes of discourse, and the intention of the text is hard to pinpoint to anything else than to providing moral models for mortals, despite the criticism by Geary and others. For instance, John Damon sees the cult itself 'inextricably bound up with his function as sacrificial victim', and downplays the saint's role as a sponsor of faith.²⁶³ Damon refers to Alan Thacker—who himself refers to D. W. Rollason—in support of the idea that by the end of the tenth century and the Benedictine reform, which showed unusual interest towards royal martyrs, St Oswald was clearly categorized among martyrs and not confessors.²⁶⁴ Thus when Ælfric is stated to have considered St Oswald's martyrial status as 'self-evident', even though he did not explicitly mention the king having been a martyr, it appears to be a rather odd statement, especially so when looking at the contents of Ælfric's adaptation of Bede.²⁶⁵ More problematic is the interpretation of Ælfric as a direct continuation of the reformers who preceded him. As far as the emphases in the saint-kings' lives themselves go, it seems more plausible to

²⁶¹ Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 28–29.

²⁶² '[H]e swanc for heofon rice mid singalum gebedum swiþor þonne he hogode hu he geheolde on worulde þa hwilwendlican geþingcðu þe he hwonlice lufode.' *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁶³ John Edward Damon, "The King's Fragmented Body: A Girardian Reading of the Origins of St Oswald's Cult," *The Heroic Age*, no. 9 (2006): § 11.

²⁶⁴ Rollason, "The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England," 1–22; Thacker, "*Membra Disjecta*," 124–125.

²⁶⁵ Thacker writes: 'What it does demonstrate is the saint's high standing in reformed circles and the fact that his martyrial status required neither discussion nor proof. Although Ælfric, who followed Bede very closely, did not explicitly refer to Oswald as a martyr, he probably regarded the matter as self-evident.' ———, "*Membra Disjecta*," 125.

admit that they reflect more interest in the matters of faith and good life than those of powerful royalty and the king's sacrificial status.

Also the scene of Oswald's martyrdom with the king praying has received certain elaborate interpretations about the Christocentric nature of kingship and its development in later times. In *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede stated that it was the king's custom to pray vehemently, and that he also ended his life with words of prayer (*etiam inter uerba orationis uitam finierit*). Bede wrote that the king's last words, 'God have mercy on [our] souls, said Oswald when he fell to the ground,' had by his own time become proverbial in common parlance.²⁶⁶ Damon has interestingly raised a question of the actual meaning of *animabus*. Was the purpose of the king to pray for Oswald's own men's (our') souls, or for those of his opponents ('their souls')? Since Bede did not include a direct indication of whose souls were in question, the passage could be read either way. Damon has suggested that it was indeed the latter meaning which should be considered to be the original one. This would in turn create a certain connection between the king and Christ; the king's dying words on behalf of his enemies would thus be a reference to those of Christ in Luke 23:34: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (*Pater dimitte illis non enim sciunt quid faciunt*). Damon argues that this explanation is more plausible than to think that Oswald would have regarded his own, Christian, people to be in need of mercy, unlike his pagan opponents. Furthermore, he distinguishes the 'original' meaning of the proverb from that of Bede's, who actually comments on the king's death and presents it as a 'sacrifice' on behalf of his people. Damon's argument is that in its earliest stage the proverb was used to denote a universal sense of imitation of Christ, in contrast with the later presentations, which filled the king's martyrdom as nationalizing and sacrificial interpretations.²⁶⁷

The question of interpretation in this instance is important; whereas one could, like Damon, contemplate the original meaning of the passage, it does not change the fact that interpretations are done in each situation by the audience, and that the meaning of the king's original outcry, assuming that it really happened, was already detached from the original context when it was transferred to writing. In other words, the intentions are separated from meaning, so that the written text now meant more than what

²⁶⁶ 'Deus miserere animabus, dixit Oswald cadens in terram.' Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 250.

²⁶⁷ Damon, "The King's Fragmented Body," § 15–18.

the king (or the author of the proverb) meant in the original situation. The dialogic relationship of the original situation, which is always highly situational, is essentially changed when it is written as text; writing changes the basis of this relationship of reference, and can also broaden it. In this instance it means that meanings were assigned anew in each situation of translation. Ælfric, for instance, clearly read the passage as a reference of the king's prayer for his own people, as he wrote that 'he prayed for his people who died there falling, and entrusted their souls and that of his own to God, and in this way cried out on his fall: "God have mercy on our souls!"'²⁶⁸ References to the sacrificial death of Christ are in Ælfric's text hard to find, but the king's exemplary faith and pious actions are, in turn, more present.

Even though Geary's critique of studying hagiographic texts as universally representative of ideals of sanctity and society is sound and justified, in the case of Ælfric's royal saints' lives the criticism requires some modification. While reading them as only general ideals of individual kings or as indicators of the medieval mind would certainly have its shortcomings in a study like this, it has to be recognized that Ælfric's texts, after having been read through the methodological principles which Geary pinpointed—taking into account the author and his surroundings and the textual relationships with his other works as well as that with his predecessors—and not as expressions of a collective medieval mindset, the result remains contradictive to Geary's critique. In Ælfric's hagiographic homilies, as in his other texts even in a larger scale, the intention cannot be read as explicitly propagandist for royal power or monastic cults. Instead, I would rather see them as showing a remarkable concern for providing moral models for his contemporaries. This does not necessarily mean that all the individual actions of a saint should be blindly considered to have been imitative, but that the principles behind the actions themselves, moral and ethics, were the driving force for Ælfric's writings and for his interest in pastoral care in general. I believe he was genuinely interested in trying to improve the order of society within the religious framework that he saw right and correct. In the case of saints' lives he pursued this in a smaller scale than the later, theoretical political thinkers. With royal saints' lives he could provide exemplary models not just for kings but for other lords of the Anglo-Saxon

²⁶⁸ '[He] gebæd for his folc þe þær feallende sweolt and betæhte heora sawla, and hine sylfne, Gode, and þus clypode on his fylle, "God gemiltsa urum sawlum!"' Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 36.

society, like his patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær, and also for any other Christian individual.

3.4. Conclusion

With regard to the *Lives of St Edmund* and *St Oswald*, Ælfric's wish to 'write order' becomes clear in the way he treats the narrative structure in order to create standardized presentations of the saints-kings' lives, which consist of the kings' deeds in life, their martyrdom, and of the miracles which denote their sainthood. The sainthood of the martyr-kings was constructed with textual means in a similar vein as it was with the choices of translation. This means that when creating standardized models for sanctity, Ælfric made certain changes to his translations, and with textual means created both narrative coherency and religious authority, and concentrated the order of the narrative strictly around the right themes, right words, and right associations. It seems that Ælfric was specifically concerned with the 'proper' structure of a saint's life, since there can be seen a systematic avoidance to use the term 'saint' in the early parts of the narrative. Comparing the Latin and vernacular narratives of St Edmund and St Oswald with each other, it is evident that Ælfric has deliberately avoided nominating the king a saint before he gains his martyrdom in the narrative.

There are more reasons to regard the lives of royal saints as moral models for men—kings as well as others—than to see them as proponents of Christocentric, theocratic kingship. Basic Christian virtues that are displayed in the lives include humility, devoutness, honour, turning away from sins, orthodoxy, generousness, justice and mercy; all of which were admittedly virtues of a ruler but also virtues for any other Christian. Additionally, the features that were omitted from the Latin models indicate that more blatant expressions of Christocentric or panegyric rhetoric have in many places been left aside. In the case of St Oswald the source text itself did not offer ample material to begin with, but in the case of St Edmund this was the opposite. I would like to suggest that the role of royal saints' lives, whereas in other instances more clearly connected to real politics and power struggles, cannot be said to be the main point in Ælfric's texts. Rather, the moral models provided in the form of royal hagiography are not confined to the higher strata of society, but also offered to any Christian individual. This relationship between the individual and the society will turn out to be a revealing feature in Ælfric's other texts, as will become evident in the

following chapters. Holy individuals, saints, worked as examples in moral terms, and were also a part of Ælfric's political thought—not only regarding the king and the lords, but the whole Christian society, the Church as community.

To view the vernacular accounts only as simplifications of the Latin originals is a simplification itself. The function of Latin and vernacular literatures are different, but a strict dichotomy between them as somehow implying an elite and popular spheres is not sufficient. The vernacular of Ælfric, while simple in its clarity, is at the same time highly organized and learned. From the fact that the Latin texts are shortened and adapted, it does not in any way follow that the vernacular texts could be understood as synonymous to the unlearned or somehow opposite to the true and right perceptions of sainthood. On the contrary, the vernacular accounts suppress any views that might have been regarded as unorthodox or ambiguous in the theology of the late tenth century. They do not try to simplify theological issues to an unlearned audience, although there was a clear reluctance to translate every religious text into the vernacular; however, this was more connected to the right order of the world, yet again. The intended use of the whole collection, the *Lives of Saints*, was different from the beginning compared to the earlier two collections of *Catholic Homilies*. Malcolm Godden has also questioned the assumption that vernacular literature would imply a popular audience. He writes that the collection was written 'for bishops and monks and for highly educated laymen [...], not just (if at all) for the ordinary laity.'²⁶⁹ The starting point in evaluating the function of discourse should of course be the perceptions of Ælfric himself. The intended and factual audiences may differ but only the intended one influenced the discourse. The reception and meaning of this discourse can of course vary depending on any given context but that is to a certain extent a matter of speculation.

Ælfric's works are rarely if ever interpreted as primarily political. Additionally, when the royal saints in Ælfric's texts are discussed, it is often done in relation to other royal saints, not in relation to Ælfric's other texts, such as his exegetical homilies or pastoral letters. Therefore the royal saints have equally rarely been discussed within Ælfric's wider framework of social and political thought. What else, other than deeply embedded with social interests, can Ælfric's whole discourse be seen as? The questions of

²⁶⁹ Godden, "Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles," 94.

what is right and what is wrong, how men should live their lives on earth in a Christian community, and which moral models they should look upon, are all thoroughly embedded in Ælfric's texts. The saints' lives are part of his normative discourse, which forms the religious-political ideas that he intended to deliver and spread broadly within and outside his own community.

For Ælfric, it seems, the analogy of an earthly king and the sacred suggests an all-embracing similarity of all saints, who are part of God's orderly, singular sanctity. Religious assimilation was important not because it implied a connection between the king and his heavenly counterpart, but because it implied the similarity—but not identicalness—of all saints and the universal authority of God. This does not mean that secular elements as such would be considered irrelevant. On the contrary, the whole order of society was built on the order of God, which Ælfric accentuated in his writings. In order to understand the role which the royal saints had in the formulations of the order of society, it is necessary to look also at other forms of the discourse, which approach the issue from another perspective. For these purposes, I will next discuss the relationship between Ælfric and the lay aristocracy, who were recipients of not only the lives of saints examined in this chapter, but also a number of his other writings, homiletic letters in specific.

4. Teaching the laity: Ælfric, secular aristocracy and proper order

This chapter continues with the theme of order, but concentrates on the period shortly after the turn of the millennium and after the *Lives of Saints*—the later years of Ælfric’s life. In the following I will turn attention towards the recipients of these hagiographic homilies, the secular aristocracy. It appears that in pursuing his literary activities Ælfric’s relationship with the laity corresponded closely with his career. Did the abbot’s dependency on Æthelmær on the one hand, and his connections to the lay aristocracy on the other, influence the treatment of the nature of authority and social order in his texts? Here I will examine the notions of authority, morality and social order as they are conveyed in a set of texts written by Ælfric around the year 1005, namely his letters to members of the secular aristocracy. In general, these letters teach the laity about the tenets of faith and morality. My aim is to consider the discourse of the letters in conjunction with the religious-political ideas, and to estimate Ælfric’s role in transferring the ideas of a just society from monastic to lay spheres, in terms of moral notions on how to conduct a good life in order to fulfil one’s role in society. This discussion is not seen as isolated, monastic discourse, but these views and texts were inherently part of the contemporary surroundings, not just the monastic circles. Some of these texts had even further impact on English legal culture through Wulfstan, as will become evident in chapters 5 and 6. I will first examine Ælfric’s relationships with the lay aristocracy, and the events connected to the establishment of Eynsham. Then I will give a brief account of the letters he wrote to the laity during his abbacy of Eynsham. These letters represent a direct link between Ælfric and the secular aristocracy, and tell of the ways Ælfric wanted to extend the teaching of morality from the monastic to secular spheres. My argument is that the problem of authority for Ælfric did not lie in the negotiations between secular and spiritual powers, but in morality and the right conduct of life and in one’s

ability to fulfil their role in society. One of my aims is to show how Ælfric was indirectly involved in the formulations of the secular society.

4.1. Ælfric's relationships with the lay aristocracy

Even though little is known about Ælfric's life, his relationship with the contemporary aristocracy can be attested in some measure with the help of the references visible in his works. A fair number of the works Ælfric produced during his lifetime was written as a response to lay requests. All of these works show a great interest in teaching and providing proper and orthodox answers to religious questions that might concern or puzzle the laity. Therefore, Ælfric's relationship with the highly influential aristocracy is one of the background factors which should be taken into account when estimating the role of his writings at the time of his abbacy, and his position as a scholar, homilist, and abbot is to be considered from this starting point.

During his life he is known to have had contacts with several men of high rank, ecclesiastical as well as secular. The ecclesiastical connections include figures like Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester and archbishop of Canterbury, Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester, Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury, and of course Wulfstan, bishop of London and Worcester and archbishop of York. His writings also refer to contacts with Cenwulf, bishop of Winchester, Æthelwold II, archbishop of Winchester, and Wulfsige, bishop of Sherborne.²⁷⁰

In addition to these several ecclesiastical contacts, Ælfric was connected with laymen of notable rank, of whom the most influential and the most highly ranked were his patrons Æthelweard, ealdorman of the Western Provinces, and his son, Æthelmær.²⁷¹ They were part of a small and prestigious elite who had close contacts with the king and his advisors. The ealdormen of Anglo-Saxon England governed quite large areas for the king, and were responsible for the military defence of their areas. Some ealdormen, such as Æthelweard or his kinsman Byrhtnoth, famous from the poem *Battle of Maldon*, were notable benefactors of monasteries. Æthelweard and Æthelmær were related to King Æthelred, and not only were they highly ranked in secular spheres, but they also took interest in

²⁷⁰ Lees, *Tradition and Belief*, 87–88.

²⁷¹ Catherine Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 165.

learning and religious matters. Ælfric dedicated the *Lives of Saints*, but also a translation of a part of Genesis and an abridged translation of the story of Joshua to his lay patrons.²⁷² Æthelweard himself was the author of the Latin translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which, when considered together with his interest in Ælfric's theological translations, shows the unusual range of his preoccupation with scholarly matters.²⁷³ Although engagement with the matters of the Benedictine reform and monastic affairs was not that rare among the elites of late Anglo-Saxon England, it must be emphasized that the kind of translation activity which Æthelweard produced was still highly unusual among the laity—not to speak of the direction of translation, which was from vernacular to Latin. These men played quite a significant part in contemporary politics; Æthelweard had been a person of influence already during King Edgar's reign, and Æthelmær was one of King Æthelred's closest lay associates through the 990s.²⁷⁴ They were also the figures most important to Ælfric himself. It was exactly these two figures, especially the younger Æthelmær, who played a part in Ælfric's own career, and this makes the assessment of Ælfric's views on society all the more interesting.

A set of homiletic letters from the time of his abbacy, discussed below, can also be directly associated with the local, lay aristocracy. The recipients of the letters discussed below, Sigeweard of Eastheolon, Wulfgeat of Ylmandun, and Sigefyrð—although not much evidence of their lives has survived—presumably were laymen of lesser rank than the influential ealdormen Æthelweard and Æthelmær, probably prosperous local figures, belonging to the middle ranks of thegns.²⁷⁵ With such a significant amount of contacts to secular aristocracy, it is curious that any explicit reference to the king or the royal family is absent, as Clare Lees has pointed out.²⁷⁶ There are

²⁷² Printed in S. J. Crawford, ed. *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, EETS, O.S. 160 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922).

²⁷³ Printed in Alistair Campbell, ed. *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, Medieval Texts (London: Thos. Nelson, 1962).

²⁷⁴ Simon Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter, et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 451–452; Barbara Yorke, "Aethelmaer: The Foundation of the Abbey at Cerne and the Politics of the Tenth Century," in *The Cerne Abbey Millennium Lectures*, ed. Katherine Barker (Cerne Abbas: The Cerne Abbey Millennium Committee, 1988), 18–19.

²⁷⁵ Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 186–187.

²⁷⁶ Lees, *Tradition and Belief*, 88.

only two explicit references to King Æthelred II by name in Ælfric's works, both of them for the purposes of dating.²⁷⁷

It has been noted before that towards the end of Ælfric's career his works convey an increasing concern for the contemporary issues that faced late Anglo-Saxon England.²⁷⁸ There are several studies which contextualize Ælfric's individual homilies, but rarely have his works from the time of his abbacy been treated as a whole. For the purposes of this study it is essential to examine Ælfric's discourse in more than one text, but without losing sight of the importance of a single text as such. Sometimes the interpretations of Ælfric's discourse, although based on several texts, have lost sight of the specific context they were written in, meaning that the discourse in texts written at Cerne have been treated together with texts written at Eynsham. By acknowledging the circumstances, which after the turn of the millennium were quite different when compared to the situation in the 990s, Ælfric's discourse can be contextualized better. I think this is the best way to estimate his views on society, and especially to evaluate the development of his thought in a political situation that was itself problematic, to say the least. The changes that can be seen in his post-abbacy corpus directed to the secular aristocracy as a whole also confirm the notion that Ælfric was not an isolated monk writing for a monastic audience about merely theological matters, but shows how closely he was part of the surrounding world. It seems that after the time at Cerne, Ælfric became more and more involved in the matters of the secular society.

²⁷⁷ In the preface to *CH I* Ælfric states that he was sent to Cerne, at the request of Æthelmær, in the days of King Æthelred. Clemons, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 174. In the *Life of St Edmund (LS 32)* he also refers to Æthelred only when indicating a date, when he states that Abbo came to England in the days of King Æthelred. Needham, *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints*, 43.

²⁷⁸ See for instance Mary Clayton, "Of Mice and Men: Ælfric's Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor," *Leeds Studies in English, New Series* 24 (1993); ———, "Ælfric and Æthelred," in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet L. Nelson (London: King's College London, 2000); Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church"; Robert K. Upchurch, "A Big Dog Barks: Ælfric of Eynsham's Indictment of the English Pastorate," *Speculum* 85, no. 3 (2010). See also the introduction to Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.

4.2. The establishment of Eynsham

Æthelmær appears in Ælfric's career for the first time when Ælfric moved from Winchester to Cerne Abbas in about 987. The land for the re-establishment of Cerne as a reformed monastery was granted by Æthelmær, who gave large endowments 'to God, to the honour of the Virgin Mary, St Peter and St Benedict'.²⁷⁹ Ælfric himself states in the preface to the first series of *Catholic Homilies* that he was sent to Cerne 'at the request of thegn Æthelmær, whose nature and goodness is known everywhere.'²⁸⁰ The second move which promoted Ælfric's career was the re-establishment of Eynsham as a reformed monastery in about 1005. The charter of Eynsham (S 911), which confirms the foundation of the monastery by Æthelmær, attests that the ealdorman decided to retire to the monastery himself. It is stated that Æthelmær would live in the monastery together with the monks: 'Placing there monks who live according to the rule, himself performing the authority of a father, and living together with them, he [Æthelmær] has appointed an abbot for the holy congregation of monks, in which he chooses to live himself.'²⁸¹ It is generally assumed that the abbot to whom the charter refers is Ælfric, even though he is not named. The date of the establishment of Eynsham, and consequently the dating of the works Ælfric is known to have produced there, is based on this charter. It was customary, though, that charters of this kind were drafted some time after the actual establishment, and not before. Also the tense in the charter (*instituit*) indicates that the appointment had already happened. The date of the establishment of Ælfric's monastery is thus somewhere between 1002 and 1005. The *terminus post quem* must be based on references in Ælfric's letters to Wulfstan; in 1002 Wulfstan was appointed archbishop, and is saluted as such in the 'private' letter by Ælfric (Fehr 2a). In this letter, which is thought to be the earliest extant letter from Ælfric to Wulfstan, Ælfric refers to himself still as 'brother', indicating that he was still a monk and not an

²⁷⁹ G. D. Squibb, "The Foundation of Cerne Abbey," in *The Cerne Abbey Millennium Lectures*, ed. Katherine Barker (Cerne Abbas: The Cerne Abbey Millennium Committee, 1988), 11–12. The charter is printed in John Mitchell Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, vol. 3 (London: English Historical Society, 1845), 224–226.

²⁸⁰ Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 174.

²⁸¹ 'Uite igitur regularis monachos inibi constituens, ipse patris uice fungens uiuensque communitur inter eos, abbatem sanctę monachorum congregationi preferre se uiuente instituit.' H. E. Salter, ed. *Eynsham Cartulary*, vol. 1, Oxford Historical Society, vol. XLIX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 20.

abbot.²⁸² The first Old English letter (Fehr II), for its part, which develops from the private letter, is now written by 'abbot' Ælfric.²⁸³ The appointment must have happened between Wulfstan's appointment to the archbishopric of York and the drafting of the Eynsham charter in 1005.

Another source which can be associated with the establishment of Eynsham is Ælfric's *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, which belongs also to this period.²⁸⁴ Ælfric wrote the letter to his community of monks after being appointed abbot.²⁸⁵ In this text Ælfric specifies the daily and yearly conduct of life in his monastery. The title 'letter' is derived from the greeting and farewell in the text, but by nature it is a monastic customary, or consuetudinary, rather than a letter. The work is a detailed and practical guide about liturgy and customs, meant to supplement the *Benedictine Rule*, and it is based on the *Regularis Concordia*, composed in the 970s by Æthelwold, Ælfric's mentor. This letter is different in nature than most of Ælfric's texts discussed here, as the audience of this text was intended to be strictly monastic, and it was not originally intended to a wider, secular circulation. However, as regards the complex relations and textual interactions between Ælfric and Wulfstan, it is still very interesting to note that one of Wulfstan's so-called 'commonplace-books' has survived in a manuscript that includes the only surviving copy of the *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (CCCC 265: Ker 53, Gneuss 73). Hill supposes that Wulfstan gained a copy of Ælfric's customary directly from him, and was interested in it specifically because it provided a model for modifying the secular church. Another manuscript which contains selective literal quotations from the *Regularis Concordia*, and includes Wulfstan's commonplace book, is CCCC 190 (Ker 45, Gneuss 59). According to Hill, the selections are made in line

²⁸² 'Frater Ælfricus salutem exoptat Uulstano, venerabili archiepiscopo.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 247.

²⁸³ 'Aelfricus abbas uulstano Venerabili archiepiscopo salutem in Christo.' Bernhard Fehr, ed. *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics: In Altenglischer und Lateinischer Fassung*, Repr. with a supplement to the introduction by Peter Clemons. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 69.

²⁸⁴ Printed in Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.

²⁸⁵ But, as Jones points out, it is very difficult to assign a definitive date to either the appointment or the *Letter* itself. The establishment charter of Eynsham is the only document that can be dated to 1005, and it may not be contemporaneous with the establishment, and issued only later. The best that can be said of the dating of the *Letter*, is that it was written after the establishment, but how long after, is not known, and might be anything between 1002 and 1010. *Ibid.*, 5-17.

with the same thought—to provide material for the secular church.²⁸⁶ This shows the wish to use the ideas of the reformed monasticism more extensively than just within the walls of the monasteries; a general aspiration to regulate and define also other parts of the society in God's proper order can be seen to be visible in these actions.

The Eynsham charter, for its part, has survived only as a copy, but Simon Keynes has estimated that in its original state it would have been a highly impressive single charter, and as such would have been a valuable document bearing royal authority.²⁸⁷ The charter makes it explicitly clear that monastic communities were expected to have independent authority over conducting their business, such as electing their abbots, which becomes apparent in the formulations about the comprehensive privileges of liberty that King Æthelred granted to Eynsham: 'At the request of Æthelmær, a man very loyal and dear to me, I establish a full privilege of liberty for his monastery.'²⁸⁸ The successor for the abbot would in the future be elected in accordance with the rule, and in consultation with the king (*cum regis consilio eligatur*).²⁸⁹ Freedom from secular powers, the royal power notwithstanding, was one of the important causes that the Benedictine reformers tried to establish a few decades before. In their aspirations to gain independence for monasteries, the leading figures of the reformed monasticism had leaned on the authority of the king and in turn promoted notions of theocratic kingship.²⁹⁰

By the time of the establishment of Eynsham the alliance between the king and the reformed parties had changed from its heyday under King Edgar's reign. The relationship between King Æthelred and certain monastic parties had suffered during the early years of Æthelred's reign when, for instance, the king himself had violated the rights of monasteries by intervening in the affairs of Abingdon by selling its abbacy in the 980s. Similar wrongdoings are reported in charters and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which states that the king 'laid waste the diocese of Rochester' in

²⁸⁶ Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 107–108.

²⁸⁷ Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 459.

²⁸⁸ 'Æthelmaro, uiro ualde fidelissimo michi quoque dilectissimo, impetrante, absolutissimum libertatis priuilegium constituo monasterio eius.' Salter, *Eynsham Cartulary*, 20.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹⁰ See chapter 2.1.2. "Reformed monasticism and royal authority".

986.²⁹¹ In a charter drafted in 993 (S 876) the king announces that he now regretted the afflictions which had happened after the death of Æthelwold (984), and admits that they occurred partly because of his youth and partly because of the greed of certain men who were supposed to advise the king.²⁹² Although the alliance between the king and monasteries is often referred to in a way which implies a dichotomy between ‘monastic’ and ‘secular’ or royal spheres, it is worthwhile to remember that this category is formed much for the sake of convenience and was not that simple in its own time. The monastic parties with which the king had a clash of interests cannot be regarded as the whole monastic sphere of the time, but were limited to certain individual monasteries. The king and his allies, Ealdorman Æthelweard included, had been in close and amiable contact with Bishop Æthelwold, but the same cannot be said of Archbishop Dunstan, another major figure of the reform. When King Edgar died in 975, Dunstan had sided with those supporting the accession of Æthelred’s half-brother Edward, whereas Æthelwold had supported Æthelred himself—or more rightly, Æthelwold supported Æthelred’s mother, Queen Ælfthryth, with whom he is known to have had a long alliance throughout Ælfthryth’s royal office as queen, possibly extending already to the period before that. When Edward was murdered and Æthelred enthroned in 978, it appears to have been one of the last occasions where Dunstan is known to have acted officially in royal affairs.²⁹³ Charters report the king having disagreements with Dunstan after this, too.²⁹⁴ Ealdorman Æthelweard, for his part, might have held an old grudge on account of a marriage settlement of the previous king, which Dunstan had effectively criticized.²⁹⁵ Because no contemporary historical evidence has survived which would testify to Dunstan’s own attitudes, we should proceed with caution in this matter, but it has to be remembered that

²⁹¹ ‘Her se cyning fordyde þæt bisceoprice æt Hrofeceastre.’ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 986. Occurs also in MSS C and E.

²⁹² A diploma from King Æthelred to Abingdon Abbey, which confirms its privileges and its right of election of a new abbot. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “the Unready”*, 176–187. Printed in S. E. Kelly, ed. *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), 477–483.

²⁹³ Fisher, “The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr,” 255, 268–270; Stafford, “The Reign of Æthelred II,” 21–26; Yorke, “Aethelmaer,” 17–18; ———, “Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century,” in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1988), 76–77, 81–88.

²⁹⁴ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred “the Unready”*, 178–179.

²⁹⁵ Yorke, “Aethelmaer,” 16–18.

certain actions on the king's part, or the literary assessments of their outcome, cannot always be seen as evidence of a clash between monastic and secular parts of society or of a change in the ideology of kingship, for instance, since this kind of entity which all monastic figures would have approved of, did not exist. Rather, the individual actors behind these kinds of assessments should be regarded in their own rights.

After the king's announcement of regret and the restoration of the rights of Abingdon in 993, the frictions between him and the parties in question seem to have improved. However, scepticism towards the king may have remained within certain monastic and political circles. A certain passage in the charter of Eynsham might point to this direction. It is stated that the king's lordship over Eynsham would be practised so that only the king, not any other kind of secular lordship, had dominion over the monastery. This clause ensured the independence of the monastery from the local lay aristocracy, but also authorized the status of the king himself. It is followed by a statement that the authority of the king was to be exercised for the protection of the place, not for the exercise of tyranny (*Rex autem non ad tirannidem, sed ad munimen loci et augmentum, uti mos est, super pastorem et Christi gregem dominium sollerti uigilantia misericorditer custodiat*).²⁹⁶ This statement was most likely drawn from the *Regularis Concordia*. However, the *Concordia* provides only the latter part of the clause, not the part about tyranny, as Jones has observed. The same sentence, with both parts, is also found in Ælfric's *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*,²⁹⁷ as well as in another charter.²⁹⁸ While adapting the *Regularis Concordia* to the monks of his monastery, it seems that in the process Ælfric suppressed almost all references to the alliance between the king and the monasteries, on which the former generation of the reform movement had placed so much emphasis, and which is apparent in the *Concordia*. While Æthelwold had emphasized the role of the royal family and referred to the king as the 'vicar

²⁹⁶ Salter, *Eynsham Cartulary*, 21.

²⁹⁷ 'The customary also warns that no layman shall have dominion over [any] monastery where the holy Rule is observed, save the king alone – and even he for the protection of the place, not the exercise of tyranny over it.' ('Monet etiam consuetudo ut nullus laicorum habeat dominium super monasterium ubi regula sancta tenetur, nisi rex solus ad munimen loci, non ad tirannidem.') Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, 140–141. Trans. Jones.

²⁹⁸ S 792, a grant of lands issued in King Edgar's name to Æthelwold's monastery at Thorney, dated 973, but possibly a forgery. *Ibid.*, 14, n. 47; 45, n. 111; 213.

of Christ', Ælfric's adaptation remains silent about these references. Based on these differences, which can be interpreted as political, Jones has argued that there can be seen 'a gradual change in the monastic theology of kingship' during the time when Ælfric was staying at Winchester, and that there he could have observed this change until his transfer to Cerne in about 987.²⁹⁹ Jones admits that the absence of political emphases in the *Letter* can be due to the pragmatic mind of Ælfric, who did not regard it necessary to include political polemic in the customary whose primary purpose was to regulate the yearly round of work in his monastery. Despite this, he sees so much downplay of all the reform movement's political features in the letter that he suggests another interpretation. Jones connects this kind of downplay to the political circumstances of the time, to Æthelred II and to Æthelmær. He states that it is possible that the 'realities of the new millennium' did not conform to the praise of an ideal king as the patron and protector of the monks. The failure of Æthelred II to make a similar alliance with the monastic circles in which his father and predecessor, King Edgar, had succeeded, was apparent. The contrast between Æthelred's and Edgar's reigns would have at times been even 'outright embarrassing to some early eleventh-century heirs of reform.'³⁰⁰ The differences between the *Regularis Concordia* and Ælfric's letter can, however, be read in a way which gives Ælfric himself more accountability for his choices than what the 'change in the monastic theology of kingship' which he could 'observe' at Winchester—and then reproduce—suggests. I would rather like to see Ælfric as an active part in making these ideologies, as a participant in discourse himself.

The exact relationship between the establishment charter of Eynsham, the *Regularis Concordia*, and Ælfric's letter to his monks is not known, but Keynes and Jones have concluded that Ælfric probably drew from the charter, and not *vice versa*.³⁰¹ Jones sees the inclusion of tyranny as intentional on Ælfric's part, and regards it as a sign of Ælfric's 'quietly skeptical view' of the royalist and polemical zeal that the previous generation of reformists had embraced. I see this as plausible, despite the fact that evidence of Ælfric's critique in the letter is quite circumstantial. But given the certain degree of downplay in the discourse of the *Lives of Saints*, as it was seen in the preceding chapter, a similar tendency to de-emphasize references to the religious authority of the king and the royal family in the

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44–46.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 43–45.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 44–45, 213; Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 461.

Letter to the monks of Eynsham fits the overall image of Ælfric's discourse. It is true that the audience of this letter is quite different from the secular audience that the *Lives of Saints* or Ælfric's other letters imply, but the anticipation of audience might be also the reason for *not* including any direct criticism, and only an impression of discontent, by omitting all the eulogistic references to the king.

Although the situation was admittedly very different from the idealistic atmosphere of the early reformists, some of the omissions can just be seen as excision of material not relevant in the running of Eynsham. Additionally, the nature of the work is different from other texts that Ælfric produced in this period. It was not addressed to the lay aristocracy, or even to bishops or secular clergy, but to the monks in his own monastery. So it is expected that a similar reproach or exhortation to take care of the state of society would not be included in this material. It is true, however, that Ælfric usually wrote his works with a larger audience in mind. Possibly the letter, too, was written with the idea in mind that it would possibly turn out to provide a model for the conduct of liturgy also in other monasteries. At least the manuscript evidence that we have would point to this direction. As stated above, the only copy of the letter appears in a manuscript that is considered to be one of Wulfstan's commonplace books, a reference book of canonical, liturgical and homiletic materials.³⁰² The sphere of influence remained monastic in the initial stage, and the expectations of audience from Ælfric's part are clearly monastic. As such, there was neither need nor motivation to address the king (in opposition to the *Regularis Concordia*, which was more intimately tied to a royal monastery). But here we encounter the distinction between motives, intentions and influence; Ælfric's motives for writing (to provide regulations for his monks), his intentions (to improve the state and conduct of proper round of life), are quite different from the possible outcome of his writings. The orderly rules that he provides in this text reached Wulfstan, and at that stage the audience was not monastic anymore. In fact, Wulfstan used these same theological and monastic notions on the proper order when he drafted his own texts and laws, which were directed to secular clergy and secular aristocracy. Wulfstan was the next link after Ælfric in translating the religious notions of order and society into secular surroundings.

³⁰² CCCC 265 (Ker 53, Gneuss 73). Jones, *Aelfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.

Another reason for downplaying references to the king in the letter might have simply been the presence of Æthelmær at Eynsham, which might have affected the way Ælfric wrote about royal authority in general. Namely, it is somewhat unclear whether Æthelmær's retirement was completely voluntary, or whether it was connected to the contemporary events and changes at the king's court at the time. For Æthelmær, a highly powerful and influential layman, the decision to retire to Eynsham must have carried with it more than a personal preference. It also meant withdrawal from politics. Simon Keynes has speculated several reasons for this decision, such as Æthelmær's boredom with the life in the middle of political affairs. Possibly he was also disillusioned with the workings of the king's council, and disagreed with its decisions.³⁰³ Whereas several reasons may lie behind this move, it is fairly safe to assume that it was a result of the change of faction in the king's court.³⁰⁴ The witness lists of 1005–1006 show a significant change in the circles of the king. Many names that used to be prominently displayed disappear at this time from the lists. At the same time as Æthelmær retires to Eynsham, the king's uncle Ordulf also retires, possibly to Tavistock, and other men are disgraced, murdered, and blinded. All this is thought to be a sign of a certain 'palace revolution' in King Æthelred's court, engineered by Eadric Streona, ealdorman of Mercia.³⁰⁵ Barbara Yorke has suggested that the establishment of Eynsham and Æthelmær's retirement to live there as a monk was indeed due to the change of the king's favour. She has pointed out that due to Æthelmær's royal blood he was allowed to retire and in this way escaped the fate of more unfortunate men. He was not allowed to retire to Cerne, however, which was situated within his ealdormanry, and therefore would have remained within his supporters in the Dorset area. Instead he 'had to' found Eynsham as his place of retreat outside his traditional area of influence.³⁰⁶ Considering all these factors connected to the establishment of Eynsham, it is reasonable to think Æthelmær's withdrawal was connected to the relationship between him and the king.

However, the position of Eynsham does not suggest an eremitical retreat; it was geographically situated very centrally when it came to places of power. It was close to the shire-town of Oxford, to several important

³⁰³ Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 456.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ See Clayton, "Of Mice and Men," 19–20; Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready"*, 209–214.

³⁰⁶ Yorke, "Aethelmaer," 19–20.

monasteries such as Abingdon and Malmesbury, and to other important places where the king is known to have acted.³⁰⁷ The foundation of Eynsham ensured that a new prestigious, reformed religious house with royal and aristocratic ties emerged right at the heart of Æthelred's kingdom.³⁰⁸ It is entirely possible that Æthelmær could still participate at some level in the secular political life, especially considering that he returned to politics later on in 1013–1014. However, this comeback occurred just as Sweyn was on the brink of conquering England and Æthelred was fleeing to Normandy. Wessex succumbed easily to Sweyn, and it seems that he did not face any resistance in the South West, which is exactly the time when Æthelmær 're-emerges from his self-imposed exile', as the leader of the men of the South West. This is the reason why Pauline Stafford suspects that disagreement with the crown must have been the reason for Æthelmær's retirement in 1005.³⁰⁹ Especially if the retirement of Æthelmær was a result of disagreement between the king and Æthelmær, emphasizing the alliance between the monks and the king at the expense of downgrading lay aristocracy would probably not have been the first thing in Ælfric's mind, especially when the very existence of the community at Eynsham was due to Æthelmær himself.

The foundation charter of Eynsham does not, however, indicate any disagreements between the king and Æthelmær, nor does Ælfric's letter to his monks. Therefore the motives behind Æthelmær's retirement, as plausible as it is to assume that it was either a result or an act of anticipation of caution from his part, can be argued for only with circumstantial evidence. It must be said, though, that the charter's discourse cannot be regarded as evidence to another direction either; as Jones has pointed out, it is entirely conceivable that 'the protests of affection and pious motive in this highly conventional, public document' do not tell the whole story.³¹⁰ Ælfric's career, including his pastoral and literary activities at Eynsham, was in any case closely involved with secular aristocracy, ealdorman Æthelmær in specific. In addition to Æthelmær, Ælfric reached out from the monastery of Eynsham to teach also the wider secular aristocracy surrounding him and

³⁰⁷ See map 2.6 which shows the royal lands granted during 1003–1016, in Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 455–459; Stafford, "The Reign of Æthelred II," 32.

³⁰⁸ Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 459.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 456. Stafford, "The Reign of Æthelred II," 35.

³¹⁰ Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, 13–14.

his monastic community. Indications of this interaction between the monastic and secular spheres are Ælfric's homiletic letters that he wrote during his abbacy, which will be examined next.

4.3. Ælfric's letters ca. 1005

Ælfric's letters are usually less known than his famous two series of homilies, possibly because the homilies have for long been the centre of scholarly attention, and as such are more thoroughly edited and easily available for research. Ælfric is not primarily known for his political ideas, either. Lately, however, the view of Ælfric has changed from a solitary monk isolated from the 'real world' and focused solely on theological and otherworldly matters, to a person more closely involved with the secular and political matters of his day. Nowadays his works are being read in conjunction with the political circumstances of the turn of the first millennium.³¹¹ In this respect my study belongs to the same trend. The letters examined here coincide with the establishment of Eynsham, and are thus essential sources for evaluating this era from a wider political perspective. The letters are written in a homiletic style, and cannot be considered as private letters in modern standards, but more as designed sermons drafted by Ælfric, sometimes at the request of other people. The letters as such are an indication of the interaction between monastic interests and secular spheres. In specific, they tell of the ideals of the monastic reform, with the interest of transferring these ideas onto the rest of the society.³¹² The letters are presented below in their relative chronological order, as established by Peter Clemoes.³¹³ Since the means for exact dating are often somewhat indefinite, the sequence is not to be seen as absolutely established.

³¹¹ Clayton, "Ælfric and Æthelred," 65.

³¹² Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 106, 115–116.

