

# Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England

Mechthild Gretsch



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ÆLFRIC AND THE CULT OF SAINTS IN LATE  
ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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## Preface

This book does not claim to be a comprehensive monograph on Ælfric's hagiographic writings. Indeed, the idea to write a book on the subject only occurred to me after I had finished what are now its first two chapters, which were commissioned for specific purposes and which are included here in a revised and updated form. When I was invited to contribute to a Festschrift for Don Scragg, my immediate reaction was that a piece dealing with saints might be appropriately presented to a scholar who had devoted a considerable amount of his working life to saints' *uitae* and homilies. In the course of my previous work on the intellectual foundations of the English Benedictine reform I had become convinced that the most lavish book which was produced during Ælfric's lifetime, the Benedictional of his master Æthelwold, had interacted with various kinds of contemporary intellectual activities such as defining the essence of kingship or translating Christian key terms into the vernacular. I therefore proposed to explore possible relationships between the texts and the iconography of the Benedictional and the formation of Ælfric's *sanctorale*, that is, his selection of the saints to be represented in his three great cycles of *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*. As a result, the present chapter 1 took shape, in which a possible influence of the Benedictional is reviewed in the context of other factors which may have contributed to the formation of Ælfric's *sanctorale*. I had scarcely finished this article, when I was asked by Don Scragg to contribute to a small volume devoted to Ælfric's Lives of saintly popes. Since my pope was to be Gregory the Great, who could have said 'no'? Gregory was one of the saints who featured prominently in the Benedictional and whose representation there may well have influenced Ælfric. But, most importantly, Gregory was the 'apostle of the English'. It was an invigorating exercise to assemble the manifestations of the veneration in which he was held in Anglo-Saxon

England and with which Ælfric, certainly or arguably, was familiar, and to examine against this foil the way Ælfric chose to relate the Life of this important saint to a lay audience. While writing this article, it gradually dawned on me that Ælfric's Lives of the other four of the five saints who occurred in important groupings in the iconography of the Benedictional might reward an approach similar to the one I had employed in my analysis of Gregory's *uita*. For each of the three saints from the *Catholic Homilies* (Cuthbert and Benedict, in addition to Gregory) and for each of the two saints from the *Lives of Saints* (Swithun and Æthelthryth) I would reconstruct as far as possible the historical, liturgical and literary state of their cults by the time Ælfric composed their *uitae*. At the same time I would attempt to recover what knowledge Ælfric may be presumed to have had of the development of the respective cults and of their literary manifestations. In a second step I would then relate the combined historical evidence to Ælfric's Lives and examine in what ways this evidence was reflected in the *uitae*. At this stage the idea of the present book took shape.

Two further points were also clear to me at this stage. First, my overall approach to the five Lives would be identical: tracing a saint's cult and exploring how it impinged on Ælfric's hagiography. However, in its application to the five Lives, in each case my approach would obviously have to accommodate the specific conditions pertinent to a cult so that Ælfric's perception of five important Anglo-Saxon cults could be reconstructed in an adequate fashion from the surviving evidence. The implication of this concept was that I would not embark on a quest for 'Ælfric's ideal of sanctity' or 'Ælfric's perception of a saint's role in medieval society'. Secondly, this would also be a book about Ælfric's style and narrative modes (if not about his use of the 'Winchester vocabulary'), and about his intellectual training and the way this training is reflected in the five Lives. In other words, this book aims to illustrate what the study of language and literature has to gain from a close collaboration with other historical disciplines: Ælfric's linguistic and literary achievement – in the five Lives, as elsewhere in his works – can be comprehensively understood only when set in its overall historical context.

The result of these initial coincidences and ensuing deliberations are the following five monographs *en miniature* on saints who were assigned important roles in the iconography (and, for the most part, also in the texts) of the Benedictional and in Ælfric's *sanctorale*.

## Preface

It is with deep gratitude that I record here the help which I received in the production of this book. Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge have been patient, meticulous, critical and inspiring readers of the individual chapters as they saw light. Once again, the twenty-one volumes of dossiers on Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, compiled by Helmut Gneuss in the course of his work on the *Handlist*, proved invaluable. (It is much to be hoped that the vast bibliography on manuscripts, which is contained in these dossiers, will be available in print some day.) Michael Lapidge generously let me have, before publication, the parts of his monumental *The Cult of St Swithun* which are relevant to my Swithun chapter, and without which my chapter could not have been written in its present form. Simon Keynes, also with characteristic generosity, let me have, before publication, his masterly article on Ely Abbey, which was immensely helpful in placing Ælfric's Æthelthryth in her context. Christy Hosefelder word-processed the entire book with circumspection, and Carolin Schreiber and Janna Riedinger were its highly competent first proof-readers. Finally, I would like to thank Simon Keynes and Andy Orchard for finding the book a place in the Cambridge series, and Clare Orchard for carefully copyediting the typescript.

I hope this book will, in a modest way, help to focus our increasingly clear picture of the highpoint of Anglo-Saxon culture around the first millennium and on the eve of its destruction.

