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Exegetical Theory and Textual Communities in Late Anglo-Saxon England

By

Jacob Eli Hobson

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English and Medieval Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, Chair

Professor Emily V. Thornbury

Professor Jonas Wellendorf

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Abstract

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This dissertation, a study in political hermeneutics, claims the practice of biblical interpretation as one of the primary shaping forces of Anglo-Saxon literature and society. From the educational reforms of King Alfred (r. 871-99) through the end of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom (c. 1066), anyone who received an education in England began by memorizing the Psalms and progressed to the study of biblical exegesis, a method of reading that moves from the historical analysis of scripture to the figurative description of moral action in the present and eternal punishment or reward in the future. Exegetical theory inscribes human action in the morally charged temporalities of Christian salvation history, encompassing all historical time from Creation to Judgment Day. It provides a foundational method by which Anglo-Saxons read texts, but it also becomes a powerful structuring principle of sacred and secular society as a whole. The practice of scriptural interpretation interpellates individual subjects as historical actors, and it frames social institutions, from monasteries to the kingdom itself, as agents in the unfolding progress of world history. The chapters that follow study its role in the Alfredian translations, Ælfrician liturgy, hermeneutic Latin diplomas, and classical verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Although land conveyances and the heroic *Battle of Brunanburh* might be the last places we would expect to find the effect of exegetical reading, I show that it is precisely such texts where exegetical theory makes its influence known most effectively. These texts frame real politics and warfare as moments in the progress of salvation history, and they place contemporary individuals at the center of the action. In late Anglo-Saxon England, salvation history provides the absolute and universal horizon of present action, subsuming the lives of individuals and the developing history of the kingdom. At the same time, individual writers saw this horizon approaching at different rates, and no two writers perceived the shape of its curve in quite the same way. My dissertation reveals how the exegetical interpretation of texts and events produces the Anglo-Saxon political subject as an actor in salvation history, one who is shaped by it at the same time that he or she works to further its progress.

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List of Abbreviations Used

<i>AEOLO</i>	<i>Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia</i>
<i>ANQ</i>	<i>American Notes & Queries</i>
<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASPR</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i>
<i>CCCM</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Catholic Homilies</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>DOML</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library</i>
<i>EETS</i>	<i>Early English Text Society</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>English Studies</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>NLR</i>	<i>New Left Review</i>
<i>NM</i>	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes & Queries</i>
<i>OEN</i>	<i>Old English Newsletter</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue benedictine</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Studia Neophilologica</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Scandinavian Studies</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>

Introduction: The Anglo-Saxons in World History

This dissertation, a study in political hermeneutics, claims the practice of biblical interpretation as one of the primary shaping forces of Anglo-Saxon literature and society. From the educational reforms of King Alfred (r. 871-99) through the end of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom (c. 1066), anyone who received an education in England began by memorizing the Psalms and progressed to the study of biblical exegesis, a method of reading that moves from the historical analysis of scripture to the figurative description of moral action in the present and eternal punishment or reward in the future. Exegetical theory inscribes human action in the morally charged temporalities of Christian salvation history, encompassing all historical time from Creation to Judgment Day. It provides a foundational method by which Anglo-Saxons read texts, but it also becomes a powerful structuring principle of sacred and secular society as a whole. The practice of scriptural interpretation interpellates individual subjects as historical actors, and it frames social institutions, from monasteries to the kingdom itself, as agents in the unfolding progress of world history. The chapters that follow study its role in the Alfredian translations, Ælfrician liturgy, hermeneutic Latin diplomas, and classical verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Although land conveyances and the heroic *Battle of Brunanburh* might be the last places we would expect to find the effect of exegetical reading, I show that it is precisely such texts where exegetical theory makes its influence known most effectively. These texts frame real politics and warfare as moments in the progress of salvation history, and they place contemporary individuals at the center of the action. In late Anglo-Saxon England, salvation history provides the absolute and universal horizon of present action, subsuming the lives of individuals and the developing history of the kingdom. At the same time, individual writers saw this horizon approaching at different rates, and no two writers perceived the shape of its curve in quite the same way. My dissertation reveals how the exegetical interpretation of texts and events produces the Anglo-Saxon political subject as an actor in salvation history, one who is shaped by it at the same time that he or she works to further its progress.