³¹³ Bruno Assmann, ed. *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, Repr. with introduction by Peter Clemoes ed. (Darmstadt: Kassel, 1964), xi–xix; Clemoes, "The Chronology of Ælfric's Works," 238–245; Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, cxliv–cxlviii.

4.3.1. Letter to Sigeward

Ælfric's letter to Sigeward, also known as *Libellus de ueteri testamento et nouo*, was written in about 1005 to provide a teaching text about the meaning of the Old and New Testament to a layman called Sigeward of Eastheolon.³¹⁴ Not much is known of Sigeward, but his name probably refers to Asthall in Oxfordshire, which is located only eight miles from Eynsham.³¹⁵ The work is one of the latest of Ælfric's production, and in it he refers to many of his previous works and translations, to the *Catholic Homilies* and the *Lives of Saints*, making the text basically a run-through of all his previous writings which already existed in vernacular concerning the Bible and the doctrine. In this letter Ælfric summarises and comments on the books of the Bible and the meaning of the doctrine. As such, it is a remarkable and unique account of a discussion and explanation of the meaning of the Bible, and unusual for its own time. In this letter Ælfric also refers to the contemporary times, and discusses how men ought to live well according to Christ's teachings. It seems likely that Ælfric based the beginning of this text on his homily with which the first series of the *Catholic Homilies* begin, *De initio creaturae*.³¹⁶ The letter also gives the account of the three orders of the society, as an extension to his admonition to *witan* to take a good look at the state of society. A rubric in the text shows that Ælfric intended this text not only for private use of Sigeward, but also for wider use, when it is stated that 'this text was written to one man, but it may nonetheless benefit many'.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Richard Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, vol. 1: Introduction and Text, EETS, O.S. 330 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Also Larry J. Swain has edited the letter fully from its known four manuscripts (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 509; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343; London, BL, Cotton Vitellius c.v and London, BL, Harley 3271), and defended the edition and its translation as doctoral thesis in 2009. Larry J. Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeward: An Edition, Translation and Commentary*. University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009. Retrieved October 15, 2010, from Dissertations & Theses: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. (Publication No. AAT 3364640).

³¹⁵ Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 186–187; Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 63–64; Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 13–14.

³¹⁶ Virginia Day, "The Influence of the Catechetical Narratio on Old English and Some Other Medieval Literature," *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 58.

³¹⁷ 'Þis gewrit wæs to anum men gediht ac hit mæg swa ðeah manegum fremian.' Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeward*, 227. Trans. Swain.

4.3.2. Letter to Sigefyrð

Another letter addressed directly to the local aristocratic laity that Ælfric wrote during his abbacy, is the letter to a thegn called Sigefyrð (Assmann 2).³¹⁸ Sigefyrð himself remains unidentified, but from the contents of the letter it can be gathered that he knew of Ælfric's works, and had requested a clarification on the issue of clerical celibacy. Mary Clayton thinks that the letter is closely dependent on the first Old English letter to Wulfstan, whereas Clemoes states that it was written after the first Latin letter to Wulfstan and before the first Old English letter to Wulfstan, that is 1005-6, so the relative dating of the letters is somewhat blurred.³¹⁹ The contents of the letter circulated more widely as a homily on virginity, in a form which did not include the original beginning of the letter. Ælfric presumably used this letter for compiling more general homilies on this topic, as well.³²⁰ Assmann's edition, which is so far the only one of its kind, does not represent the text as it is extant in any of its manuscripts; instead, the edition is an amalgam of a title, preface, main text, and ending that all derive from different manuscripts, which Assmann identified in his notes. The edition thus represents the efforts of the nineteenth-century philologist to reconstruct unity out of fragments. With this in mind, the following examination of Ælfric's discourse has to take into account the specific contexts in which each part of the text occurs, when relevant.

4.3.3. Letter to Wulfgeat of Ylmandun

Around the same time as the other letters, Ælfric wrote a letter on morals and good life to Wulfgeat of Ylmandun (Assmann 1).³²¹ Ylmandun probably refers to Ilmington in Warwickshire.³²² Like in the letter to Sigeward, there is a rubric which states its purpose of providing material for a wider

³¹⁸ Printed in Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 13–23.

³¹⁹ Cf. Peter Clemoes, "Supplementary introduction" in Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, xviii; Clayton, "Of Mice and Men," 2.

³²⁰ Jonathan Wilcox, "The Transmission of Ælfric's Letter to Sigefyrth and the Mutilation of MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv," in *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 299.

³²¹ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 1–12.

³²² Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 186.

audience.³²³ The letter starts with an account of the creation and the fall of angels, and moves on to relate brief passages of the life of Jesus and about the proper interpretation of the word of God. This is a preparatory introduction to the main theme of the letter, which is to provide information about the morally righteous conduct of life to the laity. The beginning of this letter is thus similar to the beginning of the letter to Sigeward. This is an interesting text from the point of view of my study. It provides a lively account of Ælfric's views on the crucial relationship between the moral and social order. There has not been much research on this text, and as such it offers some fresh viewpoints about Ælfric's notions on the order of society.

4.3.4. *Wyrdwriteras*

A text known as *Wyrdwriteras*, while not indisputably identified as a letter, as the sources presented above, is a fragmentary text whose recipient is not named. Its contents suggest, however, that in its original state it was possibly another homiletic letter which Ælfric wrote to 'some nobleman of influence, hoping to reach the king himself and his chief ministers'.³²⁴ Pope suspects that this excerpt was written at the time of Ælfric's abbacy, but there is no certain proof of it. It is fairly safe to assume that in any case it belongs to the later period of Ælfric's life, because it contains references to Ælfric's previous writings.³²⁵ The text is without a title, and gets its modern title from the opening lines of the excerpt, 'wyrdwriteras us secgað' ('the chroniclers tell us'). The piece deals with the defence and government of the kingdom. As the text is an excerpt from some larger composition, interpreting its meaning is challenging. The message of the piece seems to be that the well-being of the kingdom is dependent on God's support and protection, which is partly gained through the proper conduct of kings and their generals.

³²³ 'This text is not written for just one man, but for all.' ('Nis þis gewrit be anum men awriten, ac is be eallum.') Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 1.

³²⁴ Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, vol. 2, 726.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 725–733.

4.4. Morality and social order

4.4.1. Interpretation and worldly status

When compiling his works for the advice of the laity, Ælfric was always aware of the questions of language and wisdom, and concerned about the limits of knowledge that should be made available for them. He hesitated in translating certain texts from Latin into the vernacular, since he was worried that providing too much complex information for unlearned people might lead them astray.³²⁶ Proper interpretation of doctrine was one of Ælfric's biggest concerns. However, it is well known that Ælfric himself digressed from his initial and austere intentions of *not* translating, for instance, the apocryphal legend of St Thomas, by succumbing to Æthelweard's insistence and including it in the *Lives of Saints* (*LS* 36). He had initially rejected this translation from the second series of the *Catholic Homilies* on the account that it was already available in English, and that it was not strictly orthodox, because St Augustine had rejected a part of it. Later he was apparently persuaded by his patron to do it anyway, as he states in the preface to the work.³²⁷ This indicates that the wishes of the audience were part of Ælfric's way of composition. Despite this, Ælfric was constantly critical towards his sources, and did not reproduce those parts of the earlier texts that he regarded as heretical and erroneous.³²⁸ Neither did he want to translate the books of the Old Testament into the vernacular, because he feared that they might set up a wrong example for the laity, and even stated that he would desist from doing so in the future. In the preface to the translation of Genesis he states that he will not translate more from Latin to English, and asks Æthelweard not to request any more of him, so that he will not have to disobey his patron; or, should he end up translating more, to prevent it happening that this statement would make him a liar.³²⁹

³²⁶ Joyce Hill, "The Benedictine Reform and Beyond," in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 160.

³²⁷ 'Et ideo volo hoc [the piece that Augustine rejected] prætermittere et cetera interpretari quæ in eius passione habentur, sicut Æþelwerdus venerabilis dux obnixè nos præcatus est.' Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 122.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27–31.

³²⁹ 'Ic cweþe nu þæt ic ne dearr, ne ic nelle, nane boc æfter þissere of Ledene on Englisc awendan. And ic bidde þe, leof ealdorman, þæt þu me þæs na leng ne bidde, þi læs þe ic

Despite this announcement, his works show a continued engagement with biblical adaptations and translations.

Jonathan Wilcox has studied Ælfric's attitudes towards translation, and argues that in the course of his life, even though always being wary towards translations, Ælfric learned to accept the status of his own translations as an authoritative body of the doctrine.³³⁰ Ælfric's references to his earlier production in the letter to Sigeweard shows how much weight Ælfric placed on his own works.³³¹ Correct interpretation of Christian tenets proved to be a persisting concern for Ælfric; he was aware that not all people understood the Christian message correctly, and tried to avoid causing miscomprehension with his own works. The amount of importance Ælfric placed on proper interpretation and proper learning cannot be overstated, and when examining the religious-political discourse in his works, this concern must always be kept in mind, as it affects the way we make our own interpretations about his discourse as normative and authoritative. Ælfric's uneasiness with translation was often exemplified with the basic principle about the meaning of the New Testament in relation to the old. He often refers to the typology between these two, and emphasizes that the New Testament had annulled certain wrong conceptions which still were inherent in the old one.³³² Among the issues which were in danger of being misunderstood were, for instance, Old Testament conceptions of priestly marriage or polygamy.³³³ In his preface to the translation of Genesis he writes about his own experiences with this kind of common misinterpretation among the contemporary clergy. In his own words, his first steps in Latin learning were guided by an unlearned priest, who could read Latin poorly; this resulted in false interpretation of the word of God,

beo þe ungehirsum, opþe leas gif ic do.' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 7.

³³⁰ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 37–44.

³³¹ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*. Ælfric refers to his own texts 15 times: 210 (Sigeweard's difficulties to obtain Ælfric's texts), 202 (Isaiah's prophecy), 204 (typologies of OT and NT), 206 (the tower of Babel and idolatry), 209 (Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), 209 (Joshua), 210 (Judges), 211–212 (Kings), 215 (Daniel), 216 (Job), 217 (Esther), 217, (Judith), 218 (Maccabees), 220–221 (forty sermons about the four gospels), 223 (the fate of the Apostles).

³³² Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 16–17; Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 204–205, 218.

³³³ As is evident in the letter to Sigefyrð. Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 16–17.

since the priest did not understand ‘how big difference there is between the old and the new law’ (*hu micel todal ys betweohx þære ealdan æ and þære niwan*).³³⁴

Ælfric’s discourse in the letters directed to the laity suggests that his concern about interpretation had wider implications regarding the order of society. His reckoning of who was actually able to make proper interpretations concerning the doctrine is not only a feature of his writing but also an indication of his social and political thought—in other words, this is what Ælfric’s discourse was ‘doing’ in its own context.³³⁵ The issue of interpretation, tied to capabilities endowed according to one’s worldly status is apparent especially in the letter to Sigefyrð. The topic of the letter on clerical celibacy was prompted by a dilemma that the layman faced; Sigefyrð had, according to the letter, heard that in his writings Ælfric taught that priests cannot marry. The layman was puzzled about this since a hermit had told him that they could.³³⁶ The confusion must have arisen specifically because in practice priestly marriage was still common around 1000, and it was one of the aspects the reformed monasticism tried to root out. Reformers had used it as an excuse to expel secular clergy from certain monasteries, such as the Old and New Minsters in Winchester, Chertsey and Milton.³³⁷ Chastity and virginity were connected to the ideals of the reformed monasticism, and they were among the most important aspects that the Benedictine reform movement emphasized, and the letter to Sigefyrð should be seen in this light. Chastity was in Ælfric’s mind, as Catherine Cubitt has shown, closely intermingled with his theological notions about martyrdom and sainthood, and the lack of purity, for its part, with the devil and heathenism.³³⁸

The ideals of chastity and virginity that the reformers promoted had some practical implications for the old religious alliances. The new Benedictine houses were prestigious establishments, founded in collaboration with the king and aristocrats (such as Ely, Abingdon, and

³³⁴ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric’s Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 3.

³³⁵ Cf. Introduction, chapter 1.2.

³³⁶ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 13.

³³⁷ Gransden, “Traditionalism and Continuity during the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism,” 169–170.

³³⁸ Catherine Cubitt, “Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England,” *Gender and History* 12, no. 1 (2000): passim.

Ramsey). When they emerged in the landscape they must have broken the old alliances in a practical way. Previously this landscape had been dominated by old religious houses characterized by blood-ties with the local aristocracy and secular families, which was one of the implications of the clergy forming alliances through marriage. The reformed monasticism attempted to legitimize taking over of the old houses by accentuating the authority of the king and their own ties to the king, as well as by emphasizing the need and righteousness that the clergy should remain celibate. In Cubitt's words, there was 'a new ethos of religious virginity', which in effect left the old religious houses outside of their own criteria of sacredness.³³⁹ The new kind of sexual morality, which also tried to impose rules for the laity, would have appeared for a common audience a novelty not always welcomed.³⁴⁰ So while priestly marriage was not legally forbidden at this time, it was not considered ideal on the part of the reformers, which made the issue a conflict between the norms and aspirations of the Benedictines and the society surrounding them.

Ælfric takes on a strong grip to the issue, emphasizing the misfortune that Sigefyrð had been led astray by a citation from the Old Testament. The married priesthood in the Old Testament, Ælfric explains, was necessary under Mosaic law, because no other than an heir of Aaron could be a bishop (*Se bisceop þa moste under Moyses æ habban wif and cild for þære gesetnysse, þe nan mann to þam micclum hade nateshwon becuman buton of Aarones cynne, þæs forman bisceopes, be godes gesetnysse*).³⁴¹ This was not to be held as a precedent for contemporary priesthood. The strong emphasis which Ælfric adopted when explaining the issue imply a certain connection between social morality and Christian history; it was important to understand correctly the meaning of Christian history and especially the meaning of the New Testament in order to correctly fulfil one's social role on earth. A literal reading of the Old Testament could not suffice, but it was to be understood typologically, as Ælfric explains in the letter to Sigeward, too. The dangers of providing readings from the Old Testament to the laity without explanation were evident to Ælfric. In trying to correct this error he explained the stages of Christian history and its eight ages, and how they all are connected with each other in their true signification: Adam signified Christ, Eve the church of God, the slaying of Abel the slaying of the Saviour,

³³⁹ ———, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons," 185.

³⁴⁰ John, "The World of Abbot Ælfric," 308.

³⁴¹ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 16–17.

‘and so on until the end each holy father truly testified with words or with deeds about our Saviour and his life.’³⁴² In the same way random passages from the Old Testament could not be used as examples for the present-day people, but had to be read as symbols, or ‘signs’— often Ælfric uses the verb *getacnian* and noun *getacnung* when discussing the typological parallels between the Old and new Testaments.³⁴³

What was at stake here was not only a singular instance of correcting someone’s knowledge of Christian doctrine. In addressing the issue of correct priestly way of life in this manner, Ælfric’s discourse participates in creating normative standards. Jonathan Wilcox has already noted that in the preface to the letter Ælfric uses pronominal juxtaposition in a clever way to authorize his own notions of the issue. He shows how Ælfric imposed a notion of authority by creating a dichotomy between the right interpretation, represented by himself and the holy teachings of the Lord, and the wrong interpretation, represented by Sigefyrð and his anchorite.³⁴⁴ This kind of authorization is not, however, restricted to the preface, but continues with rhetorical tools typical of Ælfric throughout the letter.

The homiletic text which follows the preface offers several references to chaste saints and apostles, and to the Holy Scriptures and church fathers, all supporting the cause of clerical celibacy. Later Ælfric developed this part of the letter into a more general homily, targeted at a broader audience.³⁴⁵ As a supporting argument Ælfric presents the three orders of chastity (*bry hadas*), and writes that ‘the laity is in great need to learn about the faith from the teachers of Christ, and to know how they lived righteously in the church of God.’³⁴⁶ The three orders of chastity are lawful marriage (*riht sincipe*), widowhood (*wudewanhad*), and celibacy (*mægðhad*), which are the

³⁴² ‘And swa forð oð ende ælc halig fæder mid wordum oþpe mid weorcum cyddon urne Hælend and his fær witodlice.’ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric’s Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 204–205.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 204–205, 216, 217.

³⁴⁴ Wilcox, “The Transmission of Ælfric’s Letter to Sigefyrth and the Mutilation of MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv,” 287–288.

³⁴⁵ This is a generalized homily on chastity, aimed at a broad audience, in which Ælfric has augmented material from his other works. It appears in a manuscript (BL Cotton Vitellius C.v: Ker 220, Gneuss 403) as an addition to the *CH* I, acting as the third homily for the assumption for the Virgin Mary. *Ibid.*, 289.

³⁴⁶ ‘Is nu for ði mycel neod læwedum mannum, þæt hi leornion heora geleafan æt Cristes lareowum, and hu hi lybbon on riht on godes gelaðunge.’ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 19.

only rightful states of being that please God.³⁴⁷ The role which Ælfric's texts assigned to the laity in terms of chastity has gained different interpretations. More commonly, perhaps, it is thought that Ælfric's sermons on lay virginity are written for the purpose of encouraging the laity to obey the church law concerning the regulation of marriage, and also to urge on them 'an ideology of literal and figurative virginity which lies at the core of [Ælfric's] notions of a holy society and his hope for national unity', as Robert Upchurch has argued.³⁴⁸ According to this view, Ælfric hoped to inspire the secular society to conduct similar asceticism and steadfast belief that was proper in monastic communities. Another perspective, not so often attested, is that argued by Peter Jackson. Jackson has proposed that Ælfric did not see virginity as a proper state for the laity. With the help of an addition from *Historia monachorum*, which Ælfric included in his adaptation of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, Jackson suggests that the virgin saint Æthelthryth did not actually function as a literal example for the laity. Instead, the role of the laity in a Christian society was to bear children, not to stay abstinent for their whole lives. He states that in this respect Ælfric followed the Augustinian ideal of Christian marriage.³⁴⁹ Jackson's views fit well with the notion that Ælfric's discourse does not imply a universal role for all parts of Christian society, and also confirms the issue of interpretation and worldly status; in the same way as the laity was not supposed to conform to monastic standards of celibacy and virginity, they were also assigned different interpretative skills—and responsibilities. What Ælfric stresses in the letter to Sigefyrð, too, is the chastity of priests and monks, not the virginity of the laity.

Apart from the presentation of the three orders of chastity, the letter to Sigefyrð lists several names and references to the Scripture, with which the authority of the argument is strengthened—the argument being simply that of clerical chastity, *clænnysse*. Starting from the first line, Ælfric invokes the

³⁴⁷ Ælfric had discussed the three orders of chastity—a categorization which was derived from Augustine—in his earlier works, too: *CH* 1.9, a *Homily on the Purification of the Virgin Mary*, and *CH* II.4, a *Homily for the Second Sunday after Epiphany*. Chastity itself, without its threefold category, was more common and a topic of discussion in several of his homilies. See Peter Jackson, "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, lines 120–30," *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2000): 241–245.

³⁴⁸ Robert K. Upchurch, "The Legend of Chrysanthus and Daria in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," *Studies in Philology* 101, no. 3 (2004): 251–252, 269.

³⁴⁹ Jackson, "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage," 238, 257–259, 260.

examples of Christ, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, the apostles, and Church Fathers, with an impressive list of exemplary Christians, among others St Martin, Gregory, Augustine, Basil, Cuthbert, Bede, Jerome, ‘and many thousands of monks and nuns’, as Ælfric states.³⁵⁰ The list is full of argumentative force whose purpose is to convince the listener or the reader of the message’s truthfulness. In addition, the biblical references are used in such a way that they create a surplus of sacredness and indisputable authority to Ælfric’s notions. This is of course not surprising, as Ælfric was always very mindful about following correct doctrine and abolishing heretical views, but what is worth noticing here is that this polemic, too, was inherently connected to the roles people were supposed to conform to in a Christian society. Ælfric saw it as his task to do his best to ensure that the roles assigned to different parts of society were executed correctly. Here, too, he says that ‘we must tell and dare not conceal by silence the holy doctrine that the Saviour taught.’³⁵¹ Again, the societal issues of how to lead a life and how to arrange a Christian society were tightly intertwined in the ideology of this time. Married priests were problematic not only because of the practical implications their families and relatives posed for the earliest members of the reform in terms of monastic possessions and appointments. For Ælfric they also posed a deeply theological concern, since their way of life violated the proper order in earthly and holy society.

In the same way that the letter to Sigefyrð presents concern for proper interpretation and explanation, it also forms the very essence of both of the

³⁵⁰ ‘Ure hælend Crist cydde þæt he lufode þa halgan clænnysse on his þeowum swutelice [...] Iohannes eac, se fulluhtere, þe Crist gefullode, heold þa clænnysse gecwemlice gode on mode and on lichaman [...] Iohannes se godspellere, þe gode wæs gecweme, and Crist hine lufode for þære clænnysse [...] Sume þa apostolas, þe siþodon mid Criste on his læreowdome, þa þa he her on life wæs, hæfdon him gemacan æfter Moyses æ. Ac hi sona geswicon þæs sinscipes æfre, syþþan hi Cristes lare geleornodon æt him, swa swa Petrus sæde on sumum godspelle. [...] We rædað on bocum, þæt ungerim bisceopa and muneca wæron, swa swa wæs Martinus, Gregorius and Augustinus, Basilius and Cuthbertus, and manega oðre, on micelre drohtnunge Criste þeowigende on clænnysse æfre. [...] Eac swylce mæssepreostas manega wæron halige, swa swa wæs Beda, se mæra bocere, and eft Hieronimus and oðre gehwylce wide geond þas woruld [...] On westenum wunedon þa wisan fæderas Antonius and Paulus, Hilarion and Macharius, Iohannes and Arsenius, Pafnutius and Apollonius, and fela þusenda, swa swa *Vita Patrum* segð, muneca and mynecena, on mycelre drohtununge Criste þeowigende on modes clænnysse.’ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 13, 14, 22–23.

³⁵¹ ‘[W]e sceolon secgan and forswigian ne durrin þa halgan lare, þa se hælend tæhte.’ *Ibid.*, 13.

letters to Sigeward and Wulfgeat. Whereas the letter to Sigefyrð is more concerned with the particular issue of clerical celibacy, the letters to Sigeward and Wulfgeat aim to explain much wider concepts, the doctrine of Christianity and the meaning of the Bible. They partly fall within catechetical literature, and both of them show the importance of transmitting the correct interpretation of doctrinal and moral principles to the laity. The model for this kind of writing was Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus*, and it is clear that Ælfric knew the text, since he used it in his *Homily for the Second Sunday after Epiphany* (CH II.4).³⁵² His treatment of Christian doctrine and biblical history in *De initio creaturae* (CH I.1) also clearly follows Augustine's instructions on how to arrange a pedagogic narrative and which elements it should contain when teaching the unlearned. It seems that Ælfric based both letters on this homily as it follows the same line of arrangement.³⁵³ Whereas *De initio creaturae* follows the line from creation to fall, redemption and then judgement, the treatment in the letter concentrates more on explaining the typological relationship between these events.³⁵⁴ According to Augustine, Christian narratives should be based on the idea of redemption, a theme that Ælfric employs widely throughout his works. He also advises that biblical history, the essential knowledge of the Old and New Testament, and the explanation of their meaning should be followed by a reference to the final days, and then by a moral exhortation, also seen in Ælfric's letters, especially that directed to Wulfgeat. It is therefore important to note this textual and doctrinal example for Ælfric's own treatment of the topic of moral order.

Considering this purpose of the letters, it is evident that the texts cannot be seen as a sign of a simplified understanding of the doctrine on Ælfric's part. For instance, it has been said that Augustine was too complex and too philosophical for the later writers, who needed something simpler for their use.³⁵⁵ Instead, it was Ælfric himself who wanted to explain the doctrine in simple terms for the unlearned laity to understand. The simple

³⁵² Records for Source Title: "Catech. Rud." *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*. Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project. English Faculty, University of Oxford. <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>.

³⁵³ This was noted by Day, "The Influence of the Catechetical Narratio on Old English and Some Other Medieval Literature," 56–59.

³⁵⁴ Clemons, "The Chronology of Ælfric's Works," 225.

³⁵⁵ Day, "The Influence of the Catechetical Narratio on Old English and Some Other Medieval Literature," 52.

treatment of the topic is in no way a sign of Ælfric's incapability to understand Augustine, but of his attempt to translate the more complex theological principles to a simpler form. The treatment thus tells of Ælfric's conceptualization of what he thought the laity to be capable of understanding. As he states in the letter to Sigeweard, he wanted to explain what the events of the Old Testament signified in terms of the new order set by the redemption of Christ, since he had already written about all of this 'with greater intellect / knowledge / understanding than you have been able to see / examine'.³⁵⁶ Ælfric saw himself thus in an authoritative position when it came to transmitting the correct knowledge; he was the mediator of the true faith to the laity, and aimed to do this with his texts.

In the first part of the letter to Wulfgeat, Ælfric offers a brief biblical history and a short explanation of Christian doctrine. This mode of writing falls close to the genre of *narratio*, as Day showed in her article.³⁵⁷ The purpose of *narratio* was to offer the basic tenets of Christianity in a condensed form. Ælfric writes about the creation and the fall of angels, then about the birth and death of Jesus, and concentrates on explaining the meaning of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. Again, he gives attention to the interpretation of the word of God, and refers to the dangers of misinterpretations if one is 'half-taught' (*samlæredum mannum*) and thus does not know the meaning of the Scripture.³⁵⁸ In contrast to this, Ælfric tells about St Augustine's wisdom to interpret and explain the word of God in a correct way. Ælfric sets the writings and books of Augustine in a high position, through which the wisdom was spread to other parts of world, England included. The authority of the written word becomes evident in this passage, where Ælfric appeals to the books of Augustine, and how he was able to 'uncover' the word of God and transfer it into his own writings, which in turn functioned as the messengers and preservers of the true doctrine.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ 'We secgað nu mid ofste þas endebirdnisse, for þan ðe we oft habbað ymbe þis awriten mid maran andgite (þa þu miht sceawian).' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 204.

³⁵⁷ Day, "The Influence of the Catechetical Narratio on Old English and Some Other Medieval Literature," 59.

³⁵⁸ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 5.

³⁵⁹ 'Augustinus se wisa us onwreah þas deopnyse, se þe wæs swa wis on godes wisdom, þæt he gesette þurh his sylfes diht an þusend boca be ðam soðan geleafan and be ðam cristendome [...] and þa bec syððan sume becomon to us [...] godes þeowum to lare and to geleafan trymninge.' Ibid.

Also other works of Ælfric from the same period suggest that he had certain hierarchical attitudes towards the laity. Mary Clayton has examined his *Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor*, which was composed at the request of Bishop Æthelwold the Younger, presumably around 1006, and shown that Ælfric's attitude regarding the inferiority of the laity, and the consequent superiority of priests and monks, becomes clear with Ælfric's formulations and treatment of his material. The piece in question shows specific engagement with the current affairs in politics, and targets its criticism specifically to the contemporary laity, by first establishing its own authority to preach and to correct, and then pointing fingers towards the lack of morals and dishonourable acts of the current lay aristocracy.³⁶⁰ Even though any hierarchical setting is not presented in any of his works, it can be read that Ælfric valued the clergy, especially the monks, as being the most important part of society. This is said directly in the *Colloquy*, in a fictive conversation between a master and his pupils, intended for use in Latin teaching. Certain different occupations are reviewed with the help of Latin dialogues, and even though it is said that all the secular occupations are important to make a society function, a specific point is made about monks. When a disagreement arises about the importance of various secular tasks, the master asks a wise counsellor (*sapiens*) to judge the matter: 'What do you say, wise man? Which trade among these seems to you to be superior?' The counsellor says: 'I tell you, the service of God seems to hold the first place among these crafts, just as it reads in the Gospel: Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'³⁶¹

The skills in the interpretation of the word of God were limited when it came to laymen, and in an attempt to make sure they would not misunderstand the doctrinal issues, and consequently their moral and social responsibilities, Ælfric made a continuous effort to provide the necessary tools for correct interpretation also for the laity. The ability to interpret the word of God was connected to the different tasks and ranks of the society. By thinking that the laity was not properly receptive to subtle and perhaps

³⁶⁰ Clayton, "Of Mice and Men," 5–6, 11–14, 16–17, 22–23.

³⁶¹ 'Quid dicis tu, sapiens? Que ars tibi uidetur inter istas prior esse? –Dico tibi, mihi uidetur seruitium Dei inter istas artes primatum tenere, sicut legitur in euangelio: Primum querite regnum Dei et iustitiam eius, et hæc omnia adicientur uobis.' G. N. Garmonsway, ed. *Ælfric's Colloquy* (London: University of Exeter Press, 1947), 39. Trans. in Michael Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London: Rowan and Littlefield, 1975), 113.

complex religious ideas, and more susceptible to wrong interpretations, Ælfric presents at the same time the boundaries between different social groups which he saw fit as being separate. In the assurance that he was able to provide correct explanations about the sacred texts, Ælfric's concern seems somewhat discordant, since at the same time he questioned the capabilities of the laity to correctly understand it. By their outset, Ælfric attempted to create texts which did not produce new knowledge, but seemingly only mediated the Christian message. This act entailed principles of the most fundamental nature; interpretation, translation and interest in pastoral care created authority over the whole discourse and within this discourse defined the boundaries between different people in society.

4.4.2. Well-ordered life and secular authority

As is evident from the issue of interpretation, Ælfric placed significant weight on the differences between the clergy and the laity. The superior position of the clergy is apparent also when it comes to other themes, especially regarding their role as the laity's teachers, who are consequently responsible for their way of life. Among the letters for the laity, the letter to Wulfgeat of Ylmandun is a case in point; it is intimately involved with teaching moral order to secular aristocracy. Its contents are only concerned with exhortation to live a morally and religiously well-ordered life. At the end of the letter Ælfric devotes a considerable amount of space to what seems to be an explanation of his motives to write the letter. He states that it is necessary for 'us teachers' to teach the unwise and negligent people, either publicly or in private, because they (the priests) have been told to correct the unrighteous, and if they do not, they will be responsible for their sins.³⁶² In the greatest need of learning are the 'unwise and neglected' (*þa dysigan and þa gymeleasan*) laymen. Addressing the recipients of the letters in this way, Ælfric was promoting a sense of hierarchical dichotomy between the teachers—we—and the unwise laymen—you. This dichotomy between priests, who possessed the correct knowledge, and the laymen, who did not, is stressed with repetitive positioning of the two groups. Ælfric ends the

³⁶² 'Us lareowum is neod, þæt we læran sceolon openlice oððe digollice þa dysigan and þa gymeleasan mid ðære drihtenlican lare, and to geleafan hi tihtan, forðam þe se witega þysum wordum us manað: Gif ðu nelt gerihtlæcan þone unrihtwisan wer and him sylfum secgan his unrihtwisnysse, ic wylle ofgan æt ðe his blodes gyte, þæt is sawul, þe þurh synna losode.' Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 12.

letter by stating that God had granted the priests the right to preach the holy teachings to the laity, so that they would be obedient and turn their lessons into useful deeds.³⁶³ This message establishes the boundaries of these two groups; even though the word of God is meant to reach all people, it is the task and privilege of the teachers to understand the word correctly, and to spread the correct knowledge.

Mary Swan has studied Ælfric's prefaces and showed how this kind of 'positional rhetoric', as she calls it, creates an ideological map of the relationships of different groups and their hierarchies, and that these particular linguistic markers indicate distinctions, affiliations and also boundaries between them. She has concentrated on the prefaces, in which Ælfric positions himself most clearly, but this kind of rhetoric is not restricted to prefaces only, but extends to Ælfric's overall discourse. Swan has shown that Ælfric's positional rhetoric differs interestingly in the prefaces that are directed to the laymen in the letters, from those which were targeted to his patrons, Æthelweard and Æthelmær. Whereas the works addressed to the ealdormen imply that the recipients were assumed to be part of Ælfric's ideological circle, albeit dependent on his writings, in the letters from the time of his abbacy 'Ælfric makes no attempt to camouflage his superior knowledge and insight'.³⁶⁴ Swan suggests that Ælfric considered his patrons to be more closely associated with the ideals of reformed monasticism, and closer to his ideals than the secular aristocratic recipients of his letters, Sigeweard, Sigefyrð and Wulfgeat.³⁶⁵ Another reason for the difference in Ælfric's positional rhetoric might be that by the time he wrote the letters at Eynsham, Ælfric's career had developed from that of a priest and monk to that of an abbot; perhaps this and other developments had made him more concerned with the issues of society, and compared to the time of the *Lives of Saints* and the translation of Genesis, Ælfric would now have gained even more assurance as to his own position as the superior teacher of the laity.

As a way of comparison, the authoritative position and greater social responsibility becomes evident also in an exemplary story in Ælfric's letter

³⁶³ 'Getiðige **us** se ælmihtiga god, þæt **we** magon **eow** secgan his halgan lare oft, and **eow** gehyrsumnysse, þæt **ge** ða lare awendon to weorcum **eow** to þearfe, se þe leofað and rixað a to worulde.' Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Mary Swan, "Identity and Ideology in Ælfric's Prefaces," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Mary Swan and Hugh Magennis (2009), 268.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 254–256, 262–265, 268–269.

to Sigeward. He writes a lengthy passage about St John the Evangelist and a young man who St John had entrusted to the care of a bishop in a city near Ephesus.³⁶⁶ The newly consecrated bishop agreed to teach and advise the young man in matters of faith, and to take care of him, while St John returned to Ephesus. The bishop fulfilled his duty to instruct the young man at first, and after baptizing him in Christianity, he regarded the youth would continue in faith and spiritual life without him, and did not pay attention to him anymore. The youth, however, did not manage so well on his own, but succumbed to vices and sins, drunkenness, thieving and other vile and deadly sins (*swa ferde se cniht on his fracedum dædum and on morðdædum*).³⁶⁷ After the youth had abandoned the faith and was living a shameful life full of sins, St John returned to the bishop, to whom he had entrusted the soul of the young man. The bishop was sorrowful, and said: 'He is dead to God.' St John, however, did not give up but reproached the bishop of neglecting his duty to act as a shepherd for the soul of the one he was responsible for. John then went to meet the youth, who was soon overcome with shame, and wanted to return to true faith. St John promised to pray for God's mercy diligently, and said: 'I wish to make atonement for Christ on behalf of your soul, and I would willingly give my own life for you, just like the Saviour gave himself for us, and my soul I would give for yours.'³⁶⁸ St John did not cease from consolation of the young man, from praying, nor from teaching, until mercy had been received. Apart from the importance of penance, the passage stresses that it should have been the bishop's duty to take care that the young man stayed on the righteous path, but that he had failed in that duty. To emphasize the importance of the role of the priests as teachers for the laity, Ælfric repeats the phrase about blind teachers leading the blind, after the narrative of St John and the young man.³⁶⁹ The story is, according to Ælfric's words, also supposed to serve as an example to Sigeward to stress the importance of good deeds in acting out the principles of Christian teaching. Ælfric states that he relates this

³⁶⁶ This story comes, through Paul the Deacon's homiliary, from Rufinus's translation of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.23. Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeward*, 65–68, 329.

³⁶⁷ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 225.

³⁶⁸ 'Ic wille agildan gescead for þinre sawle Criste and ic lustlice wille min lif for þe syllan, swa swa se Hælend sealde hine sylfne for us, and mine sawle ic sille for þinre.' *Ibid.*, 226.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 223–227.

story in order to make Sigeweard believe that St John ‘spoke with acts’ (*he mid weorcum spræc*).³⁷⁰

As the story takes up such a big part of the text that is otherwise an abridged run-through of biblical writings and Christian history—it fills about one sixth of the whole text and as such is the longest single story within the letter—we must attempt to evaluate the reasons behind Ælfric’s choice to include it in the letter. Larry Swain has suggested that Ælfric had prepared the story independently for other purposes before compiling the letter, and given the ‘off the cuff’ nature of the inclusion, he might have just been reminded about the story when reaching the end of the account of the New Testament, John and the Apocalypse. Swain states that since the story does not fit the theme of the letter, its inclusion ‘was not a well-thought-of conclusion’, and as such indicates that while Ælfric still was interested in Christian education in the later stages of his career, he was also busy revising his works and producing new ones which explain and comment on the themes he had previously touched upon.³⁷¹ If this was the case, the story would not bear any specific significance for Ælfric himself with regard to his intended audience of this particular letter, but would be a randomly associative choice. Whether or not the inclusion of the story was well planned or not, its existence in the letter is not changed by this acknowledgement, meaning that its discourse was separated from the original motives the instance it became a text. However, given the theme of the story, I would like to point out that it must have played a significant role for Ælfric, if not in the instance of planning this letter in particular, then in other instances, which fits well within the framework of his whole discourse concerning social roles. Emphasizing the responsibility of the clergy even in such a scale that they would sacrifice themselves in the process creates a clear hierarchy of social order. And including this account in a letter he specifically addressed to Sigeweard also fits well in his attempts to admonish the laity about the matters of faith and the prerequisites it poses for different people.

This kind of emphasis which Ælfric placed on the role of the teachers as superior to the laity was a major theme also in Ælfric’s *Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor* (Assmann 4: *Sermo in natale unius confessoris*).³⁷² Its treatment is quite similar to the letters he wrote to the lay aristocracy, even

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 223.

³⁷¹ Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham’s Letter to Sigeweard*, 65–72.

³⁷² Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 49–64.

though it was primarily addressed to Bishop Æthelwold, around 1007. Mary Clayton has argued, however, that in this homily Ælfric's attitudes and criticism towards the secular aristocracy become evident, and suggests that it was done on purpose, in the assumption that it would be read aloud in a situation where the audience consisted of the most influential political persons of the day. She has specifically argued that by introducing a sudden change of topic from the necessity of pastoral teachers and their responsibility to preach to one which warns of the revenge of God, Ælfric showed his discontent with the events that took place at Æthelred's court shortly before, and which would have resulted in the situation where Ælfric's patron and the establisher of his monastery, ealdorman Æthelmær, would have had to suffer a fall from the grace of the king. Therefore Ælfric's discourse implicitly juxtaposes the piety of Æthelmær with the wickedness of the other men in power.³⁷³ In addition to criticism, the homily shows a similar kind of positioning between clergy and the laity, Ælfric himself in specific. By being confident of his role as the admonisher and the instructor of the men in secular authority, he creates a position where he has the moral upper hand and the right to address the laity in this manner.

Similar tendencies are found in Ælfric's reworking of his earlier homilies, specifically in a *Homily for the Second Sunday after Easter*, as discovered by Robert Upchurch. Ælfric made a considerable revision to one of his homilies, originally written for the first series of the *Catholic Homilies*, notably at the same time as the letters for the laity and the *Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor*.³⁷⁴ With this revision Ælfric transformed a general treatise of clerical duties into a politically charged accusation of the negligence of the clergy and the wickedness of the ruling class which was both greedy and corrupt. As in the case of the homily studied by Clayton, Upchurch similarly argues that his sermon was intended by Ælfric to be read by a powerful bishop before an influential audience during Rogationtide, when it was customary that the men in power met to discuss legal matters of the kingdom.³⁷⁵ It is significant that Rogationtide was a major period of preaching to the laity. Three days of fasting, prayer and procession preceded

³⁷³ Clayton, "Of Mice and Men," 3, 18–21.

³⁷⁴ Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 313–316, 535–542. Clemoes dates the revision to 1002–1005, but see also Godden's comments, which suggest that the revision was most likely done after Ælfric became abbot in 1005. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 136–144.

³⁷⁵ Upchurch, "A Big Dog Barks," 505–506, 510–511, 513–514, 518–524, 529–533.

the Ascension Day, and judging from the number of Old English homilies — both anonymous and those by Ælfric—it was also an important one. Compared to other occasions, homilies for Rogationtide are the most abundant. Ælfric, for instance, produced one homily for each day of the period in each of his series.³⁷⁶ After Easter it was customary that the secular and spiritual leaders met to discuss and decide on legal matters and on the conduct of the state. Therefore the chances to try to impose these notions to the important decision-makers of the time were increased during Rogationtide. By this implication it has to be assumed that Ælfric most likely anticipated an important audience for his homilies compiled for this specific time.