# Abbreviations

ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i> , ed. Bollandists, 2 vols. (Brussels 1899–1901, with supplements 1911 and (by H. Fros) 1986)
CBP	<i>Corpus Benedictionum Pontificalium</i> , ed. E. Moeller, 4 vols., CCSL 162, 162 A–C (Turnhout, 1971–9)
CCCM	Corpus Christinorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout)
CH I	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The First Series</i> , ed. Clemoes
CH II	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The Second Series</i> , ed. Godden
CH, Commentary	M. Godden, <i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. Introduction, Commentary and Glossary</i>
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna)
DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English</i> , ed. Cameron <i>et al.</i>
EEM	'Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries' (the Preface to the Old English Rule), ptd and trans. Whitelock, in <i>Councils &amp; Synods</i> , ed. Whitelock <i>et al.</i> , I.1, pp. 142–54 (no. 33)
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile (Copenhagen)
EETS	Early English Text Society (London)
—OS	Original Series
—SS	Supplementary Series
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society Publications (London)
HE	Bede's <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>

*List of abbreviations*

<i>HSC</i>	<i>Historia de Sancto Cuthberto</i> , ed. Johnson South
<i>LS</i>	<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints</i> , ed. Skeat
<i>MGH</i>	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
—AA	Auctores antiquissimi
<i>PL</i>	Patrologia Latina, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
<i>RSB</i>	<i>Regula S. Benedicti</i>
<i>S</i>	P. H. Sawyer, <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters</i>
<i>SK</i>	D. Schaller and E. Könsgen, <i>Initia Carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquiorum</i> (Göttingen, 1977)
<i>VCA</i>	anonymous prose <i>Vita S. Cuthberti</i> , ed. Colgrave
<i>VCM</i>	Bede's metrical <i>Vita S. Cuthberti</i> , ed. Jaager
<i>VCP</i>	Bede's prose <i>Vita S. Cuthberti</i> , ed. Colgrave
<i>Wulfstan: Life</i>	<i>Wulfstan of Winchester: the Life of St Æthelwold</i> , ed. Lapidge and Winterbottom



# 1

## Ælfric's *sanctorale* and the Benedictional of Æthelwold

The first book ever to be printed in Old English was Ælfric's Easter homily, edited by Archbishop Matthew Parker and his circle, and Ælfric played a paramount role in the formative period of Anglo-Saxon studies from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It was through his Latin Grammar written in Old English and the Latin paradigms provided with English translations that the early 'antiquaries' gained a first glimpse of the grammatical structure of Old English, and, above all, it was through his vast corpus of homilies and saints' Lives that scholars such as Matthew Parker, William L'Isle, George Hickes and Elizabeth Elstob sought to demonstrate that the Church of England had its venerable roots in pre-Conquest times. Scholarly interest in Ælfric has not abated since the days of these pioneers, and consequently Ælfric is one of the best researched authors in Old English literature.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, perhaps, in spite of this wealth of

[An earlier version of this chapter was published as M. Gretsch, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale* and the Benedictional of Æthelwold', in *Early Medieval English. Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. E. Treharne and S. Rosser (Tempe, AZ, 2002), pp. 31–50.]

<sup>1</sup> See [M. Parker *et al.*], *A Testimonie of Antiquitie, shewing the auncient fayth in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and bloude of the Lord here publickly preached and also receaved in the Saxons tyme 600 yeares agoe* (London, 1566 or 1567). For surveys of the period, see the essays in *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: the First Three Centuries*, ed. C. T. Berkhout and M. McC. Gatch (Boston, MA, 1982), and *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. T. Graham (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999); for the early eighteenth century, see also M. Gretsch, 'Elizabeth Elstob: a Scholar's Fight for Anglo-Saxon Studies', *Anglia* 117 (1999), 163–200 and 481–524, at 481–522.

<sup>2</sup> L. M. Reinsma, for example, lists 882 titles up to 1982: *Ælfric. An Annotated Bibliography*. Reinsma's bibliography has recently been updated by A. Kleist, 'An Annotated Bibliography of Ælfrician Studies: 1983–1996', who lists 162 items out of a total of approximately

secondary literature, there remain aspects of his oeuvre on which so far scarcely any work has been done. In a recent article Michael Lapidge has pointed out one such aspect when he suggested that the structure of Ælfric's *sanctorale* and the principles according to which Ælfric selected the saints and feasts for commemoration in his homilies and Lives would deserve close attention.<sup>3</sup> As Lapidge pointed out, there are obvious peculiarities with regard to the saints and feasts chosen by Ælfric for commemoration in his *sanctorale*, when, for example, he commemorates the deposition of St Swithun (2 July), not the feast of the *translatio* (15 July), or when, as a Benedictine monk, he celebrates only one of the two feasts of St Benedict (again the less important *depositio*), or when, though Winchester-trained, he seems to depart from Winchester's liturgical practice in commemorating the feast of *Quadragesima milites* (9 March), while omitting from his *sanctorale* all the Northern French and Flemish saints such as SS Vedastus, Iudoc or Bertin, who were especially culted at Winchester.<sup>4</sup>

No doubt Ælfric had an intimate knowledge of the full range of saints included in liturgical calendars or the martyrology, but it is equally clear that only a limited number of those saints could be honoured by providing their *uitae* in the vernacular. As is confirmed by their respective prefaces, the two sets of the *Catholic Homilies*, containing forty pieces each, preserve fairly accurately Ælfric's original compilation,<sup>5</sup> and the *Lives of Saints*, though preserved less intact, probably also closely approximated forty in Ælfric's original scheme for the collection.<sup>6</sup> Within the three collections, in the *Catholic Homilies* the items pertaining to the *sanctorale* occur side by

400 titles which have accumulated during the intervening twelve years. For an introduction to Ælfric's works and historical background, see now the excellent brief monograph (with useful bibliography) by H. Gneuss, *Ælfric von Eynsham und seine Zeit*.

<sup>3</sup> See Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*'.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 119–23.