Scholars within the larger discipline of medieval studies have lauded exegetical interpretation as a genuinely historical criticism, derided it as simplistic and predictable, or, in recent decades, often forgotten about it. D. W. Robertson, the best-known of the mid-twentieth-century exegetical critics, drew on the four senses of scripture when he insisted that medieval literature was fundamentally about the theological virtue of charity.¹ In Old English studies, R. E. Kaske argued in a classic essay that *Beowulf* exemplified the tropological virtues of *sapientia et fortitudo* [wisdom and bravery],² and Bernard F. Huppé attempted to show that Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* is foundational to the entire enterprise of Old English poetry.³ These scholars' work has been criticized, sometimes caricatured, for over-reliance on Augustine's thought alone and for its supposedly reductive arguments that medieval literature should be understood allegorically.⁴ Acknowledging the importance and the sometimes demonstrable

¹ D. W. Robertson, "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory," *Speculum* 26.1 (1951): 24-49.

² R. E. Kaske, "Sapientia et fortitudo as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*," *SP* 55.3 (1958): 423-56.

³ Bernard F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry* (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York, 1959).

⁴ The most cogent critique and discussion of exegetical criticism from the last decade is that of Steven Justice, "Who Stole Robertson?" *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 609-15. Exegetical criticism caused a flare of controversy in its own day as well; see the essays collected in the volume *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected Papers from the*

significance of these scholars' work to our understanding of medieval literature, this dissertation places the tropological (or moral) sense of Anglo-Saxon literature squarely back into the actual history of the kingdom and the postulated history of the world. It considers the various and concrete ways in which Anglo-Saxon texts interpellate individual subjects as moral and political actors within both the realities of their own present day and the imagined structure of salvation history. Doing so returns exegetical theory from the ahistorical generality of mid-century criticism to the experience of the Anglo-Saxons who wrote and read these texts. By attending to the historical context of these texts' production, this dissertation shows how salvation history had real ideological stakes and social effects in Anglo-Saxon England. Salvation history underlay the most powerful aspects of the West Saxon kings' self-presentation, and Anglo-Saxon authors used exegetical interpretation to produce audiences aware not just of broad moral imperatives—be charitable, acquire wisdom—but of their necessary role in the world's ineluctable movement toward eternity. As the practice of scriptural interpretation produced individual subjects and important social institutions as moral actors, this morality took on a political valence and required specific actions within England's communities, whether (for local parishioners) attending Mass or (for the king) carrying on David's simultaneously penitential and warlike example. Far from an abstract or general idea, exegetical theory formed the basis for a practical political hermeneutics in late Anglo-Saxon England.

At the same time that the political hermeneutics I explicate had far-reaching effects on the intellectual and political cultures of Anglo-Saxon England, it also offers a corrective to our own theories of ideology. At the heart of historicist scholarship and much literary theory lie the questions: what social role do literary texts play? What social role does literary *theory* play? The British Marxists and their more philosophically inclined Continental counterparts answered these questions by reading literature as an arm of ideology, the translation of abstract belief into material practice.⁵ Louis Althusser explains how this translation took place for twentieth-century Catholics: "If he (i.e., the subject) believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance . . . and naturally repents."⁶ While the members of *Projekt*

English Institute, 1958-59, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). Kaske himself wrote a penetrating review essay of Robertson's monumental *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); see his "Chaucer and Medieval Allegory," *ELH* 30.2 (1963): 175-92.

⁵ On the early history of "ideology" as a term, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 153-57. Williams often treated language and literature as a means of cultural production: *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 53-54; and "Means of Communication as a Means of Production," *Culture and Materialism* (New York: Verso, 1980), 50-63. Terry Eagleton treats literature as ideology more explicitly than Williams: *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Humanities Press, 1976); see further Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991). Stuart Hall engaged ideology as a set of ideas arising from and influencing objective conditions while moving past the critique of its truth value: "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 262-75; elsewhere, he considered the role of discourse (but not specifically literature) in producing subjects: "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 35-57. Fredric Jameson, whose work arises primarily out of the dialectical tradition of European Marxism, defines ideology simply as "constitutive features of belief, socially symbolic praxis and group mediation," *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2009), 319.

⁶ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 85-126, at 113.

Ideologietheorie (led by Walter F. Haug at the Freie Universität in Berlin) have more recently stressed that ideology can involve horizontal social forces as well as vertical, top-down interpellation, they and others scholars continue to operate within an Althusserian paradigm of ideology as a set of objectively conditioned beliefs put into practice.⁷ However, medieval exegetical theory is not a belief about society or the world but a collection of analytical methods. No one set of practices arises from exegetical analysis in the way that Althusser describes modern worship and penance arising from belief in God, and the Anglo-Saxon culture of exegetical practice led not to any one kind of action *per se* so much as a discrete way of doing things, a way of engaging with history and the meaning of the present.