When considering the context of the political situation during Ælfric's time at Eynsham, the discourse of his letters to the laity can indeed be seen as an indication of his concern for the state of the kingdom, not only because of the external afflictions which the Viking attacks caused, but also, and perhaps primarily, because of the internal disorder which prevailed—at least in Ælfric's view. As Ælfric makes it clear, the foundation for the success of a kingdom is that its members act morally and religiously properly, in a correct and 'right' way. If the fragmentary text *Wyrðwriteras*, which can be dated roughly to the period of Ælfric's abbacy, is assumed to have been targeted to the laity, like the texts discussed above, it places even more weight on Ælfric's concern. In *Wyrðwriteras* Ælfric relates with the help of examples drawn from biblical history, how the kings used to delegate their burdens to ealdormen by sending them to battles on their behalf, so that the king himself could be where he was needed for his people.³⁷⁷ With the example of emperor Theodosius II Ælfric indicates that one of the most important duties of a king was to gain God's support—as he notes, he has already written in a homily that relates how Theodosius used to send his army to fight on his behalf, while he himself was praying and putting his trust in God. Ælfric writes that consequently God protected and saved his people.³⁷⁸ Towards the end of the excerpt Ælfric emphasizes this duty by

³⁷⁶ Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 145.

³⁷⁷ Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 728–730.

³⁷⁸ 'Theodosius se gingra and se wurðfulla casere sende oft his heretogan, swa swa us segð seo racu, to gehwylcum gefeohtum for his leode ware, and he him sylf wolde singan his gebedu, and Gode betæcan symle his fyrde, and God him eac fylste and his folc bewerode, swa swa we awriton on sumon spelle hwilon.' *Ibid.*, 730–731.

adding an example of Moses controlling the outcome of the battle by prayer, a topic he used already in the *Lives of Saints* (*Prayer of Moses*, LS 13).³⁷⁹

This admonition to delegate power in *Wyrðwriteras* has been seen at least from two perspectives. Firstly, it can appear to be an exhortation to implement this kind of policy, in which case the idea behind the tract would reveal that King Æthelred himself used to participate in battles, instead of delegating power to his generals. However, Æthelred is known to have done this only on three occasions during his reign, in 1000, 1009 and 1014.³⁸⁰ It is therefore more likely to see this excerpt as a defence of Æthelred's policy. In this case the question is: why would Ælfric see the need to defend the king? Mary Clayton has suggested a solution for this problem, which I also would like to endorse. Instead of seeing the excerpt as a defence of Æthelred, she connects the discourse on the delegation of power to other instances where Ælfric discusses this theme, concluding that *Wyrðwriteras* should be seen as Ælfric's subtle criticism of Æthelred and his policies. The main idea in this text would thus be an exhortation to choose and reward his generals and ealdormen better.³⁸¹ Clayton does not certainly connect this discourse to Ælfric's relationship with Æthelmær, but rather suggestively asks if Ælfric could have had Æthelmær in mind when writing this piece. However, she points out that it was Æthelred's policy not to appoint very many ealdormen during his reign, only keeping them effective in politically sensitive areas. Also, and I would like to emphasize this fact even more, it has not been ascertained whether or not Æthelmær was officially appointed ealdorman after his father's death in 998, or if the office was left vacant. The only time Æthelmær appears in the sources as ealdorman is from 1013, and then only in the role to submit the West Saxons to the Danes.³⁸² The criticism to choose his generals better fits well with the situation of 1005–1006, when Æthelmær retired or was made to retire from the king's court, and when many of the king's counsellors seem to suddenly have changed. It is plausible therefore to think that this tract was part of Ælfric's criticism, as Clayton suggests.

The principle of administering the secular kingdom has been left with less importance in these interpretations. As the end of the piece is lost, its

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 731; Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 282–307.

³⁸⁰ Clayton, "Ælfric and Æthelred," 84.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 85–86.

³⁸² Ibid. See also Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready"*, 197–198; Stafford, "The Reign of Æthelred II," 29–31.

full contents cannot be known, but what can be gathered is that the text ends with a theme which seems to be an opening to a change of topic, but it is left unfinished in the excerpt. It states that in the end all guidance must be sought from God with truthful sincerity and a pure conscience. Ælfric turns the attention to truth and faithfulness (*soðfæstnyss*), and iterates a Latin paraphrase about how everyone who lies will perish.³⁸³ The discussion about the defence of the kingdom turns thus to spiritual requisitions that people must conform to in order to secure the earthly kingdom, and possibly alludes to the abrupt changes in the king's court. The change of topic, as seen in the case of *Second Homily for the Feast of a Confessor*, as shown by Clayton, and in some degree also in the case of the letter to Sigeward, was for Ælfric a useful tool to promote his cause. If we assume that the delegation of earthly power in terms of battles anticipated a theme which turned the issue to spiritual significations, as it seems, it can be suggested that it follows a similar line of argumentation for the cause of a theologically ordered society. The delegation of the authority of the king was one of the issues which Ælfric, again, knew should be handled in the right way.

Therefore, what transpires from Ælfric's exhortation is not only the attitude of the superiority of the clergy, but also a notion that secular authority itself was based on the morals and the love of God which the preachers were supposed to delegate to the laity, and which the laity was supposed to act out in their lives. The expectation of action and its importance in Ælfric's discourse form a rational relationship between the word of God, its messengers, the action and free will of its receivers. It is action and good deeds which are expected as the outcome of the moral exhortation provided with the letters. In the letter to Sigeward Ælfric starts the discussion with this very issue; the outcome of good deeds—as in what is right and normative according to the standards of his teachings—lead to the joys of heaven, whereas bad deeds lead to damnation. The normativity of his discourse is apparent when he states that it is 'very wrong that God's

³⁸³ 'Ure wissung and ure waru sceal beon of Gode, and we sceolon secan æt Gode sylfum urne ræd mid anrædum mode, and on eornost sprecaþ, þæt ure behat beon þe we behatað Gode fæste and getreowe, trumran þonne stanweall; for þan ðe God is soðfæstnyss, and he soðfastnyssse lufað, and he ealle ða forðeð þe leasunga sprecað, swa swa hit on Leden stent ðysum wordum awriten: Perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium.' Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 731–732.

creations, whom he himself made, do not obey him.’³⁸⁴ Ælfric uses here the word *wolic*, which means not only wrong, but perverse and evil, something contrary to the natural, right way of things. The importance of the right order of the world becomes evident in his concern to maintain the normative roles people are supposed to have and fulfil on earth. Action, consequently, is of utmost importance in this aspiration. Ælfric stresses that more than smooth words, which are transitory, the Saviour loves deeds, the outcomes of which remain.³⁸⁵ The importance of action does not, however, fully mean that words as such would be meaningless; on the contrary, they were means with which knowledge of proper order and behaviour could be delegated. Ælfric stresses this in the end of the letter to Sigeward:

*Now you may properly know that action speaks more than the naked word, which does not have any effect. However, there is good work in good words, when a man teaches and instructs another in the matters of faith with true knowledge, and when a man speaks wisdom, which is for the benefit and correction of many others.*³⁸⁶

The point Ælfric wishes to make for the laity is that in order to fulfil one’s task on earth it is not important to judge others, but to take responsibility for one’s own actions, and to begin with humility and obedience to God. He notes that some people tend to punish harder those who are under their command for lesser crimes than they would punish themselves for bigger sins.³⁸⁷ One should instead take heed of God’s—and of the preachers’—words, and to focus on their own actions. He states that God did not tell men to work wonders or raise the dead—which is impossible anyway—but to lead a moderate life. ‘If you (Ælfric addresses Wulfgeat directly as *þu*) wish to be powerful and prosper gloriously, you must begin with humility’, he writes. Humility is the cornerstone of life, on which everything else is

³⁸⁴ ‘[H]it ys swiðe wolic þæt ða geworhtan gesceafta þam ne beon gehirsume þe hi gesceop and geworhte.’ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric’s Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 201.

³⁸⁵ ‘[S]e Hælend lufað swiþor þa dæde þonne þa smeðan word. Þa word gewitað and þa weorc standað.’ *Ibid.*, 221.

³⁸⁶ ‘Nu miht þu wel witan þæt weorc sprecað swiþor þonne þa nacodan word, þe naddað nane fremminge. Is swa þeah god weorc on þam godam wordum, þonne man oðerne lærð and to geleafan getrimð mid þære soþan lare and þonne mann wisdom sprecð manegum to þearfe and to rihtinge [...]’ *Ibid.*, 229.

³⁸⁷ Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, 7–8.

built.³⁸⁸ For those in power Ælfric states that ‘people should love and govern themselves first, because only then can they truly love God’s word and other people, and only then can they govern and admonish other people.’³⁸⁹ The basis for exercising authority on earth is thus greatly dependent on religious morals.

One’s actions in life have lasting consequences, as Ælfric demonstrates. He makes an analogy of the current life and the afterlife with a biblical example about King Solomon’s wise words: ‘A lazy man did not want to plough because of cold weather in the winter. In the summer he was begging for food, but was not granted any.’³⁹⁰ This passage reveals not only a condemnation of laziness as such, but it serves as an analogy about the deeds in life and their consequences in terms of salvation. In his insistence on correct order, Ælfric condemns all action and behaviour that is disorderly, ill-mannered, or dissolute; drunkenness, adultery, greediness and deceit are displayed as evil practices and vices.³⁹¹ He reiterates that bad habits will bring sin. Opposing this is *þeawfæstness*, adherence to the rules of right conduct, method, discipline, obedience to rule and the right way for a well-ordered, moral, and virtuous life. The purpose of all of Ælfric’s exhortation was to provide means for the laity to fulfil their role both as a moral individual and as a member of a Christian society. Amid this exhortation the issue of authority culminates in the responsibilities of different people. Ælfric reminds his audience that the teachings of Christ are meant for all people, and that the word of God is the only lasting moral

³⁸⁸ ‘Ne het se leofa drihten us leornian to wyrrenne oðerne middangeard, ne ða micclan wundru, þe he worhte on life on alefedum mannum, ne ða deadan to arærenne, þæt þæt we don ne magon, ac het us beon liðe on ures lifes þeawum and eadmode on heortan æfter his gebysnunge. Gif þu mycel wylle beon and mærllice geþogen, þonne most ðu hit onginnan on þære eadmodnysse. Gif ðu þencst to wyrrenne stænen weorc mid cræfte, þonne scealt þu ærest embe þone grundweal smeagan, þæt is, þæt ðu gelogie þin lif on eadmodnysse, forþan ðe seo eadmodnys astihð up to heofonum to ðære orsorgan reste, þe urum sawlum byð forgyfen.’ Ibid., 10.

³⁸⁹ ‘Ne lufast þu na godes word, gif ðu ne lufast þe sylfne, ne ðu ne miht naht eaðe oðerne mann lufian, gif ðu þe sylfne ne lufast, ne oðrum men styran, gif ðu þe sylfum ne styrst.’ Ibid., 7.

³⁹⁰ ‘Propter frigus piger arare noluit. Mendicabit aestate, et non dabitur ei.’ Ibid., 9.

³⁹¹ ‘Ðu lufast druncennysse and dwollice leofast, swylce þe togamenes, ac godes wisdom þe segð: Hwam becymð wawa, hwam witodlice sacu, oððe hwa byð bepæht, oððe hwam becumað wunda oððe eagen blindnys: buton þam unðeawfæstum, ðe wodlice drincað and heora gewitt amyrrað, swa þæt hi dwæsiað for heora druncennyssum.’ Ibid., 6.

foundation for a good life.³⁹² As conventional as these assertions are, the ethical principles are not to be seen as insignificant lament on Ælfric's part, but as an essential topic in his attempts to organize both individual and social order. His formulations always had further goals: to achieve salvation and eternal life. In choosing to employ these commonplaces and conventions, his discourse is part in creating norms and authority.

These notions of morality came in the end to their wider and more lasting consequences in terms of human history; obeying and following the example of Christ and the gospels was the only way to reach salvation. And if people were true to the word of God, they would receive rewards in heaven, as Ælfric stressed in the letter to Sigefyrð.³⁹³ Ultimately this was the message of all of Ælfric's writing, but it is important to note here that firstly, the ideas of moral order were requisites for both individual and societal life, and secondly, that the way Ælfric offers moral guidance shows how these social roles were conceptualized. Even though it was the responsibility of every individual universally to adhere to these rules, it was the ecclesiastical part of society who was responsible for delivering the message to the laity, and therefore responsible also for their failures if their teaching was neglected.

4.5. Conclusion

Ælfric's letters to the laity reveal the elements of morality that were communicated to the lay aristocracy by admonition of proper conduct of life which the laity was supposed to conform to. Teaching the laity was an integral part of Ælfric's religious-political discourse, since it participated in defining the different statuses and positions of different people in terms of interpretation, possession of true knowledge and proper action. Ælfric's letters indicate that this admonition was attempted to be carried out much further than monastic walls. The categories of secular and monastic were clear to Ælfric when it came to skills and responsibilities of different people, but his monastic ideals cannot be considered as isolated from the rest of the society. Ælfric's letters to the lay aristocracy show that he was part of the

³⁹² Ibid., 5–8.

³⁹³ 'And ælc þæra, þe forlæt on þisum lifum nu fæder oððe modor, gebroðru oððe gewustru, his wif oððe cildru, hus oððe æceras for minum naman, he underfehð þa mede be hundfealdum edleane and þæt ece lif.' Ibid., 15.

society surrounding him. The moral teachings of the letters speak for Ælfric's intentions of reaching a wider audience for the views about proper order.

The discourse of the pastoral letters can be seen as persuasive and normative in its classical sense; its arguments are based on the shared notion of what constitutes the divine, indisputable and unchanging truth. That the laity was supposed to obey the moral exhortation of the preachers entails the presumption that priests possessed knowledge on how the society's members were expected to act and live a well-ordered life. The way of life of the laity and also secular authority was based on the morality which was preached to them by those with greater knowledge and by those who were in a position to interpret the word of God correctly. The clergy was thus made responsible for the greater part of the society and its fate, although a certain amount of free will and independence was ascribed to the laity when it came to executing their actions in the right way. The responsibility of teachers was to try to amend the behaviour and action of the laity, and in this attempt action, not words, constituted the decisive factor in fulfilling the moral order in society. In other words, the proper knowledge and a certain amount of interpretation were provided, but in the end it was the individual who decided what to do with it. In this respect the relationship between the written word, ideals, and norms on the one hand, and the expectations of action and practice are clearly apparent in Ælfric's discourse. Whereas the letters discussed in this chapter engaged directly with the laity, Ælfric aspired to delegate his message also more widely by offering admonition to other preachers. Next I will engage with the transmission and development of Ælfric's discourse from the perspective of his letters to Archbishop Wulfstan.

5. Formulating the holy society: transmission and development

The main argument of the previous chapters has been that the overall mode of discourse, firstly in Ælfric's vernacular adaptations of the saint-kings, and secondly in the pastoral letters to the laity from his later career, was connected to the larger religious scheme of moral and social order, and to Ælfric's aspiration for a just and righteous society. In the following I shall examine the transmission and development of religious-political discourse from the works of Ælfric to the works of Wulfstan, specifically to the *Institutes of Polity*. The framework of discourse was thus different from the one examined in the previous chapter, since it stayed within the ecclesiastical circles, without a specific intention to extend its message to the laity. Instead, it entailed both monastic and episcopal spheres, with the intention to ultimately address the secular clergy. My focus will be on the notion of division of society, how it was conceptualized and developed, how the different duties of each part were treated in the process of transmission, and how the theme was appropriated in different contexts. At the end of this chapter special attention is given to the idea of society divided in three parts, also referred to as the 'doctrine of three orders of society'. The main interest lies in evaluating the nature of the transmission of this concept, and I will examine the ways the idea of the three orders was used and developed in order to authorize certain views on the duties and responsibilities of different people. The use of this idea in different works shows that the purposes for promoting it could vary from monastic ideologies on clerical duties seen in the pastoral letters, through targeted criticism of the secular aristocracy during the time of severe Viking attacks, to attempts of regulation to set established duties for all parts of society.

5.1. The relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan

The underlying theme that pervades the writings of Ælfric and Wulfstan is an aspiration for order. In some way or another, almost all of their works reflect an orthodox and organized view of the order of the world, and insist on God's mercy as a constituting factor in the success of society. The aspiration for order is visible throughout their works, and it becomes apparent in many forms, from the order of narration and insistence on orthodox faith to the formulations of social duties and responsibilities. It is apparent also in Wulfstan's actions of drafting both ecclesiastical and secular laws. It is now generally believed that Wulfstan's views on society were drawn partly, but not insignificantly, from Ælfric, but the line of communication is quite complex, and certain differences in the way these men wanted to promote the idea of social order are seen in their works.

The nature of the relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan has been discussed widely, ranging from seeing Ælfric as a close friend of Wulfstan, supplying him with ample theological material, to a more reserved view of Ælfric as a reluctant, cool, and even condescending abbot who wrote to the archbishop not as a friend, but as a teacher who had—at least in his own view—better command of Christian doctrines than the archbishop.³⁹⁴ Whatever the nature of the personal relationship between these men was, it remains clear that Wulfstan used a wide range of Ælfric's texts in his own works. Not only the pastoral letters discussed below, but also a large amount of Ælfric's homilies provided ample material for Wulfstan to be used in his own sermons. In all cases it is not certain whether Wulfstan received his source texts in a form intended by Ælfric, and part of them may have been circulated already in a manuscript context detached from Ælfric. This applies especially to Ælfric's homilies, which were copied as separate texts very soon after their publication.

The pastoral letters, however, can be seen as a definite and direct link between Ælfric and Wulfstan, and are even more valuable from the point of view that they were written specifically with Wulfstan in mind. This correspondence is also a concrete example of the interaction and translation of ideas and notions in late Anglo-Saxon England. In the period just before and during his abbacy, Ælfric is known to have written five letters to

³⁹⁴ The latter view is promoted especially by Malcolm Godden, "The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric: A Reassessment," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

Wulfstan, three in Latin and two in Old English. The first one was addressed directly to Wulfstan in response to his questions, and it is assumed that, satisfied by the answers given in this correspondence, Wulfstan requested Ælfric to write more material for him. For this purpose Ælfric wrote two homiletic letters in Latin, which he soon translated in Old English. These letters were written in a manner as if the first person speaking was the archbishop himself, and as such could be intended for (oral) delivery by Wulfstan. Next I want to pay attention to these particular letters and the correspondence of thought on the matters concerning the order of society, which relate about the direct relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan, and then examine the way they and other Ælfric's works were employed in Wulfstan's own texts.

5.1.1. 'Private' letter to Wulfstan

The so-called private letter is Ælfric's reply to a letter which has not survived. It addresses questions which Wulfstan presumably had about certain practical matters concerning the conduct of life of the clergy. Many topics, but not all, from this letter were also dealt with in the subsequent pastoral letters, but in a more prescriptive way. The letter can be dated to the period 1002–1005, that is, before Ælfric's abbacy, but after Wulfstan was appointed archbishop in 1002. It is also fairly safe to assume that it was not written long before the following Latin letters to Wulfstan. Compared to the other letters, this text is written in a different manner than the following ones which can be characterized more closely as 'designed sermons', whereas the first letter addresses the archbishop directly. For this reason this letter is usually called 'private'. The letter survives as a copy of correspondence in a manuscript consisting of a collection of texts compiled by Ælfric himself (Boulogne-Sur-Mer, Bibl. Munic. MS 63: Gneuss 800) and can therefore fairly certainly be regarded as presenting the text in its original form. It is also the only manuscript known to contain this letter. The letter was first edited by Bernard Fehr (Fehr 2a),³⁹⁵ but due to the late discovery of the Boulogne-sur-Mer manuscript, the edition is considered unreliable. It was later edited more fully by Dorothy Whitelock.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 222–227.

³⁹⁶ For this reason in case of letters I, 2, 3, II, and III, I refer to Fehr's edition, but in case of letter 2a to Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 242–255.

Apart from some minor matters answered in this letter, such as questions on caesarean sections performed on deceased women (item 2),³⁹⁷ or on eating castrated animals (item 6),³⁹⁸ there are two items that have received a more thorough treatment and more space than anything else in this letter: items 14: 'De bellico aparatu', and 15: 'De furibus'. Item 14 first presents the three orders of society, and then adds some arguments against the participation of priests in warfare. Item 15 concentrates on reproaching bishops who participate in secular matters, especially in judging thieves, and then laments the regrettable state of greedy bishops 'in these days', who set a bad example to the laity.³⁹⁹

The passage on priests and warfare occurs only partly paralleled in the Latin letters, and the doctrine of three orders is not present in them. It was, however, used by Wulfstan in his *Institutes of Polity*, but the source for this was, according to Whitelock, Ælfric's letter to Sigeweard (see below, chapter 5.3.).⁴⁰⁰ This passage is also very similar to a section titled 'De militia' in a collection of canon laws, formerly known as *Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti*, but now assigned to the circles of Wulfstan, and referred to in the following as Wulfstan's *Canon Law Collection*. The archbishop is thought to have, if not entirely compiled, at least commanded its preparation. When Whitelock published her edition of the letter, it was generally assumed that the *Canon Law Collection* in its known state was significantly older, and that Ælfric had used it as his source of composition of the letter. The authorship of the collection—or at least of its compilation as it is presented in the manuscripts—has since then been re-evaluated, and it has been argued that Wulfstan took part in compiling the collection with the help of many of Ælfric's texts.⁴⁰¹ Consequently, the line of transmission must now be considered to be the opposite of the one previously assumed; Ælfric presumably did not use the *Canon Law Collection* while writing his letter, but, on the contrary, provided material for it. The implication of this is that the role of Ælfric must be considered to have been greater than the previous view would let one assume. That is, if Ælfric was himself the source of

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 247–248.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 253–254.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 244–245.

⁴⁰¹ James E. Cross and Andrew Hamer, eds., *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 17–28.

material for the longer recension of Wulfstan's *Canon Law Collection*, his role in formulating the order of society rises to the foremost significance.

5.1.2. Two Latin letters to Wulfstan

After the composition of the 'private' letter, Ælfric provided further material on pastoral care for Wulfstan. He wrote two Latin letters which can be dated more or less to the time when Ælfric was appointed abbot of Eynsham.⁴⁰² They are written as if they were spoken by Wulfstan, that is, he uses the first person 'on behalf of' the archbishop. The indication of this style is that Wulfstan had most likely asked Ælfric to provide material for his use. This was not the first time Ælfric provided homiletic material for bishops, as he had used this style already in his pastoral letter to Bishop Wulfsige of Sherborne in about 992.⁴⁰³

The Latin letters survive in manuscripts that can be associated with Wulfstan.⁴⁰⁴ This means that they may have been altered by Wulfstan himself, or by the members of his circle. It is therefore impossible to say for certain whether a phrase was originally implemented by Ælfric, or whether the text was altered already at the stage it was received. This makes the letters good examples of textual appropriation and their discourse should be read with Wulfstan's reception in mind, and not only as exclusive creations of Ælfric. As the letters appear in three manuscripts associated with

⁴⁰² According to Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 103. But cf. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 242. Clemoes, "Supplement to Fehr's Introduction" in Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, cxliv-cxlv.

⁴⁰³ Printed in ———, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 1–34.

⁴⁰⁴ The Latin letters and their Old English translations appear in pairs, the Latin ones in CCC 190 (Ker 45, Gneuss 59), pp. 188–201 (Fehr 2) and pp. 151–159 (Fehr 3), CCC 265 (Ker 53, Gneuss 73), pp. 160–173 (Fehr 2) and pp. 174–180 (Fehr 3), and Copenhagen Kongelige Bibliotek, G.K.S. 1595 (Gneuss 814), ff. 67r–74r (Fehr 2) and ff. 74r–77v (Fehr 3). The Old English letters are also in CCC 190, pp. 320–336 (Fehr II) and pp. 336–349 (Fehr III), but not in other manuscripts with the Latin ones. The rest of the extant manuscripts of the Old English letters are partly associated with Wulfstan in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (Ker 338, Gneuss 644), ff. 111r–124r (Fehr III) and Bodley 343 (Ker 31), ff. 133r–137r (Fehr II) and ff. 137r–140v (Fehr III). Other manuscripts not for certain connected to either Ælfric or Wulfstan are CCC 201, London, BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii and Cotton Vespasianus C.xiv, which also contain the Old English letters. Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 117.

Wulfstan, it is clear that Wulfstan approved the discourse as his own, as it stands extant.

The first Latin letter (Fehr 2) deals with the chastity of body and soul, and touches upon the practicalities of conducting masses, baptism and communion. It also lists the books every priest was supposed to have—although it can be doubted whether the reality lived up to this ideal—and iterates other basic things the secular clergy was expected to know. The letter is thus very basic by its contents, and gives the impression that its target audience was either quite young or ignorant of the tasks and responsibilities of the clergy. For the purposes of this study it is especially the end of the letter which is of interest, where the order of society and the correct conduct of life becomes the centre of attention. The letter engages with issues of chastity and marriage in a lengthy passage, then lists the seven orders of the clergy, and discusses the importance of proper ‘spiritual weapons’ a priest should have, comparing it with the necessities of proper tools in a secular profession.⁴⁰⁵ The proper behaviour of the clergy follows, including a prohibition to act as a merchant, to solicit profit, or to drink excessively or in taverns; in contrast, a priest should always be prepared to do what he was ordained for.⁴⁰⁶ In the end of the letter the discussion focuses on prohibiting priests from fighting (items 178–191).⁴⁰⁷ The issue of priests and warfare appears to have been essential at this point, as will be discussed in more detail below.

The second Latin letter (Fehr 3) is shorter, and it, too, deals with practical matters the priests ought to know about their order. Basic tasks, such as the importance and meaning of anointing, baptism, communion, and other priestly codes of conduct are discussed in the letter, and many points are made in order to warn the priests about the consequences of neglecting their duties. It is also mentioned that celebrating mass is not allowed in the houses of the laity (item 23), that it is not allowed to have a secular feast or meeting in the house of God (item 24), that one should not use wine for baptism, but holy water (item 67), and that priests should not sell sacraments (items 80–81).⁴⁰⁸ These remarks might in turn tell of the differences between theory and practice of life in the Middle Ages, but since

⁴⁰⁵ Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 51–53.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Sed oportet eum semper esse paratum ad hoc quod ordinatus est.’ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 55–56.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 60, 65, 66. All of the points appear also in Wulfstan’s regulations, either in the *Canon Law Collection (Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti)*, or in the *Canons of Edgar*.

they were also part of earlier ecclesiastical legislation, they cannot be pinpointed to specifically Anglo-Saxon practices. What seems to be an original passage constitutes the end of the letter. In the final clauses of the letter the current state of the negligent clergy and bishops, who were supposed to be ‘the pillars of the Church’, is lamented; they are ignorant of the word of God, and as such do not teach well enough, but are prone to secular honour, greed, and avarice. In addition, they provide bad examples for the laity. ‘They do not have courage to speak of justice, since they do not perform or value justice themselves.’⁴⁰⁹ The issue of greedy, negligent bishops and priests proved to be a constant cause for concern in Wulfstan’s subsequent works and regulations.

5.1.3. Two Old English letters to Wulfstan

Ælfric translated his Latin letters to Old English apparently in the following year, in 1006. As it was the case with the translated hagiography in chapter 3, the translations are not literal, but were made according to the custom, ‘*sensum ex sensu*’. Because of these customs of translation, the rhetoric of the Latin and Old English versions can be compared with each other in order to see if they imply anything about the ideologies of social order, considering the different functions and authoritative statuses these two languages had. As Joyce Hill has pointed out, there are omissions, additions, expansions, explanations and rearrangements in the Old English letters. She suggests that by these changes Ælfric recognized a different audience and a different intellectual milieu, and expected the vernacular letters to have an audience consisting of priests who could not understand Latin.⁴¹⁰

Especially the Old English translation of the second Latin letter (Fehr III) was significantly altered, and these changes make this letter very interesting, as they imply an awareness of different audiences for Latin and vernacular. It is considerably longer than the Latin letter, as there is an entire section (items 23–63) that does not occur in the Latin one. And

⁴⁰⁹ ‘*Sed ualde dolendum est, quia his diebus tanta neglegentia est in sacerdotibus et episcopis, qui deberent esse columnę ecclesię, ut non attendant diuinam scripturam, nec docent discipulos qui sibi succedant, sicut legimus de sanctis uiris, qui multos perfectos discipulos successores sibi reliquerunt, sed honores sæculares et cupiditates uel auaritiam sectantes, plus quam laici mala exempla subditis præbentes. Non audent de iustitia loqui, quia iustitiam nec faciunt nec diligunt.*’ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴¹⁰ Hill, “Monastic Reform and the Secular Church,” 104.

because this addition occurs in all of the extant Old English manuscripts of this letter, and in none of the Latin, it can be suspected that this addition was made by Ælfric himself when he adapted the letter to Wulfstan.⁴¹¹ This extensive passage contains the liturgical practices for the Holy Week, derived from the *Regularis Concordia*. Both Fehr and Whitelock supposed that Ælfric based the second letter to Wulfstan on the *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, rather than directly on the *Regularis Concordia*.⁴¹² Hill, however, thinks that both of the letters are modifications of the *Regularis Concordia*, without any vernacular in-betweens.⁴¹³ It should be noted, too, that the first Old English letter (Fehr II) bears much resemblance to the letter to Sigefyrð (Assmann 2), discussed in the previous chapter. Thus the relationship between these texts is quite complex. Many of the ideas presented in these letters were additionally transferred onto Wulfstan's own work, such as the *Canons of Edgar*, the *Canon Law Collection*, a law code from the year 1008 (VI Æthelred), and the *Northumbrian Priests Law*.⁴¹⁴

It is clear, therefore, that the textual relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan was active and diverse. The pastoral letters which Ælfric provided for the use of Wulfstan tell of the influence which the reformed monastic ideologies could provide for an archbishop with similar interests. Wulfstan would from thereon aim to disseminate the ideas of the reformed monasticism further, in an attempt to harness these rules in practice among the secular clergy. Within the scope of this study and the source material available it is impossible to make any further estimation about the actual effect of Wulfstan's mission, but it is important to note this aspect and the forceful *intention* in the nature of transmission. Next I will examine Wulfstan's way of applying the sources Ælfric provided in his own writings in different contexts.

5.2. Textual appropriation of social order

Ælfric proved to be an important provider of sources for Wulfstan, not only in terms of the letters discussed above, but also passively, in terms of homilies and other writings. Ælfric's textual influence has been observed in

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 106.

⁴¹² Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, lxiv; Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 259.

⁴¹³ Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church," 107, note 110.

⁴¹⁴ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 245–247.

several of Wulfstan's works, including his own homilies, legal tracts and also the political tract known as the *Institutes of Polity*. In the beginning of this thesis I stated that in order to make interpretations about the meaning of ideas or thought, the texts which formulate them must be considered within their own specific context, both historically and textually speaking. In addition, one should not anticipate a uniform meaning to an idea in each situation (see chapter 1.4). To emphasize this theoretical principle I would like to draw attention to three specific instances in which commonplace ideas were used in Ælfric's and Wulfstan's works, and which had either common sources or a direct textual relationship. I will begin with the treatment of analogies assigned to the king in the *Institutes of Polity* and then reflect it to Ælfric's views about the theological prerequisites for authority.

5.2.1. The *Institutes of Polity* and its kingly analogies

During his career Wulfstan wrote drafts of what seems to have been an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the duties and rights of different parts of society. This work on political thought, or rather on political morality, has been given the title *Institutes of Polity*, but it is somewhat misleading to think of it as a single work, since it was rewritten and edited by Wulfstan many times, and it was possibly never completed in a way that he would have been happy with. The *Institutes of Polity* forms the most arranged and comprehensive account of Wulfstan's conceptions about the order of society and of Christian and secular law. Despite its exceptional nature it remains one of the least studied texts in the Old English corpus, and a full-length study on it is still lacking.⁴¹⁵ The work belongs to the later stages of Wulfstan's writing career, and it draws heavily on his earlier writings, especially the *Canon Law Collection*. The intertextuality concerning these writings is important, since the *Canons* are for their part heavily influenced by the correspondence between Ælfric and Wulfstan, as was mentioned above. The *Canons* base several items on Ælfric's pastoral letters to Wulfstan. The discourse of the *Institutes* is thus to be seen in this light, as a result of ideas developing in literary and personal relationships.

⁴¹⁵ Trilling, "Sovereignty and Social Order: Archbishop Wulfstan and the *Institutes of Polity*," 60; Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol. 1: Legislation and its Limits (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 458, n. 153.

It was characteristic of Wulfstan to rewrite his works; as Malcolm Godden has stated, Wulfstan's 'constant tinkering with his own work suggests a man obsessive about the best formulation but incapable of satisfying himself.'⁴¹⁶ Therefore, although I speak of the *Institutes* as a single work, it should be noted that it was not a coherent, set text, but alive and changeable, with different versions written in different stages of Wulfstan's career.⁴¹⁷ For the same reason the *Institutes*, and consequently the texts which draw material from it, are hard to date. The early drafts of the *Institutes* (often referred to as the *Polity* I) belong to a time quite soon after Wulfstan rose to the archbishopric of York (1002), and the later versions (*Polity* II) to the time after Sweyn's conquest and Cnut's accession to the throne. Wormald has compiled a relative chronology of Wulfstan's work, in which *Polity* I is placed to a time after the correspondence with Ælfric (1005–1006), and the later versions of the *Institutes* to the time after Cnut's coronation in 1018.⁴¹⁸ The different versions of the *Institutes* belong to fundamentally different stages of Wulfstan's career and the political situation of the kingdom, the first one representing the time when Wulfstan began to take part in the legislation of Æthelred, whereas the later versions must be read in a very different political situation after the ever escalating Viking attacks, invasion, and the change of rule. By this time Wulfstan had acted as the principal legal advisor for the king for a long time, and his works in general show a more legally-oriented point of view on the order of society.

⁴¹⁶ Godden, "The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric," 374.

⁴¹⁷ There are five manuscripts which include passages from the *Institutes*: CCCC 201 (Ker 49, Gneuss 65.5), BL, Cotton Nero A.i (Ker 164, Gneuss 341), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (Ker 338, Gneuss 644), BL, Cotton Tiberius A.iii (Ker 186, Gneuss 363) and Cambridge, University Library, Additional MS 3206 (Ker 11, Gneuss 30). Importantly, none of them present the work as a 'whole'. Instead, the passages are scattered, and give the impression that Wulfstan wrote them as notes which he could later use in composing other works, homilies for instance. The manuscript context of all the manuscripts suggest the same, as the passages in three of the first mentioned manuscripts which provide most material from the *Institutes* have been interpreted as Wulfstan's 'commonplace-books' or his handbooks for pastoral care. I suspect that this was very much the case with the way Wulfstan composed his latest legal homilies in which he used passages from the *Institutes* extensively. To verify this, the context of each homily requires more detailed examination, and will be addressed in further research.

⁴¹⁸ Patrick Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State-BUILDER," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 26–27.

Ælfric provided essential material for Wulfstan to use in his *Institutes of Polity*.⁴¹⁹ Among the texts Wulfstan used are Ælfric's *Homily on the Lord's Prayer* (Tuesday in Rogationtide: *CH* I.19),⁴²⁰ a homily on brotherly love and social duty (Monday in Rogationtide: *CH* II.19),⁴²¹ the pastoral letter to Bishop Wulfsig (Fehr I),⁴²² the *Letter on the Old and New Testament* for Sigeward,⁴²³ the pastoral letters for Wulfstan (Fehr 2, 3, II, III),⁴²⁴ and possibly also *De duodecim abusivis*, a tract on the twelve abuses of the world.⁴²⁵

The *Institutes of Polity* is a systematic presentation of the administration of society, in which all people are organized in a strict hierarchy. The rights and responsibilities of each social group are dealt with, starting with the king—who in the latest edition of the *Institutes* is preceded by God—and moving through his counsellors, bishops, earls and reeves to priests, abbots, monks and nuns and finally to laymen and all Christian people. Wulfstan's premises for the social order, responsibilities and rights cannot be said to have been unusual, since they are strongly dependent on conventional statements and traditions. Order is based on the idea that obedience to God and the king is the key to salvation. Despite its conventional character, as Renée Trilling has stated, it is the bishop, not the king, who rises to the crucial role in reaching salvation, peace and unity. Trilling has argued that this feature in the discourse of the *Institutes* suggests 'a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Wulfstan's *Polity*,' in that it conveys an idea of the ultimate irreconcilability of secular and divine sovereignty. The relationship between secular and sacred authorities is

⁴¹⁹ Printed in Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*. The list follows Godden, "The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric," 363–364. *Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti* is not considered by Godden to be undoubtedly by Wulfstan, so it is not included in the list.

⁴²⁰ Clemons, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 325–334. Commentary in Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 153–158.

⁴²¹ ———, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series: Text*, EETS, S.S. 5 (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 180–189. Commentary in ———, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 519–529.

⁴²² Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 1–34. Printed and translated also in Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 191–229.

⁴²³ Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 201–230.

⁴²⁴ All printed in Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*. The Old English letters also in Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*.

⁴²⁵ Richard Morris, ed. *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, EETS, O.S. 29, 34 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 101–119.

formulated in a way which gives the bishop a primary role in the ordering of not just the ecclesiastical organization but also earthly society. Trilling argues that the *Institutes* represent a view which radically rethinks the relationship between secular and divine power, especially when applied to the dealings of kings and bishops.⁴²⁶ At this point it can be mentioned that a similar tendency is visible also in Wulfstan's law codes, to which I will return in the next chapter.

With the exception of the version of the text which is considered to be its latest development, the *Institutes* begins with a passage 'Concerning the king' (*Be cinincge / cynge / eorðlicum cyninge*) which positions the king as a zealous and righteous protector of his people.⁴²⁷ The king is supposed to show justice, prudence, moderation, patience and wisdom in his rule, and it is stated that he is responsible for his people, and for the protection of the Church.⁴²⁸ Although the description of the king's duties is very conventional and fully compatible with the ideals of the Benedictine reform, the different versions show some variations in Wulfstan's formulations. I would like to draw attention to the reference of the king as a father for his people, as a shepherd for his herd, and as the representative of Christ on earth.

Variant formulations in the different versions of a written work may sometimes affect the historical interpretation of the meaning of the text. This is evident especially in the case of the *Institutes*, which has often been read as a single cohesive text with one meaning. For instance, Peter Richardson has argued that the *Institutes* can be as a text deeply engaged with traditional Anglo-Saxon values of kinship and family. He argues that the rhetoric of kinship inherent in the text would be a tool to invoke respect in Wulfstan's audience, in order to gain force for his aim to establish firm power structures in society. Richardson states that the importance of kinship is evident in the opening passage in which Wulfstan refers to the king as a father to the Christian people: 'It is very right and fitting for a Christian king that he acts in place of a father to the Christian people, guarding and watching over them, as he is assigned to do as the representative of Christ.'⁴²⁹ Richardson states that the paternal analogy

⁴²⁶ Trilling, "Sovereignty and Social Order," 60.

⁴²⁷ The version in MS X (Junius 121) begins with a passage 'Concerning the heavenly king' (*Be heofonlicum cyninge*). Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 39.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–54.