<sup>5</sup> The critical editions of the *Catholic Homilies* are: *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The First Series*, ed. P. Clemoes, EETS SS 17 (Oxford, 1997) and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The Second Series*, ed. M. Godden, EETS SS 5 (Oxford, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> The edition is: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS OS 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. in 2 vols., 1966). There are thirty-six pieces in Skeat's numbering from which four (three in Skeat's numbering) non-Ælfrician Lives have to be subtracted (nos. xxiii and xxiiiB, xxix and xxxiii). For the changes which the *Lives of Saints* underwent in the course of their manuscript transmission, see Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*: a Preliminary Survey'; for the non-Ælfrician pieces, see *ibid.*, pp. 236–7 and 253, n. 4.



side with those for the *temporale*, and in the *Lives of Saints* they are mixed with homilies treating incidents from the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> This leaves us with a total of fifty-four feasts of the *sanctorale*, nineteen occurring in the first series of the *Catholic Homilies*, sixteen in the second series and twenty-nine in the *Lives of Saints*.<sup>8</sup> By comparison, the four Winchester calendars printed by Francis Wormald commemorate some 209 (nos. 9 and 10), 213 (no. 11) and 226 (no. 12) feasts respectively.<sup>9</sup> Ælfric's awareness of having to pick for inclusion in his three collections of homilies and *uitae* a relatively small selection from the feasts of the *sanctorale* (but also from those of the *temporale*) emerges clearly from his prefaces to these collections: in the English preface to the *Lives of Saints* he remarks with regard to the saints of the *sanctorale* that God has so many saints for his service that it is impossible to commemorate them all.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, concerning the feasts of the *temporale*, Ælfric explains that in his two sets of *Catholic Homilies* he has not expounded all the gospel pericopes read in the course of a year but only a selection of these, which should be sufficient for edifying and rectifying the souls of the simple-minded.<sup>11</sup> Although he does not say so explicitly, we may be certain that the principle which governed Ælfric's choice of the *temporale* items – the moral and spiritual improvement of the laity – may also be sought behind the selection of saints for his *sanctorale*. The one statement we get from Ælfric with regard to the presence of a particular saint in one of the three collections is that the *Catholic Homilies* commemorate those

<sup>7</sup> For the division of the liturgical year into *temporale* and *sanctorale* cycles, see, for example, Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office*, pp. 4–13, and Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, pp. 49–53. Traditionally the *temporale* contains the movable feasts keyed to Easter and the feasts pertaining to Christ such as Christmas; the *sanctorale* contains saints' feasts and feasts of the Virgin Mary, which are always celebrated on the same day of the year. A simple division into movable and immovable feasts is also possible, in which case Christmas and Epiphany would belong to the *sanctorale*: this division is adopted by Michael Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', pp. 115–16. Such a division makes sense because feasts such as Christmas and Epiphany (but not the movable feasts) are recorded in Anglo-Saxon liturgical calendars.

<sup>8</sup> For these figures and lists of the items in question, see Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', pp. 116–19. The total of fifty-four feasts of the *sanctorale* is arrived at by ignoring the duplications of feasts which occur in the three collections.

<sup>9</sup> See Wormald, *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100*, nos. 9 (London, BL, Cotton Titus D. xxvii), 10 (Cambridge, Trinity College R. 15. 32), 11 (London, BL, Arundel 60) and 12 (London, BL, Cotton Vitellius E. xviii).

<sup>10</sup> See *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat I, 6. <sup>11</sup> See *Catholic Homilies* I, ed. Clemoes, p. 173.

saints culted by the laity nationwide, whereas the *Lives of Saints* contain *uitae* of saints commemorated in monasteries only.<sup>12</sup> But this broad distinction does not give a rationale for inclusion of one saint and omission of another in cases where both would qualify for treatment in one of the three collections. Is it possible to get somewhat nearer to the rationale of Ælfric's selection?

It has been pointed out that a political and ethical motivation occasionally seems to have determined Ælfric's choice, especially with regard to the *uitae* and Old Testament pieces in the *Lives of Saints*, and that he decided to include pieces such as The Forty Soldiers (no. ix), The Prayer of Moses (no. xiii), Kings (no. xviii), Achitophel and Absalom (no. xix), Maccabees (no. xxv), St Maurice and his Companions (no. xxviii) and St Martin (no. xxxi) because of the parallels to contemporary political conditions which they provided, and because of their potential for serving as a vehicle for the political and ethical instruction of a lay audience.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the Forty Soldiers of Sebaste in Armenia (*Quadráginta milites*) such parallels and potential may also serve as an explanation why, in commemorating them, Ælfric departs radically from Winchester's liturgical practice, as we have seen. The Forty Soldiers provide an excellent example of collective resistance towards a cruel and arrogant enemy. By the same token, Ælfric's penchant for this type of narrative may help to explain why he omitted from his *sanctorale* saints that were widely venerated in late Anglo-Saxon England and/or Winchester such as SS Vedastus, Amandus, Audoenus, Bertinus, Audomarus, Iudoc and Grimbald,<sup>14</sup> all of whom led exemplary lives as bishops or monks but could not serve as models for heroic resistance, and why he included instead two saints from Francia who fitted this pattern: St Maurice and the Theban Legion, and St Dionysius and his Companions.<sup>15</sup> Another determining factor for Ælfric's selection of his saints may have been a wish to comply with the predilections of his patrons. In the case of

<sup>12</sup> See *Catholic Homilies* II, ed. Godden, p. 2 and *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat I, 4.

<sup>13</sup> See Godden, 'Experiments in Genre: the Saints' Lives in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', pp. 261–2; Godden, 'Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles', pp. 94–7; and Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', pp. 107–8.