This dissertation therefore emphasizes interpretation as a fundamental component of ideology in late Anglo-Saxon England. Presenting a new insight into both the workings of ideology and the way that it shapes social reality, the present study grows out of theoretical work bridging Marxist historical analysis and the interpretation of semiotic systems. Stuart Hall argued influentially that culture (particularly, in his case study, television) encodes ideological messages that consumers must then decode through their individual “structures of understanding.”⁸ His model is an important one, allowing for a subject who talks back to or misunderstands ideology. This dissertation, while similarly taking interpretation (“decoding”) to be a necessary part of the process by which ideologies become practices, shifts Hall’s focus from average recipients of ideology to the social architects of late Anglo-Saxon England. Indeed, exegetical theory was probably opaque to most Anglo-Saxons. But those educated individuals who understood exegesis applied it in their jobs as priests, bureaucrats, and church leaders. They educated, led worship, advised the king, and drew up legal documents. For these writers, history is a divinely inspired account of providence, and exegesis allows one to uncover the principle that structures it and therefore one’s life within it.⁹ They interpellate their imagined audiences—from workaday Christians to the leading members of the kingdom’s government—as actors in the last age of the world, working to carry on the mission of Christian history until its ultimate end on Judgment Day. In showing how these authors fashion themselves and their society through the application of historical analysis, I argue for an ideological criticism able to account for not only the way beliefs arise from and influence material relations but also the way cultural interpretation helps to create these beliefs. Anglo-Saxon authors used the principles of exegesis to interpret their world, but their point, I contend, was to change it.

⁷ On *Projekt Ideologietheorie*, see Jan Rehmann, who worked on the project from 1977-85: *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 241-69. This approach, like Althusser and Stuart’s, grows out of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, in which the powerful class may lead as well as (or rather than) dominate. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 181-82 *et passim*. Concerning Gramsci’s broader influence on late twentieth-century Marxism, see Perry Anderson, “The Heirs of Gramsci,” *New Left Review* 100 (2016): 71-97.

⁸ Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding,” *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 90-103, at 93.

⁹ On modern philosophical and critical attempts to locate a rational principle immanent to history or society, see Martin Jay, *Reason after its Eclipse: On Late Critical Theory* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016). On the influence of salvation history on modern philosophies of history, see Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, 5th ed. (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1953). Fredric Jameson considers the allegorical sense of biblical exegesis as “a mechanism for preparing such a [biblical] text for further ideological investment,” *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 29-32, at 30.

The Four Senses of Scripture

In order to understand how exegetical theory became a political hermeneutics, one must first establish how, for a late antique or medieval exegete, the scriptural text always signified readers of the present day. The literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses of the scripture were the foundational modes of biblical interpretation from the time of the patristic commentators onward. This famous four-fold method of interpreting scripture receives one of its most important articulations at the beginning of Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*:

[I]n libris autem omnibus sanctis intueri oportet, quae ibi aeterna intimentur, quae facta narrentur, quae futura praenuntiantur, quae agenda praecipiantur uel admoneantur. in narratione ergo rerum factarum quaeritur, utrum omnia secundum figurarum tantummodo intellectum accipiantur, an etiam secundem fidem rerum gestarum adserenda et defendenda sint.¹⁰

[In all the holy books it is right to consider what eternal things are made known there, what past things reported, what future things foretold, what things are advised or taught to be done. It is therefore sought in the narrative of things done whether all things should be received only according to the figurative understanding or whether they ought to be affirmed and defended according to the historical understanding.]

In this description, the literal sense of scripture is concerned with past things, i.e., with history. The typological (or allegorical) sense is concerned with eternal things. In practice, this often means elucidating the ways Old Testament events and individuals prefigure those in the New Testament, especially Christ. The tropological sense is concerned with moral instruction, and the anagogical sense is concerned with the future, especially judgment and the end of the world. Augustine's formulation could be subject to change among other exegetes. Some, like Pope Gregory the Great discussed below, distinguish only three senses of scripture. In such cases, the senses identified are usually the literal, typological, and tropological. Further variation was possible. For instance, the ninth-century Carolingian scholar John Scotus somewhat idiosyncratically identifies a physical sense in addition to the literal and tropological senses.¹¹ Some exegetes also present these senses in a different order than will be explicated here, suggesting a different hierarchy among them. However, a three- or four-fold scheme using the literal, typological, and tropological senses was traditional.¹²

The senses of scripture have a prescribed and intrinsic relationship to one another, one that medieval exegetes tend to quietly assume. The literal sense is the foundation of the others. The metaphor of the literal level as foundation is taken quite seriously by many exegetes, from at least the time of the sixth-century Gregory the Great through the high medieval reception of

¹⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim; Eiusdem libri capitula; De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber; Locutionum in Heptateuchum libri septem*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CCSL 28.1 (Vindobonae, 1894), 1. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ In doing so, he anticipates twelfth-century cosmological allegories. John Scotus Eriugena, "Homilia in Prologum S. Euangelii Secundum Ioannem," PL 122, 290C.