⁴²⁹ 'Cristenum cyninge gebyrað swiðe rihte, þæt he sy **on fæder stæle** cristenra þeode and on ware and on wearde Cristes gespeliga, ealswa he geteald is.' *Ibid.*, 40.

refers to the old notions of the importance of family and kinship ties, making the analogy an indication of a time in which the transition from a more primitive society into a more organized and centralized state is evident.⁴³⁰ In his research Richardson has studied the literature of Anglo-Saxon England more broadly, concentrating on 'imaginative writing', such as poetry. As his starting point is that literature not only reflects, but creates social reality, he analyzes literature as a factor that was part of shaping the various social and political processes that took place during the tenth and eleventh centuries. He argues further that certain 'patterns of identification', which not only address but also create the social and moral complexities of the time, are visible in the literature of the time.⁴³¹

Richardson's conclusion from this passage is that the paternal reference is not only a rhetorical ornament, but 'a pervasive conceptual metaphor that maps family relationships onto political and spiritual ones.'⁴³² Analogy to the family is juxtaposed to the discourse of the *Sermo Lupi*, which complains about deteriorating family values; Richardson states that by using the analogy in this way Wulfstan was able to model his audience's political and religious obligations, 'by invoking ancient and undeniable kinship duties.'⁴³³ The reference to family ties is thus seen as a metaphor for conceptualizing a society in which the ecclesiastical and political structures were understood in terms of family relationships. This observation is important, and I agree that it works especially within the discourse of the monastic spheres, where the same figure of speech was for long used for abbots and bishops, denoting the spiritual family ties that replaced the earthly ones. It falls well within the ideology of kingship that was promoted during the Benedictine reform, as well, when the king was assigned with all the more religious and bishop-like features in literature and art.

But the importance, meaning and consequence of this metaphor is not as straight-forward as Richardson implies. I would like to point out that firstly, one sentence selected from a single work or, in this case, from a set of texts that were changed and adapted during Wulfstan's career, should not be used as evidence in the argumentation for the meaning of the whole work. Secondly, this particular metaphor appears only in one version of the

⁴³⁰ Peter R. Richardson, "Making Thanets: Literature, Rhetoric and State Formation in Anglo-Saxon England," *Philological Quarterly* 78, no. 1/2 (1999): 221.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

Institutes, and it is changed into another form in its other versions. This means that either Wulfstan himself was not content with its initial form, and developed the text into a direction that he considered to be better, more convincing and effective in stylistic standards, or that the different versions were targeted to different audiences. The manuscript context of each version does not, unfortunately, give any definite explanation for Wulfstan's intentions regarding the two versions, as their nature can be regarded quite similar; all CCCC 201 (representing the first version), Junius 121 and Cotton Nero A.i (representing the second version) have been characterized as a certain kinds of handbooks, consisting of homilies, laws, ecclesiastical institutes, canons and penitential passages.⁴³⁴

In order to emphasize my point, I would like to draw attention to the context of the metaphor. Of the four instances in which the section appears, only one of them uses the paternal metaphor (CCCC 201, Jost's D2). This is thought to be the earliest one, dating to the time Wulfstan began his career as the legislator of King Æthelred. The later versions have been modified rather comprehensively, and the father-metaphor removed and replaced by a more pastoral metaphor of the king as the shepherd for his Christian herd.⁴³⁵ The clause is similar in all three later versions; two of them appear in London, BL, Cotton Nero A.i (Jost's G1 and G3), and one in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (Jost's X). It also appears in this form in one of his homilies (Napier 50), to which I will return in chapter 5.3.⁴³⁶ As the designation of the king is changed in all the later versions of the text, its significance must also be re-evaluated. Rather than emphasizing the traditional, approved family values of the lay Anglo-Saxon society, I would say that this metaphor is solidly built on ecclesiastical, more specifically reformed monastic ideological notions of kingship, and uses its language to promote a religiously satiated *ethos* about the right order of the world.

⁴³⁴ For the contents of each manuscript see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). Item numbers: CCCC 201: Ker 49 (homilies, laws etc.), Junius 121: Ker 338 (ecclesiastical institutes and homilies, etc.), Cotton Nero A.i: Ker 164 (ecclesiastical institutes, laws, etc.). Item numbers in Gneuss: 65.5, 644 and 341 respectively.

⁴³⁵ 'Cristenum cyninge gebyreð on cristenre þeode, þæt he sy, ealswa hit riht is, **folces frofer and rihtwis hyrde** ofer Cristene heorde.' Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 40–41.

⁴³⁶ Arthur Napier, ed. *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, Repr. with a supplement by Klaus Ostheeren. (Dublin: Weidmann: Max Niehans Verlag, 1967), 266.

Based on Christian principles, the metaphor actually alludes to the important relations between the church and the state, and not to traditional family ties. In the same vein with continental Carolingian ideology, Wulfstan thus promoted the view of society as the Church, as the community of Christians. In Wulfstan's idealistic vision society was not divided in two powers, but was coherently working towards Christian unity and peace, based on 'proper and right' Christian principles. This aspect of Wulfstan's thought is all the more highlighted, when in the same instance the first duty assigned to a king is the protection of the church.⁴³⁷ I would like to suggest that the changes in Wulfstan's formulations in the different versions of the *Institutes* can be connected with his increasing interest in the spiritual aspects of the order of society and legislation towards the end of his life.

Other changes that Wulfstan made to the earliest version of the *Institutes* indicate a similar tendency. When writing the later redactions of the work, Wulfstan added a passage on the heavenly king to the beginning (MSS X and G), drawing more religious analogies between secular and sacred powers towards the end of his life. Therefore the whole beginning of the text is changed to start with a reference to the highest authority, on which the authority of an earthly king was then based.⁴³⁸ It should be noted, too, that the passage on the king in its later stages is remarkably similar to a passage in one of Ælfric's homilies. Ælfric used the analogy of the king as the representative of Christ in *Dominica post ascensionem Domini* (ca. 1000), written for the Sunday after Ascension. The homily does not emphasize the king's paternal role or family ties, but on the contrary uses full references of theocratic ideologies. After the opening lines it turns to deal with the duties of the king. Ælfric writes that the king needs to call upon his counsellors for advice and not rely on 'secret suggestions' (*runung* – 'whispering'). The king is called 'the vicar of Christ', sanctified as the guardian of the Christian people. It is his utmost duty to protect his people from the attacking army. Ælfric repeats that 'every king who protects God's people is holy,' and a good king should give his life for his people, should there be need, just like Christ gave his life for mankind. Here is another analogy between the heavenly and

⁴³⁷ 'Godes cyrcan æghwar georne weorðige and werige [later versions use: fyrðrie and friðie] and eal cristen folc sibbigge and sehte mid rihtere lage, swa he geornost mage.' Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 40–43.

⁴³⁸ The passages in MSS D2 and G1 are different, and MS G3 is closer to MS X Polity II, whereas MS D2 starts the same way as G1, but then G1 continues in the same way as MSS G3 and X.

earthly kings, stating in direct words the same thing that could be anticipated in the case of the *Lives of Saints*. The parallel is made here to explicitly strengthen the rhetoric with religious imagery, and with that to underline the duties of the king.

And the king needs to call upon his counsellors (for help), and act according to their advice, not according to secret suggestions, because the king is the vicar of Christ himself, over the Christian people who Christ himself delivered, (and the king is) sanctified (to be) as the guardian / shepherd, (so) that he shall protect them, with the help of the people, against the attacking army, and ask for the victory for himself from the true Saviour, who gave him the power under himself, just like all the kings who pleased God did. Each king who protects God's people is holy, and (who) governs with love, not with cruelty, and always righteously, not with obstinacy, and (who) also wants to give, should there be such a great need, finally his own life for the protection of his people, just as the Saviour gave himself for us, although he might have saved all mankind, without his own death, and take away from the devil, his own handwork, had he wanted to do so.⁴³⁹

The phrase in Ælfric's text, even though not ascribed as Wulfstan's direct source for the composition of the *Institutes*, uses similar terms in positioning the king, especially when compared with the later versions of the work. While the ultimate source of this analogy for both is usually thought to have been Sedulius Scotus's *De rectoribus Christianis*,⁴⁴⁰ there are similarities in the choice of words between Ælfric and Wulfstan. Whereas the analogy of the king as the vicar of Christ appears only in Wulfstan's first version of the

⁴³⁹ 'And þæs behofað se cyning þæt he clypige to his witum, and be heora ræde, na be rununge fare, for ðan þe se cyning is Cristes sylfes speligend ofer ðam Cristenan folce þe Crist sylf alysde, him to hyrde gehalgod, þæt he hi healdan sceol[e], mid ðæs folces fultume, wi[ð] onfeohrend[n]e here, and him sige biddan æt þam soðan Hælende, þe him þone anweald under him sylfum forgeaf, swa swa ealle cyningas dydon þe gecwemdon Gode. Ælc cyning bið halig þe gehylt Godes folc, and mid lufe gewissað, na mid wælhreownysse, ac æfre æfter rihte, na mid anwilnysse, and wyle eac syllan, gif hit swa micel neod bið, his agen lif æt nextan for his leode ware, swa swa se Hælend sealde hine sylfne for us, þeah þe he mihte eall mancynn ahreddan butan his agenum deaðe, and of ðam deofle [ge]niman his agen handgeweorc, gif he swa don wolde.' Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, vol. 1, 380–381.

⁴⁴⁰ 86.6: 'Oportet enim Deo amabilem regnatorem, quem divina ordinatio tanquam vicarium suum in regimine Ecclesiae suae esse.'

Institutes, the subsequent versions employ the same metaphor of the shepherd (*rihtwis hyrde*) as is seen in Ælfric's text. The version in Cotton Nero A.i (G3) employs terms similar to Ælfric but which are absent in the earlier versions of the *Institutes*. For instance, the king was supposed to 'rightfully protect' (*rihtlice healde*, cf. *þæt he hi healdan sceol[e]* in Ælfric's text) the 'Christian people' (*Cristen folc*, as opposed to *cristenre þeode* in other manuscripts, but *Cristen folc* in Ælfric's text). The terminology is so similar in these two cases that some kind of relationship of influence can be suspected, although not ascertained. Wulfstan used the term 'vicar of Christ' also in one of his law codes,⁴⁴¹ but in that instance it was not developed further.

The analogies connected to the king can all be seen to employ a monastic mode of discourse, in my opinion also in the case of the paternal metaphor. They all assign certain episcopal assimilation to the tasks of the king, which also makes the king seem very dependent on the Church. The society as Church was one of Wulfstan's aspirations, and in his task to build this society he used spiritual discourse together with political aspirations increasingly as he advanced in his career. The way Wulfstan used this spiritual discourse digressed, however, from the theological principles which Ælfric assigned as the grounds for social order. To examine the differences in their theological tones I will next turn to the virtues of the soul and the king.

5.2.2. Virtues of the soul and the king

The duties of different people in an earthly society were not discussed in such a systematic way by Ælfric as they were by Wulfstan in the *Institutes*. Nonetheless, Ælfric's ideas become evident throughout his works, and some of them, especially the pastoral letters, had an influence on Wulfstan, as it was said before. Ælfric's *Homily for the Monday in Rogationtide* (CH II.19) is one of his homilies much concerned with contemporary social issues. Wulfstan knew this homily, and used it in writing the *Institutes*. It starts with a theme of brotherly love, but then turns to present the different duties of the members of the society. Even though the homily is not based on any specific model, the presentation resembles the legend of the martyrdom of St Peter and Paul, which concerns the nature of preaching, and was possibly

⁴⁴¹ VIII Æthelred 2.1: 'Forðam Cristen cyning is Christes gespelia geteald.'

used as a basis to discuss the social classes.⁴⁴² In general the text is an active composition by Ælfric, rearranging known material to a new form and purpose. After the opening passage Ælfric lays out the theme that follows in the rest of the text, and brings out the importance of the proper order of society: 'Everyone should now consider what is fitting for his rank, since men in every order are able to please the Almighty with the diligence of soul.'⁴⁴³ When turning to discuss the moral duties of each section of society, the homily employs the same idea that is seen in the *De duodecim abusivis*, especially when briefly commenting on the duties of the king. Righteousness and wisdom are stated as proper qualities of the king, and the king should lead his people with justice and prudence. A wise king profits the people, whereas an unwise king causes many misfortunes.⁴⁴⁴ Despite the change of topic, the opening theme of the homily should not, in my view, be seen as a diversion. The discussion on love creates a preamble for what is, in Ælfric's view, the basis and most important requirement for a morally righteous Christian society. The order is not important just for the sake of rules and order, but has as its prerequisites the principles of Christian love. The discussion of love first and not after the duties of society highlights exactly this point.

This homily is, as it was mentioned, one of the texts Wulfstan most likely used in his *Institutes*. Jost has pinpointed a passage on the duties of a king in which Wulfstan mentions the unwise king in the same manner as Ælfric did in his *Homily for the Monday in Rogationtide*. The similar formulation in these texts is a likely indication of Wulfstan's dependency on Ælfric.⁴⁴⁵ The theme of just and unjust kings was of course so common in the medieval literature, that a direct relationship between these two texts is difficult to establish, but Malcolm Godden has identified especially two collections that may provide the sources for almost all of Ælfric's material

⁴⁴² Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 519–520.

⁴⁴³ 'Smeage nu gehwa hwæt his hade gedafnige. for ðan ðe menn magon þurh modes gecnyrdnyssse on ælcere endebyrdnyssse ðam ælmihtigan gecweman.' ———, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series: Text*, 183.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Cyninge gerist. rihtwisnyss and wisdom. him is nama gesett of soðum reccendome. þæt he hine sylfne. and siððan his leode mid wisdom e wissige. and wel gerihlæce; þæt folc bið gesælig þurh snoterne cyning. sigefæst. and gesundful. þurh gesceadwisne reccend; And hi beoð geyrmede ðurh unwise cyning. on manegum ungelimpum. for his misræde.' Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Þurh unwise cyning folc wyrð geyrmed for oft, næs æne, for his misræde. þurh cynincges wisdom folc wyrð gesælig and gesundful and sigefast.' Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 47.

that Wulfstan used—apart from the pastoral letters.⁴⁴⁶ As Wulfstan was also familiar with *De duodecim abusivis* and Sedulius Scotus, this relationship should not be over-emphasized; the theme was standard material for ecclesiastical writers. Similar discourse was thus drawn from either Ælfric's tract on *De octo uiciis et de duodecim abusiuis* or the *Homily for the Monday in Rogationtide*, or both. Therefore, Wulfstan's account of the duties of the king in the *Institutes* is a composition of several commonplaces assigned to an ideal Christian king.

The same principles and duties that are presented in the *Institutes* were treated alongside virtues and vices also in Ælfric's *De octo uiciis et de duodecim abusivis*.⁴⁴⁷ It is a composite text which deals with vices and virtues, and presents the twelve abuses of the world, one of them being an unjust king.⁴⁴⁸ The remedies for this abuse are then presented with a conventional list of the virtues of a good king; a righteous king should govern his people with wisdom, suppress all wrong deeds, and support the Christian faith and the Church, as well as widows, orphans and the poor. A just king should be stern in judging criminals, and judge all men in an equal manner regardless of their wealth. He should appoint loyal men for his aid, and take care to listen to their advice, and he should never be passionate, angry, or impatient (*weamod*). He should bravely fight against the attacking armies, and in general lead a good, moral life, pray regularly and hold fast at appointed times. If he holds on to these commands (*bebodan*), the kingdom will prosper, and for his faithfulness in this life the king will be granted a reward of eternal life.⁴⁴⁹ Correspondingly, if he does not, his kingdom would be struck by war, famine, disease, bad weather or wild beasts. It is reminded that if a king is unrighteous, he will meet his end in the depths of torment,

⁴⁴⁶ A collection of homilies in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 115 and another collection all by Ælfric in CCC 178. Godden, "The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric," 366–369.

⁴⁴⁷ Ælfric's authorship of this text has been argued by Mary Clayton, "Ælfric's *De Auguriis* and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 178," in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), vol. 2, 376–394. Clayton is preparing a new edition of this text.

⁴⁴⁸ '[P]e nihgeðe unþeau is þæt þe king beo unrih[t]wis'. Morris, *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, 115.

⁴⁴⁹ 'Þenne bið his riche isundful on liue. And efter þisse liue he scal faran to þan eche liue for his treowscipe'. *Ibid.*

even if he is now exalted on throne above other men.⁴⁵⁰ The treatment of the king's virtues is very similar to Wulfstan's in the *Institutes*, and both of them stress justice, wisdom and righteousness as important qualities of a Christian king.

The principles of the duties and virtues of a righteous king are strikingly similar to the virtues of the soul, which Ælfric discussed in the *Homily for the Nativity of Christ* in the *Lives of Saints* (*LS* 1). This homily draws mainly on Alcuin's *De animae ratione*, and adapts the passage on the cardinal virtues of the soul following Alcuin.⁴⁵¹ These *virtutes* are the strength and power (*miht* and *mægen*) of the soul, with which humans are able to fight evil. The four foremost are '*prudencia*, that is wisdom (*snoternysse*), through which the soul understands its creator, loves him, and recognizes good from evil.' The second strength is *iustitia*, that is righteousness (*rihtwisnys*), with which the soul honours God and lives righteously. The third one is *temperantia* (*gemetegung*), which moderates all things to achieve a state of being that is not too excessive or too slight. The fourth virtue is *fortitudo*, that is strength (*strængð oððe anrednys*), to endure hardships and to resist the devil.⁴⁵²

In this instance Ælfric examines only the notion of soul, but these same principles are treated as qualities of a righteous ruler both in *De octo uiciis et de duodecim abusivis* and in Wulfstan's *Institutes*. The first one, wisdom, was naturally one of the most important and common features in presentations of an ideal king, and much used also in Anglo-Saxon England especially in the literature of King Alfred's reign.⁴⁵³ The passages about the king's wisdom in Ælfric's tract (*he sceal wissian mid wisdom his folke and unriht aleggen*

⁴⁵⁰ 'Wite ec þe king hu his is icweðen on boken. gif he rihtwisnesse ne halt. þet swa swa he is on heuene on his kine setle to-foran oðer mennen; swa he bið eft in iþered on þan neoþemeste pinan under þan unrihtwise deoule þe he er iherd and icwemde.' Ibid., 117.

⁴⁵¹ Records for Anglo-Saxon Text: "Lives 1 (Nativity of Christ)". *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*.

⁴⁵² Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 20. Cf. Alcuin: 'Cujus excellentiores virtutes, quatuor esse manifestum est, id est, prudentia, qua [*Al.*, quae] agenda vel non agenda discernit; et iustitia, qua Deus colitur, et amatur, et recte vivitur inter consocias animas; temperantia, quae concupiscentiam vel iram gubernat, ne definitos honestatis terminos transgrediantur; fortitudo, qua adversa hujus vitae quaecunque contingant, constanti animo tolerat.' Alcuinus, *Opusculum sextum: De animae ratione liber ad Eulaliam virginem*. Patrologia Latina Database: vol. 101.

⁴⁵³ See David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

and þene ileaue areren),⁴⁵⁴ in the *Homily for the Monday in Rogationtide*, seen above, and consequently in Wulfstan who closely adapts this Ælfric's homily in the *Institutes* (*Þurh cynincges wisdom folc wyrð gesælig and gesundful and sigefast. And ðy sceal wis cyning cristendom and cynedom miclian and mærsian, and a he sceal hæþendom hindrian and hyrwan*)⁴⁵⁵ are commonplaces and repeat the prevailing tradition.

It is noteworthy that all of the other virtues presented in the discussion on the soul are also present in these texts. Justice in particular gained much importance in Wulfstan, which is understandable considering his sustained interest in the legal principles of society. Justice, *rihtwisnys*, is the basis for peace and order, and through justice the king is responsible for the protection of the weak and the punishment of the wicked. He should be merciful towards good people, and severe towards the evil. Basically, he is responsible for 'purifying his land in the sight of God and the world,' as Wulfstan vehemently formulated.⁴⁵⁶ This theme is important in *De octo uiciis*, naturally, as the text derives from a tract on an unjust king, but it is not so much emphasized in Ælfric's *Homily for the Monday in Rogationtide*. Wulfstan concentrates on justice, righteous law, and correction as the most important feature and almost leaves the other features overshadowed by this accentuation. The fourth virtue, strength, is also closely tied to justice, which the king should exercise with great fortitude.

Therefore, the virtue of temperance, even though mentioned also by Wulfstan, gains much less space in his text than it does in Ælfric's. Patience (*modþwærnes*) is mentioned in the following passage, 'concerning kingdom' (*be cynedome*), but derives from a different source, Sedulius Scotus, rather than from Ælfric's adaptation of *De duodecim*, and the word to denote the virtue is different from Ælfric's text.⁴⁵⁷ In Ælfric's adaptation and in the *Homily for the Nativity of Christ*, however, temperance is mentioned explicitly as the most important virtue of all. *De octo uiciis* starts by mentioning that moderation is the mother of all virtues, and that all things

⁴⁵⁴ Morris, *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, 115.

⁴⁵⁵ Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 47. Wulfstan normally seems to have used *wisdom* instead of *snoternysse* when discussing prudence. Jost's list of Wulfstan's typical lexical choices is also seen in Dance, "Sound, Fury, and Signifiers," 45.

⁴⁵⁶ 'And do, swa him þearf is, clænsige his þeode for Gode and for worulde.' Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 50. Wulfstan used this phrase also in one of his law codes, VI Æthelred, 7.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

done in excess are harmful.⁴⁵⁸ Also in the passage on the unjust king, it is said that a king ‘should never be impatient’, and that he should be ‘unmoved in hardships and humble in peace’.⁴⁵⁹

As it is seen, therefore, the principal virtues of the king were the same as the virtues of the soul. Wisdom, righteousness, fortitude and temperance display themselves in both theological notions of the strengths of the soul and in the features of an ideal Christian king. This similarity between the ethical principles of an individual human being and those connected to a political office was essential already in classical philosophy, and proved to be as essential also later in the Middle Ages, but rarely perceived or studied in the Anglo-Saxon homiletic material. I would like to suggest, however, that seeing this connection is essential also in understanding the late Anglo-Saxon political thought, especially that of Ælfric. In Wulfstan’s case we cannot say for certain if he connected the virtues of the king as deeply to the theological notions than Ælfric did, but his textual and ideological dependence on Ælfric was evident also in this instance. The individual soul and its important features cannot be seen as separate from the concept of the political entity; what was important in living a good life as an individual was as important in conducting proper order as a society. The same principles had a common goal, to carry out a morally righteous life as a part of the Christian community, for achieving salvation and eternal life.

5.2.3. Priests, laymen, and warfare

The theological principles behind the order of society and its hierarchy touched also upon a matter which was perhaps painfully familiar for the people living in the beginning of the first millennium: warfare and its participants. As it has become evident, in several instances during his writing career Ælfric pointed out the different duties of laymen and clergy, especially when directing secular clergy in their pastoral duties, but also when instructing the lay aristocracy on how to lead a morally proper life.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Omnia nimia nocent. et temperancia mater virtutum dicitur. Pæt is on englisc. alle ofer done þing denað. and imetnesse is alre mihta moder.’ Morris, *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, 101. The source for this clause is not certain, but Mary Clayton has suggested that Ælfric drew it from Haymo of Auxerre. Mary Clayton, “Temperance as the Mother of Virtues in Ælfric,” *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 1 (2008).

⁴⁵⁹ ‘He ne scal beo nefre wemod [...] and beon on erfeðnesse anred and edmod on stilnesse.’ Morris, *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises*, 115.

One of the duties strictly tied to the secular sphere was warfare, and this theme is presented and commented upon repeatedly in Ælfric's pastoral letters. Next I will discuss how this theme was used in Ælfric's early production in his letter to Bishop Wulfstige (Fehr I) in about 992, and how it was developed in his pastoral letters from the time of his abbacy. These texts also provided material for Wulfstan to use in his *Canon Law Collection*, the *Institutes of Polity* and legal tracts.

The ethics of war had been a continuous subject of discussion in early medieval theology, and the disagreement between Christian doctrine and warfare had been treated together with biblical exegesis and broader theological and legal ideas.⁴⁶⁰ The issue of priests taking part in warfare was theologically problematic, as it broke the holy order of society and defiled their task as the mediators between God and people. As seen from the monastic point of view, the duty of the laity to take care of warfare was thus both a practical and spiritual responsibility. In reality the roles of warfare were not so clear, and it could happen that among the participants in war were also churchmen, not only unlearned secular clergy, but specifically those in the higher positions of ecclesiastical hierarchy. The figures in these positions were most often members of aristocratic families who were responsible for warfare and military protection. As Helen Nicholson has pointed out, the theory and practice of medieval warfare did not often meet each other, and especially bishops were even expected to engage in the warfare of their administrative areas.⁴⁶¹ The discourse of Ælfric and Wulfstan has to be regarded in this light, not as descriptions, but prescriptions—as attempts to actualize ideals into practice based on their knowledge on the 'proper' conduct of warfare.

For a learned monk like Ælfric it was important to stress the idea that it was wrong for the clergy to participate in secular warfare, and as such there is nothing peculiar in Ælfric's treatment. Ælfric's close relationship to the secular aristocracy, however, makes his comments interesting, since ealdormen were responsible for warfare in their assigned regions. Wulfstan, for his part, was as an archbishop even closer to the affairs of warfare; he, too, was responsible for the people of his area, and perhaps even aware of the military reality. What makes the issue of warfare in their works

⁴⁶⁰ On just war and Augustine's influence in the Middle Ages see Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁴⁶¹ Helen Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare: Theory and Practice of War in Europe 300–1500* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 64–65.

interesting is the development of the theme in different texts, during the time when the Viking attacks had intensified and political circumstances had become problematic, to say the least.

Even though the theological principles concerning the clergy and warfare should have been clear, especially if Ælfric was concerned, some biblical passages offered cause for misunderstanding. This applies especially to a passage in the Bible (John 18:10) in which St Peter succumbs to using violence in an attempt to defend Christ at the moment of his arrest. As St Peter was the principal saint and example for the clergy, the passage could be read in a way which entitled the priests' use of the sword. It seems that Ælfric had indeed encountered this issue and anticipated that some priests might argue against this rule. He states in his pastoral letters that 'some priests nevertheless say that the apostle Peter used weapons'.⁴⁶² Ælfric explains that this example is not to be read as a justification to carry weapons, but on the contrary it validates the point of not to. To counter these kinds of misunderstandings, Ælfric discusses the role of priests as non-violent, spiritual fighters of the Christian society. The importance of proper interpretation and Ælfric's tenacity to disseminate it are also in this instance at the forefront of the discourse.

The problem of priests taking part in secular affairs was first discussed in Ælfric's pastoral letter to Bishop Wulfsgige, written soon after 992.⁴⁶³ In this letter Ælfric dealt broadly with the duties of priests, and drew heavily on the Carolingian capitulary of Aachen, the first capitulary of Gherbald of Liège (*Iura quae sacerdotes debent habere*), written in ca. 802.⁴⁶⁴ The relationship between the clergy and the laity is presented as custodial; it was the duty of the priests to make sure that the laity knew the right Christian doctrine and, above all, behaved according to it. The right conduct of life and the correct knowledge of the Scripture were seen as means to create proper order, and in the aspiration to reach this order the clergy had a greater responsibility than the laity. The rigorous order of society becomes evident when Ælfric lists seven 'ranks' (*hadas*) of priests—but not of monks or nuns, as this letter was written with the secular clergy in mind. The ranks,

⁴⁶² 'Dicunt tamen quidam clerici Petrum apostolorum usum fuisse armis, eo quod abscidisset auriculam Malchi.' Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 55.

⁴⁶³ Clemoes, "Supplement", in Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, cxliv–cxlv.

⁴⁶⁴ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 195. Edited in Peter Brommer, ed. *Leges, Capitula Episcoporum*, vol. 1, *The Digital Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Hannover: Monumenta Germaniae Historica & Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 1984), 3–21.

hadas, were sacred, and in accordance with the rest of Ælfric's discourse on order, it is stated that those who live according to the rules that are set upon them, are saved and shall go to heaven.⁴⁶⁵ In the letter Ælfric reprimands the priests for wanting to participate in secular affairs and breaking the rules. The priests are reprimanded for wanting to act as reeves and wishing to leave the church in favour of secular affairs.⁴⁶⁶ When engaging with the issue of warfare Ælfric uses the metaphor of holy books as weapons for spiritual work (*þa wæpna to þam gastlicum weorce*).⁴⁶⁷ This metaphor serves as a transition to the discussion of warfare, but there is no explicit criticism about carrying weapons or taking part in warfare. In this letter Ælfric does not yet expound on the issue of priests and warfare, and only briefly states that priests should not carry weapons nor start strife (*ne he wæpna ne werige, ne ne wirce sace*).⁴⁶⁸ Most of the rules imposed on the clergy in the letter were derived from *Iura quae sacerdotes debent habere*, and this passage seems to me to be a direct, abridged translation of it (*Nemo ex sacerdotum numero arma pugnantium umquam portat nec litem contra proximum ullam excitat*).⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, since this translation is not commented upon further, it is plausible to think that at this stage Ælfric did not see it necessary or relevant to engage with this issue. As it was stated, the period in the 990s was still fairly peaceful in terms of the Viking attacks.

⁴⁶⁵ 'Þas hadas syndon halige and to heofenum gebringað þæra preosta sawla þe hy syferlice healdað.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 205–206.

⁴⁶⁶ 'How dare you now despise the ordinance of them all, when monks keep the ordinances of one man, the holy Benedict, and live by his direction, and if anywhere they break it, they atone for it again by the direction of their abbot with all humility? You, too, have a rule, if you were willing to read it, in which you can see how it is laid down concerning you; but you love secular concerns and wish to be reeves and desert your churches and the ordinances entirely. We will nevertheless tell you the ordinances, lest we ourselves perish along with you.' ('Hu durre ge nu forseon heora ealra gesetnyssa, þonne munecas healdað anes mannes gesetnyssa, þæs halgan Benedictus, and be his dihte lybbað, and gyf hy hwær hit tobræcað, hi hit gebetað eft be heora abbuddes dihte mid ealre eadmodnyssse? Ge habbað eac regol, gyf ge hine rædan woldan, on þam ge magon geseon, hu hit geset is be eow. Ac ge lufiað woruld-spræca and wyllað beon grefan and forlætað eowre cyrcan and þa gesetnyssa mid ealle. We wyllað swapeah secgan þa gesetnyssa eow, þe læs þe we sylfe losigon forð mid eow.') Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 23; Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 216–217. Trans. Whitelock.

⁴⁶⁷ 'He sceal habban eac þa wæpna to þam gastlicum weorce, ær þan þe he beo gehadod, þæt synd þa halgan bec.' ———, *Councils and Synods*, 206–207.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁶⁹ Brommer, *Leges, Capitula Episcoporum*, 20.

This brief statement that he had adopted from the Carolingian capitulary later develops into more elaborate discussions about correct moral and societal order.

In his later compositions on the same issue Ælfric elaborates on the passage and introduces the example of St Peter. Firstly, the example appears in the private letter from Ælfric to Wulfstan (Fehr 2a), following the metaphor of three pillars, and then also in the first Latin (Fehr 2), and the first Old English letter (Fehr II), from which it was transferred to Wulfstan's *Canon Law Collection*. In the private letter the issue is not developed further than stating, by quoting the Bible, that Jesus had told Peter to put away his sword.⁴⁷⁰ In the first Latin letter and its Old English translation, it is anticipated that as a counterargument the priests could use the example of St Peter, who carried a sword and struck off the ear of Jesus's enemy.⁴⁷¹ The first Old English letter (Fehr II) states:

He is not to be quarrelsome; and he is not to stir up strife; but he must reconcile the quarrelsome, if he can. He may not bear weapon nor go to battle, for the canon tells us: if he is slain in war or because of some dispute, on no account may mass be celebrated for him or prayers be offered for him; but yet one may bury him. Now some priests say that Peter had a sword when he struck off the ear of the wicked man, the Jewish servant, as we read about it. But we say in truth that the righteous Saviour, and those who followed him, did not go armed or with any warfare; as it is written about him, that he went through the land, teaching the faith, doing good and healed the insane and healed all infirmity and sicknesses. He did not strive nor shout, nor proceed with fierceness, but was brought to slaughter just as an innocent lamb. Yet there came suddenly there among them, when the Jews bound him, two swords to hand, as it is said: Dear Lord, here are two swords. If they had been there before, they would not have spoken thus; and if Peter had been all allowed to kill the man, Christ would not have commanded him to hide the sword. He said: Put the sword into the sheath. He did not wish to injure the impious man, but he at once healed him in the afflicted ear. The

⁴⁷⁰ 'Et Dominus dixit Petro carnaliter adhuc sapienti: "Mitte gladium in vaginam. Omnes qui acceperint gladium, gladio peribunt" Non dixit gladio occiduntur, sed gladio peribunt.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 252.

⁴⁷¹ Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 55–56. Cf. Wulfstan rec A. 75 and rec. B. 165. Cross and Hamer, *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*, 99, 169.

*same Peter, who struck off that ear, later was hanged on a cross for faith in the Saviour, and he did not resist, neither by word nor by deed.*⁴⁷²

When compared with the Latin letter, the Old English translation is fairly similar, but shows some minor changes with the way this example is authorized. Whereas in the Latin letter Ælfric had appealed to the authoritative examples of martyr saints⁴⁷³ and St Martin⁴⁷⁴ in establishing the arguments against carrying weapons, in the Old English translation only biblical examples are given. This might suggest that when translating the Latin letter Ælfric expected the vernacular letter to have a less educated audience in terms of the story of St Martin, but given the interest that he had shown towards this particular saint in his earlier texts, this may not be a sufficient explanation.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, the example of St Peter was in both cases elaborated on in the texts written at the time of his abbacy. He emphasizes the point that within this story, which the unlearned priests might use as an argument for the use of weapons, Jesus immediately told Peter to put down the sword, and healed the man's ear.

⁴⁷² 'Ne he sacful ne beo; ne he ceaste ne astyrige; ac he sceal þa sacfullan gesibbian, gif he mæg. Ne mot he wæpnu werian ne to gefeohte faran, forþon þe se canon us segð: gif he ofslagen bið on folces gefeohte oþþe for sumere ceaste, þæt man nateshwon ne mot him mæssian fore ne him fore gebiddan; ac bebyrian swaþeah. Nu secgað sume preostas þæt Petrus hæfde sweord þa þa he of asloh þæs forscyldigan eare, þæs iudeiscan þeowan, swa swa we rædað be þam. Ac we secgað to soþan þæt se soðfaste Hælend, ne þa þe him folgodon, ne ferdon gewæpnode, ne mid nanum wige; swa swa hit awriten is be him, þæt he ferde geond land, geleafan tæcende, god wyrcente, and þa witseocan gehælde and ealle untrymnyse and adla gehælde. He ne flat, ne ne hrymde, ne mid hreðnyse ne ferde, as wæs gebroht to slege swa swa unscaþþig lamb. þær coman þeah færlice, swa swa hit gecweden is: Domine, ecce gladii duo hic. 'Drihten leof, he syndon twas sweord.' Gif þær ær wæron, ne cwædon hi na swa; and gif Petrus moste þone man fulslean, þonne ne hete Crist hine behydan þæt sweord. He cwæð: 'Do þæt sweord into þære scaþe.' He nolde geyfelian þam arleasan menn, ac he hine sona gehælde on besettum eare. Se ylca Petrus eft, þe þæt eare of asloh, wearð ahangen on rode for þæs Hælendes geleafan, and he ongean ne wan, naþer mid worde ne mid dæde.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 269–299. Trans. Whitelock.

⁴⁷³ 'Nullus igitur sanctorum umquam pugnando saecularibus armis adeptus est regnum coelorum, sed potius martirium patiendo aut pie et iuste uiuendo.' Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 56.

⁴⁷⁴ 'Sanctus Martinus quoque dixit Iuliano, perfido imperatori: Christi enim sum miles; pugnare mihi non licet.' Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ælfric wrote a homily on St Martin in *CH* II.34 and *LS* 31. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series: Text*, 288–298; Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 219–313.

The importance of the example for the clergy rose from the status that St Peter had; he was not only the symbol of papacy, but as the first apostle also the primary saint of the clergy. The work of priests as successors of the apostles culminated in St Peter, who was thus an example also for priestly life and behaviour. But St Peter was problematic in two aspects, especially for the ideology of the Benedictine reform movement. Firstly, St Peter had been married before he began to follow Christ. This did not agree with the strict insistence on chastity and virginity of the clergy that the movement vindicated. Secondly, as the passage on priests and warfare makes it clear, St Peter had used violence against a man. Both of these aspects were important themes in the pastoral teaching of that era.⁴⁷⁶

Wulfstan is thought to have revised Ælfric's letter in one of the manuscripts (CCCC 201).⁴⁷⁷ The changes and additions show minor alterations to the theme, but not significant differences in content. Wulfstan added some more argumentation against priests carrying weapons, and expanded the last chapter of the letter which mentions St Peter's martyrdom and death on the cross without resistance, confirming the non-violent nature of the clergy. Wulfstan stresses that it was not the task of the clergy to fight.⁴⁷⁸ When estimating the relationship between Ælfric and Wulfstan on the issue of priests and warfare, it is noteworthy that Ælfric's main source for his composition, the capitulary of Aachen, appears in three manuscripts that are considered to be connected to Wulfstan.⁴⁷⁹ All of the manuscripts continue with the shorter recension of Wulfstan's *Canon Law Collection* (*Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti*). CCCC 265 also contains Ælfric's First and Second Latin letters for Wulfstan (Fehr 2 and 3), and Ælfric's *Letter to the monks of Eynsham*. A large proportion of the collection consists of numerous ecclesiastical excerpts on various practical matters on how to conduct ecclesiastical life, and touches upon matters such as the proper conduct of bishops, and the exemplary power of priests who teach right but live

⁴⁷⁶ On the importance of virginity for the reform movement see Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*; Cubitt, "Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England."

⁴⁷⁷ This was established by Jost in review of Fehr in *Englische Studien*, iii (1918), 105–112. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 255.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁴⁷⁹ CCCC 265 (Ker 53, Gneuss 73); BL, Cotton Nero A.i (Ker 164, Gneuss 341); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barlow 37: 6464.

badly.⁴⁸⁰ It also contains issues of penance, marriage, confession, and excommunication, and implements earlier texts which were useful for Wulfstan's own composition, such as King Edgar's fourth law code, excerpts from Amalarius of Metz's *Liber officialis* on priests' vestments and the order of various masses, Wulfstan's own homily on baptism, and the *Capitula* of Theodulf of Orléans.⁴⁸¹ We must, however, be wary of assigning a too direct relationship of influence between Ælfric and Wulfstan on this matter, since the actual relationship between Ælfric's use of the Capitulary of Aachen in Fehr I, on the one hand, and Wulfstan's use of both Ælfric's letter and Gherbald's capitulary in his works, on the other, is very complicated. Fehr I is, in addition to the *Canon Law Collection* (version B), the most important source for Wulfstan's *Canons of Edgar*, a collection of vernacular episcopal statutes. The manuscripts that can be connected to Wulfstan, in which this capitulary appears, represent a different manuscript tradition than the one Ælfric seems to have used in his letter to Wulfsige.⁴⁸² In this light it appears that Ælfric and Wulfstan both used the text independently, and that Ælfric was not the only source for Wulfstan in this matter.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ Isidore of Seville, excerpts from book 3 of *Sententiae*, ch. 36–38.

⁴⁸¹ On pages 121–160. Manuscript description in the *Parker Library on the Web*, MS CCCC 265. Corpus Christi College, the Stanford University Libraries, and Cambridge University Library. Accessed 5.9.2010.

<http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/>

⁴⁸² Brommer, *Leges, Capitula Episcoporum*, 5.