<sup>14</sup> See above, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat, nos. xxvi and xxix. The commemoration of a third Frankish saint, St Maur (*Lives of Saints*, no. vi), is no doubt due to the (erroneous) notion that he was St Benedict's principal student: his *uita* relates many incidents pertaining to a biography of St Benedict.

one saint, St Thomas, we have clear proof of such compliance. Towards the end of the Second Series of the *Catholic Homilies* Ælfric has a note saying that he has not written a Life of St Thomas for two reasons: because a translation of his *passio* into Old English verse has been in existence for a long time, and because St Augustine rejected as incredible (*ungeleaflic*) a certain episode in the *passio*.<sup>16</sup> Ælfric includes, however, a Life of St Thomas in his *Lives of Saints* collection (no. xxxvi). Interestingly, this is provided with a brief Latin introduction, where Ælfric reiterates St Augustine's (and his own) doubts about that specific episode but concludes that he will translate the *passio* of St Thomas nevertheless, since the venerable Ealdorman Æthelweard urgently requested him to do so.<sup>17</sup> Æthelweard, ealdorman of the western provinces (975–c. 998), who together with his son Æthelmær commissioned the *Lives of Saints*,<sup>18</sup> may quite possibly also have influenced Ælfric's choice of feasts for the *Catholic Homilies*. In any case, he seems to have obtained a special edition of the First Series which contained forty-four pieces instead of the usual forty.<sup>19</sup> With these examples in mind, one might ask what influence may have made Ælfric relent and provide a homily for the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (8 September) after he had expressly declined to do so on grounds of the dubious and difficult nature of the source material.<sup>20</sup> Was it again some sort of pressure from one or several of his patrons or was it in deference to the important role which the cult of the Virgin played in reformed monastic circles, and especially in Æthelwoldian

<sup>16</sup> See *Catholic Homilies* II, ed. Godden, pp. 297–8. For a discussion of Ælfric's attitude towards the *uita* of St Thomas in terms of his orthodoxy and interest in history, see Godden, 'Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problem of Miracles', pp. 88–90. The kind of passing reference which Ælfric has to the episode in question would seem to indicate that the Old English poetic version of the *passio* was known at least among the first readers of the *Catholic Homilies*. Unfortunately it has not survived.

<sup>17</sup> 'sicut Æþelwerdus uenerabilis dux obnixè nos præcatus est', *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat II, 400.

<sup>18</sup> As emerges both from the Latin and from the Old English preface to the collection: *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat I, 4.

<sup>19</sup> This much emerges from the Latin conclusion to the English preface to the First Series, which has been preserved in Cambridge, University Library, Gg. 3. 28: see *Catholic Homilies* I, ed. Clemoes, p. 177, app. crit.

<sup>20</sup> Ælfric's remarks are found in a note in the Second Series of the *Catholic Homilies* in the place which would have been appropriate for commemorating the feast on 8 September: see *Catholic Homilies* II, ed. Godden, p. 271. The homily which Ælfric eventually composed for that feast is ed. by Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, pp. 24–48.

Winchester, or was it a combination of both?<sup>21</sup> Or, to give a last example: by what influence was St Vincent admitted to Ælfric's *sanctorale*? From the manuscript transmission of this *passio* it is not clear whether Ælfric intended it to be included in his *Lives of Saints*,<sup>22</sup> or whether it was a piece written by him on commission for some monastery which possessed a relic of the saint and where, consequently, he was held in especial veneration. Glastonbury, the New Minster, Winchester, and especially Abingdon would be obvious candidates for such a commission.<sup>23</sup> In this case, St Vincent would not be part of Ælfric's *sanctorale* as it is defined in his prefaces to the *Catholic Homilies* and the *Lives of Saints*. But given the wide dissemination of his cult all over England and given the indubitable Winchester base for his cult, it cannot be ruled out that St Vincent either obtained his vernacular Life through the intervention of one of Ælfric's lay patrons, or that his *uita* was composed by Ælfric as an afterthought while he was recollecting his Winchester roots and the veneration in which the saint was held in two further important monastic centres, Glastonbury and Abingdon.

In addition to the factors I have touched on so far, there were no doubt other forces at work in the shaping of Ælfric's *sanctorale* – literary and liturgical forces, for example. The so-called Cotton-Corpus legendary has been identified as one such shaping force of paramount importance, especially for the *Lives of Saints*. The Cotton-Corpus legendary is a collection of 165 saints' *uitae* and *passiones* written at Worcester in the third quarter of the eleventh century, and now preserved as London, BL, Cotton Nero E. i and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 9.<sup>24</sup> Although obviously the Cotton-Corpus manuscript itself cannot have been the manuscript which was consulted by Ælfric, it has been shown that in many cases where a number of variant redactions of a saint's Life have survived it is the form

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of Ælfric's attitude towards this feast of the Virgin, see M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary', *Anglia* 104 (1986), 286–315; for the importance of the cult of the Virgin in reform circles and especially at Winchester, see Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 61–89 and 110–21, and Clayton, 'Centralism and Uniformity Versus Localism and Diversity: the Virgin and Native Saints in the Monastic Reform', *Peritia* 8 (1994), 95–106.

<sup>22</sup> The Life of St Vincent is ptd by Skeat as an appendix: see *Lives of Saints* II, 426–43.

<sup>23</sup> For the cult of St Vincent in late Anglo-Saxon England and the view that Ælfric's Life was commissioned, probably by the Abingdon monks, see S. E. Irvine, 'Bones of Contention: the Context of Ælfric's Homily on St Vincent', *ASE* 19 (1990), 117–32.