⁴⁸³ See also Michael Elliot, "Gherbald's First Capitulary, the Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti, and the Sources of Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar," *Notes and Queries* 57, no. 2 (2010): 163. In Ælfric's second Latin letter to Wulfstan, he used only ch. 12 of the capitulary, which concerned selling baptism or sacraments. Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, 64. The passage is not written at all verbatim. In fact, the only similarity in detail is the adapted quotation from Matth. 21:12 or Mark 15:11 in both of the texts: '...ne vendentes et ementes in templo columbas imitentur' (Gherbald); 'quia ipse eiecit de templo cum flagello uendentes et ementes in illo' (Fehr III). Cf. Matth. 21:12: 'Et intravit Iesus in templum et eiciebat omnes vendentes et ementes in templo, et mensas nummulariorum evertit et cathedras vendentium columbas.' Mark 15.11: 'Et cum introisset in templum, coepit eicere vendentes et ementes in templo et mensas nummulariorum et cathedras vendentium columbas evertit.' It might be suspected that if this is the only 'trace' of Gherbald's first capitulary in Fehr III, it was not actually used for writing this passage, as the differences are so big. It might be more plausible to think that Ælfric used this biblical passage as a commonplace from other sources, or that it was so common topic to choose when writing about selling sacraments, that it would have not even required a direct textual model.

Furthermore, the criticism and the imposition of monastic standards make it clear that the secular clergy was regarded to be inferior to the monks who lived by the rule. In the course of the pastoral letters the secular clergy was associated with features like lack of Latin knowledge, lack of self-discipline, lack of chastity, and even lack of knowledge of what their assigned role in the holy society was. Catherine Cubitt has shown how the patronizing attitudes towards the clergy were similar to attitudes towards women, and both were regarded inferior because of their 'failure to conform to monastic standards of sexual purity and learning.'⁴⁸⁴ This is an important notion, and I would like to add to this that not only chastity and learning, but also the willingness to participate in secular matters tainted the clergy and their religious responsibility to perform their duties in society. Like chastity at all times, warfare was also a very pressing issue in this particular time, and a growing interest in this issue is apparent that develops from the short remarks in the letter to bishop Wulfsgie, to the long explanations in the letters that date to the time of Ælfric's abbacy.

In his pastoral letters Ælfric, and consequently Wulfstan, repeated this ideal of the reform. They insisted that as heirs to the disciples of Christ, contemporary priests should never carry weapons with them, but should only preach and heal people. The contemporary clergy is scolded for wanting to take part in secular affairs and warfare. In doing this, they desecrate themselves and their order, putting future salvation at risk. On the ideological level this was, in Ælfric's view, more than a breach of conventional social tasks; it was a theological matter which concerned all humankind. It appears that Ælfric placed more emphasis on this admonition in the end of his career; in the letter to Wulfsgie he did not elaborate on the matter at all, instead just briefly repeating the clause from the Carolingian capitulary. In the letters from his later career the issue was elaborated on by adding a lengthy passage of the example of St Peter, making the issue a very pressing conclusion for the letters. This development shows a connection between the literary discourse on peace and renunciation from violence, and the real policies of the time, which in the 990s were definitely more peaceful than the situation at the time of Ælfric's abbacy after 1005. The issue of warfare brings us to the core of the next section, which continues with textual transmission, and develops from the theme of warfare into a presentation of society divided in three parts.

⁴⁸⁴ Cubitt, "Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England," 19.

5.3. The metaphor of the three pillars

Next I will examine the transmission of political thought with the help of the metaphor of the three pillars of kingdom, which appears first in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and pastoral letters, and was thereafter used by Wulfstan in his *Institutes of Polity* and in a homily which was one of his last works before his death, *Larspell* (Napier 50). First I will examine the notion in the works of Ælfric, and then discuss their transmission to the works of Wulfstan. Lastly I will evaluate the nature of transmission and the wider implications of the use of this idea. The main task is to specify the religious rhetoric used in the discourse, and through this to evaluate its meaning and function in the given historical circumstances. In some cases the linguistic sphere changes from Latin to Old English, and in others the 'translation' is done within the vernacular, adapting the form and content of the text, thus giving it a new angle. The point is not only that the same idea can be used in different ways, making the idea versatile, but that this also implies the effectiveness of words. The discourse itself is in the process of making the concept of society, not reflecting the existing circumstances.

The idea of a tripartite society, those who pray (*oratores*), those who work (*laboratores*) and those who fight (*bellatores*), is mostly known from its feudalistic connections, and it has gained interest especially as an expression of inequality prevailing in a stagnant system where people were assigned to their place according to their prestige. The work by Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, is still the most comprehensive account of the idea and its development from an imagined concept to an accepted notion of a three-layered society. It concentrates heavily on eleventh-century Francia, and sees the works by the bishops Adalbero of Laon (d. 1030 or 1031) and Gerard of Florennes (bishop of Cambrai) (ca. 975–1051) as the cornerstones in promoting the idea.⁴⁸⁵ Duby's approach to the idea shows that he considered its development to be quite evolutionary; he saw the idea as an underlying structure in the mentality of the eleventh century. Consequently and as a response to Duby, earlier references to the idea in Anglo-Saxon England were treated by Timothy Powell in his article "The 'Three Orders' of Society in Anglo-Saxon

⁴⁸⁵ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Originally published as *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, 1978.

England".⁴⁸⁶ Powell responded to Duby's approach by accentuating the varied applications of the idea in different contexts. He also re-evaluated some of Duby's ideas about the origins of the concept. My purpose here is not to take part in the discussion of the origins and development of the concept, but to examine its usage in a specific historical context, and show *how* the concept is treated in the process of transmission from Ælfric to Wulfstan. My examination also takes into account the appearance of the idea in one of Wulfstan's homilies (Napier 50), which both Duby and Powell dismissed. The goal is therefore to discuss the meaning of rhetoric and literary discourse, and the implications of the transmission process itself. Simply put, the transmission of an idea from one text to another, or from one author to another can be seen as an act of interpretation; the way the concept was used and rewritten defines the attitudes the authors had towards this specific idea and its authority. The examination of the transmission, adaptation and regulation of this idea helps to determine the terms in which it was seen appropriate and possible to transfer a concept like this into another sphere, be that linguistic or genre-related.⁴⁸⁷ This approach also points out that the meaning of a text is not restricted to one, unchanging concept, nor is it recovered only by tracing the textual antecedents and models further back in history, but that meanings are produced in each instance of interpretation.

5.3.1. Three orders in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and pastoral letters

The notion of the division of society in three parts, a doctrine of three estates, those who pray, those who fight, and those who work, occurs in three texts of Ælfric, and is closely tied to the issue of warfare. Ælfric uses this idea to comment specifically on the role of priests and laymen, and for this purpose the metaphor was used as an exemplifying and categorizing feature to segregate the duties and responsibilities of different parts of society in a simple way.

The idea that a kingdom is dependent on all three parts of society occurs in Anglo-Saxon literature for the first time in King Alfred's (871–899)

⁴⁸⁶ Timothy E. Powell, "The 'Three Orders' of Society in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994).

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Stanton, *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England*, 1–5.

translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*. It does not appear in the Latin original.⁴⁸⁸ Ælfric certainly knew of the translation, as he used it extensively in his homilies *On Auguries* (LS 17) and the *Nativity of Christ* (LS 1). Some traces are seen also in his second series of *Catholic Homilies* (CH II.23),⁴⁸⁹ but it does not seem to be a direct source for the concept of three estates, nor has one been established so far.⁴⁹⁰ The metaphor of society divided into three orders like a three-legged chair was not that common in the literature of Western Europe at the time Ælfric wrote. It became more popular only later, especially in Francia, together with theological discussions on inequality, but the first instances when the idea was becoming more popular are coeval with Ælfric.⁴⁹¹ Given the uncertainty of

⁴⁸⁸ On the development of this notion, see Powell, "The 'Three Orders' of Society in Anglo-Saxon England." NB. traces of *De consolatione philosophiae* are seen peculiarly also in King Æthelred's charter of Eynsham (S 911), and in three other charters (S 438, 429, 470): 'Duo quippe sunt quibus omnis humanorum actuum constat effectus, uoluntas scilicet et potestas, quorum si alterum desit, nichil est quod explicari quis queat: uoluntate autem defficiente, ne aggreditur quidem quisque quod non uult; ac si potestas desit, uoluntas omnino necesse est ut frustra sit.' Salter, *Eynsham Cartulary*, 19–20.

⁴⁸⁹ Records for Source Title: "OEBoeth". *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*.

⁴⁹⁰ The reason for not assuming that King Alfred was the source for Ælfric is the vocabulary. Alfred provided the vernacular terms (*gebedmen*, *fyrðmen*, *weorcmen*), whereas Ælfric always provides the Latin terms, as if translating from a Latin source. The vocabulary of Ælfric when expanding the function of these parts is also dissimilar. Wulfstan, however, in two out of three terms, used the same vernacular terms as Alfred (*gebedmen*, *weorcmen*), but in place of warriors, where Alfred used *fyrðmen*, Wulfstan used *wigmen*. Powell, "The 'Three Orders' of Society in Anglo-Saxon England," 113.

⁴⁹¹ While the first instances in which this specific idea in this form was used in Francia are early eleventh-century bishops Adalbero of Laon and Gerard of Florennes, similar notions can be seen already in the ninth century, in the works of Haymo of Auxerre (d. 866), and his successor Heiric (d. 877 x 883), but the terms are used differently in them. *Ibid.*, 105–109. Ælfric knew and used both Haymo's and Heiric's works; possibly he got the idea to use this division from them. It is worth noting, however, that Adalbero, in his satirical poem targeted against the contemporary monastic reform, addressed to King Robert II the Pious, used the same notions as Ælfric did, and also mentioned that all the orders support the whole, which occurs in both Ælfric and Wulfstan. (Adalbero Laudunensis Episcopus, 'Carmen ad Rotbertum Francorum Regem' PL 141, 0771–0785.) Gerard of Florennes used the idea in his theories of society as well, and saw the division and inequality as a necessary evil in God's ordained natural law. See further on Gerard and Adalbero: Duby, *The Three Orders*. It should also be noted that Abbo of Fleury used the idea in his *Liber Apologeticus*, addressed to the Kings Hugh and Robert. The interaction between Fleury and Ramsey, for instance, among other connections between the reformed monasteries both in England as in the continent, provide the simplest link when it comes to the increase of this

Ælfric's source text, and the rare occurrence of the idea in the contemporary literary milieu, it is notable that Ælfric has chosen to use it in his works.

Ælfric first presented the doctrine of three orders some time before his abbacy, in the 990s. In a homiletic piece in the *Lives of Saints* (*Maccabees*, LS 25), which was written at the request of his lay patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær, Ælfric discusses the nature of warfare and its meaning in God's plans. The piece on the Maccabees is an adaptation from the Old Testament, and it is martial in tone and subject matter. The heroic virtues of a great leader are celebrated in the piece in a similar manner as in *Beowulf* or in the *Battle of Maldon*. The narrative thus resembles secular poetry more than pious literature. The doctrine of salvation does not play a part in the midst of the celebration of Judas Maccabeus's martial virtues. Therefore it is a curious piece in Ælfric's production. When treating his material, Ælfric has arranged and modified the rhetoric and style to introduce the proper interpretation. He has omitted martial material, redefines the sense of heroism according to Christian ethics, and in the end emphasizes the difference between the Old Testament law and the new Christian law.⁴⁹² This last feature serves to illustrate the point of figural reading; the battles of heroism and martial prowess should be read as allegories of the current spiritual fight. Ælfric thus manages to combine the heroic *ethos* with a religious meaning. The piece that is dealt with here follows the story, and it was added in order to clarify the point made in the end of the story of the Maccabees. Ælfric's interpretational schemes are allegory and typology; the common theme, as Bethurum stated, in all of the *Lives of Saints*, is the triumph of Christianity over paganism.⁴⁹³ The battles of the Old Testament were prefigurations of Christ's triumph, and are repeated in contemporary times in the good works of the Christians—this is the typology interpreted in the story.⁴⁹⁴ Peter Clemons has observed that with this kind of interpretation Ælfric strove to extract from the story its 'true', spiritual

idea in this time. It is not, however, my interest to decide where the idea was used first, but it definitely is not Adalbero or Gerard, who Duby pays most attention to.

⁴⁹² See in detail John Halbrooks, "Ælfric, the Maccabees, and the Problem of Christian Heroism," *Studies in Philology* 106, no. 3 (2009).

⁴⁹³ Dorothy Bethurum, "The Form of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," *Studies in Philology* 29, no. 4 (1932): 533.

⁴⁹⁴ Halbrooks, "Ælfric, the Maccabees, and the Problem of Christian Heroism," 267.

meaning, as opposed to its literal, historical meaning.⁴⁹⁵ This corresponds to exegetical theories, for instance Bede's theory of interpretation in his *De schematibus tropis*, when he discusses the literal, typological and moral meanings of allegories.⁴⁹⁶ This means that Ælfric promotes a similar view on textual interpretation, and that proper interpretation requires proper knowledge. Halbrooks concludes from this that it was this view on exegesis that made Ælfric worry about translation and writing in general. Because it was also possible for an uninitiated reader to interpret texts wrongly, it was the responsibility of the writer to produce correct content in a form that is understandable and clear. In addition, the writer or the interpreter must provide guiding help for the reader and remain true to the authoritative sources.⁴⁹⁷

The story of the Maccabees is tied to contemporary events by a reference to the Viking raids, and possibly this particular discussion was even prompted by them. Namely, Ælfric refers to the defensive warfare against the Vikings as 'just war', the only acceptable form of warfare (*iustum bellum is rihtlic gefeoht wið ða reðan flot-menn, oþþe wið oðre þeoda þe eard willað fordon*).⁴⁹⁸ The message of the story of the Maccabees was to show 'how God has often protected people from their enemies, if they worshipped him.'⁴⁹⁹ This is a notion that Ælfric raises also in the letter to Sigeward in about 1005, in which he states that the book of Judges clearly says that as long as the people (of Israel) worshipped God and sought true penance, they were protected from the pagans who lived around them (in this passage Ælfric refers to his former translations, and mentions to Sigeward that he believes this account would serve as an example for him).⁵⁰⁰ It was also in

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 268. Halbrooks refers to Peter Clemoes, "Ælfric", in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (Nelson, London 1966), 188.

⁴⁹⁶ Kendall, *Bede: Libri II De Arte Metrica et De Schematibus et Tropis*, 196–207.

⁴⁹⁷ Halbrooks, "Ælfric, the Maccabees, and the Problem of Christian Heroism," 268.

⁴⁹⁸ Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 114.

⁴⁹⁹ 'Oft is geswutelod hu god gescylde þæt folc wið heora wiþer-ascan gif he wurðodon hine.' Ibid., 120.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Seo boc us segð swutollice be þam folce þæt hi on sibbe wunedon swa lange swa hi wurðodon þone heofonlican God on his bigengum georne, and swa oft swa hi forleton þone lifiendan God, þonne wurdon hi gehegode and to hospe gedonne fram hæðenum leodum þe him abutan eardodon. Eft þonne hi clipodon on eornost to gode mid soþre dædbote, þonne sende he him fultum þurh sumne deman þe wiðsette heora feondum and hi alisde of heora yrmðe.' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 209–210.

that letter that Ælfric returned to the Maccabees, in his run-through of the books of the Old Testament. Again he emphasized the importance of following the laws of God; in the Old Testament it was shown how the wrath of God brought the heathen enemies and war onto the people, but that when the Maccabees obeyed God, he granted them victory over their enemies.⁵⁰¹ There is, however, a deeper lesson in the story than this. The connection between people's sins and the dissatisfaction of God was an important theme also to Wulfstan, as it will be seen especially in the next chapter, but Ælfric went beyond this to explain how this story should be read. The story itself should, in Ælfric's view, be seen as an allegory; in the times of the Old Testament people had to fight with real weapons, but after the new order set by Christ and the New Testament, people should turn to their inner selves, and fight against the Devil with their spiritual weapons.⁵⁰² The fact that Ælfric turns the whole issue of warfare into an allegorical and theological discussion emphasizes his point of the importance of the work of the clergy, who were most of all responsible for the well-being of society, including the laity. After finishing the story Ælfric clarifies his point on warfare by digressing to discuss the order of society. He gives an account of the division of society into *laboratores*, *bellatores* and *oratores*. He focuses on the role of the *oratores*, and accentuates that the lay soldiers should not force (*neadian* – to compel, force) the monks to participate in secular warfare.

You should know, however, that there are three orders in this world, set in unity. These are laboratores, oratores, and bellatores. Laboratores are those who toil for our food, oratores are those who intercede with God for us, bellatores are those who guard our towns, and defend our land against an attacking army. Now, the farmer toils for our food, and the worldly warrior must fight against our enemies, and the servant of God must constantly pray for us, and fight spiritually against invisible enemies. Now, the struggle of the monks against the invisible devils that lay snares around us is therefore greater than that of the worldly men who struggle against fleshly [foes], and fight against the visible [enemies]. Now the worldly soldiers should not compel the servants of God to the worldly battle away from the spiritual fight, because it will

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² 'Pæt ealde godes folc sceolde feohtan þa mid wæpnum, and heora gewinn hæfde haligra manna getacnung, þe to-dræfað þa leahtras and deofla heom fram on ðære niwan gecyðnyssse þe crist sylf astealde.' Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 112.

benefit them more that the invisible enemies are overcome than the visible. And it is severely harmful that they leave the Lord's service, and turn to worldly battles, which does not benefit them at all. Julian, the apostate and cruel Caesar, wanted to compel priests to worldly battle, and also the holy monks, and ordered to bring them to prison.⁵⁰³

The spiritual battles of the servants of God are greater than worldly battles, and the prayers of the monks will in the end profit the secular warriors more than their participation in the fights against fleshly enemies. The ways of dealing with the military campaigns should also, in Ælfric's point of view, be corrected to their proper order. The interest here is thus not to justify inequality in the world, but to use the model to emphasize the duties that the clergy is expected to fulfil. The tone here implies that the clergy was forced to take part in warfare, and Ælfric uses the example from Sulpicius Severus's *Life of St Martin* to illustrate his point of how badly this offended the rules of God.

The private letter (Fehr 2a) from Ælfric to Wulfstan (ca. 1002–1005) addresses this question also in a clear manner in a section headed 'De bellico apparatu'. The idea of three orders follows immediately the arguments against the participation of priests in warfare. Ælfric states that it is the duty of clergy to pray, preach, and take care of people, and that they are elected to wage spiritual war, which is more important than secular warfare, because the battle with the devil is more important and more real than earthly

⁵⁰³ 'Is swaðeah to witenne þæt on þysre worulde synd þreo endebyrdnysse on annysse gesette, þæt synd laboratores, oratores, bellatores. Laboratores synd þa þe urne bigleafan beswincað, oratores synd þa ðe us to Gode geðingiað, bellatores synd þa ðe ure burga healdað, and urne eard beweriað wið onwinnendne here. Nu swincð se yrðlincg embe urne bigleafan, and se woruldempa sceall winnan wið ure fynd, and se Godes þeowa sceall symle for us gebiddan, and feohtan gastlice, wið þa ungesewenlican fynd. Is nu forþy mare þæra muneca gewinn wið þa ungesewenlican deofla þe syrwiað embe us, þonne sy þæra woruldmanna þe winnað wiþ ða flæsclican, and wið þa gesewenlican <gesewenlice> feohtað. Nu ne sceolon þa woruldcempa to þam woruldlicum gefeohte þa Godes þeowan neadian fram þam gastlican gewinne, forðan þe him fremað swiðor þæt þa ungesewenlican fynd beon oferswyðde þonne ða gesewenlican; and hit bið swyðe derigendlic þæt hi Drihtnes þeowdom forlætan, and to woruldgewinne bugan, þe him naht to ne gebyriað. Iulianus, se wiðersaca and se wælhreowa casere, wolde neadian preostas to woruldlicum gecampe, and eac þa halgan munecas, and het hi on cwearterne gebringan.' Ibid., vol. 2, 121–123.

disputes, and it is its outcome which matters more.⁵⁰⁴ The tone in this text is different than in the previous one; he criticizes the priests who have taken up arms in warfare, not the secular leaders who have demanded the clergy to take up arms.

I suppose that it has not escaped the notice of Your Grace that there are three orders in the Church of God: those who work, those who fight, and those who pray. Those who work, obtain nourishment for us, and those who fight, have to defend our land with weapons from the assaults of the enemy. And those who pray – that is priests, monks, and bishops, who are chosen for the spiritual army – have to pray for all people, and always pursue for the services and offices of God, and to preach the universal faith, and to grant holy gifts for those who believe. And all who have been ordained into this [spiritual] army, even if they have previously carried secular weapons, must lay them down, and take up spiritual weapons, the coat of justice, the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit – which is the word of God – and fight bravely against spiritual wickedness. Is not he, who has come to this army, and afterwards wants to use secular weapons against carnal enemies, an apostate, retreating from the army of God to secular one? Thus he cannot be simultaneously in both armies, since the hand that has shed a man's blood cannot be worthy of sanctifying the chalice of Lord.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ Curiously, this section is only partly included in the pastoral letters, in which the doctrine of three orders is not present. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 244–245. Cf. this with a section in Wulfstan's *Canon Law Collection*: 'De militia'. Both of the texts have similar description of St Peter cutting the ear off the servant. Cross and Hamer, *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*, 99, 169–171.

⁵⁰⁵ 'Suspicio non latere almitatem tuam tres ordines fore in ecclesia Dei: laboratores, bellatores, oratores. Ordo laboratorum acquirit nobis victum, et ordo bellatorum debet armis patriam nostram ab incursibus hostium defendere, et ordo oratorum, id sunt clerici et monachi et episcopi, qui electi sunt ad spiritalem militiam, debent orare pro omnibus et servitiis seu officiis Dei semper insistere et fidem catholicam predicare et sancta charismata dare fidelibus. Et omnis qui ad istam militiam ordinatus, etsi antea secularia arma habuit, debet ea deponere tempore ordinationis et assumere spiritalia arma, lorica iustitiae et scutum fidei et galeam salutis et gladium spiritus, quod est verbum Dei, et bellare viriliter contra spiritalia nequitia. Qui ad istam militiam pervenit et vult postea secularibus armis uti contra hostes carnales, nonne erit apostata, recedens a militia Dei ad militiam secularem? Ergo non potest in ambabus militiis simul stare, quia illa manus quae humanum sanguinem effuderit non potest digne Domini calicem sanctificare.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 252.

As opposed to the first account in the *Lives of Saints*, it can be seen that in this later letter, from around 1005, Ælfric by no means criticizes the laity for *compelling* priests to take up arms, but blames the priests themselves for *wanting* to fight. Ælfric has apparently changed his mind about laymen forcing the clergy to fight, since he states that if a priest later in his life *wants* to use worldly weapons against carnal enemies, and return to worldly wars, he is an apostate. A man cannot be in two armies at the same time. As affirming pleas Ælfric offers biblical passages from Ephesians 6.14 and 6.16, for instance. Here Ælfric enters into the discussion about the two powers in the world, spiritual and secular, which was common to the discourse of Wulfstan, too. With this juxtaposition Ælfric forcefully reiterated the separated duties of the clergy and the laity. This can be seen as harsher criticism towards a much more serious crime, because the priests were, as Ælfric reminds his readers many times, responsible for the morality and the right conduct of the laity, and this being so, the clergy was charged with much more accountability in society than the laity, which was expected to be faulty and susceptible to errors.

The issue of priests taking part in warfare seems to have been of some importance, and as I believe, to write about this was not only to repeat old worn-out commonplaces. The contents and the intended audience of the private letter also support this view. Given that the matters addressed in the letter, as well as their further examination in the following pastoral letters which Ælfric wrote to Wulfstan, appear also in a vernacular collection of canons that Wulfstan compiled (*Canons of Edgar*), it can be assumed that it was during the preparation of the canons that Wulfstan needed advice on these matters. And as the matter of priests and warfare takes up a considerable amount of space in the letter, it must reflect the genuine concern of the time.

Powell has made an important point about priestly warfare and the ideology of kingship of this time, and has demonstrated that the kind of theocratic kingship which the Benedictine reform endorsed blurred the conceptions of spiritual and secular warfare. Reformed monasticism promoted the status of the king as God's vicar, and consequently service to the kingdom was seen as service to Christianity. According to Powell this kind of royal ideology caused many priests, especially those in higher positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to take part in warfare. Similarly, it

was this misuse of monastic ideologies that Ælfric battled against.⁵⁰⁶ This would make Ælfric's discourse similar to that of Adalbero of Laon, who in his satirical poem attacked the Cluniac reformists and ridiculed their ideas of the battling monks.⁵⁰⁷ I agree with Powell in that spiritual and secular notions were very much intermingled when it came to political thought, and that the alliance between the king and reformed monasticism had its effects on the strongly religious discourse in the literature of the time. However, I would explain Ælfric's intentions when addressing this issue slightly differently. These particular pieces were targeted most of all to the secular clergy to instruct them in their clerical duties, and not to the upper echelons of the church hierarchy. It is questionable how widespread the ideologies of the reformed monasticism were among the secular clergy. There are also several other instances in Ælfric's works in which the issue of priestly warfare is treated more thoroughly, and the intensity of the discourse grows stronger with the political turmoil of the time. I would thus rather see this as a response to the effects that the Viking attacks had brought about, and not see the partaking of priests in warfare as a direct result of the reformed monastic ideologies. It was rather Ælfric's Augustinian thought on order and proper conduct of life, with theological consequences, that this discussion was connected to. The final example in which the three orders are dealt with further clarifies my point, as it turns the discourse to another direction, away from priestly warfare.

The three orders are found for the last time in Ælfric's letter to Sigeward of Eastheolon in around 1005. Ælfric gives the account of the three orders as an extension to his admonition to the king's counsellors to take a good look at the state of society, and introduces the metaphor of a three-legged chair to refer to society. Here Ælfric talks about the kingly 'throne' (*cynestol*), whereas before he had talked about orders in 'this world' (*on þysre worulde synd þreo endebyrdnyssse*) or in the Church of God (*tres ordines fore in ecclesia Dei*). He urges the king's counsellors to fix the broken leg, but it is not so clear anymore that it is the *oratores* that should be mended. As in previous instances, they do merit additional remark, but in this text also the warriors, *bellatores*, are given attention, as if to encourage the *witan* to arrange the military defence of the country better.

⁵⁰⁶ Powell, "The 'Three Orders' of Society in Anglo-Saxon England," 124–129.

⁵⁰⁷ Duby, *The Three Orders*, 54–55.

The counsellors should think with wise consideration, [now] when there is too much evil among mankind, which of the pillars of the throne is broken and should fix it soon. The throne stands on these three legs: laboratores, bellatores, oratores. Laboratores are those who provide food for us, farmers and serfs, committed to this one purpose. Oratores are those who intercede with God for us and promote Christendom among Christian people in God's servitude with spiritual labour, committed to this one purpose, which is necessary for us all. Bellatores are those who guard our towns and also our land against the approaching army, fighting with weapons, just like Paul said, the teacher of the people, in his teaching: Non sine causa portat miles gladium et cetera. The warrior does not carry his sword without a cause. He is God's thane, who for his own benefit is set to punish evil-doers. On these three legs stands the king's throne and if one is broken down, it instantly falls down, certainly ruining [also] the other legs. But why would this belong to us to think on? This should be reflected upon by those who are responsible for taking care of it.⁵⁰⁸

The theme that Ælfric introduces here is just warfare, and designates the worldly soldiers as 'God's thanes' (*Godes þen*), a term that was usually used of saints or of the apostles. Military rhetoric is used extensively in the New Testament as metaphors of spiritual hard work of Christians, and Ælfric himself used similar rhetoric in his previous passages on the three orders, and even the exact same metaphor in the story of the Maccabees. There the metaphor was used of the warriors of the Old Testament, who should be

⁵⁰⁸ 'Witan sceoldan smeagan mid wislicum geþeahte þonne on mancinne to micel yfel bið hwilc þæra stelenna þæs cinestoles wære tobrocen and betan ðone sona. Se cinestol stynt on þisum þrim stelum: laboratores, bellatores, oratores. Laboratores sind þe us bigleofan tiliað yrðlingas and æhte men to þam anum betæhte. Oratores syndon þe us þingað to Gode and cristendom fyrðriað on cristenum folcum on Godes þeowdome to ðam gastlican gewinne, to þam anum betæhte us eallum to þearfe. Bellatores sindon þe ure burga healdað and eac urne eard wið þone sigendne here feohtende mid wæmnum, swa swa Paulus sæde se þeoda lareow on his lareowdome: Non sine causa portat miles gladium et cetera. Ne byrð na se cniht butan intingan his swurd. He ys Godes þen þe sylfum to þearfe on ðam yfelum wyrceandum to wræce gesett. On þisum þrim stelum stynt se cynestol and gif an bið forud he fylð adun sona þamm oðrum stelum to unþearfe gewiss. Ac hwæt gebyrað us embe þis to smeagenne? Þis sceolon smeagan þe þæs giman sceolon.' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 228; Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeward*, 266, 380–381.

seen as allegories of the spiritual battles that are fought after the dispensation of Christ, as Ælfric reminds.⁵⁰⁹ But in this last reference to the three orders in the letter to Sigeweard the setting has turned around, and the secular warriors are denoted as God's thanes, which at first seems paradoxical, since everywhere else in Ælfric's works worldly warfare is condemned and peace promoted. This kind of rhetoric about worldly soldiers as God's thanes even brings to mind the usage of *miles Christi* for secular soldiers who battle for the just cause of God against heathens.

To clarify this paradox, I would like to argue that both issues, concerning priests and warfare as well as military defence, are in Ælfric's thought connected to his theological notions on the order of the world, and that in both instances the need for amendment was brought on by the Viking attacks. It is unlikely that Ælfric wanted to promote the status of the warrior with this religious reference, but rather to point out the same principle as in previous instances, that the duties of each part of society, also of the laity, are holy and should be tended to. It is the *bellatores*, secular lords, who should see to the security of the land, and that is their sacred task. So far it seems that they have failed in their task to ward off the enemies. Furthermore, the criticism is not limited to warfare. He continues to explain that the same God's thanes, if they are to fulfil their duties, set by God, must also take care that the judgements they make are righteous and not influenced by bribes.⁵¹⁰ Bribery, wrong judgements, and sins are signs of an evil state of society, and the secular lords must rectify their conduct both in arranging the military defence and the righteous administration of laws, for the better of the whole society.

⁵⁰⁹ 'On þam dagum was alyfed to alecgenne his fynd, and swiþost ða hæðenan þe him hetole wæron, and se wæs godes ðegen þe ða swiðost feaht wið heora onwinnendan to ware heora [leoda]. ac crist on his tocyme us cydde oðre ðincg, and het us healdan sibbe, and soðfæstnyssse æfre, and we sceolon winnan wið þa wælhreowan fynd, þæt synd ða ungesewenlican, and þa swicolan deofla þe willað ofslean ure sawla mid leathrum.' Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, vol. 2, 112.

⁵¹⁰ 'Se rihtwisa God lufað rihte domas, ac medsceattas awendað wolice to oft þa rihtan domas ongean Drihtenes willan and seo yfelnyss becymð ofer eallum folce, þær ðær se unþeaw orsorghlice rixað. Se þe Godes þegen bið sceolde deman rihtlice butan ælcum medsceatte mid soðfæstnyssse. Þonne wurðode he God mid þam godan þeawe and his med wære micel for Gode, se ðe leofað and rixað a to worulde.' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 228–229; Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeweard*, 266–267.

Compared to the first and second instance of the three orders, this text introduces a more tangible connection to the nature of Ælfric's times. Whereas in the two former texts the concept served as a tool to admonish priests in their conduct of life, this last example turns the arrangement in another direction. The outspoken judgement of the state of society is laid upon the responsibility of the laity. It is the counsellors, the *witan*, who should contemplate the state, and act accordingly. Nowhere else is the responsibility of the warriors laid out as openly as in this text. Especially when seeing the end of the passage, it cannot be doubted that this text was written as an admonition to the lay aristocracy in high power. As Ælfric states in the letter himself, and as it was typical of him in general, it was not only Sigeward that he had in mind when writing this piece, but a wider audience: 'This text was written to one man, but it may nonetheless benefit many'.⁵¹¹ Of the three texts that promote the idea of three orders, this is the one that Ælfric could expect to be heard by the men in power. The two previous ones build on the very same notion, but emphasize the responsibility of the *clergy*, not the laity, in their work for the right order of society. The spiritual battles of the priests are not prominent here; this shows brilliantly how Ælfric could use the same idea to impose his advice on two different parts of society. Also, it is evident that he was aware of the different audiences, and changed the nuances of the notion of three orders accordingly.

The grounds to encourage a certain order and a certain action are based on the authority of examples and the written word, and the exhortation is made authoritative by including references to the Scriptures. Ælfric uses religious rhetoric and especially biblical examples to confirm the notion of a just and holy society as a segregated community with different roles assigned to different people—though, the grounds for *why* people have *those* roles specifically, are not explored anywhere. Biblical examples are given to provide lessons for the contemporary audience, and in some cases the examples are connected with the political circumstances of the day, like in the first use of the idea in the Maccabees, where the warfare of the Old Testament was seen as an allegory, and in which the example from Sulpicius Severus was used to emphasize Ælfric's point of the order of society. Similar instances in his other texts confirm this notion; for instance, he states in his

⁵¹¹ 'Þis gewrit wæs to anum men gediht ac hit mæg swa ðeah manegum fremian.' Marsden, *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo*, 201; Swain, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeward*, 227.

letter to Sigeweard that he had written his story of Judith ‘as an example for you people, that you should defend your land with weapons against the invading army’.⁵¹² The power of examples, in terms of rhetorical effects, lies in their capacity to create generalizing codes of behaviour. Examples function as generalizing arguments; by presenting one instance of proper conduct, they support general notions on right order. Even though the examples themselves were tied to restricted circumstances in a specific biblical narrative, their effect was not bound to any specific context, but could be seen as overall rules.⁵¹³ The power of example was strengthened further with the authority of sacred texts, making the notion on proper and morally right conduct indisputable. Consequently, from this kind of use of biblical examples it follows that the generalization that was made from examples was not only a statement (e.g. ‘this is the way people used to behave in previous times’), but an exhortation to correct the current, wrong, conduct of life of both the laity and the clergy (‘this is how all of you *should* behave’). This kind of rhetoric is seen in several instances, and used systematically as justifying language in almost all the occasions where the roles of different parts of people are discussed.

The duties of each part were not presented in any systematic way, and thus this metaphor cannot be considered to be an ideology of a hierarchical society. Rather, it was used to point out that the kingdom was dependent on all of its parts, and cannot stand upright without each of them filling their duties (which are not specified in detail). The purpose was not to present a systematic political ideology of a tripartite society. The idea itself was, however, very effective as an example because of its convenient metaphoric level. Moreover, by using this metaphor Ælfric gained convincing force for his admonition to fix the state of society. The wrong conduct of life and improper behaviour of the contemporary people was thus both a cause and an implication of the bad state of the kingdom, which was ‘broken’ like a chair without its one leg.

The division of society into three categories did not reflect the contemporary reality either; the status and ranks were more complex both

⁵¹² ‘Seo ys eac on englisc on ure wisan gesett eow mannum to byrne þæt ge eowerne eard mid wæmnum bewerian wið onwinnendne here.’ ———, *Ælfric of Eynsham's Letter to Sigeweard*, 248. Trans. Godden, in Godden, “Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England,” 140.

⁵¹³ Cf. James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), 31–32.

in secular and in spiritual parts of society, as becomes evident from canon law collections which defined the different ranks and responsibilities of priesthood, but also in compilations of secular treatises which differentiated between lay people.⁵¹⁴ The division in three, therefore, was not as important as the idea of order itself. Thus the implication of the metaphor is not that it represented or anticipated the strict social boundaries in these specific ranks. It was the order itself, not the number or even what they represented, that was important for Ælfric. This kind of division could also associate the worldly ranks, as they were presented in these texts, with allegorical, spiritual meanings. Especially in the case of Ælfric it might be suggested that he used the metaphor as an allusion to the Holy Trinity, as his verbal formulation in the passages on the three orders set in unity (*þreo endebyrdnyssse on annysse gesette*) is very similar to his formulations of the Holy Trinity in a number of his homilies.⁵¹⁵ As Lynne Grundy has showed, it was unusually important for Ælfric to understand the concept of Trinity. Even though Ælfric dealt with the subject much less than the early Church Fathers, when compared with his contemporaries—including Wulfstan, who only dedicated a few lines to the doctrine—his engagement with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is notable. Also the *Blickling* and the *Vercelli* homilies are mostly quiet or extremely brief about it. Ælfric, however, was concerned about the concept and tried to explain it in several instances.⁵¹⁶ The doctrine, of course, had nothing to do with the practical organization of

⁵¹⁴ Of these the collection referred to as ‘the *Gepyncðu* group’ is the most revealing. Printed in Felix Liebermann, ed. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1903–1916; reprint, Scientia Aalen, 1960), vol. 1, 456–469. Translation in Dorothy Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents 1: c. 500–1042*, 2. ed. (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), 468–471.

⁵¹⁵ For instance: ‘on **annysse** þæs halgan gastes’, in the *Homily for Christmas*. Clemoes, *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: the First Series: Text*, 197. ‘Uton gelyfan on þære halgan **þrynnysse** & on soþre **annysse**’, in the *Homily for Third Sunday after Epiphany*. Ibid., 248. ‘Se god wunað on **þrynnysse** untodædlic. & on **annysse** anre godcundnyssse’, in *Feria IIII de fide Catholica*. Ibid., 336. ‘God soðlice. fæder. & sunu & halig gast þurhwunað on **þrynnysse**. hada: & on **annysse** anre godcundnyssse,’ in the same homily. Ibid., 342. ‘þæt is se ana ælmihtiga god on **þrynnysse** and on **annysse**’, in the *Nativity of Christ*. Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 33. ‘Her is micel swutelung þæs soðan geleafan, hu se Hælend sylf hit sæde, and bead þæt ealle þeoda sceoldon swa beon gefullode on þa halgan **þrynnysse** and soðe **annysse**; and þes an geleafa is eallum to healdenne, þam mannum þe habbað ænigne myne to Gode,’ in *Dominica post Ascensionem Domini*. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, vol. 1, 383.

⁵¹⁶ Grundy, *Books and Grace*, 25–46.

society, and cannot be understood as a specific analogy, but the way Ælfric formulated his three orders can tell of his conceptualization of order which was based on strictly religious principles.

The criticism towards the secular clergy and lay society rose from imposing monastic standards on other parts of the society. When the clergy was reproached for carrying weapons, the different standards for different ranks of clergy, such as bishops, priests, acolytes, readers, and others which were noted in Ælfric's other works, were not defined.⁵¹⁷ Even though the criticism was targeted specifically to the secular clergy, and not to monks—who in Ælfric's mind were the better part of the society—it still addressed the audience as a whole, and therefore, did not attempt to establish detailed rules for each part of society. In reality the standards for how to conduct one's life would not have been so uniform, as the lower ranks of the clergy were not required to maintain a lifestyle that was required from the higher ranks of priests, and especially from bishops. For its part, this could lead to varied practice regarding the carrying of weapons, as well. In addition, in an age of the Viking attacks and political turmoil in general, the threshold to grasp a weapon for one's defence was undoubtedly lower. The rhetoric of renunciation from weapons therefore simultaneously simplified the division of society into larger, distinct units, and tried to impose strictly monastic and religious standards of behaviour onto these three parts. This kind of usage of the idea of three orders was thus strictly situational, and as such it differed from the way Wulfstan used it. Next I will examine how the idea was transferred and developed from Ælfric to Wulfstan.

5.3.2. Three orders in Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* and *Larspell*

It is the third and last text of Ælfric, the letter to Sigeweard, which is thought to be the one from which Wulfstan drew the notion of three orders. He uses it in the various versions of the *Institutes of Polity*. The doctrine of three orders is similar in all of its versions, with differences that extend only to a few words, which are marked with parentheses in the quoted passages. The passage 'Concerning the throne' (*Be cynestole*) follows Ælfric's treatment quite freely:

⁵¹⁷ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 205–206.