<sup>24</sup> For a description of the manuscript and a helpfully detailed listing of its contents, see now Jackson and Lapidge, 'The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary'.

as transmitted in Cotton-Corpus which is closest to Ælfric.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, some eccentricities in Ælfric's *sanctorale* can plausibly be explained at a stroke on the assumption that he had regular recourse to a predecessor of the Cotton-Corpus manuscript, as Michael Lapidge has shown. For example, Ælfric seems to have taken not only the text of the *Vita S. Eugeniae* from the Cotton-Corpus legendary but also the date against which she is commemorated. This date is peculiar indeed, inasmuch as it is 25 December, Christ's Nativity, and no Anglo-Saxon calendar has her feast against that date; in Winchester especially she does not seem to have been culted extensively, since none of the Winchester calendars commemorates her at all.<sup>26</sup> In what follows, I want to suggest a further literary and liturgical, but also art-historical, source which, in my view, influenced the structure of Ælfric's *sanctorale*: the famous Benedictional of Æthelwold (London, BL, Add. 49598), a lavishly produced manuscript made for Æthelwold's personal use as bishop of Winchester and very possibly for the occasion of King Edgar's coronation at Bath in 973.<sup>27</sup> There are some striking parallels, as I hope to show, between the commemoration of saints in Æthelwold's Benedictional and Ælfric's *sanctorale*, parallels which can plausibly and economically be explained on the assumption that the teacher's most valuable book, in the production of which he seems to have taken an active interest,<sup>28</sup> was a major shaping influence for the *sanctorale* which the pupil devised for the instruction and edification of a lay audience. We may begin by looking at some figures. Ælfric's *sanctorale* contains, as we have seen, fifty-four feasts; the Benedictional of Æthelwold has blessings for thirty-eight feasts of the *sanctorale*. Thirty-six of these thirty-eight feasts are provided with a homily by Ælfric. The two feasts which have blessings in the Benedictional but no homily by Ælfric are St Vedastus (6 February; Æ 41, CBP 704)<sup>29</sup> and

<sup>25</sup> See Zettel, 'Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric'.

<sup>26</sup> See Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> For the probable date of the Benedictional, see Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 212–14 and 260–1.

<sup>28</sup> For Æthelwold's involvement in the production of his Benedictional, see Deshman, *Benedictional*, pp. 252–4 and *passim*. Contemporary evidence for Æthelwold's involvement is found in the dedication poem of the book: for this poem, see below, p. 19 and n. 83.

<sup>29</sup> The numbers for the blessings in Æthelwold's Benedictional (Æ) are those given by Prescott, 'The Text of the Benedictional of St Æthelwold', pp. 128–32; CBP refers to the numbers in Moeller, *Corpus Benedictionum Pontificalium*.

St Ambrose (4 April; *Æ* 45, *CBP* 1254).<sup>30</sup> The parallels between the blessings in the Benedictional and the homilies in Ælfric's *sanctorale* are distributed over Ælfric's three collections as follows: twenty in *Catholic Homilies* I, nine in *Catholic Homilies* II (five of these are duplicates for feasts already commemorated in *Catholic Homilies* I), ten in *Lives of Saints* (two of these being duplicates), and two (St Vincent and the Nativity of the Virgin) are extra-cyclic pieces.<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that the bulk of the parallels is found in *Catholic Homilies* I (recall that the *Catholic Homilies* commemorate saints and feasts established in the entire kingdom). Of the feasts commemorated by Ælfric but not in the Benedictional the following are in question: St Basilus (1 January), SS Julian and Basilissa (13 January), St Maurus (15 January), SS *Quadragesima milites* (9 March), St Cuthbert (20 March), St George (23 April), St Mark the Evangelist (25 March), SS Philip and James (1 May), St Alban (22 June), St Apollinaris (23 July), St James (25 July), SS *septem dormientes* (27 July), SS Abdon and Sennen (30 July), SS Maccabees (1 August), St Oswald (5 August), St Mauricius (22 September), St Dionysius (9 October), SS Simon and Jude (28 October), St Edmund (20 November), SS Crisanthus and Daria (29 November), and St Eugenia (25 December).<sup>32</sup> Several points emerge from these comparative statistics. It is obvious that there is a striking agreement in the saints commemorated in the Benedictional and Ælfric's *sanctorale*. Such agreement is all the more striking

<sup>30</sup> There are blessings for two further feasts in the Benedictional for which no homily is provided by Ælfric: the Conversion of St Paul (25 January; *Æ* 36, *CBP* 940) and SS Tiburtius and Valerian (14 April, *Æ* 83, *CBP* 153). However, *Catholic Homilies* I, xxvii (*Natale S. Pauli apostoli*) is in large part the story of St Paul's conversion, and the *passio* of Tiburtius and Valerian, husband and brother-in-law of St Caecilia, is included in her Life as *Lives of Saints* II, no. xxxiv, against 22 November. Note that the Benedictional has a separate blessing for St Caecilia but none for the deposition of St Paul. Note also that the Cotton-Corpus legendary, like Ælfric, does not provide pieces for the conversion of St Paul and for Tiburtius and Valerian.

<sup>31</sup> To these thirty-four parallels add St Paul and SS Tiburtius and Valerian; see above, n. 30.