Every (lawful)⁵¹⁸ throne that stands fully upright, stands on three pillars: one is oratores, and the second is laboratores and the third is bellatores. Oratores are prayer-men, who must serve God and earnestly intercede both day and night for all people. Laboratores are workmen, who must supply that by which the entire nation shall live. Bellatores are soldiers, who must defend the land by fighting with weapons. Every throne (in a Christian nation) must stand aright on these three pillars. And should any of them weaken, the throne will immediately totter; and should any of them shatter, then the throne will tumble down, and that is entirely to the detriment of the people. But let them be diligently fixed and strengthened and made firm with the wise teaching of God (and with worldly justice); that will be to the lasting benefit of the people.⁵¹⁹

The beginning of the passage is very similar to the passage in Ælfric's letter to Sigeward. They both hold the view that all three pillars are needed to support the throne, the same idea that is seen in the contemporary works of the Frankish bishops Adalbero and Gerard. But Wulfstan's account is not completely equivalent with Ælfric's, and departs from it in the end. It does not address the *witan* explicitly, and does not refer to the contemporary situation as being a time, 'when there is too much evil among mankind' (*þonne on mancinne to micel yfel bið*), as Ælfric did. The stance of Wulfstan is more regulatory; it states that all the pillars must be kept firm with God's laws. He does not say that the throne is broken (*tobrocen*), or that it should be fixed right away (*betan ðone sona*), like Ælfric. There is a noticeable difference in tone where Wulfstan states that the three pillars should be fixed. Ælfric's verb, *betan*, denotes in a strong way an act of repair. Its usage assumes a broken state, which must be improved, amended, compensated or

⁵¹⁸ The addition in MS X (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121) are given in parentheses, as specified by Jost.

⁵¹⁹ 'Ælc (riht) cynestol stent on þrim stapelum, þe fullice ariht stent: Án is Oratores, and oðer is Laboratores, and þridde is Bellatores. Oratores syndon gebeldmen, þe Gode sculon þeowian and dæges and nihtes for ealne þeodscipe þingian georne. Laboratores sindon weorcmen, þe tilian sculon, þæs þe eal þeodscipe big sceal libban. Bellatores syndon wigmen, þe eard sculon werian wiglice mid [w]æpnum. On þisum þrim stapelum sceal ælc cynestol standan mid rihte (on cristenre þeode). And awacige heora ænig, sona se stol scilfð; and forberste heora ænig þonne rist se stol nyðer, and þæt wurð þare þeode eal to unþearfe. Ac staðelige man and strangige and trimme hi georne mid wislicre Godes lage; (and mid rihtlicre woruldage) þæt wurð þam þeodscipe to langsuman ræde.' Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 55–56.

restored.⁵²⁰ However, the verb Wulfstan uses, *staþolian*, also means ‘to fix’, but in a different way. It does not assume a broken state, but it is used to describe an act of establishment, founding, or settlement. It also refers to making things steadfast and firm.⁵²¹ It is followed by repetitive verbs *strangian* (to make strong, confirm) and *trymman* (to make firm or strong). It is also noticeable that in the later versions of the *Institutes*, Wulfstan has added that not only God’s law, but also the worldly law (*woruldlaga*) is needed to uphold the kingdom. This treatise makes it also clear that without order the nation will collapse and the metaphor of a chair with three legs is an explicit example.

Somewhat like Ælfric, Wulfstan continues loosely with the theme of unjust decisions, but does not explicitly mention corrupt judges or bribery, instead closing the passage on the throne with a general statement on the connection of Christian faith and the well-being of the kingdom.

*And it is true what I say: should the Christian faith weaken, the kingdom will immediately totter; and should bad laws arise anywhere in the land, or vicious habits be too greatly cherished anywhere, that will be entirely to the detriment of the people. But let what is necessary be done, injustice put down and God’s law raised up; that may be of advantage in the sight of God and the world. Amen.*⁵²²

The latest text in which Wulfstan used the idea of three orders is his homily *Larspell* (Napier 50; ‘homily, treatise’), which is mostly composed of many of his earlier writings (the *Institutes of Polity*, VI Æthelred, I Cnut, Ælfric’s Old English letters, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, and three of his eschatological homilies).⁵²³ Wulfstan’s proclivity to constantly rewrite and formulate anew his own writing is seen strongly also in the homily *Larspell*, in which the three orders of society occurs for the second time after the *Institutes*. This

⁵²⁰ Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), s.v. *betan*.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, s.v. *staþolian*.

⁵²² ‘Forðam soð is, þæt is secge: awacige se cristendom, sona scylfð se cynedom, and arære man unlaga ahwar on lande oððe unsida (lufige) ahwar to swiðe, þæt cymð þare þeode eal to unþearfe. Ac do man, swa hit þea[r]f is alecge man unriht and arære up Godes riht; þæt mæg to þearfe for Gode and for worlde. Amen.’ Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 58.

⁵²³ Lionarons, “Napier Homily L,” 417.

text is not taken into account by Powell in his article on the three orders of society—the nature of the text, being heavily compiled from other texts, has most likely caused it to have been overlooked as an unoriginal and meaningless source. Its classification has proved problematic for the modern editors, and Bethurum, for instance, did not include it in her edition of Wulfstan’s homilies, because she did not see it as a homily, but as a version of the *Institutes*. It is, however, more than a simple restatement of the topic and actually not very close to the *Institutes* after all, even if it admittedly employs much material from it. It can be seen as a work in which Wulfstan gathered material he had accumulated during his life, and rearranged it into the most meaningful whole he was able to at the end of his career. The passage on the three orders in this homily is almost identical to the passages in the later versions of the *Institutes*. The only addition is an explicit mention of the king, when defining the role of the *oratores*, who must ‘earnestly intercede both day and night *for the king* and for all people’, in a passage that earlier mentions only ‘people’ (*þeodscipe*).⁵²⁴ The whole homily is quite ‘political’ in nature. It is addressed to an aristocratic audience, both secular and ecclesiastical. It addresses King Cnut as ‘our lord the king’, and then turns to address secular lords, judges, and reeves, and then the clergy. The work can be dated to a period soon after King Cnut had risen in power and the calamities caused by the Viking attacks had ceased. Joyce Tally Lionarons has pointed out that this is seen in the way Wulfstan repeatedly refers to the past events by stating that ‘before this’ evil things happened.⁵²⁵ Also the quotations from Cnut’s law code (I Cnut) point to a dating around 1020. Wormald has suggested that the homily could be connected to Cnut’s Oxford code from 1018, and that this could be a possible source text for I Cnut, rather than *vice versa*.⁵²⁶ This would mean that the sermon was intended to be preached at the meeting in Oxford, ‘perhaps as a preliminary announcement of the laws that Wulfstan wanted to be enacted,’ as Lionarons

⁵²⁴ ‘Oratores syndon gebedmen, þe gode sceolon þeowjan dægnes and nihtes for þæne cyngc and for ealne þeodscipe þingjan georne.’ Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, 267.

⁵²⁵ Lionarons, “Napier Homily L,” 419.

⁵²⁶ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 335, 356–360. Pauline Stafford has suggested that this text was a draft of a homily that was meant to be preached at the coronation of Cnut. Pauline Stafford, “The Laws of Cnut and the History of Anglo-Saxon Royal Promises,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982): 179–180, 186.

has suggested.⁵²⁷ The content of this piece is therefore important and telling. It deals with the responsibilities and rights of each part of society, at least the higher parts which it addresses—as usual, the ‘working’ part of the society is left without discussion. After this, a short note is made on proper weights and measures, followed by a reminder of the proper observance of feasts and fasts. The homily ends with an exhortation to prepare for the approaching age of Antichrist.

In this final piece the idea of three orders is presented in a form and context quite different from its ‘original’ context in Ælfric’s letters, but also different from its context in the *Institutes*. The whole piece can be seen as Wulfstan’s intentional and final effort to influence the order of society, through admonition to the king and other men in high power. The admonition is done in a condensed, pointed, and in a more regulatory way than in the previous texts. There is no forceful blame targeted to the men in power, or an urgent advice to the *witan* to fix the state of society; the passage is more a statement than an exhortation. This kind of change is seen also in other texts that Wulfstan adapted in the late stages of his career. For instance, Jonathan Wilcox points out that one of his later sermons, *To eallum folce* (Napier 27), which reuses and abbreviates the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, places all the references to the Viking raids and evil times in the past. This is probably also the homily through which passages from the *Sermo Lupi* were transferred to Napier 50.⁵²⁸ The forceful rhetoric of the original had heavily depended on exactly the opportunity to tie together the current political perils and moral degradation of the people. The later sermon had thus, according to Wilcox, turned into ‘a version of pessimistic apocalypse that has lost some of its forceful punch through adaptation to the apparently more optimistic times of Cnut’s England.’⁵²⁹ The same could be said of *Larspell* when estimating the notion of three orders in it. The general context of the text shows that the idea was used very differently in different instances. The analyses done by DUBY or POWELL do not take this into account, but treat the idea as an independent entity, and they do not discuss the textual context of the idea, which, as it has been demonstrated above, could vary. The idea is not detachable from the other ideas that surround it in the text it appears,

⁵²⁷ Lionarons, “Napier Homily L,” 418–419.

⁵²⁸ Jost, *Wulfstanstudien*, 250.

⁵²⁹ Jonathan Wilcox, “Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* as Political Performance: 16 February 1014 and Beyond,” in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 393.

but must be read together with them. This is why it is somewhat strange that Powell, when analyzing the meaning of the idea in Anglo-Saxon England, completely disregards this text—possibly he, along with Bethurum, regarded it as a version of the *Institutes* and as such not worth mentioning. Therefore, far from being a common restatement of the topic, Napier 50 represents an important development and should not be omitted from the discussion of the three orders.

From the point of view of transmission and ‘translation’ of political thought from one sphere into another, the appearance of the concept of three orders is quite interesting. The text as a whole repeatedly calls for repentance, and draws material from laws and homilies. It is somewhat unlike the *Institutes*, because here it can be seen employed together with a powerful rhetoric of atonement and guilt, and when compared with the *Institutes*, this text is clearly more morally inclined. It starts with a short exhortation to uphold God’s law, confess sins and make amends, a theme that continues throughout the homily. Then it introduces an abridged passage that concerns the duties of a Christian king, taken from the *Institutes*. Already here Wulfstan’s purposes for this sermon are seen; whereas in the *Institutes* a righteous Christian king was to ‘severely correct with worldly punishment, and loathe and suppress robbers, plunderers and despoilers of worldly goods’,⁵³⁰ now he was to extend his correcting hand not just on robbers and plunderers, but on ‘murderers, traitors and perjurers, manslayers and fratricides, persecutors of the church and priest-slayers, injurers of men in holy orders and adulterers, thieves and criminals, robbers and plunderers, liars and deceivers, traitors and troth-breakers’.⁵³¹

After this pounding repetition—one of Wulfstan’s classic ways to nominate sinners, which surely delivers home the message that a remedy is needed—the homily presents the three pillars that support the throne and exhorts the audience to strengthen them. It does not fully employ the end of

⁵³⁰ ‘He sceal mandæde menn þreagan þearle mid woruldlicre steore, and he sceal ryperas and reafaras and ðas woruldstruderas hatian and hynan and eallum Godes feondum styr[n]lice wiðstandan.’ Jost, *Die Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical*, 45.

⁵³¹ ‘He sceal mandæde men þreagan þearle mid woruldlicre steore, and he sceal morðwyrhtan, hlafordswican and manswaran, mannsлагan and mægslagan, cyrichatan and sacerdbanan, hadbreacan and æwbrecan, þeofas and þeodsceaþan, ryperas and reafaras, leogeras and liceteras, wedlogan and wærlogan hatjan and hynan and eallum godes feondum styrnlice wiðstandan. Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, 266–267. Cf. V Æthelred, 24–25, p. 356.

'Be cynestole', but ends shortly—and more rhetorically: 'And it is true what we say: should the Christian faith weaken, the kingship will immediately totter.'⁵³² Then it moves immediately to some short remarks about secular lords (corresponds to 'Be eorlum' in the *Institutes*), and turns the whole discussion into another level, beginning to pound upon sins, unlawfulness, and atonement, with rhetorically powerful passages taken from the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* and the homily *To eallum folce*. The sins of the people, wrong conduct of life, and contempt for God's laws have prevailed in the land for too long and have brought on destruction. Now is the time to remedy, make amends, and correct habits.⁵³³ The same words that Wulfstan used to preach in the time of the most pressing Viking attacks and political turmoil in 1014, just on the brink of the collapse of Æthelred's reign, are here used at a time when Cnut was establishing his rule and legitimacy for the English throne. In this instance they are used in an attempt to establish order with sermonizing rhetoric based on repentance and the concept of righteousness.

In addition to the texts examined here, the idea of order was important also elsewhere in Wulfstan's works, especially in a group of legal tracts that Wormald called 'the *Gefyncðu* group'.⁵³⁴ The collection of short tracts deals with status and social mobility, and was possibly written around the same time as the first version of the *Institutes*, but before Æthelred's exile. Wormald argues that the discourse in this collection, which accentuates the orderliness of ranks, reflects Wulfstan's overall ideas about society. He ties the concern together with the social disorder that was caused by the events of 1014, the change of rule and political upheaval. It is attested in the *Sermo Lupi* that some of 'the slaves became Vikings and acquired the *wergeld* of a thegn, while thegns were enslaved with no *wergeld* payable for them.'⁵³⁵ According to Wormald, this compilation of texts 'sought to restore past proprieties, as orthodox legislation targeted other social ills.'⁵³⁶

⁵³² 'And soð is, þæt is secgað: awacyge se cristendom, sona scylfð se cynedom.' *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵³³ 'Hit wæs nu lange, þæt wæron to wide godes laga laðe and lara forsawne, and woroldlaga syndan innan þysan earde wraðe forhwyrfde on æghwylcan ende; and þæt is gesyne wide and side, þæt man god gremede mid þam unrihte ealles to lange. betan þa nu georne, þa þe þyssere þeode nu sceolan rædan, swa swa gode wyle, gif hig gode willan rihtlice cweman and on þam myclan dæge heom sylfum gebeorgan bet, þonne þa dydon, þe beofran wæron, þe unriht arærdan to forwyrde heom sylfum.' *Ibid.*, 268.

⁵³⁴ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 391–394.

⁵³⁵ Quoting *Sermo Lupi* 104–8, 120–1. *Ibid.*, 394.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

The context where Wulfstan used the idea was thus very different from Ælfric. Both in the *Institutes* and in *Larspell* the broader framework of the concept concerns good government and the establishment of a Christian kingdom. In both works the doctrine follows the account of the king's duties, not the duties of secular clergy or just warfare. In this respect Wulfstan's treatment resembles his Francian contemporaries, especially Adalbero. As Duby has shown, Adalbero's ideas concentrate on issues of government and the sacred duties of the king to enforce the law and preserve order.⁵³⁷ Like Adalbero, Wulfstan was an adviser to the king, and his general interest is in political order, which is established both on spiritual and secular principles. There is thus a difference in emphasis and viewpoint between Ælfric and Wulfstan, but they both shared a concept that the contemporary society was not in its proper order, and they both tried to amend it. In this attempt they found the division of society a convenient tool to argue for their point. As some of Ælfric's homilies, Wulfstan's works repeatedly convey a concern for the state of society. Elsewhere Wulfstan even lamented about the excessive social mobility that could be seen in his times, as Wormald has pointed out.⁵³⁸ This concern is also seen in those instances where he treated the three orders, especially in *Larspell*, and should be seen together with his attempts to establish order with his numerous laws and homilies that pound upon the morality of the time.

5.4. Conclusion

The texts discussed in this chapter suggest textual appropriation in various cases. They show that despite their conventional and derivative nature, the themes and tropes could be used selectively in different situations, depending on the intended audience or the aspirations of the author himself. The constituting principle behind the interest in the nature of transmission from Ælfric to Wulfstan is a notion that ideas do not transfer or passively spread in time or place as a result of cultural or textual influence. When the existence of ideas as independent factors in history is questioned, the focus of attention necessarily shifts to human action that always lies behind any idea. Thus, I see that ideas as such do not develop, but are developed. Similarly, ideas or ideologies as such are not the forces that change history,

⁵³⁷ Duby, *The Three Orders*, 52–55.

⁵³⁸ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 461.

but people are. Consequently, also political thought is always tied to specific historical instances, always has a reason, and is always a result of human action. This, in my view, is an approach with which aspects of both theory and practice can be examined to a satisfying degree, and one with which it can be demonstrated that varied meanings can be assigned to different usages of the same ideology. The argument of this chapter is that this is exactly what is seen in the instance of transmission of thought from Ælfric of Eynsham to Wulfstan of York.

Both writers accentuated the correctness and order of society. As it has become evident from Ælfric's works throughout, it was important for him that everyone had their preordained place in society, and following Augustine's thought, the order of society was immutable and sacred. Hierarchy was based on virtues and merits, and in order to gain prosperity, all the members of the society must act according to their place. The proper conduct of life was the way to gain God's favour, and this is the reason why regulation, instruction, and teaching were so important. However, whereas Ælfric's approach can be described to reflect the issue from a more theological point of view, Wulfstan focused heavily on matters in this world, and reached out to influence people to take action in a very concrete way. The motives were the same as Ælfric's—to strive for a society which would imitate the order set by God, and in this way would ease the way to salvation—but the discourse itself is less otherworldly than in Ælfric's case. The first reference to the three orders by Ælfric even resembles descriptions of the Holy Trinity. Ælfric's discourse is based on notions of eternity, salvation, and sacred order, which would be sacrilegious to break. Wulfstan concentrates on balance, moral order, and the establishment of a lawful kingdom and Christian faith.

The adaptation that is seen in these texts is also interesting when considering the authors themselves and their own attitudes towards translation and textual transmission. As it is well known, Ælfric's views on translation and transmission were stricter than those of Wulfstan. Ælfric believed in the existence of truth in the written word, and textual authorities played an important role in his work. Even when translating himself, or when using other texts as his sources, he wanted to preserve the original as much as possible, and wanted to produce orthodox texts free of error. His concern extended beyond his own times; he was painfully aware of scribal practices which tended to change the order and context of texts, and tried to prevent this by including instructions for all the scribes to copy the text as

accurately as possible. Wulfstan treated material available to him more freely. His interest was practical and regulatory. And as Malcolm Godden has pointed out, Wulfstan used Ælfric's material in a way that Ælfric would not have approved.⁵³⁹ The paradox in this is that Ælfric, too—at the same time insisting on textual orthodoxy, the correct order, and the proper interpretation and knowledge—rearranged and rewrote several texts himself. And in the three instances in which he used the idea of three orders, they, too, were subject to change depending on the audience and political situation. In this instance the idea of three orders was used in these works in different ways; adapted by Ælfric to criticize the clergy and then the lay aristocracy and transferred from there to Wulfstan's attempts to regulate the order of society to establish a morally righteous Christian kingdom.

⁵³⁹ Godden, "The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric," 373.

6. *Guilt, atonement and legislation: Wulfstan's legal-homiletic discourse*

In the following I examine the religious rhetoric of guilt and atonement in Wulfstan's legal and homiletic texts concentrating on the ways these notions were used to authorize and implement religious modes of thought into established legal regulation. I concentrate mainly on the law codes written by Wulfstan for the kings Æthelred II and Cnut, and read them together with homilies which convey similar modes of discourse. These works are part of an extremely complicated and intermingled bulk of material, represented in various manuscripts, often in a different manner. The texts are related also to his *Canon Law Collection* (*Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgberhti*) and the *Canons of Edgar*, which emphasize his scheme for the right order of society, and especially the priests' role in guiding the religious life of the lay people. The central concern here is the regulatory discourse of Wulfstan, which was used to construct ideas of a politically unified, coherent, and sacred society. Much has been already said about Wulfstan's style, language and rhetoric, and about the homiletic elements in his legal texts, so the notion of the permeating religious tone in his regulatory texts is hardly new or surprising.⁵⁴⁰ For my part, I will concentrate on one aspect of his religious rhetoric that I see as an important part in the religious-political discourse of late Anglo-Saxon England. The penitential mode in Wulfstan's legal texts is developed from the homiletic discourse, but enters another social framework, and as such diverges from the discursive fields examined in the previous chapters.

⁵⁴⁰ See for instance Jonathan Davis-Secord, "Rhetoric and Politics in Archbishop Wulfstan's Old English Homilies," *Anglia* 126, no. 1 (2008); M. K. Lawson, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut," *The English Historical Review* 107, no. 424 (1992); Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society."

6.1. Wulfstan's legislative works

Wulfstan's legislative works were not in any systematic form of writing, and their recognition and categorization has often been problematic. Wulfstan started his legislative activity around 1008, when the first code which can be recognized as being written in his style was drafted to display the decisions made by the council of Enham (V, VI [OE] and VI [Lat.] Æthelred).⁵⁴¹ This occasion marks a clear division in King Æthelred's legislation, which is usually divided into two stages; pre-Wulfstan and Wulfstan's laws. This division is based on the notable differences in the discourse of legislative tracts. Æthelred's laws before Wulfstan's involvement were remarkably different than the ones after 1008. For instance, the law codes of Woodstock (I Æthelred) and Wantage (III Æthelred), which can be dated to around or before 997, are 'as resolutely secular as Wulfstan's were overwhelmingly ecclesiastical.'⁵⁴² Patrick Wormald has discussed the change in the tone of the law codes, and described Wulfstan's legislative texts as a 'ramble through the principles of Christian life, whose cadences were as homiletic as its sanctions were few.'⁵⁴³ The change in the written law of Æthelred clearly indicates the role the archbishop had in the promulgations of law in the later stages of the king's reign. It is notable that almost all of the surviving manuscripts of Æthelred's later law codes can be directly or indirectly linked to Wulfstan.⁵⁴⁴ Therefore Wulfstan plays an important part also in our interpretations of the legal culture of late Anglo-Saxon England, as he has dominated the source material available from this era. Consequently, historical judgements of the legal and administrative culture of the end of Æthelred's reign have been influenced by Wulfstan's texts. The highly

⁵⁴¹ The numbering of the law codes is based on Liebermann's edition. The order of the codes and their different versions is much more problematic than what the straightforward assignation of numbers suggests. For the sake of convention and readability I retain Liebermann's numbers, but the incoherent nature of Wulfstan's legislation should be kept in mind throughout the discussion. All the law codes referred to here are printed in Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*. In addition I use the more commented Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*. In the case of Cnut's Oxford code I refer to A. G. Kennedy, "Cnut's Law Code of 1018," *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1982).

⁵⁴² Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 328.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 450.

⁵⁴⁴ The manuscripts of the legal texts have been thoroughly studied by Patrick Wormald. See *ibid.*, 162–263.

ecclesiastical and homiletic tone of the law codes should first and foremost be analyzed as Wulfstan's choice of discourse and rhetoric.

Wulfstan's formulations concerning the council's meeting at Enham in 1008 are reflected in three codes (V, VI [OE] and VI [Lat.]). Additionally, a fragment of a code labelled as X by Liebermann is thought to belong to this group. The first codes served as a base for the codes Wulfstan drafted later on, including those of Cnut's reign.⁵⁴⁵ It is thought that V represents the decisions of the meeting most accurately, but at the same time it is to be noted that none of the codes that Wulfstan drafted can be seen as direct reflections of the *witan's* interests or as direct formulations of the meetings. The prominently different versions of the same meeting at Enham suggest that more than actual formulations of the *witan*, the codes are to be seen as Wulfstan's representations of what he considered to be important to transmit of that meeting.⁵⁴⁶ Wulfstan's first code is already highly ecclesiastical in tone, and as Whitelock pointed out, there are only a few matters which deal with strictly secular business, such as the building of bridges and forts, or minting coins.⁵⁴⁷ Wulfstan apparently intended the code to be as general as possible, and to be reusable for the future, since the code is fairly anonymous and not clearly pinpointed to any special occasion. Æthelred, for instance, is not named in the Old English version of VI, and in the end of the Latin version the king's name is written in Wulfstan's hand above the line in a passage which employs an impersonal 'N' in three occasions instead of proper names.⁵⁴⁸ This is a striking example of Wulfstan's intentions of making his message as general and as applicable as possible, and shows his wishes to reach a wide audience also in the future.

There were two other occasions in Æthelred's reign which can be connected with Wulfstan's legislative work: a meeting at Bath in 1009 after a severe attack of Thorkell's army (VII [Lat.] and VIIa [OE] Æthelred), and a meeting in 1014, when the *witan* had decided to invite Æthelred back to the English throne after Sweyn's death (VIII Æthelred). The result of the meeting at Bath was an unusual code which calls for a general three-day fasting and penance as a countermeasure for the devastating raiding activity

⁵⁴⁵ See a chart of the relative order of Wulfstan's legal texts in ———, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State-BUILDER," 26–27.

⁵⁴⁶ Lawson, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut," 573.

⁵⁴⁷ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 340–341.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

of the Vikings. The latest code from King Æthelred's reign is an ecclesiastical code which reiterates many points from previous legislation. These two codes are examined in their own context shortly (chapter 6.3).

After the change of regime Wulfstan continued his work as archbishop and legislator for King Cnut. There are four extant codes which are now thought to be the work of Wulfstan. The first one (DCn) is apparently a draft right after the change of rule, and can be dated to a meeting at Oxford in 1018.⁵⁴⁹ This text borrows much from Æthelred VI (1008), and can be said to be an extended version of the code drafted after the meeting at Enham. It resembles Cnut's later codes to such an extent that Whitelock argued for its role as a sort of an in-between after VI Æthelred and Cnut's full codes.⁵⁵⁰ It is probable that this version was done in haste and that Wulfstan used it later as the basis for I and II Cnut. This earlier draft of Cnut's codes survives only in one manuscript (CCCC 201), and because of its unfinished and fragmentary contents, was not for a time regarded as an individual composition but as a selection drawn from other law codes. Whitelock however identified it as Wulfstan's composition and placed it in this particular occasion, in which peace was negotiated between the English and the Danes. A letter from Cnut, which he sent from Denmark in around 1020, can also be associated with Wulfstan. Although he might have not written the text himself, there are clear signs of his hand revising and commenting it. Wulfstan used the first drafts as the basis for the latest codes for Cnut, which have been described as the highest point and consummation of all of Wulfstan's ideals about Christian state and legislation.⁵⁵¹

The latest law code that Wulfstan drafted for Cnut consists of two parts, which are given the titles I and II Cnut. They refer to the same occasion, and the numbers denote the ecclesiastical (I) and secular (II: *seo woruldculde gerædnes*) parts of the code. The code was issued at Winchester, during Christmas, as it is stated in the text (*þæt wæs on þære halgan midewintres tide on Winceastre*), and is dated to a time just before Wulfstan's death. The dating is based on the knowledge that since Cnut was not in England in 1019–20 nor in 1022–3, and that since Wulfstan died in 23 May 1023, the code was presumably issued at Christmas 1021 or 1022. The actual code differs from the Oxford draft in that it is divided into an ecclesiastical and a

⁵⁴⁹ Kennedy, "Cnut's Law Code of 1018."

⁵⁵⁰ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 432; ———, "Wulfstan and the Laws of Cnut," *The English Historical Review* 249 (1948): 435–436.

⁵⁵¹ Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society," 206.

secular section, a model that presumably was adopted from King Edgar's legislation.⁵⁵² The code survives in three manuscripts.⁵⁵³ Worthy of mention is especially Cotton Nero A.i, which is thought to be a compilation by Wulfstan in the very late stages of his life.⁵⁵⁴ The whole manuscript reflects the concerns Wulfstan had about social order and law. Jonathan Wilcox has described the period after the establishment of Cnut's power until 1023 as a peaceful time when Wulfstan could formulate his ideas about society further, and rewrite and assemble his earlier writings anew, as is seen in the case of this specific manuscript.⁵⁵⁵ According to Whitelock, Cnut's laws were held in high regard, and they tell about Anglo-Saxon legal culture more than any other earlier code.⁵⁵⁶

When drafting this code, Wulfstan used his *Institutes of Polity* and his later homilies, in addition to the earlier laws. Patrick Wormald has analyzed the sources of Cnut's legislation, and pointed out that almost 75 % of the material was derived directly or indirectly from earlier material.⁵⁵⁷ When compared to the Oxford code, the secular part of Cnut's code has more additions than the ecclesiastical one does. It is possible that this is an indication of Cnut's interest in the secular part of the code, and that he had required certain changes to it.⁵⁵⁸ Despite its heavy dependence on earlier English legislation, there are several clauses which are not known from earlier laws. These topics include the king's rights (II Cnut 12–15a), payment of military equipment (71–71.5), repossession of property (19–19.2), and a demand that every man must be in a tithing (20–20a). In addition, the secular code contains quite a lot of material that at first sight would seem to belong to the ecclesiastical part of the code, such as an account of clerics who were guilty of crime. It also makes a statement about religious feasts

⁵⁵² Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 469.

⁵⁵³ BL Cotton Nero A.i (Ker 164, Gneuss 341), fos. 3–41; London, BL, Harley 55 (Ker 226), fos. 5–13; CCC 383 (Ker 65, Gneuss 102), pp. 43–72. The beginning, up to I Cnut 14.2 is lost. Printed in Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 278–371.

⁵⁵⁴ Henry R. Loyn, ed. *A Wulfstan Manuscript Containing Institutes, Laws and Homilies: British Museum Cotton Nero A.I*, vol. xvii, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1971); Wilcox, "Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* as Political Performance," 379. The manuscripts of the legal texts have been thoroughly studied by Patrick Wormald. See Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 162–263.

⁵⁵⁵ Wilcox, "Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* as Political Performance," 379.

⁵⁵⁶ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 470.

⁵⁵⁷ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 355–361.

⁵⁵⁸ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 469–470.

and fasts, and penalties related to their incorrect observation. It touches upon penalties that are appropriate in case someone violently resists the collection of church dues, or when someone has made injuries against clerics, committed adultery or incest. Also the maintenance of excommunicated persons is dealt with. All these issues are 'supposed to' belong to the ecclesiastical part of law, but their intermingling shows that there was not such a clear-cut division of what constituted purely secular matters in Wulfstan's mind. The division of two powers, secular and ecclesiastical, is more visible in earlier laws, and perhaps also in later ones.

In addition to royal legislation, Wulfstan participated in drafting ecclesiastical and local legislative works. These include the ecclesiastical *Canons of Edgar*,⁵⁵⁹ *Canon Law Collection (Excerptiones Pseudo-Ecgeberhti)*,⁵⁶⁰ the so-called *Laws of Edward and Guthrum*,⁵⁶¹ and a set of various Old English legal tracts known as *Gepyncðu*, *Norðleoda laga*, *Mircna laga*, *Að*, *Hadbot* and *Grið*.⁵⁶² It should also be kept in mind that several of his homilies include legislative material, and *vice versa*, and therefore these assignments related to genre should not be read in a strict manner.

The archbishop's own tone is fully visible in the discourse of the legal works, both in rhetoric and the religious undercurrent that permeates all the legal principles presented in the codes. Thus the discourse is best seen as Wulfstan's representation of what he considered to be the essence of law-making in a Christian society. For this reason Wulfstan's legal formulations complement the study of the religious-political discourse in an important way. Wulfstan's legal texts, while representing the secular legal tradition of Anglo-Saxon England, are simultaneously part of another discursive field, which rose from monastic and ecclesiastical thought, and which Wulfstan attempted to bring into practice. As his other works, all the legal texts of Wulfstan are based on the presumptions of sacred order; this presumption pervades the legal discourse and brings about authority-oriented rhetoric. The holy order of society was the basic principle on which all of his homiletic, legal and political texts were dependent. The importance of proper social order is evident in the Enham code (V Æthelred), in which

⁵⁵⁹ Printed in Roger Fowler, ed. *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar*, EETS no. 266 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁵⁶⁰ Printed in Cross and Hamer, *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*.

⁵⁶¹ This text was ascribed to Wulfstan by Dorothy Whitelock, "Wulfstan and the So-Called Laws of Edward and Guthrum," *English Historical Review* 56 (1941).

⁵⁶² Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 456–473.

Wulfstan states that ‘it is the decree of our lord and his counsellors that men of every order are each to submit willingly to that duty which befits them both in religious and secular concerns’, implying that it is the duty of each member of society to act according to the rules that are seen as fit to their particular *had* (rank, office, estate).⁵⁶³ The idea about order was pointedly in conflict with the reality of the time, as the Viking attacks and political dissonance brought about anything but order. For this reason the need to try to fix the state was probably even more accentuated in the writings of this era. There are two aspects in the rhetoric of Wulfstan’s legal and homiletic texts that are of interest from the point of view of religious-political discourse. Firstly, a strong emphasis is on the thought that the lack of morals and the sins of people were the cause for the miserable state of society at present times, and that God had sent the Vikings to punish the English people. This follows the rhetoric already seen in Gildas’s sixth-century account of the Saxon invasion of Britain, a text Wulfstan himself knew and referred to.⁵⁶⁴ Secondly, the other aspect of importance is the rhetoric of penance, which aims to fix the relationship with God, and consequently the state of society. In its spiritual and homiletic tone, Wulfstan’s legal discourse is remarkably different from the previous language of legislation.

6.2. Law and morality in Wulfstan’s thought

6.2.1. Homiletic language and legal practice

Wulfstan’s concern for the best of the society was ultimately a religious one, and the religious-moral character in his writings is the base for all his legal writings, as well.⁵⁶⁵ This starting point of my examination is much indebted to the work of Patrick Wormald, who in several instances, especially in his book *The Making of English Law* (1999), as well as in his article ‘Archbishop of Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society’ (2000), showed how closely together we should see the religious and secular categories of Wulfstan’s time. My discussion continues and develops from this notion. The

⁵⁶³ ‘And ures hlaforðes gerædnes and his witenas is, þæt ælces hades menn georne gebugan for Gode and for worolde, ælc to þam rihte þe him to gebyrige.’ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 347. Trans. Whitelock.

⁵⁶⁴ ———, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 51.

⁵⁶⁵ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 342.

assessments of Wulfstan's writings have been blurred by the categorization by modern editors, in the case of homilies by Dorothy Bethurum⁵⁶⁶ and Arthur Napier,⁵⁶⁷ and in the case of laws especially by Felix Liebermann,⁵⁶⁸ who selectively categorized what they decided to print as homilies or laws. However, Wulfstan's homilies and laws resemble each other so much, especially in the later stages of his career, that the modern collections give a wrong impression of his interests. For instance, some of the items considered as 'only' legal were omitted from Bethurum's homiletic collections, which, as Wormald points out, is actually without manuscript justification.⁵⁶⁹ Consequently, modern definitions and difficulties in categorization may lead us astray when we try to force each text into either homiletic or legal, exclusive spheres.

Wormald has stressed that the understanding of these texts must derive from the manuscript contexts in which they were assembled during their own times. The manuscripts in which Wulfstan's legislation are preserved, indicate clearly how closely together the homiletic and legal texts were associated. One of the most telling examples is Cotton Nero A.i, which now consists of two parts, of which the latter is considered to be connected to Wulfstan, as the Wulfstan hand occurs in the manuscript several times. Henry Loyn concluded that if not altogether written by Wulfstan, he at least planned, ordered, supervised, and also corrected it.⁵⁷⁰ The first part includes a collection of laws, including those of Cnut, also drafted by Wulfstan, but the parts were bound together after their completion. The part associated directly with Wulfstan has been described as 'a kind of theological commonplace book, especially intended for a bishop's use in advising a king'.⁵⁷¹ The contents are mainly ecclesiastical institutes and laws, but cannot be reduced to a coherent entity at least from a modern perspective. The purpose of the manuscript is hard to estimate if it is thought as a strictly legal collection. In assessing the various manuscripts of Wulfstan's works, Wormald has argued that Wulfstan's homilies became increasingly legislative in their content towards the end of his career. At the same time,

⁵⁶⁶ Dorothy Bethurum, ed. *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

⁵⁶⁷ Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*.

⁵⁶⁸ Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*.

⁵⁶⁹ Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society," 204–205.

⁵⁷⁰ Loyn, *A Wulfstan Manuscript Containing Institutes, Laws and Homilies*, 46.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

the discourse of his legal texts started to adopt a homiletic, sermonizing stance. The early texts, such as the Enham code of 1008 (V Æthelred), are still quite distinguishable from his homilies. By the time of his late career, the difference is no longer so notable, and his legal texts also preach the consequences of sins, as if he was preaching from the pulpit. In Wormald's words, Wulfstan 'had blurred the distinctions between media in his fervent pursuit of the message'.⁵⁷²

This does not mean, of course, that Wulfstan's treatment of legal material would be completely drawn from religious texts. On the contrary, Wulfstan was extremely interested in and concerned about earlier Anglo-Saxon legal practice and canon law, as his own formulations and the manuscripts he had at his disposal suggest. Wulfstan's legal writings were also heavily indebted to Carolingian legislation, which he used extensively, and the manuscripts associated with him often include large amounts of Carolingian material. As such, Wulfstan continued the development in Anglo-Saxon legislation which had already begun many decades ago; as David Pratt has recently shown, the importance of Carolingian precedents in the development of the tenth-century law in Anglo-Saxon England was significant. Wulfstan's legal practices and especially the heavy manuscript collections which concentrate on law should be viewed against this background. Pratt states that the tenth century, especially the legislation of King Æthelstan (924–939) was extremely important in terms of long-term processes of change in the legal culture.⁵⁷³ Pratt thus emphasizes the grassroots, genuine nature of the process of legal reform, which took place in the tenth century, and which best explains the vast interest in legal matters at this time.⁵⁷⁴

M. K. Lawson, for his part, has argued that the homiletic element in Wulfstan's legal texts is a sign of the continuous tradition of churchmen purposefully trying to set their rulers' feet on the path of righteousness. He argues that the secular affairs Wulfstan refers to were intentionally selected by the ecclesiastic circles, and in presenting his religiously sated views on the king, *witan* and secular society, Wulfstan attempted to influence the king

⁵⁷² Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society," 206.

⁵⁷³ David Pratt, "Written Law and the Communication of Authority," in *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century*, ed. D. Rollason, C. Leyser, and H. Williams, *SEM 37* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 333. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Pratt for kindly providing me with his chapter before its publication.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 350.

with his writings. In his view the discourse was thus more an outcome of the archbishop's religious interests than an expression of the pious nature of the rulers themselves.⁵⁷⁵ Lawson's view is plausible, and I would like to add that it was not only the king that Wulfstan had in mind, but the whole Christian society. The rhetoric of the law codes was not targeted only to the king, but to everyone, at least the higher parts of the society, lay aristocracy and especially the bishops and clergy. Our interpretation of Wulfstan's discourse is therefore largely dependent on how much emphasis we want to place on the kingship as the constituting factor in the order of society on the one hand, and how much we want to examine the society as a whole, not only represented by the king, on the other. Formerly the focus of scholarly interest was placed much on the role of the king in early medieval societies, as it became apparent especially in chapter 3. Following this line of thought, the idea of the sacredness of the king and his office tended to overshadow other aspects of political thought. References to the status of the king were sought possibly at the cost of seeing that the whole order of the society was stressed with the very same formulations and discourses of sacredness. Thus it is easy to see why Lawson, for instance, interprets Wulfstan's rhetoric as intended for the king—which it was, but not exclusively—instead of rhetoric directed for all of society. In his interpretation of Wulfstan's intentions Lawson develops from the thought of Dorothy Bethurum, who estimated that Wulfstan had changed his view considering the sacredness of kingship, and that towards the end of his life he placed more authority on the church than on the secular power.⁵⁷⁶ Lawson figures that Wulfstan believed that the lawful king could not be dethroned, and that this idea was the reason that he supported Æthelred until the end.⁵⁷⁷ This view becomes problematic when taking into account the apparent ease with which Wulfstan adopted—and not just adopted, but was part in establishing—the rule of Cnut. The problem with determining the intended recipient of Wulfstan's discourse and the problem of the relatively smooth attitude

⁵⁷⁵ Lawson, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut," 577, 582, 586.

⁵⁷⁶ Dorothy Bethurum Loomis, "Regnum and Sacerdotium in the Early Eleventh Century," in *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemons and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 134–137, 142–143.

⁵⁷⁷ Lawson, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut," 572.

towards the change of ruler, are both explained with a shift in the interpretative viewpoint; it was not only the status of the king that mattered in Wulfstan's ideological framework of social order, but the correct, moral principles functioning as the cornerstone of every individual in the Christian society.

6.2.2. Moral guilt and legal guilt

The rhetoric of moral guilt is a pervading mode in much of Wulfstan's discourse, but from the modern perspective it is somewhat unusual to see this kind of rhetoric employed in legal writings as an integrated part of authorizing political order. What constitutes the right conduct of life, morality and law are, of course, close to each other, but not identical. Moral guilt is not a requisite for legal guilt, nor does legal guilt necessarily have anything to do with one's morality. Moral guilt is always tied to the individual, and is real, not created by judgements from outside, as legal guilt might be. In medieval penitential and legal practice, however, especially considering the canon law, these notions are intertwined. Therefore it is not surprising to see that in Wulfstan's case there is little difference between legal and moral guilt, and that their affinity becomes even clearer when morality is seen reflecting the religious principles. As Patrick Wormald aptly noted, Wulfstan did not differentiate between sin and crime, but for him they were essentially the same.⁵⁷⁸ This means that Wulfstan's conception of law was—not unusually for his time—very much religious, and that his texts created an image of closely tied secular and sacred powers.

There were precedents for Wulfstan's discourse; King Alfred's legislation was tightly committed to working within the Mosaic tradition of law, and used full Christian symbolism in establishing the basis for secular law.⁵⁷⁹ Wulfstan's sources on Carolingian legislation also reiterated the necessity of divine law as the source for secular law. Hincmar of Reims (806–882), who most clearly formulated the ideas behind this connection, wrote that God's law was the ground on which humans' laws must be built, but simultaneously acknowledged that humans are incapable of living

⁵⁷⁸ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 342.

⁵⁷⁹ Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*, 214–241; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 416–429.

purely by God's law because of 'transgressions'.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore secular law must always be adapted according to the needs of the society. This acknowledgement resembles the principles of interpretation already discussed in chapter 4. As in the case of interpreting the word of God, human nature created certain hindrances in fully understanding and executing the will of God. Consequently, it affected the conceptions of how the rules of society should be established. This notion makes the examination of Wulfstan's penitential rhetoric in his legal works essential for understanding the religious-political discourse of late Anglo-Saxon England as an act of interpretation. While holding to the principles of God's laws as the ground for legislation, they had to be implemented with particular secular rules. This, at least in principle, was the basis on which Wulfstan's conceptualization of legislation was also grounded. The acknowledgement of these two spheres of law was therefore connected to the issue of Christian history and the fall of man. In terms of secular legislation, Wulfstan most fully used this concept as the essential principle for his legal works, in a way which partly continued the language of idealized perceptions of society, manifested in the legislation of the tenth century,⁵⁸¹ but extended the rhetoric of legislation to encompass a greater homiletic dimension than his predecessors had done. It is not, therefore, the interrelatedness of spiritual and secular law that makes Wulfstan's legislation unusual, but the rhetoric he chose to employ in conveying his message of the general state of sinfulness of his contemporaries. His legislation not only emphasizes the common goals of the two laws or prescribes penitential punishments for crimes or sins, but also exhorts his audience in general, undefined mode of repentance, which almost expects people to live up to the ideals of divine law.

In several instances throughout Wulfstan's legal texts it is not always clear whether the issue at hand concerned the spiritual or the secular sense of guilt. In the Old English code which represents the meeting at Enham in 1008 (VI Æthelred) Wulfstan writes: 'And always the mightier a man is in terms of worldly matters or on account of the privileges of his rank, the deeper he shall make amends for his sins / crimes (*synna gebetan*) and the

⁵⁸⁰ Paraphrasing St Paul. Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 424.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 430–449.

more heavily shall he pay for each misdeed.⁵⁸² If the nature of a crime is not wholly clear, neither is the nature of the amendment, which is left undefined in many places where similar wording is used. Cnut's Oxford code from 1018 makes the inseparable nature of the two concepts clear, when it states that '[it is] the decree of the councillors [...] that, although a person sins (*agilte*) and commits serious offences, the punishment be prescribed as is appropriate before God and acceptable to men.'⁵⁸³ The same tract, when commenting on murderers, perjurers, violators of the clergy and adulterers, says that they shall either submit and make amends (*gebetan*) or depart from their country with their crimes / sins (*mid synne gewitan*).⁵⁸⁴ The connectedness of the concepts sin and crime is evident in that the Old English words that mean sin, crime, fault and offence (*synn* and *gylt*) are used interchangeably. The meaning of the concepts that are today so clearly separated into secular (crime) and religious (sin) categories were in Anglo-Saxon England almost identical. The way Wulfstan uses these concepts in legislation shows that the conceptualization of this aspect of morality concerned at the same time both secular and spiritual guilt. Furthermore, guilt (*gylt*) is not to be considered only as a personal emotion when it comes to these texts, but as a broader concept which encompasses the profound fault in one's actions. *Gylt* was both the act and the moral outcome of offence against the society and God.

What transpires from Wulfstan's discourse in the legal tracts is that in his thought the concept of morality entailed both secular and spiritual guilt inseparably. His theological conception of the human nature can therefore be seen as an inherent part of his political thought. The general state of the sinfulness of humans was apart from specific acts of sin performed by individuals. Therefore, in principle, being included in the call for penance did not require any specific sinning on the part of individuals. The analogy between the fall of man and contemporary law might at a first glimpse seem like an over-interpretation, but it should be noted that seen from a theological perspective, this was the cause for all imperfectness and

⁵⁸² 'And a swa man bið mihtigra her nu for worulde oþpon þurh geþingða hearra on hade, swa sceal he deoppor synna gebetan and ælce misdæda deoror agyldan.' Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 258. This statement was used also in II Cnut.

⁵⁸³ 'And witena gerædnes is, þæt þeh hwa agilte, and hine silfne deope forwyrce, þonne medemige man þa steore, swa hit for gode sy gebeorhlic, and for worlde aberendlic.' Kennedy, "Cnut's Law Code of 1018," 73. Trans. Kennedy.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

lawlessness on earth. Adam had been created as the image of God, perfect in knowledge and virtue, but had broken his laws, which then resulted in the loss everything perfect. This analogy can be read especially in Ælfric's works, where he reiterates the Christian circle together with moral exhortation, but a similar typological connection can also be seen in the way Wulfstan treats the legal material available to him. Thus it is not surprising to see that Wulfstan's law codes dwell on general references on faultiness and sin even more than on specific penalties for specific crimes, which would at first be expected from legal tracts. In addition to the examples given above, there are numerous places in Wulfstan's legal tracts in which he only refers to *synn* or *gylt* in a very general manner, without defining specific sins or crimes in detail. Consequently, the call for atonement and remorse is equally vague, often without any specific details for punishment, which, considering the purpose of law codes, raises questions about their functionality.

In many cases Wulfstan calls for the protection of the secular law for offences that might be considered spiritual. For instance, the way in which Wulfstan speaks of the 'former' legislators who added secular punishments for the protection of the church is a case in point. The tract titled *Hadbot* in the end of the compilation on status in one of the manuscripts associated with Wulfstan (CCCC 201) deals with compensation for the offences made against those in holy orders. The piece blurs the boundaries of secular and spiritual punishment, and states that in addition to legal *wergild* one must pay a monetary compensation, and also to 'engage diligently with divine repentance.'⁵⁸⁵ Material compensation is to be paid if one wishes to 'earn God's mercy.'⁵⁸⁶ The secular means of penalty are thus justified with a spiritual goal. The tract ends with a comment on former legislators: 'And the secular councillors were wise who added to the ecclesiastical right laws these laws for the control of the people, and honoured relics and holy orders for the love of God, and greatly privileged God's houses and God's servants.'⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ '[And] mid godcundre bote þingige georne.' Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 466; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 471.

⁵⁸⁶ '[G]if he godes miltse geearnian wille.' Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 466; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 470.

⁵⁸⁷ 'And wise wæran worldwitan, þe to godcundan rihtlagan þas laga setton, folce for steore, and halidon and hadas for Godes lufan wurðodon and Godes hus and Godes peowas

A legal tract which dates earlier than those issued at Enham in 1008, the so-called laws of Edward and Guthrum, reiterates a similar attitude. Although the specific date of composition is unknown, the text must have been written between Wulfstan's appointment as archbishop in 1002 and the laws drafted at Enham in 1008.⁵⁸⁸ This is the only code drafted by Wulfstan in Æthelred's reign included in the later, twelfth-century collections of Anglo-Saxon laws.⁵⁸⁹ This text also displays the division of secular and ecclesiastical law, in the same way as described in the texts above, and as such is an early example of Wulfstan's concerns to establish secular penalties for ecclesiastical offenses.

*And they appointed secular punishments also, for the reason that they knew that they could not otherwise restrain many men, nor would many men otherwise submit to ecclesiastical penance as they should; and they appointed the secular compensation to be divided between Christ and the king, wherever anyone would not submit rightly to ecclesiastical penance at the direction of the bishops.*⁵⁹⁰

The theme appears in various instances in Wulfstan's writings,⁵⁹¹ and Whitelock has noted that Wulfstan used some of the terminology of this passage also in VIII Æthelred, which employs the exact same passage as quoted above from *Hadbot*.⁵⁹² Also the *Northumbrian Priests Law* refers to the payments to Christ and the king, although, according to Wormald, it is unlikely that Wulfstan was the author of this particular law text.⁵⁹³ Other

deoplice griðedon.' Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 468; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 471. Trans. Whitelock.

⁵⁸⁸ ———, *Councils and Synods*, 302–303.

⁵⁸⁹ *Textus Roffensis*, fos. 40–41v, and CCCC 383, pp. 7–10. The text is also printed from both manuscripts along with Latin version in *Quadripartitus* in Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 128–135. Only this tract and VII Æthelred are in *Quadripartitus*. *Consiliatio Cnuti* has part of VIII Æthelred. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 303.

⁵⁹⁰ 'And hig gesetton woroldlice steora eac, for ðam þingum þe hig wistan, þæt hig elles ne mihton manegum gesteoran, ne fela manna nolde to godculdre bote ellse gebugan, swa hy sceolden; þa woruldbote hig gesetton gemæne Criste and cynge, swa hwar swa man nolde godcunde bote gebugan mid rihte to bisceopa dihte.' ———, *Councils and Synods*, 304–305. Trans. Whitelock.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. *Hadbot* 11, *Grið* 24. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 468, 472.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵⁹³ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 396–397.

tracts, such as *Gebyncðu*, invoke nostalgic feelings of golden former times, when it was the concern of the bishop *and* the king, if someone injured an ecclesiastic person.⁵⁹⁴ This is a continuous theme in Wulfstan's works; it was the duty of the secular part of the society to provide protection for the church, monks and priests.⁵⁹⁵

A short homiletic piece, with a rubric possibly given by Wulfstan himself (*Her is gyt rihtlic warnung*, Napier 34; Bethurum 21), shows a similar concern for the principles of earthly society. This short exhortatory homily is thought to be one of Wulfstan's later works. Wormald's chronology places this piece together with the *Sermo Lupi*, around 1014.⁵⁹⁶ Its manuscript contexts indicate that it was connected with other pieces with similar concern; in CCC 201 it is directly followed by texts called *Be Godcundre warnunge* (Napier 28; Bethurum 19), *Be mislicum gelimpum* (Napier 35), *Her is git oþer wel god eaca* (Napier 38), and *Bis man gerædde þa se micle here com to lande* (Napier 39). These texts are in turn followed by a variant from Ælfric's second pastoral letter. In three manuscripts (twice in CCC 201; Hatton 113; BL Cotton Nero A.i) it follows the *Sermo Lupi*, as 'another' warning and admonition.⁵⁹⁷ The theme and message of the piece is that religious piety is the cornerstone of secular life, and that well-being in this world is dependent on not only secular laws and concerns, but ecclesiastical as well. Bethurum's comments on the piece state that the integrity of the church was essential, but I would say that it was the whole human community that should be seen as 'the church', not only the ecclesiastical institution, understood as separate from the secular one.⁵⁹⁸ The main force of Wulfstan's admonition originates from the importance of turning oneself from wrong deeds to righteousness, from sin to the love of God. It shows concern for the current times, which are filled with many misdeeds and treachery.⁵⁹⁹ The piece accentuates that the only lasting resolution for a successful living on earth was based on the joint efforts and mutual principles of spiritual and secular laws.

⁵⁹⁴ Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 458–459.

⁵⁹⁵ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 304–305.

⁵⁹⁶ Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State-BUILDER," 26.

⁵⁹⁷ Joyce Tally Lionarons, "Textual Identity, Homiletic Reception, and Wulfstan's *Sermo ad Populum*," *Review of English Studies* 55, no. 219 (2004): 163.

⁵⁹⁸ Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 364–365.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 276–277.

Taking into consideration the vast ecclesiastical regulation which Wulfstan produced and collected, it is no wonder that his secular regulations echo the same ideas and values. Allen Frantzen has noted that as the author or compiler for the *Canons of Edgar*, the *Institutes of Polity*, the *Northumbrian Priests Law*⁶⁰⁰ and other ecclesiastical legislation, Wulfstan 'made penance a systematic program in the English Church.'⁶⁰¹ He states that Wulfstan's legislative actions enabled the penitential practice to become customary in Anglo-Saxon England.⁶⁰² Therefore it is expected that his secular laws would repeat the penitential discourse, and Frantzen's statement that Wulfstan 'aimed at the establishment of Christian ethics within the secular law codes' is not surprising.⁶⁰³ Frantzen concludes that the statements in the law codes which echo the penitentials must in the end be seen merely as verbal accomplishment, as we cannot know how Wulfstan's society lived up or reacted to these standards.⁶⁰⁴ Carole Hough has revised some of Frantzen's views and questioned especially a specific use of penitential handbooks in the formulations of secular law. As she points out, often a clear distinction is not made between general allusions to penance and specific references to the penitential handbooks.⁶⁰⁵ In the case of Wulfstan's law codes, even though the concepts of sin and guilt on the one hand, and spiritual and secular accountability on the other, are wholly intermingled, his legal tracts cannot be equated with penitential handbooks, as they essentially cannot be described as 'systematic manuals of penance containing long schedules, or tariffs, of specific penances for corresponding lists of sins.'⁶⁰⁶ Hough also makes an important point of the function of penitential discipline, and argues that the penitential tones in law codes are not to be seen as support for a 'weak' secular authority, but instead it seems

⁶⁰⁰ As it was stated above, it is not certain whether this collection is one of Wulfstan's works. It is influenced by his texts, certainly, but includes traits uncharacteristic of him. A plausible explanation is that it was compiled by one of his successors at the see of York. See Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 396–397.

⁶⁰¹ Allen J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 144.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 143–147.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁶⁰⁵ Carole Hough, "Penitential Literature and Secular Law in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 11 (2000): 133.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 134. Quoting T. P. Oakley, "The Penitentials as Sources for Mediaeval History", *Speculum* 15 (1940): 210–223, at 211.

like they could only be enforced *by means of* secular law.⁶⁰⁷ Wulfstan's discourse on spiritual and secular sins and crimes should, therefore, be read primarily as rhetoric, not as implications of the prevailing practice, or as direct indications of the use of penitential handbooks in compiling secular laws.

Wulfstan's law codes reflect a deep engagement with morality, and this feature brings the legal discourse not only to the sphere of sacredness, but to the sphere of institutionalized sacredness. The texts secure their position as authorizing instances in legal practices, and thus tie together the sacred and secular. This means that when the religious rhetoric of moral guilt was used in legal tracts in order to create feelings of remorse in the audience (*pathos*), it was a way to influence the audience's receptiveness and attitude towards the tracts and the authority behind them. The tools for creating authority were rhetorically powerful; by invoking guilt with religious language Wulfstan blurred the boundaries between law and morality.

6.2.3. Contemporary hardships as punishment for sins

The main message of Wulfstan's legislative works was that the well-being of the realm, its military defence, and its political success was possible to achieve only through religiously and morally correct and pious action within society. This principle has certain implications in terms of Wulfstan's thought, which I will discuss in the following. The assumption that behaviour had both legal and spiritual consequences was, in my view, deeply connected with Wulfstan's—and Ælfric's, as it became evident in the preceding chapters—concept of Christian history. This means that one's choices of action on earth not only had immediate consequences, but also those of eternal nature. In addition, Wulfstan's discourse makes it clear that also the current miserable situation was an outcome of people's sins, and that by acting righteously the current state of being could be amended. For instance, in the Enham code from 1008 Wulfstan states: 'But God's law is henceforth to be eagerly loved by word and deed; then God will at once become gracious to this nation.'⁶⁰⁸ This clause was kept in the first drafts of Cnut's laws, and in I Cnut, as well. The supposition of morality as the cause

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 137.

⁶⁰⁸ 'Ac lufige man Godes riht heonanforð georne wordes and dæde; þonne wyrð þysse þeode sona God milde.' Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 357. Trans. Whitelock.

for certain effects is visible in the law codes, but also in his homilies, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* in specific.

Among the homilies of Anglo-Saxon England Wulfstan's homilies are the most forceful to employ the theme in which sins are seen as the cause for the contemporary bad circumstances. The theme appears in the most famous of Wulfstan's morally pounding writings, and probably even the most famous of all Anglo-Saxon texts from this time, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*.⁶⁰⁹ Additionally, the current times with the Viking attacks are compared with Gildas's account of the sins of the Britons as the cause of the Saxon invasion in the sixth century.⁶¹⁰ This homily is full of negative morality and invocation of guilt and penance. Its rhetorical force has been acknowledged many times, and it has been the favourite subject of study when considering Wulfstan's language. And since it is one of the texts from this era most clearly tied to the Viking attacks, it has also gained more historical interest than the rest of Wulfstan's works.

Jonathan Wilcox has studied the political dimensions of the sermon and argued for dating the sermon to a specific instance: the immediate time after Sweyn's death and the decision of the *witan* to invite Æthelred back from his exile. Wilcox dates the performance of the sermon to 16 February 1014 quite convincingly, and for the purposes of this study there is no need to question this date. My interest in the rhetoric of the sermon as political discourse is wider than the initial performance of the sermon on that specific day, as its discourse remained in practice even after that, and Wulfstan used the sermon or parts of it in his later production, as well.

The general mood of the sermon is that the Viking attacks are a punishment from God; people's sins have brought on misery, and they must repent and correct their ways, as God has ordered. The currently poor state of people's morality was therefore seen as the cause for the equally poor state of society, as the cause for both internal and external hardships which afflicted England. Consequently, the acts of people, for good or for bad, were

⁶⁰⁹ Printed in Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, 255–275; Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, 156–167; Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. Worth noting are also homilies 19 (*Be godcundre warnunge*): on the disobedience and repentance of Israel; 11 (*Vidit super iudam et Hierusalem*): on sin and repentance; 15 (*Sermo de cena Domini*): on excommunication and penance; 21 (*Her is gyt rihtlic warnung*): on divine and secular law. The numbers refer to homilies in Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*.

⁶¹⁰ Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 51–52.

seen as active agents in the course of history; morality had an important role in the outcome of history. An idea of a certain moral cause-and-effect was an effective and pervasive element in Wulfstan's discourse at large. In the sermon Wulfstan used a typical juxtaposition of the past and the present, presenting the past as good and glorious, and the present as evil and morally corrupt. In one of the manuscripts the sermon places emphasis on the difference between the reign of Edgar and the contemporary times, as Ælfric did in his works, and notes that after Edgar things have gone badly: 'But what I say is true: there is need for that remedy because God's dues have diminished too long in this land in every district, and laws of the people have deteriorated entirely too greatly, [since Edgar died].'⁶¹¹

Wulfstan's concern about unjust laws is reflected in the *Sermo Lupi*, when he refers to the contemporary social disorder. He laments the current unlawfulness and disregard of the 'proper' social orders, and notes regrettably that some of the slaves have turned into Vikings, betraying their former lords, and in this way have escaped from paying the proper *wergild*, whereas the lords are to pay a full *wergild* for the lives of their former slaves. This disorder upset Wulfstan, since it broke the social order that was intended by God. The prevailing hierarchy had been turned upside down.

*Although it happens that a slave escape from a lord and, leaving Christendom becomes a Viking, and after that it happens again that a hostile encounter takes place between thane and slave, if the slave kills the thane, he lies without wergild paid to any of his kinsmen; but if the thane kills the slave that he had previously owned, he must pay the price of a thane. Full shameful laws and disgraceful tributes are common among us, through God's anger, let him understand it who is able. And many misfortunes befall this nation time and again.*⁶¹²

⁶¹¹ 'Ac soð is þæt ic secge, þearf is þære bote, forþam Godes gerihta wanedan to lange innan þysse þeode on æghwylcan ænde, and folclaga wyrseadan ealles to swyþe, [syððan Eadgar geendode.]' Ibid., 36, note 39. The reference to Edgar occurs only in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 113 (formerly Junius 99: Ker 331, Gneuss 637), fol. 84 v. ff., which was written at Worcester in the latter part of the 11th c. by the scribe Wulfgeat. Trans. Melissa Bernstein in *The Electronic Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*.

<http://english3.fsu.edu/~wulfstan/noframes.html>.

⁶¹² 'Ðeh þræla hwylc hlaforde æthleape and of cristendome to wicinge weorþe, and hit æfter þam eft geweorþe þæt wæpngewrixl weorðe gemæne þegene and þræle, gif þræl þæne þegen fulllice afylle, licge ægyld ealre his mægðe; and, gif se þegen þæne þræl þe he ær ahte fulllice afylle, gyld e þegengylde. Ful ealhlice laga and scandlice nydgyld þurh Godes

Alice Cowen has studied the vocabulary of sin in Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, and argued that the way the Viking attacks are used in the sermon can be linked to a metaphor that was common in the penitential texts of that time, namely the wounds of sin.⁶¹³ She follows Allen Frantzen in seeing the sermon as primarily penitential literature.⁶¹⁴ The analysis of the way sin and shame are tied together with the literary images of the Viking attacks shows in an interesting way how the rhetoric of Wulfstan worked to achieve a certain effect among his listeners. The sermon is not alone in invoking this kind of rhetoric, even though the exact vocabulary is not prevalent in many other works. Cowen reads the rhetoric specifically as rhetoric of shame, not of guilt, making a distinction between shame, as consciousness of how one's actions are perceived by others, and guilt, which rests on a concept of an interior moral reality.⁶¹⁵ She connects the rhetoric of the *Sermo Lupi* with the public and with the community, and concludes that the theme of the sermon aimed to invoke shared repentance in the framework of shared shame.⁶¹⁶ I would like to add that the purpose of penance, if seen from a theological point of view or from the perspective of Wulfstan's overall discourse, was not only to inflict public shame for the sake of humiliation. The motive behind Wulfstan's exhortation was ultimately to achieve correction, and to steer the sinning individual towards right behaviour and God. The premise behind the acts of penance was the thought that humans were by nature faulty and prone to sin and therefore had to constantly contemplate and correct their actions. Thus, I would be more cautious in stating that this kind of discourse would be an indication of an Anglo-Saxon 'culture of shame', but would like to connect it to the same ideological framework that has been the focus throughout this study, the inseparable connection between morals, right conduct of life and the order of society.

yrre us syn gemæne, understande se þe cunne; and fela ungelimpa gelimpð þysse þeode oft and gelome.' Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 44–45. Trans. Bernstein.

⁶¹³ Alice Cowen, "Byrstas and Bysmeras: The Wounds of Sin in the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *SEM 10* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 397–398.

⁶¹⁴ Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, 176–178.

⁶¹⁵ Cowen, "Byrstas and Bysmeras," 405.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 404–411.

6.3. Penance and guilt in the legislation of Æthelred

6.3.1. Rhetoric of repentance

By 1000, penance had for long already been practised as a form of both spiritual and secular punishment. Exiles into monasteries, public confessions of one's crimes, and other actions had been used as political penalties since the seventh century.⁶¹⁷ Carolingian canonists had made an attempt to implement a rule of dividing the practice of penance according to the nature of the sin into two forms, private (or 'secret') and public; private sins could be atoned with private penance assigned by a confessor, but sins of a more public nature, pertaining to ecclesio-political issues, for instance, would consequently require a public display of penance and was always administered by a bishop.⁶¹⁸ Therefore both religious and political aspects of social authority are inherent in penitential practice. Whether the actual practice lived up to these ideals is a matter of debate, and it has been noted that both in Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon material the division of penance into public and private was not always clear-cut, but that both forms were practised in some way or another. However, Wulfstan himself was apparently very much interested in employing this rule in practice.⁶¹⁹ As the practice of penance was one of the most powerful tools especially for bishops, who had major responsibilities in controlling the local authority both in spiritual and legal terms, Wulfstan's choices of including penitential rhetoric in legal writings becomes a matter of great importance when considering his own role as an archbishop. For the purposes of this study it is essential to recognize the nature of the sources which relate the aspirations of penance, especially when speaking in terms of legislative writing. As Sarah Hamilton has shown in her study, the sources for

⁶¹⁷ Mayke De Jong, "Power and Humility in Carolingian society: the Public Penance of Louis the Pious," *Early Medieval Europe* 1, no. 1 (1992): 43–47.

⁶¹⁸ Brad Bedingfield, "Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 226–229; Sarah Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance 900–1050* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 2–9.

⁶¹⁹ Bedingfield, "Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England", 223–224, 233–237; Catherine Cubitt, "Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England," *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 1 (2006): 52–53; Sarah Hamilton, "Rites for Public Penance in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Liturgy of the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. Helen Gittos and M. Bradford Bedingfield (London: The Boydell Press, 2005), 65–68, 71–83, 87–90.

penitential practice were mainly prescriptive writings telling about the aspirations of the clergy and about their relationship with, or attitude towards, the laity.⁶²⁰ Wulfstan's legislative discourse of penance should be viewed with similar concerns in mind. The penitential tone in his law codes from the end of Æthelred's reign cannot, as a rule, be seen as reflecting an unusual shift in interest towards sin and punishment in Anglo-Saxon England in general, but should be read primarily as evidence of Wulfstan's own interest rather than as a sign of a 'shift in legislative mentality', so to speak. Wulfstan's writings had strong precedent; in the previous Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian legislation, in which penance had been used as a penalty for secular crimes, too.⁶²¹ But Wulfstan's works also bear a certain degree of uniqueness in the way he applied penitential discourse in his own legal writings.

To fully understand the penitential tone of Wulfstan's legislation, a few words about its precedents in the earlier stages of Æthelred's reign should be stated. The discourse of Wulfstan's homilies and laws gains further light when it is compared with the language of the charters of the reign of Æthelred. A series of royal diplomas in the 990s have been noted to share a certain penitential tone similar to Wulfstan's rhetoric of repentance in the later stages of Æthelred's reign.⁶²² Keynes has stated that the religiously saturated mood in the charters was employed in order to represent the good intentions of the king and his counsellors, but also to 'avert further punishment and even deserve divine assistance in their struggle against the heathen armies.'⁶²³ Pauline Stafford, for her part, has suggested that the charters produced during Æthelred's reign reflect an attempt to repair the king's bad reputation by creating an image of the king's youth as a period of

⁶²⁰ Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance 900–1050*, 1–2.

⁶²¹ ———, "Rites for Public Penance in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 83–87; Hough, "Penitential Literature and Secular Law in Anglo-Saxon England."

⁶²² Levi Roach, "Public Rites and Public Wrongs: Ritual Aspects of Diplomas in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England," *Early Medieval Europe* 19, no. 2 (2011): 193–199. The following discussion is much in debt for this article.

⁶²³ Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12." Referring to ———, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready"*, 95–114, 198–199; ———, "Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready," 90–96; Pauline A. Stafford, "Political Ideas in Late Tenth Century England: Charters as Evidence," in *Law, Laity, and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, ed. Pauline Stafford, Janet L. Nelson, and Jane Martindale (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 68–82.

ignorance and mistakes.⁶²⁴ Both of the views are plausible in explaining the purpose of the charters, but I would like to pay some further attention to them and especially to their rhetoric that was similar to Wulfstan's discourse. Keynes has also reminded us that the impact of the Viking presence in the 990s and the early years after the turn of the millennium should not be exaggerated as the explaining factor in Æthelred's acts of amendment. Rather, it should be taken into account that when the king detached himself from those who had influenced his actions in his youth, and who may have guided his stance towards certain monastic parties, he did it in the influence of *other* men, rather than prompted by the Viking attacks only. There are no signs of a breakdown of the functionality of government from this period, as is witnessed by several law codes, coins and charters.⁶²⁵ Therefore, the discursive and rhetorical nature of these acts is all the more important to recognize.

The main document that relates the use of penitential discourse in royal diplomas is King Æthelred's charter from 993, which granted privileges to Abingdon Abbey (S 876).⁶²⁶ In the charter the contemporary Viking raids are presented as God's punishment for the sins of the English, in a similar vein to Wulfstan's discourse examined in the previous section. King Æthelred describes how he had succumbed to many wrongdoings and been misled by greedy men after the death of Bishop Æthelwold. Now, however, he had realized his wrongdoings, and wished to publicly admit them at the meeting he had called to Winchester at Pentecost of 993.⁶²⁷ It is not explicitly stated that he performed formal penance, but the rhetoric of repentance is clear enough. Other diplomas, such as a charter restoring the rights of Rochester in 995 (S 885), Old Minster, Winchester in 997 (S 891), and Rochester again in 998 (S 893), reiterate the repentance of the king on his unrighteous actions in his youth, and express his wish to rectify them.⁶²⁸ The latest of these charters is most clear in its expressions of penance; in it the king is said to fully repent (*cum flebili cordis contritione peniteo*) his wrong deeds, wishing to receive 'the tears of remorse' (*sperans penitentię*

⁶²⁴ ———, "Political Ideas in Late Tenth Century England: Charters as Evidence."

⁶²⁵ Keynes, "The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon," 98–99.

⁶²⁶ Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, 477–483, no. 124.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 477–483.

⁶²⁸ Roach, "Public Rites and Public Wrongs," 194–198.

meę lacrimas suscipi).⁶²⁹ With these examples of rhetoric of repentance that the diplomas testify of, Wulfstan's discourse does not appear very unusual for the time.

Æthelred's penitential discourse had precedents in the Carolingian culture. The most notable example is Louis the Pious (770–840), who made a public confession for his sins and for neglecting his sacred task as the emperor. The public display of humility was essentially a recognition of the emperor's responsibility to God for the moral well-being of his subjects, who in failing his duty, must undergo a spiritual punishment. The fact that this display was public was first and foremost a display of episcopal power to interpret and execute the will of God, but it could also strengthen the religious grounds of authority of the emperor himself.⁶³⁰ Æthelred's actions might be read in a similar vein, as ecclesiastical expressions of the duties of the king, and as displays of the authority of both the bishops and the king. It is notable that Æthelred was not accused of crimes, like Louis the Pious was, but expressed his regret voluntarily—at least in the language of the diplomas, albeit not necessarily without a nudge from the monastic parties involved. Nor was explicit public penance required in any of the charters, but the penitential tone derived from the king's own confession, which, of course, can as well have been a calculated act from his own part. This kind of acquiescence to remorse and penance must have been a powerful performance of authority on behalf of the monastic circles, but on behalf of the king, as well. With this act Æthelred gained religious authority for himself by submitting seemingly to higher authority. It has to be concluded, then, that the use of penance and humility was not extraordinary, and as such had been a significant tool also in the Carolingian empire.⁶³¹ Wulfstan was very familiar with Carolingian penitential material, as his own writings as well as his manuscripts prove. Therefore his discourse is not difficult to connect to the general literary environment he was part of.

The way Æthelred's diplomas deal with divine punishment and penance is similar to the way Wulfstan presented the connection between the sins of people and the Viking incursions as their outcome.⁶³² Religious

⁶²⁹ Alistair Campbell, ed. *Charters of Rochester*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 43, no. 32.

⁶³⁰ De Jong, "Power and Humility in Carolingian society," 39–40.

⁶³¹ According to the sacramental tradition it was the bishop's task only to issue public penance. Private penance could be assigned by priests of lower rank. *Ibid.*

⁶³² See Keynes, "Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready," 90–93.

rhetoric, which repeats the aspirations for divine assistance in harsh times, is as clearly visible in these official charters as they are in Wulfstan's homilies. It is possible that the language and ideas in the charters influenced Wulfstan when he drafted the law codes, in which he repeated the same *ethos* of divine retribution, penance and the close relationship between sin and punishment.⁶³³ Therefore, when explaining the discourse of Wulfstan, they should not only be seen as responses to the current Viking attacks,⁶³⁴ but also as part of the prevailing modes of discourse in which the notions of sin, morality, and punishment combine.

What makes the rhetoric of repentance important for this study is its adaptation and use in this particular instance. When penance is employed as law and order, its implications are bound to create authority from religious morality. Rhetoric of penance aims to create feelings of conflicting loyalty in its audience—that is, between one's loyalty to himself and to his community and law. The moral burden that was sought with penance rose not from the actual circumstances, but from the consciousness that one's conduct has been wrong and has had implications.⁶³⁵ Similar to the language of the charters was the discourse employed in two specific law codes by Wulfstan (VII and VIII Æthelred), to which I will turn next.

6.3.2. Penance: VII Æthelred

In the autumn of 1009 the king's counsellors met in the aftermath of the notorious attack by Thorkell's army, which, according to Keynes, was 'one of the most catastrophic events' of Æthelred's reign.⁶³⁶ The outcome of the meeting was an unusual code, which Wulfstan drafted in response to the devastating Viking attacks. The rubric in one of the surviving manuscripts of the tract states the circumstances by referring to 'a great army' (*ðis man*

⁶³³ ———, "King Æthelred's Charter for Eynsham Abbey (1005)," 458. On the resemblance between the discourses of diplomas and legal tracts, see the preface to X Æthelred in Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 336–337.

⁶³⁴ See Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12," 153–154.

⁶³⁵ Cf. Wayne Proudfoot, *God and the Self: Three Types of Philosophy of Religion* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1976), 202–203.

⁶³⁶ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "the Unready"*, 217.

gerædde ða se micle here com to lande).⁶³⁷ Because of its strong call for repentance the code is sometimes known as ‘Æthelred’s penitential edict’. It survives in two versions, Latin and Old English (VII and VIIa), of which the Old English one was most definitely written by Wulfstan, and the Latin one might be, although not indisputably. Even though the Latin text survives only in a twelfth-century law collection known as *Quadripartitus*, Wormald placed the Old English and Latin versions chronologically close to each other.⁶³⁸ The supposition is that two codes were issued after the meeting, one in vernacular and the other in Latin, and that the text in *Quadripartitus* is a copy of the Latin tract. The differences in these two languages show Wulfstan’s unmistakable authorship in Old English, but it is difficult to say the same about the Latin one. Also, the Latin version is much longer and employs material that is more general and not tied to any particular instance. It is of course always possible that the two versions were drafted after the meeting, and that the differences in the two versions are an indication of two different intended audiences, like Dorothy Whitelock supposed.⁶³⁹ Their differences may be also explained by Wulfstan’s habit of rewriting and modifying his own texts, as Wormald has pointed out.⁶⁴⁰

The penitential code is an exhortation for all people to repent. It is peculiar among the other law codes of this time, since it imposes a universal three-day fasting with bread, vegetables and water for all people (*Nu will we þæt eal folc [fæste] gemænelige dædbote þrig dagas be hlafe and wirtum and wætere*).⁶⁴¹ The idea behind this mass penance was that it was supposed to serve as an act to achieve help from God to withstand the enemies, as the prologue of the Old English version states: ‘It is necessary for all of us to earn the mercy and compassion of God, so that we are able to withstand our enemies with his help.’⁶⁴² The purpose of the code seems to be to invoke remorse in the audience, and to prescribe a general act of penance, resembling the acts familiar from penitential practice. People are told to fast,

⁶³⁷ This is stated in CCCC 201, in which the Old English version of the code appears. The manuscript is associated with Wulfstan, and the statement of the great army considered contemporary. Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 379.

⁶³⁸ Wormald, “Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State-Builder,” 14–15, 26–27.

⁶³⁹ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 374.

⁶⁴⁰ Wormald, “Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State-Builder,” 14–15.

⁶⁴¹ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 379.

⁶⁴² ‘Ealle we beþurfan þæt we geornlice earnian þæt we Godes miltse and his mildheortnesse habban moton and þæt we þurh his fultum magon feondum wiðstandan.’ Ibid.

to go to church with bare feet and without any kinds of ornaments on themselves, to confess their sins, to pray and call for Christ. And significantly, among all this, payment of tithes and alms for the Church is ordered. All people are to pay dues to the Church, and to even donate away the food that they would have otherwise eaten during the fast. They are required to attend masses and to sing psalms, especially Psalm 3 (*Quid multiplicati sunt*), which, in quite a violent way, addresses the issue of overcoming enemies with trust in God.⁶⁴³ An extra service to God is to be held in each minster, ‘until things get better’ (*oð þæt hit betere wurðe*).⁶⁴⁴ The code ends as it started, and repeats as its closing words the need to turn to God in order to overcome the enemies: ‘And all in common, ecclesiastics and laymen, are to turn eagerly to God and to deserve his mercy. And every year henceforth God’s dues are to be paid at any rate correctly, to the end that Almighty God may have mercy on us and grant that we may overcome our enemies. God help us, Amen.’⁶⁴⁵ These are hardly measures that seem like effective military strategies in warding off the Viking armies, but this code is a fine example of the permeating and all-inclusive association of religious morality to the events in history and contemporary times.

The authority to execute such a wide-scale penance—at least on parchment if not so thoroughly in practice—raises questions about the nature of the tract. The measures which *all* people were supposed to take in order to grapple with the Viking raids are punitive and humiliating. The rhetoric of the whole code is concentrated on invoking guilt in people. Thus morality and the acts of people are seen as the cause for the current, miserable, circumstances and for the Viking raids, in a similar way that was already seen in the preceding section. The message seems to be that by the

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 379–382. Cf. Psalm 3: ‘Domine quare multiplicati sunt hostes mei multi consurgunt adversus me / multi dicunt animae meae non est salus huic in Deo semper / tu autem Domine clipeus circa me gloria mea et exaltans caput meum / voce mea ad Dominum clamabo et exaudiet me de monte sancto suo semper / ego dormivi et soporatus sum evigilavi quia Dominus sustentavit me / non timebo milia populi quae circumdederunt me surge Domine salvum me fac Deus meus / quia percussisti omnium inimicorum meorum maxillam dentes impiorum confregisti Domini est salus super populum tuum benedictio tua semper.’

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 382.

⁶⁴⁵ ‘And ealle gemænelice, gehadode and læwede, bugan to Gode georne and gearnian his mildse. And æghwilce gear heononforð gelæste man Godes gerihta huru rihtlice, wið ðam þe us God ælmihtig gemiltsige and us geunne þæt we ure fynd ofercuman motan. God ure helpe. Amen.’ Ibid. Trans. Whitelock.

acts of penance and humility the state of affairs can be changed; the Viking incursions can be warded off not only with effective military actions, but with effective remorse and repentance.