<sup>32</sup> This gives us a total of twenty-one additional commemorations in Ælfric's *sanctorale*. For the aforementioned number of fifty-four feast days in Ælfric's *sanctorale* we must add thirty-five parallels between Ælfric and the Benedictional and subtract the Lives of SS Eugenia (25 December) and Basilus (1 January), dates on which Ælfric and the Benedictional agree in commemorating Christ's Nativity and the Octave of Christmas, but where the Benedictional does not commemorate Eugenia and Basilus. (The discrepancy between the thirty-five parallels in the Benedictional and Ælfric counted here and the thirty-six given above is explained by Caecilia and Tiburtius and Valerian being accorded two feast days in the Benedictional but only one in Ælfric; see above, n. 30.)

when we consider that the Benedictional and Ælfric commemorate a rather limited number of saints in comparison with (say) a liturgical calendar.<sup>33</sup> Four of the twenty-one feasts found in Ælfric but not in the Benedictional (*Quadragenta milites*, SS Maccabees, St Mauricius and his companions and St Dionysius and his companions) are celebrated by *uitae* of the type favoured by Ælfric, namely that of a group of associates offering stout collective resistance towards tyrants and persecution.<sup>34</sup> Four again of the twenty-one additions (SS Cuthbert, Alban, Oswald and Edmund) commemorate English or British saints. Two of the twenty-one commemorate a virgin couple suffering persecution and death (SS Julian and Basilissa, and Crisanthus and Daria). The choice of SS Julian and Basilissa is certainly an eccentric one. The pair is commemorated in three calendars only; their cult, therefore, cannot have been widespread. The date (13 January) against which Ælfric placed their *uitae* is given in none of these calendars for their feast, and may have been taken from the Cotton-Corpus legendary;<sup>35</sup> in any case, the version in Cotton-Corpus seems to have provided the source for Ælfric's Life.<sup>36</sup> The version closest to Ælfric's Life of SS Crisanthus and Daria also seems to have been the one preserved in Cotton-Corpus.<sup>37</sup> The Lives of SS Crisanthus and Daria and Julian and Basilissa are also told in two longish and memorable episodes in successive chapters in Aldhelm's prose *De uirginitate*.<sup>38</sup> One may ask, therefore, whether the inclusion of their Lives and Ælfric's apparent penchant for this type of Life in general may owe something to his Winchester training, where Aldhelm will have been the most closely studied author in the curriculum.<sup>39</sup> Other saints commemorated by Ælfric but without

<sup>33</sup> Thirty-eight blessings in the Benedictional, fifty-four feasts in Ælfric's *sanctorale* against 209 to 226 feasts in the Winchester calendars; see above, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> For Ælfric's penchant for this type, see above, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> For the commemoration of SS Julian and Basilissa in Anglo-Saxon calendars and the possible connection with the Cotton-Corpus legendary, see Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> See Whatley, 'An Introduction to the Study of Old English Prose Hagiography: Sources and Resources', p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> See Zettel, 'Saints' Lives in Old English', p. 37.

<sup>38</sup> See *Aldelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, chs. xxxv and xxxvi, pp. 276–84; trans. Lapidge, in *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, pp. 96–102.

<sup>39</sup> A further instance where Ælfric's *sanctorale* may have been influenced by the prose *De uirginitate* is the coupling of the Lives of SS Agatha and Lucy as *Lives of Saints*, nos. viii and ix, a coupling by which the chronology of the collection is disturbed. Agatha's *uita* is told against its correct date (5 February); it is followed by that of Lucy for which no date



special blessings in the Benedictional include St Mark the Evangelist, the apostles SS Philip and James the Less, and St James, as well as St Benedict's (alleged) principal alumnus St Maur. In other words, the additional items in Ælfric's *sanctorale* do not appear to have been included haphazardly: there is clearly an emphasis on saints celebrated throughout England and on types of saints' *uitae* for which Ælfric seems to have had a predilection or which he may have considered relevant to contemporary political conditions. In evaluating Ælfric's additions to Æthelwold's Benedictional we also have to bear in mind that the Benedictional has a number of generalized blessings, applicable, for example, to the feast of 'One Apostle', 'One Martyr' or 'Many Confessors'.<sup>40</sup> It is at least conceivable, therefore, that some of the feasts which were provided with a Life by Ælfric were already commemorated by such generalized blessings while Ælfric was still under Æthelwold's tutelage.

The overall orthodoxy of Ælfric's additions to the Benedictional is further revealed by the fact that most of them are represented with mass sets in eleventh-century English sacramentaries. We may take as a base for comparison three such mass books: the Winchcombe Sacramentary,<sup>41</sup> the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges,<sup>42</sup> and the New Minster Missal.<sup>43</sup> Here we find that with a very few exceptions Ælfric's additional saints are provided with mass sets in at least two, but mostly all three of these

is given (the correct date would have been 13 December). An explanation why Ælfric chose this peculiar place for St Lucy's *uita* may be found in the prose *De uirginitate*, chs. 41 and 42, where the Lives of Agatha and Lucy are linked, and where Aldhelm has a remark to the effect that their *passiones* should be coupled on the authority of St Gregory who stipulated that Agatha and Lucy should be invoked together in the daily litany at mass: see *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, pp. 293–4; trans. Lapidge, in *Aldhelm: Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, pp. 107–9. Note that in the litanies surviving from Anglo-Saxon England Agatha and Lucy occur together only in twelve litanies, whereas they are invoked separately in twenty-eight litanies. (The litanies have been ptd by Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*.) Note also that in the Cotton-Corpus legendary the Lives of Agatha and Lucy are entered against their correct dates and are thus far apart.

<sup>40</sup> See Prescott, 'Text of the Benedictional', pp. 131–2, nos. 169–76.

<sup>41</sup> Orléans, Bibliothèque municipale, 127 (105), s. x<sup>3/4</sup> or s. x<sup>4/4</sup>, from Winchcombe or Ramsey (?), ptd Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*.