It is notable that two of Wulfstan's homilies (Napier 35: '*Be mistlican gelimpan*' and 36: '*To eallum folce*') employ the same material that Wulfstan used in the 'penitential code'; both of them call for a three-day fasting, going to the church with bare feet and singing psalms to placate God, exactly in the same way as the code. These homilies do not specify the remedy to the Viking attacks only, but for any kind of misfortune: 'If it happens, that a great misfortune falls on people on account of their deeds, be that an army or hunger, fire or bloodshed, failure of crops or bad weather, plague with a sudden death among cattle or men, then men must always seek repentance (*bote*) from God himself.'⁶⁴⁶ As these homilies employ material similar to the code, Wulfstan must have used the homiletic material in drafting up the code to increase the penitential tone of the treatise. The penitential formulation, which in the law code was situated in a specific instance, was in these homilies written to apply to any kind of situation. The law code, as unusual as it is as a decree of legal practice, was thus far from being the only text to invoke guilt as a tool of authorization. The implication of this textual connection is that the means which Wulfstan offered for the remedy of the situation in 1009 cannot be seen as direct evidence of the actual execution of a general three-day penance, but rather of Wulfstan's opportunity to use this kind of rhetoric in an attempt to actualize his ideas of the connectedness of the sins of people, their consequences, and acts of spiritual remedy.

Yet, there must have been some sort of consensus among the ecclesiastical and secular decision-makers in order to implement these kinds of drastic measures in practice. As a way of comparison, we should note the unusual issuing of the so-called 'Agnus Dei' silver penny. On one side the coin displays a figure of the Lamb of God, and a figure of a Dove on the other. Keynes has pointed out that it was highly unusual not to display the portrait of the king, and that the reasons for this decision must have been stressing.⁶⁴⁷ More notably, Keynes has associated the promulgation of VII

⁶⁴⁶ 'Gyf hit geweorðe þæt on þeodscype becume healic ungelimp for manna gewyrhtan, here oððon hunger, bryne oððon blodgyte, unwæstm oððon unweder, orfcwealm oþðon mancwealm þurh færlice uncoða, þonne sece man þa bote aa to gode sylfum.' Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, 169–170.

⁶⁴⁷ Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12," 190.

Æthelred with issuing this particular coin. As he has stated, the issuing of this coin was not so much a display of royal power. Instead, the coin can be seen as an expression of the prevailing concerns, which sought political outcome from religious action. The prevailing desire for peace may have raised the interest in the figure as the symbol of Christ and peace, but it may also be connected to the eschatological interests of the time—or both.⁶⁴⁸ It should also be noted that the fact that the *witan* and the king decided to mint this coin, even if the idea itself came from ecclesiastical parties, shows the connectedness of religious symbolism and politics. There must have been some sort of an agreement, at least to an extent, that by implementing this act something relevant could be gained. That Wulfstan was able to include his homiletic call for a wide-scale penance in a royal code in this particular instance might well be an expression of similar concerns as in the case of the 'Agnus Dei' silver penny.

As the code is so unusual, the implications of penitential discourse in the law codes and homilies deserve some further thought. As the religious culture of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages has often been judged from a modern, often post-Reformation point of view as oppressive, certain prejudice still remains towards the penitential practice of the church as a form of social control. Penitential call for regret has tended to be seen as forced suppression with a threat of punishment, both temporal and eternal. Allen Frantzen has pointed out that these judgements are almost always focused on the use of penitentials rather than on their content, focusing the attention to the various, often severe forms of punishment. He has stated that the interpretations of medieval penitential writings have exaggerated their restrictive nature, and equated the texts with manipulation and modification of people's behaviour. His own argument focuses on the content and on the conceptualization of penance; penance should not be seen as mere punishment in negative terms, but as a cure. Frantzen states that the central purpose of penance was not to make the penitent 'a more obedient and dutiful member of his society', but that it was only its side-effect. He sees the primary purpose as converting the sinner away from sin, making the act of penance an act of learning at the same time.⁶⁴⁹

Frantzen's views are important and plausible, especially when considering the religious prejudices held towards the medieval religious

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁶⁴⁹ Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, 3–4.

culture. However, Wulfstan's interest in society should not be seen as merely a side-effect. What has been evident in his works throughout is that his discourse was consistently based on the idea about actualizing the moral principles of social order, and in my opinion his penitential discourse in the law codes should also be seen in this light—as admonition to instruct people away from sins and to organize a proper Christian *communitas*. Thus the interpretation of whether penance was a form of oppression and social control approaches the question from a slightly twisted side; social control as represented by penitential actions should not be seen as restrictive rules in which an upper part of society—bishops and priests—oppress the rest of the people. No doubt individual oppressive actions can have happened in situations which called for repentance and punishment, as they always do in human societies, but it was not their core purpose. In Wulfstan's case the thought of regret and penance was ultimately tied to both individual morality and organization of society, without negative connotations placed only on control for its own sake. This case deepens the understanding of the interrelations between authority, society, and religion.

The 'penitential code' is a striking example which tells of the modes of thought of Wulfstan. The need for repentance is seen as a way—or *the* way—to earn God's mercy through which the Viking attacks could be warded off and further misfortunes avoided. The goal of repentance was not only to affect the external circumstances and fix the situation. On the contrary, the Viking attacks were used in Wulfstan's language as tools; they were the consequence of people's sins. They were not the ultimate problem, but the problem was the behaviour of the people themselves. In Wulfstan's discourse the improvement of one's moral conduct was the means for gaining a just society. In this instance the external situation was tightly woven into Wulfstan's rhetoric of repentance, as it was to be in his later codes. A few years after the issuing of the 'penitential code', the political situation in England had changed drastically, and it was the next code which took up the themes of internal treachery, regret and restoration.

6.3.3. Regret and restoration: VIII Æthelred

After the code of 1009 the political circumstances quickly experienced an upheaval. In 1013 Sweyn Forkbeard finally managed to drive Æthelred and his sons to exile into Normandy, after a long campaign of raiding England's coasts. He claimed the throne of England and according to the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle was accepted as king.⁶⁵⁰ His rule ended abruptly in 1014 in his death, leaving his two sons in power in Denmark and England. Apparently the intention was that Cnut was to hold power in England, and Harold in Denmark. The situation was complicated when the English instead decided to invite Æthelred back to the English throne. The code VIII Æthelred is the outcome of this decision, and it reflects a general theme of betrayal and loyalty. This theme was important in this particular situation, which saw a fair share of swapping sides and turning coats. The code deals largely with ecclesiastical matters, and it has been estimated that it was originally accompanied by a secular code.⁶⁵¹ Because of its concerns, it is also called the 'ecclesiastical code of Æthelred'.

Despite this title, the code is also highly concerned with royal power. The importance of the collaboration of secular and spiritual authorities is evident in many of the clauses of the code, in the same vein as in other of Wulfstan's codes. This is not surprising, as the code uses the earlier legal tracts and homilies as its sources, and for its own part it also functioned as a source for the legislation of Cnut. It pays attention to *wergilds* to be paid both to the king and Christ (item 2) and to promoting 'God's dues' (*Godes gerihta*) diligently (item 14). If one should refuse to do that, 'he is to be compelled to do right by secular punishments; and that is to be divided between Christ and the king, just as it was formerly.'⁶⁵² And as the only Wulfstan's law code to do so, it employs the phrase 'the representative of Christ' (*Cristes gespelia*) when referring to the duties of the king.⁶⁵³ As it was discussed in chapter 5, Wulfstan used this phrase also in the *Institutes of Polity*, but this is the only occasion he has decided to include it in the formulations of legislation. It is not used in the earlier or consequent codes. In the context of restoration of Æthelred's power, it raises interesting questions about whether Wulfstan used the phrase on purpose to accentuate the spiritual, sacred nature of kingship and the responsibilities it included, in order to gain the upper hand, so to speak, in re-establishing the power relations in this situation.

⁶⁵⁰ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1013.

⁶⁵¹ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 387.

⁶⁵² 'And gif hwa þæt nelle, gewilde man hine to rihte mid worldlicre steore; and þæt si gemæne Criste and cyninge, eal swa hit iu wæs.' Ibid., 393. Trans. Whitelock.

⁶⁵³ 'Forðam Cristen cyning is Cristes gespelia on Cristenre þeode; and he sceal Cristes abilgðe wrecan swiðe georne.' Ibid., 388.

In the end of the code Wulfstan engages with a certain sense of regret and restoration, when he presents the current times as an unhappy time, which has prevailed after the reign of King Edgar, who for the monastic reformers represented the golden example of the harmonious alliance between the royal and monastic authorities. He laments that after Edgar's death the customs and laws were not upheld properly.

*But in these assemblies, although they took place designedly in famous places, since the days of Edgar, Christ's laws have waned and the king's laws dwindled. And then was separated what before had been divided between Christ and the king in secular penalties; and ever things grew the worse in ecclesiastical and secular affairs; may they now improve, if it is God's will! And yet improvement can still come if one will begin it zealously and in earnest.*⁶⁵⁴

The presentation of the king's laws in junction with God's laws is rhetorically powerful, and suggests that both aspects are to be considered as important and equal in a Christian society. Basically, what Wulfstan was saying that the reason for the ever worsening conditions was that the *witan* had disregarded God's law as the principle for earthly rule. He employs a passage similar to a passage in the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, and juxtaposes the waning of Christ's laws (*Cristes lage wanodan*) with the diminishing king's laws (*cyninges lage litedon*), which used to be joint together.⁶⁵⁵ With this positioning Wulfstan contrasts the glorious past and the evil present, but also seems to impose a certain authority over the secular decision-makers, *witan*. Wulfstan, being part of the decision-makers himself, invokes in the audience a feeling that their previous conduct has been wrong, and that they should amend their ways, and keep the Christian doctrine as the basis for all legislation. The ending of the passage implies a strong call for restoration,

⁶⁵⁴ 'Ac on þam gemotan, þeah rædlice wurdan on namcuðan stowan, æfter Eadgares lifdagum, Cristes lage wanodan and cyninges laga litedon. And þa man getwæmde þæt ær wæs gemæne Criste and cynincege on worldlicre steore: and a hit wearð þe wirse for Gode and for worlde; cume nu to bote, gif hit God wille! And git mæg ðeah bot cuman, wille hit man georne on eornost aginnan.' *Ibid.*, 400. Trans. Whitelock.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. 'þearf is þære bote, forþam Godes gerihta wanedan to lange innan þysse þeode on æghwylcan ænde, and folclaga wyrseðan ealles to swyþe.' ———, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 36.

and conveys a certain sense of hope for a new beginning, providing that it is executed properly according to the order of God.

Other references to a similar kind of call for regret and restoration was issued in an entry for 1014 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It states that Æthelred was called back from exile, if only he would promise to rule more lawfully than he had before. The king agreed, and said that all the past words and deeds against him should be forgiven, if all the *witan* would support him without treachery.⁶⁵⁶ Lawson has interpreted this passage as a sign for Æthelred's *de facto* acts, and sees them as proof that the king had not, in fact, corrected his behaviour after 993, even though he had promised to do so in the diplomas issued in the 990s. He also states that this proves that the king was held personally responsible for all the troubles that vexed the land. Lawson's interpretation thus confirms the picture of the unsuccessful, unjust king, who was prone to succumb to bad advice, and failed in his duty as a Christian king to protect his people.⁶⁵⁷ This more or less conforms to the picture that Æthelred gained among later interpreters, seen from the point of view of the outcome of history.

It is true that there must have been discontent towards the king already during his reign, and both Ælfric and Wulfstan refer to that several times, as Lawson also states.⁶⁵⁸ The statements that have this specific nature, however, are more than *de facto* references to the king's actions. They are part of the discourse prevalent at the time, with which the power relations between the king, the aristocracy, and the church were negotiated. The theme of humility in the diplomas, the *Chronicle*, as well as in homilies and laws, was in itself based on the Christian ideological tradition, especially that of the Carolingian royal penitential literature. It is thus important not only to recognize that the penitential motives are a reflection of the king's actions and the discontent towards them—which I do not doubt that they were—but to also realize their use when the actions and their implications were expressed in writing. The written discourse itself was an act of authorization; it had the possibility to transmit notions of what constituted the proper order and proper behaviour of those in power. Implicitly, those who could define the right way of life authorized not only the conception of the right order but their own role in the process. Without regard to how

⁶⁵⁶ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1014.

⁶⁵⁷ Lawson, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut," 570–571.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 571–572.

successful Wulfstan was in this quest, he himself cannot be blamed for not trying to tie the religious principles together with secular laws, as it can be seen in all the works examined here.

6.4. Atonement: the legislation of Cnut

Wulfstan managed to remain in a high place of power even after Sweyn's conquest and Cnut's accession to the throne. He turned out to be a highly valuable person in establishing the legitimate power of Cnut, and he drafted Cnut's law codes in the same vein as he had done with Æthelred, and reviewed his earlier versions of law codes into new presentations of social order. The legislative work of Wulfstan developed in its full length in Cnut's law codes, in which Wulfstan intended to set the social order into its holy framework, and to establish the new royal power on these firm principles. Following the examination of the religious rhetoric of guilt, this section concentrates on the aspect of atonement; the legislation of Wulfstan can be seen to represent an attempt to create order through penance and atonement of the previous false deeds in a situation when a chance for a new establishment of a Christian righteous society appeared.

Wulfstan's codes for Cnut can be said to represent his attempt to found a Christian society anew after a period of hardships. With the change of rule, Wulfstan was able to promote his views of a just society through authoritative legal writings. The latest code of Cnut is the fullest representation of late Anglo-Saxon law, and its tone is even more homiletic than the codes of Æthelred. Even though the code is divided in two parts, the latter is in tone almost as ecclesiastical as the first part. The stress is on political loyalty, a theme that was surely of current interest at the beginning of Cnut's reign. Both parts end with a homiletic passage in which Wulfstan calls for the need to pray, fear the Lord, follow God's law, and obey the religious teachers.⁶⁵⁹

The prologue of the secular ordinance (II Cnut) demonstrates the theme of this section; it starts with calling for the establishment of just practices, abolishment of illegal practices, and a zealous uprooting of all evil, and raising up God's law: 'First, namely, that it is my wish, that just practices be established and all illegal practices abolished, and that every wrong be weeded out and uprooted, as zealously as one can, from this land, and God's

⁶⁵⁹ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 504–506.

law raised up.’⁶⁶⁰ The ecclesiastical ordinance (I Cnut) for its part starts with the assimilation of religious and secular rulers, with its typical and formulaic prologue modelled on earlier Anglo-Saxon law (*Gode to lofe and him sylfum to cynescipe and to þearfe*), adopted from earlier legislation (II Edgar). The ‘first thing above everything else’, the code states, is to honour and love one God, to unanimously keep one faith, and to love King Cnut with true fidelity.⁶⁶¹ Again, Wulfstan had used this formula in his earlier laws, but despite its heavily formulaic nature, it was typical for Wulfstan to stress the basic idea that all order and law on earth is based on this simple thing. Everything that follows, in terms of the rules and admonitions on what constitutes a good and proper life on earth and in the kingdom, has no bearing unless its foundations are laid on true faith in one God and one faith. This kind of rhetoric helped to authorize the power of the king, as well, as it accentuated the assimilation of power on earth with power in heaven; one true faith with one true king representing it was the proper interpretation of how to arrange the political society.

Adapting a clause from the code of Enham, Wulfstan stresses the bigger responsibility of those in higher power: ‘And the mightier or of the higher rank a man is, the deeper shall he make amends for God and for the world for his wrongdoings.’⁶⁶² Protection of churches gains a lot of attention in the law, and is strengthened with various religious clauses assembled for instance from the Institutes, the laws of Edward and Guthrum, the *Grið*, and from Æthelred’s laws. The strengthening rhetorical tools abound; the churches are to be protected ‘for the salvation of the soul and for our own need’ (*saulum to hæle and us sylfum to þearfe*).⁶⁶³ The king’s authority and responsibility to place his protective hand over churches is strengthened with assimilation; all the churches are under Christ’s own protection, and this special protection is to be respected by all people. The closest parallel to this protection is that of the king (*forðam Godes grið is ealra griða selost to*

⁶⁶⁰ ‘Þæt is þonne ærest, þæt is wylle, þæt man rihte laga upp arære and æghwylce unlaga georne afylle, and þæt man aweodige and awyrtwalige æghwylc unriht, swa man geornost mæge, of þysum earde and arære up Godes riht.’ (From VI Æthelred 8–8.1) Ibid., 486. Trans. Whitelock.

⁶⁶¹ ‘Þæt is þonne ærest, þæt hi ofer ealle oþre þingc ænne God æfre woldan lufian and wurðian and ænne Cristendom and rædlice healdan, and Cnut cingc lufian mid rihtan getrywþan.’ (Cf. EdGu Prol. 1, V Æthelred 1) Ibid., 471. Trans. Whitelock.

⁶⁶² ‘And swa man byð mihtigra oððe maran hades, swa scæl he deoppor for Gode and for worulde unriht gebetan.’ Ibid., 491.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 471.

geearnigenne and geornost to healdenne, and þær nehst cininges), and this is why it is right that the protection granted by a Christian king remains equally inviolate as that of God's.⁶⁶⁴ This is a typical justification of the authority of the king with an allusion to God's indisputable power. The authority is constructed by transferring the reverence felt towards God, to that of the king, and by implication the power of the king is to be seen equally indisputable. Wulfstan used this same clause in many of his texts, including the *Institutes* and Æthelred's law codes. But in one instance Wulfstan has seen the need to omit an aspect of assimilation in Cnut's code that he earlier had used in Æthelred's legislation; namely, a copy of Æthelred's law code from 1014 (VIII Æthelred), examined in the previous section follows this passage in Cnut's code. The tract continues with the issue of sanctuaries, and is otherwise fairly faithful to its source, but omits the part which says that the king is Christ's deputy (VIII Æthelred 2.1).

The atonement which Wulfstan pursued with his writing was essentially enabled by the change of rule. For Wulfstan's agenda for a proper Christian social order, this situation offered a chance to polish his views of the grounds of religious and political establishment. This situation offered also a chance for Wulfstan to imply that the former wrong-doings and sins were to be dispensed with new circumstances, repentance, and morally better behaviour. Instead of intimidating the audience with divine wrath and destruction like in his earlier homilies, the code of Cnut shows a different kind of religious rhetoric. It seems to turn the situation to another direction, to that of atonement and improvement. Amid the regulations, the ecclesiastical code exhorts all people to loyalty, on the grounds that 'surely God will be gracious (*hold*) to the one who is loyal (*hold*) to his lord.'⁶⁶⁵ The

⁶⁶⁴ 'Þonne is swiðe rihtlic þæt Godes ciricgrið binnon wagum and Cristenes ciningces handgrið stande efen unwemme.' (Cf. EdGu 1, Grið 2, VI Æthelred 14, and I Polity, 100 = II Polity, 205.) Ibid., 472.

⁶⁶⁵ 'Let us also behave eagerly, as we wish to enjoin further: let us ever be loyal and faithful to our lord and ever with all our might exalt his dignity and do his will. For all that ever we do out of just loyalty to our lord, we do it all to our own great benefit, for assuredly God will be gracious to him who is duly loyal to his lord. And also every lord has very great benefit from treating his men justly.' ('Uton don eac georne, swa we gyt læran wyllað: utan beon a urum hlaforde holde and getrywe and æfre eallum mihtum his wurðscipe ræran and his willan gewyrca. Forðam eal þæt we æfre for rihthlafordhelde doð, eall we hit doð us sylfum to mycelre þearfe, forþam þam byð witodlice God hold, þe byð his hlaforde rihtlice hold. And eac ah hlaforda gehwylc þæs formycle þearfe þæt he his men rihtlice healde.') Ibid., 482. Trans. Whitelock.

word-play with the Old English *hold* which Wulfstan has chosen to use to make his point is clever. Repeating the word that can mean both ‘gracious, favourable or kind’ on the one hand, and ‘true, faithful or loyal’ on the other, demonstrates the inherent connectedness between God’s benevolence and men’s loyalty. Wulfstan has adopted the passage from his homilies—or *vice versa*.⁶⁶⁶ As a way of comparison, the themes of good and bad counsel, treachery, and unrighteous decisions were accentuated also in many of Ælfric’s works; some features seen already in the *Lives of Saints* (*Prayer of Moses*, LS 13; *Ahitophel and Absalom*, LS 19).⁶⁶⁷

Betrayal features prominently also in the *Sermo Lupi*, which appears in the same manuscript, Cotton Nero A.i, with laws and homilies that display the religiously saturated legal-societal interest of Wulfstan.

*For there are in this nation great disloyalties for matters of the Church and the state, and also there are in the land many who betray their lords in various ways. And the greatest of all betrayals of a lord in the world is that a man betrays the soul of his lord. And a very great betrayal of a lord it is also in the world, that a man betray his lord to death, or drive him living from the land, and both have come to pass in this land: Edward was betrayed, and then killed, and after that burned; [and Æthelred was driven out of his land].*⁶⁶⁸

The last passage about Æthelred was omitted in three manuscripts. It is impossible to say whether the omission was done on purpose, or whether it was an accident or irrelevant, but if it was done already during the reign of Cnut, it would fit the picture of the establishment of power. References to the former ruler’s exile, brought on by the attacks done by the current ruler, would not be appropriate.⁶⁶⁹ Wilcox sees the omission as intentional and as

⁶⁶⁶ Napier 24 and 58. Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, 119, 299–300.

⁶⁶⁷ Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, vol. 1, 282–307, 424–431.

⁶⁶⁸ ‘Forþam her syn on lande ungetrywþa micle for Gode and for worolde, and eac her syn on earde on mistlice wisan hlafordswican manege. And ealra mæst hlafordswice se bið on worolde þæt man his hlafordes saule beswice; and ful micel hlafordswice eac bið on worolde þæt man his hlaford of life forræde, oððon of lande lifiendne drife; and ægþer is geworden on þysan earde: Eadweard man forrædde, and syððan acwealde and æfter þam forbærnde, [and Æþelred man dræfde ut of his earde].’ Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, 41–42. Trans. Bernstein.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

proof for dating the longer version of the sermon to 1014. According to Wilcox, Wulfstan omitted the clause some time between 1014 and 1016, when this kind of pointed indictment for the betrayal of one's lord would have felt somewhat awkward, as the *witan* had decided to invite Æthelred back to England.⁶⁷⁰

In rebuking the rest of the society and defining the proper requisites for the establishment of Cnut's reign, Wulfstan implicitly imposes his own episcopal authority. Pointedly, the secular code of Cnut ends with a homiletic passage which admonishes everyone to turn to God and to think often on 'what he should do and forego' (*oft and gelome smeage swyðe georne hwæt him sig to donne and hwæt to forganne*).⁶⁷¹ The exhortation was already included in the draft of 1018, and is worth citing in its full length, since it has sometimes been left out of discussion of Cnut's law for the reasons of being 'merely homiletic'. The ending of the code is, as I see it, as important as its beginning, since it wraps up the connecting theme visible in all of Wulfstan's legal ideologies. It places much emphasis on the love of God as the cornerstone of Christian society, and stresses the importance of spiritual teaching. While doing so, it raises the role of the teachers to the utmost importance, as it states that it is the teachers who will lead the people to salvation on the Day of Judgement, when each man shall receive the consequences of his life on earth. The 'shepherd' is blessed, who with a good conscience can then lead 'his flock' into God's kingdom, as is the flock that has followed its shepherd and obeyed his teachings.

Now I eagerly pray, and in God's name command, every man that he in his inmost heart turn to his Lord and often and frequently meditate very eagerly on what he ought to do and what he ought to forego. There is great need for us all that we love God and follow God's law and eagerly obey religious teachers. For they shall lead us forth at the judgement, when God shall judge each man according to his former deeds. And blessed will the shepherd be who then may gladly lead the flock into God's kingdom and the heavenly joy, because of their former deeds; and well for the flock which follows the shepherd who delivers them from devils and acquires them for God. Let us all then with unanimous heart eagerly please our Lord rightly and ever henceforth shield ourselves eagerly from

⁶⁷⁰ Wilcox, "Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* as Political Performance," 389–390.

⁶⁷¹ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 504.

*the hot fire which surges in hell. And now also let all teachers and religious heralds do, as is right and a necessity for all men: preach frequently spiritual needs. And let each who is reasonable listen to them eagerly, and let each hold religious teaching very firmly in his mind, for his own benefit. And always let each man ever do gladly what good he can to the honour of his Lord by word and deed; then will God's mercy be the readier for us all. Ever be God's name eternally blessed, and praise and glory and honour to him for ever into eternity. God Almighty have mercy on us, as his will may be. Amen.*⁶⁷²

Did Wulfstan think of himself as the shepherd who will lead the people of England into salvation? It would at least fit his overall agenda seen in his works. Definitely he must have regarded his own role as the teacher of the kings and the organizer of the kingdom very important. Also, the idea of Wulfstan as the shepherd of the Christian people fits well with the notion that the person of the king or his lineage was not as important to Wulfstan as the Christian kingship as an office was. The picture that Wulfstan had in mind was bigger, one comprising the whole nation and its destiny, reached only after death on the Day of Judgement. The same theme dominates many manuscripts associated to him, which have immense amounts of material on the bishop's duties, and some of it can be seen related to his concerns of how to advise secular leaders to arrange the political order properly.

The role of the bishop as the moral leader of the people becomes evident in the ecclesiastical code of Cnut, when Wulfstan ponders upon the duties and wider implications of the bishops' work. He reminds his audience

⁶⁷² 'Eallum us is mycel þearf þæt we God lufian and Godes lage fylgean and godcundan lareowan geornlice hyran. Forðam hi sceolon us lædan forð æt þam dome, þonne God demð manna gehwylcum be ærran gewyrhtan. And gesælig byð se hyrde þe þonne ða heorde into Godes rice and to heofonlicre myrhþe bliðe mot lædan for ærran gewyrhtan; and wel þære heorde ðe gefolgað þam hyrde þe hig deoflum ætweneð and Gode hig gestrymeð. Utan þonne ealle anmodre heortan georne urum Drihtne cweman mid rihte and heonanforð symle scyldan us georne wið þone hatan bryne þe wealleð on helle. And don nu eac lareowas and godcunde bydelas, swa swa hit riht is and ealra manna þearf is: bodian gelome godcunde þearfe. And ælc þe gescead wite, hlyste him georne, and godcunde lare gehwa on gepance healde swyðe fæste, him sylfum to þearfe. And a manna gehwylc to weorðunge his Drihtne do to gode þæt he mæge wordes and dæde glædlice æfre; þonne byð us eallum Godes milts þe gearwur. A sy Godes nama ecelice gebletsod, and lof him and wuldor and wyrðmynt symle æfre to worulde. God ælmihtig us eallum gemiltsige, swa his willa sig. Amen.' Ibid., 504–506.

that 'it is right' for all Christian men to protect the churches and the clerical orders, and honour them accordingly, because their role in the society concerns all people. Even if Wulfstan assumedly had the greater consequences of eternal salvation in mind, here he employed a different strategy of argumentation, and referred to the exorcising powers that God mediated through the priests, who were able to drive away devils and help the people here on earth.⁶⁷³ When the code turns to discuss the duties of the bishop, it adopts a metaphorical and striking treatment of the topic, and emphasizes that the bishops should lead their flock by providing them an example, and to defend them from all harm. The passage is not 'law-like' at all, but turns almost to intimidate the audience with dangers that the devil, here metaphorically presented as 'the ravening werewolf' (*se wodfreca werewolf*) who may 'tear asunder and devour the divine flock' if the priests and bishops are not on constant guard.⁶⁷⁴ By including this kind of forceful rhetoric of pastoral care in the law codes, Wulfstan was partly constructing the hierarchies of social order between the laity and the clergy, in the same vein as he did with his other works discussed in chapter 5, and as Ælfric did especially with his pastoral letter to the laity, discussed in chapter 4.

The code of Cnut is one of Wulfstan's last pieces, in which he extensively used material from earlier works and laws. The purpose behind his method of composing can be seen similar to the one that was argued in the previous chapter, concerning the *Institutes*. Here he could draw *all* the important points which he saw as essential in organizing a pious Christian kingdom. Everything here is related to his big scheme to lead the people to salvation. This shows how closely tied the religious conceptions of life and morals were with actual political practices. It can be admitted that Wulfstan was unusually occupied with religious matters, and that the previous laws do not display such a wide usage of religious rhetoric. This is true, and Wulfstan's role as an ardent preacher and archbishop has to be borne in mind, but at the same time the fact that he was able to have such a big role, for a long period of time over the reigns of two kings, one of which included a complete change of regime, cannot have happened without some kind of general consensus towards what he was writing and preaching. And as a

⁶⁷³ Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, 471–474.

⁶⁷⁴ 'Þæt syndan biseopas and mæssepreostas, þe godcunde heorda bewarian and bewerian sceolon mid wislican laran, þæt se wodfreca werewolf to swyðe ne slite ne to fela ne abite of godcundre heorde.' *Ibid.*, 485–486.

consequence, his pounding of morality and Christian duties may have had an impact of steering the political *ethos* into a more religious direction.

The aspect which I would see as a connecting feature in Wulfstan's latest works can be described in similar terms as the difference between Ælfric's and Wulfstan's discourse concerning the state of the kingdom, discussed in the previous chapter. As in the *Institutes*, in which Wulfstan stressed the *strengthening* of the kingdom instead of fixing it, his latest legislation can essentially also be seen as an establishment and strengthening of a Christian society. The contrast is similar in this case, when in his latest works the call for repentance has turned to hope for a better society. Even with the change of dynasty, Wulfstan did not see it as problematic to continue his ardent work towards a holy Christian society and kingdom, even if the principal actor in the secular government was changed. Again, the universal idea behind the proper social order helped to maintain this continuity.

6.5. Conclusion

The main focus of this chapter has been on the element of penance, which was deeply embedded in Wulfstan's rhetoric, not only in his exhortatory homilies, but also in his political and legal writings. The presumption behind this permeating insistence to repent was that the acts of the current society were inherently wrong, and that the present times were evil by nature. This assumption was associated with Wulfstan's eschatological expectations, but was not restricted to them. Instead, the idea of repentance encompassed the whole political thought of Wulfstan, and was seen in the way he dealt with trying to establish an orderly Christian society. The society itself had failed to fulfil its own task on earth to imitate God's order and strive for good. The political disorder was the outcome of people's sins, but it could be fixed with penance and atonement.

In Wulfstan's writings it can be seen how closely tied the invocation of penance was with justification of authority, and how this in turn was intimately linked with modes of communication and rhetoric. The connection between religiously justified moral codes and legally valid, authorized law codes shows that the secular and sacred orders were inseparable. In many instances it is difficult to separate spiritual sin and secular guilt from each other, and it seems that Wulfstan's concepts of these two were identical. His moral engagement with legislation was part of his

vision of Christian history, in which the contemporary misfortunes were the result of a lack of morality and proper order. Legislation offered the most powerful means for Wulfstan to impose his ideas about how to arrange a proper Christian kingdom. What this tells of Wulfstan's legislation—other than that it represented his increasing vision of a holy society—has to be estimated. More than just an amalgam of homilies and laws, Wulfstan's penitential rhetoric must be regarded also as a form of discourse; it was an act with which he engaged with the realities of his time, and attempted to participate in creating religiously 'correct' social order. The effect of Wulfstan's rhetoric for subsequent generations is, however, hard to estimate, but his written word lived on for a while, until the discourse became impractical because of the change of language. Cnut's code, as it was mentioned, was the most comprehensive Anglo-Saxon code, and is known to have been used as a basis for the subsequent new rule. In this way it can be said that by securing his ardent preaching about morality and law in the written word, Wulfstan took part in conceptualizing the requisites for a functional Christian society.

7. Conclusion

I set off this study by quoting Ælfric's *Sermo de memoria sanctorum*, in which he expresses the importance of a regulated life for the sake of one's own eternal salvation. The fundamental idea behind this quotation, which binds the concepts of religious authority and social conventions together, is the guiding line in all of Ælfric's writing which concerned social order. In this study I have looked deeper into the religious-political discourses of Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulfstan of York, and have singled out different instances in their works in which the idea of social order was conveyed. In these works, what drives the idea of order most prevalently is the moral aspect of social life, and this aspect results in committed, normative, and ideological attempts to regularize the behaviour of people. It also causes the discourse to be highly concerned with fixed social boundaries, which were considered to be set by a higher authority, God. Religious authority, which pervades the ideas on social order, was the pillar on which all the interpretations of a correct state of being were based. In other words, religion was conceptualized as the source for ethics.

The main objective that this study addressed was to determine the ways Ælfric and Wulfstan formulated their conceptions about religious and social order. As my starting point for the study was that while ideological notions—or religion—have a certain heuristic value in understanding the motives behind the texts, they should not be seen as a straightforward explanation as such, I have examined a broad set of texts by both of the authors, and studied their works as discourses engaged with their own time. To study a wide variety of texts has been, from the methodological point of view, necessary in order to reconstruct the context of the texts and the frameworks within which the discourse under study functioned. The discourse of the texts of Ælfric and Wulfstan also demonstrates that the principles which guided the mode of writing were often similar and even inseparable from each other. Therefore, the study confirms the current impression that the historical research of the sources of Anglo-Saxon England may suffer if we concentrate too narrowly on specific literary genres. Instead, the material studied in this thesis—ranging from

hagiographic translations, homiletic letters, sermons and pastoral letters to ecclesiastical institutes and secular laws—indicates that in their own time their function and form was not easy to distinguish from each other, and that they all were part of the same discursive field and ideologies.

The conceptions of Ælfric and Wulfstan cannot be separated from the ideologies of the Benedictine reform. They can be regarded to have continued the goals of the reform especially in terms of their insistence to improve the current state of ecclesiastical and monastic life, but they also extended this goal and applied many of its principles to the secular parts of society. The current times, which at the change of the millennium were very unstable, are also reflected in their works. The principles of social order are an increasing concern in the discourse of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and the authors engage with the contemporary political circumstances especially towards the end of their careers. Whereas Ælfric's concern for proper order is apparent at the time of his abbacy of Eynsham, Wulfstan continued to be part of the political reality of his time also after the change of reign when King Cnut rose to power. Wulfstan appears as an indispensable figure for establishing a lawful, justified and correct Christian kingdom at a time which in reality was a result of the escalating Viking attacks which ended with a Danish invasion and a change of dynasty.

The examination of Ælfric's translations—which can more aptly be called adaptations—of royal hagiography shows that in the process of writing the *Lives of St Oswald* and *St Edmund* Ælfric remodelled not only the narrative coherence but also the ideals of sanctity into a standardized form. Additionally, the way this rewriting was done gives reason to evaluate the role of the vernacular accounts of the holy kings. What consequences Ælfric's standardization of sanctity had in terms of his conceptualization of society become clear when his treatment of the analogies between the king and Christ on the one hand and the concept of *imitatio Christi* on the other are compared with the Latin sources he had at his disposal. They show a remarkable rewriting and omission of the most obvious expressions of the religious prestige of royal power. It is more plausible, therefore, to see the vernacular royal saints' lives as moral models for all men in a broad sense and as an integral part of his moral and religious teaching, than as advocates of Christocentric, theocratic notions of kingship.

The letters to the secular aristocracy, which Ælfric wrote during his abbacy of Eynsham in around 1005, relate the active relationship between the monastic and secular parts of society. They, too, reflect deep concern for

pastoral teaching. With the discourse of his letters—a letter to Sigeward of Eastheolon, a letter to Sigefyrð, and a letter to Wulfgeat of Ylmandun—Ælfric creates a strong, hierarchical division between the secular and ecclesiastical parts of society. He repeatedly refers to the important task of priests to interpret and mediate the word of God to the laity, and in this way delineates the boundaries of social order. The issue of proper interpretation proved to be an important aspect in Ælfric's discourse; his supposition that the clergy had access to a greater knowledge on how the laity was expected to live their life was intermingled with the notion of free will. Ælfric stresses the responsibility of the clergy to instruct and admonish the laity, but ultimately he acknowledges that even with this responsibility it was in the hands of the laity itself whether or not they decided to act upon the instructions of the clergy. The pastoral letters, therefore, witness a complicated issue of the relationship between the written word, teaching, interpretation and morally righteous action in Ælfric's thought.

An essential aspect in the religious-political discourses of late Anglo-Saxon England, therefore, concerns the issue of interpretation. When we look at the line of transmission of thought from Ælfric to Wulfstan, then, it can be agreed that interpretation and appropriation played an important part in the political thought of the time. In order to accentuate the necessity of reading the texts in their own context, I have examined Ælfric's and Wulfstan's use of the same ideas in their respective texts, and also discussed Wulfstan's textual dependence on Ælfric. The most direct link between these two men are the five pastoral letters which Ælfric wrote to Wulfstan, three of them in Latin and two in Old English. Wulfstan used the material Ælfric provided for him in the composition of several of his own works, and also used Ælfric's other texts as sources. The way Wulfstan and Ælfric engage with issues of social order, especially in the case of the so-called 'doctrine of three orders', shows that they placed a somewhat different emphasis on the principles of earthly society. Ælfric approaches the issue from a deeply theological point of view; there is a certain connection in the way he treated the virtues of the soul to that how the virtues of the king were presented in the works of both Ælfric and Wulfstan. Wulfstan's use of this material shows that he was more interested in executing the correct order properly in this world; although the grounds for social order were sacred for him as well, he was not concerned with the philosophical or theological principles behind them.

Wulfstan's legal-homiletic discourse was also part of his intentions of constructing a religiously and morally righteous Christian society. I have discussed the penitential tone in his legal texts, and pointed out that his concepts of legal and moral accountability were inseparable. Rhetoric of repentance, which he employs both in his homilies and legal texts, is one of his strongest tools with which he attempts to impose notions of order, social boundaries, and the absolute, sacred principles behind secular laws. The implication of Wulfstan's use of penitential rhetoric in legal texts is that whereas Ælfric's discourse is based on (religiously) logical order, Wulfstan employs a language that is essentially based on *pathos*, affecting the feelings of the audience. As Wulfstan was a rhetorically skilled orator, this is hardly surprising, but what make this notion important are its general implications. Ælfric acted and reached out primarily from monastic spheres, with indirect influence on political society around him through Æthelweard, Æthelmær, and Wulfstan. His influence on Wulfstan's social and political thought was also not insignificant. But the way of this transmission was not so straightforward. Even if important elements were transferred from Ælfric's—and other authors'—texts onto Wulfstan's legal tracts, canon law collections, and social-political treatises, their effect was changed significantly. The form in which these notions gain their rhetorical force is not based on *logos*, but *pathos*. The attempt to convince the audience of the right order of the society is based not on logic, but on feelings. The way to the right order of the world, in the words of Wulfstan, is gained by a deeply moral act of atonement. The starting point of this research was not to compare Ælfric and Wulfstan, as is so often done, but to examine the discourse of the late stages of Anglo-Saxon England as a whole, acknowledging the interaction between Ælfric and Wulfstan. However, the results indicate a major difference at the very base of their notions.

The notion of correct social and political order was given a religious justification by connecting them to the notions of God and Christian doctrine. Consequently, in order to find out what was morally right, one had to find out what the will of God was. In this sense the religious-political discourse both reflects the ideas about correct order, but also normalizes it; the divine will is perceived as the only 'natural and correct' ethical principle. This brings the issue to the concept of proper interpretation, and implies that the theological notions cannot be separated from the political notions of order on the one hand or from the philosophical issues of language, representation and interpretation on the other. What the authors were

doing with their written discourse was interpretation and imposition of conventional, 'correct' ideals of religious and political order. While conventional, the choices displayed within the written discourse must be regarded as equally original in their own context. In other words, even the repetition of commonplace notions of the faith and doctrine, was a choice made in the act of writing itself. Therefore, conventionality worked in an active relation with the contemporary times. With their interpretations on social order Ælfric and Wulfstan concentrated on establishing and confirming the notions of sacred responsibilities of and boundaries between people on earth, which made the texts simultaneously formal and functional. The conventional formulations of the religious-political discourse participated in creating and re-creating the social and pastoral concerns of late Anglo-Saxon writers.

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