<sup>42</sup> Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, 274 (Y 6), 1014 × 1023, from Peterborough or Ely (?), ptd Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*.

<sup>43</sup> Le Havre, Bibliothèque municipale, 330, s. xi<sup>2</sup>, from the New Minster, Winchester, ptd Turner, *The Missal of the New Minster*.



mass books.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, the exceptions are: SS Julian and Basilissa, SS *Quadráginta milites* and St Eugenia which are omitted from all three books. In the case of St Eugenia we have seen (above, p. 7) that Ælfric's choice was influenced by his adherence to the Cotton-Corpus legendary, while for SS Julian and Basilissa and *Quadráginta milites* the negative evidence from the mass books confirms the suspicion that Ælfric had a special predilection for these types of saints' *uitae*.

We have seen that, as opposed to the twenty-one feasts added by Ælfric to the specific blessings of the Benedictional, there are only two saints celebrated by blessings in the Benedictional but omitted by Ælfric: St Vedastus and St Ambrose. Why does Ælfric, in the context of his considerable additions to the Benedictional's feasts, omit these saints? They were not obscure saints. Ambrose, together with Augustine, Jerome and Gregory, was one of the Doctors of the Church. Vedastus (with a cult originating at Saint-Vaast in Arras) belongs with the group of Frankish and Flemish saints who were widely venerated in late Anglo-Saxon England, with Winchester being a prominent centre of his cult, as is testified, for example, by a number of liturgical books from Æthelwold's Winchester and from the following decades.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore Alcuin's Life of St Vedastus was laid under contribution by Ælfric's colleague Wulfstan of Winchester in the prologue to his Life of St Æthelwold.<sup>46</sup> And the Cotton-Corpus legendary, so important for Ælfric's *sanctorale*, shows an especial veneration for St Vedastus by its inclusion of Alcuin's *Vita S. Vedasti* and his *Homilia in die natali S. Vedasti*.<sup>47</sup> There is no certain answer to the question why Ælfric should have omitted these two saints; there are, however, some clues. As to St Ambrose, it may be relevant to observe that, apart from St Gregory, he is the only Doctor of the Church who is assigned an especial blessing in the Benedictional. By keeping Gregory but omitting Ambrose Ælfric may have intended to emphasize his inclusion of St Gregory. But equally, the explanation may be wholly

<sup>44</sup> But note that St Basilius has a mass set in the sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges only.

<sup>45</sup> For the especial cult of Vedastus in late-tenth- and eleventh-century Winchester, see Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', pp. 120–1, and Lapidge, in *Wulfstan: Life*, pp. lxxvi and lxxxix.

<sup>46</sup> Alcuin's Life of St Vedastus is ptd *PL* 101, cols. 665–78; the parallels between this text and Wulfstan's Life of Æthelwold are pointed out (and ptd) by Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil* IV.1 (1999), p. 253. I owe this reference to Michael Lapidge.

<sup>47</sup> See Jackson and Lapidge, 'Contents of Cotton-Corpus', p. 141, nos. 120–1.

technical: in April (St Ambrose would have been on 4 April), Ælfric's *sanctorale* commemorates no saint before the 23rd (St George), no doubt because space was reserved for the important feasts of the *temporale* connected with Easter. It may also be worth recording that the blessings for Ambrose in the Benedictional carry no individual traits but belong to the generalized type of blessings that were freely interchangeable between saints and feasts in later benedictionals. Thus, in the Sacramentary of Ratoldus (Paris, BNF, lat. 12052), a French manuscript of the tenth century which incorporates an English benedictional closely related to Æthelwold,<sup>48</sup> Æthelwold's blessings for St Ambrose were assigned to St Cuthbert and St Benedict respectively.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in the Canterbury Benedictional (London, BL, Harley 2892), compiled shortly after 1023 at Canterbury, Æthelwold's blessings for St Ambrose were assigned, as a second set of blessings, to St Benedict.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, St Vedastus is given only a generalized set of blessings in Æthelwold's Benedictional, and this set recurs in the closely related Anderson Pontifical (London, BL, Add. 57337, s. x/xi, from Christ Church, Canterbury), as attached to St Cuthbert.<sup>51</sup> As to Ælfric's omission of St Vedastus, we should also recall that Ælfric commemorates none of the other northern French or Flemish saints who were celebrated in late Anglo-Saxon England, and we have to bear in mind that Vedastus is the only such saint commemorated in the Benedictional and that this may reflect an especial attachment of Bishop Æthelwold to the saint. We should consider further that Alcuin's Life of St Vedastus does not represent the genre of heroic saints' *uitae* for which Ælfric seems to have had a penchant; that, apart from a cult based principally at late-tenth- and eleventh-century Winchester, Vedastus has no connection with English history or church history; that Ælfric could, on occasion, differ radically from Winchester's liturgical practice; and that his *sanctorale* was not compiled primarily with a Winchester monastic audience in mind.

<sup>48</sup> For the date and provenance of the Sacramentary of Ratoldus, see, briefly, Prescott, 'Text of the Benedictional', pp. 135–6, and cf. the list of its blessings, *ibid.*, pp. 136–40. There is a recent ed. by N. Orchard, *The Sacramentary of Ratoldus*, HBS 116 (London, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> See Prescott, 'Text of the Benedictional', p. 137, nos. 35 and 36, and Orchard, ed., *Ratoldus*, nos. 462 and 467.

<sup>50</sup> See Prescott, 'The Structure of English Pre-Conquest Benedictionals', p. 152, no. 195; for the Canterbury Benedictional, cf. *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> On the benedictional in the Anderson Pontifical, see Prescott, 'Structure', pp. 121–3, and cf. the table of contents, *ibid.*, pp. 134–8.

We may now look briefly at some parallels between the iconography of the Benedictional and the representation of saints and feasts in Ælfric's *sanctorale*. To begin with, it is striking that all of the Benedictional's miniatures for saints and feasts of the *sanctorale* are represented with narrative pieces in Ælfric's cycles.<sup>52</sup> The feast of Epiphany (6 January) is the only feast which is represented with two full-page miniatures in the Benedictional. Both miniatures are facing each other at one opening of the manuscript: fol. 24v contains a depiction of the Adoration of the Magi, and fol. 25r an illustration of the Baptism of Christ.<sup>53</sup> The illustrations refer to each other in their iconography, and this iconography is centrally important for a principal message of the Benedictional: the imperial and Christological conception of kingship, a conception which informed, for example, Edgar's coronation at Bath in 973, the occasion for which the Benedictional was arguably produced.<sup>54</sup> According to this conception Christ is 'king of kings', and the earthly king is seen as Christ's vicar on earth, *rex et sacerdos*. The iconography in both miniatures is strikingly innovative, especially with regard to the symbolism of crowns and other imperial insignia, but the importance and symbolism of baptism *per se*, not only its association with a king's coronation, is also stressed.<sup>55</sup> Originally, both forms of Christ's *epiphaneia* or 'manifestation', the Adoration of the Magi and his baptism, had been celebrated on 6 January, but by the tenth century, it was the feast of the Adoration of the Magi which was universally, and almost exclusively, celebrated by the western church.<sup>56</sup> The Benedictional, however, not only has, uniquely among its illustrations, two miniatures for a single feast, depicting its dual significance, but here Epiphany is provided also with two sets of blessings, the first commemorating the Adoration of the Magi,

<sup>52</sup> Note that there were losses from the miniatures of the Benedictional, which, for the feast miniatures, can, however, be safely reconstructed from the surviving blessings: Holy Innocents, St Michael, the Nativity of the Virgin. These too are represented by pieces in Ælfric's *sanctorale*. For the lost miniatures, see Deshman, *Benedictional*, pp. 258–9.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Deshman, *Benedictional*, pls. 18 and 19. In addition to Deshman's reproduction of all the full-page illustrations in the Benedictional, the entire book is now available in a (reasonably priced) facsimile edition: *The Benedictional of St Æthelwold. A Masterpiece of Anglo-Saxon Art. A Facsimile*, introd. A. Prescott (London, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> For the possible date of the Benedictional, see above, p. 7, n. 27.

<sup>55</sup> For a searching interpretation of the pictures, see Deshman, *Benedictional*, pp. 45–52.

<sup>56</sup> For the origin and development of the feast, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Cross, p. 554, s. v. Epiphany (with further literature).

the second the Baptism.<sup>57</sup> This representation of Epiphany in the Benedictional has a close parallel in Ælfric. Both series of the *Catholic Homilies* contain a homily on Epiphany. In the First Series the Adoration of the Magi is related and expounded,<sup>58</sup> and the homily of the Second Series is devoted to an exposition of Christ's Baptism along the lines of the Benedictional, stressing the general symbolism of baptism.<sup>59</sup> Another striking parallel between the Benedictional and Ælfric's *sanctorale* emerges when we look at the groupings of a number of important saints. The first of these groupings concerns SS Gregory (12 March), Cuthbert (20 March) and Benedict (21 March). The Lives of the three saints occur in a series in *Catholic Homilies II*.<sup>60</sup> For all three the date for their commemoration is the feast of their deposition. In the case of St Benedict Ælfric's failure to commemorate his translation (11 July), the more prominent feast in Benedictine houses, has elicited scholarly comment,<sup>61</sup> and in the Benedictional it is the *translatio*, not the *depositio*, which is commemorated by a series of blessings and by a feast picture fraught with symbolism and spiritual significance.<sup>62</sup> However, the *spiritus rector* behind the Benedictional was the man whose uncompromising commitment to Benedictine monasticism was unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon England, whereas Ælfric was aiming at a lay audience. It is also relevant to note that even in the Benedictional it is only one feast of St Benedict which is commemorated, not, as often in later benedictionals and sacramentaries, the translation *and* the deposition. In any event, the discrepancy between the Benedictional and Ælfric's *sanctorale* in their choice of St Benedict's feast day pales when we look at the three saints as a group. Apart from the uniformity within the group which is provided by Ælfric

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Prescott, 'Text of the Benedictional', p. 128, nos. 24 and 25, *CBP* nos. 732 and 1087. Both these blessings make mention also of Christ's presence at the Wedding of Cana, which was a 'manifestation' also remembered on Epiphany.

<sup>58</sup> See *Catholic Homilies I*, ed. Clemons, pp. 232–48; here Ælfric refers briefly also to the Wedding at Cana.

<sup>59</sup> See *Catholic Homilies II*, ed. Godden, pp. 19–28.

<sup>60</sup> No. ix: Gregory, no. x: Cuthbert, no. xi: Benedict.

<sup>61</sup> See Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', p. 120.

<sup>62</sup> The blessings are listed by Prescott, 'Text of the Benedictional', p. 131, no. 146; *CBP* 1770 (of English origin); for an interpretation of the feast picture (fol. 99v; Deshman, pl. 33), see Deshman, *Benedictional*, pp. 117–31; for a connection between the iconographic message of the miniature and scholarly work on Old English vocabulary, see Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, pp. 296–310. For the Benedictional's influence on Ælfric's Life of Benedict, see below, pp. 151–5.