¹² For an overview, see Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998-2009), I: 82-115.

Peter Comestor's twelfth-century *Historia scholastica*.¹³ Gregory, whose *Regula pastoralis* and *Dialogi* were among those texts translated by Alfred's circle, explains this metaphor in the prologue to his *Moralia in Iob*:

Nam primum quidem fundamenta historiae ponimus; deinde per significationem typicam in arcem fidei fabricam mentis erigimus; ad extremum quoque per moralitatis gratiam, quasi superducto aedificium colore uestimus.¹⁴

[For indeed we first place the foundations of history. Then, through the figural sense, we erect the structure of the mind in the form of the citadel of faith. Finally, we also clothe the building through the grace of morality as if by color drawn over it.]

According to Gregory, the allegorical and tropological senses are built upon the literal sense like a house upon a foundation. Although Gregory will use Job primarily as an *exemplum* of virtue in the commentary itself, each sense is theoretically necessary. After laying the groundwork of the literal sense, one proceeds to erect the structure of the allegorical sense upon it. The tropological sense adorns the allegorical structure. Without a full three-fold explication, the interpretation given will be built upon quicksand, lack a shape, or be naked against the elements. Without the history that the literal sense explicates, however, there can be no interpretation of scripture at all, and the other senses must be built in their proper order upon a historical understanding.

Although early medieval exegetes often focused on allegorical interpretation, they did so as an enrichment and fulfilment of the promise of scriptural history. Their preference was so marked that literal and allegorical exegetes have sometimes been seen as (and sometimes actually were) in conflict with one another. Describing the ascendancy of allegorical over literal exegesis in the West, Beryl Smalley writes that the "allegorical method captivated the Latin world."¹⁵ Exegetes' interest in the allegorical sense often took the form of the explication of *figurae* in the biblical text. According to Erich Auerbach, typology ("figural interpretation") relies on "a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first."¹⁶ He argues against those who read typology as a negation of history: "The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life."¹⁷ Figural or typological analysis thus allows one to understand the hidden truth and prophetic nature of the Bible. However, as a middle term between the literal sense and allegorical truth, the *figura* never fully supersedes the foundation of history. In an eloquently argued essay, Friedrich Ohly describes typology as a poetic device as much as a theological one: "Unentbehrlich für Typologie ist das Moment der Zeit, einer geteilten Zeit mit einer Wende in der Zeitenmitte: vor Christus, in Christus, nach Christus. Der Typus liegt in jedem Fall vor Christus, der Antitypus in

¹³ Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, PL 198, 1053-55. On this reception, see James H. Morey, "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible," *Speculum* 68.1 (1993): 6-35.

¹⁴ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. Marc Adriaen, 2 vols., CCSL 143A-143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), I: 4.

¹⁵ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), 1-26, at 14 and 20. On this patristic difference in views, see further Jacques Guillet, "Les exégèses d'Alexandrie et d'Antioche: Conflit ou malentendu?" *Recherches de science religieuse* 34.3 (1947): 257-302.

¹⁶ Auerbach, "Figura," *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11-76, at 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Christus oder nach ihm. Typ and Antityp heißt alt und neu.”¹⁸ For Ohly, typology is often expressed metaphorically rather than in propositional or theoretical terms. It is “Schatten und Licht, Figur und Wahrheit, Verbergung und Offenbarung, Morgen und Mittag.”¹⁹ However, these terms are always mediated by Christ and situated within salvation history through their relation to him.

This interest in figurative reading is well illustrated by theological commentaries on Psalms, the most important text of early medieval education. The great majority of commentators on the psalms, even when acknowledging their historical or literal sense, were most interested in the way they allegorically figured Christ. Cassiodorus, borrowing from Augustine and himself among the most important scholars of the psalms, shows the attraction of reading figuratively. When discussing the utility of the psalms, he says that the psalms are a “paradisus plenus omnium pomorum”²⁰ [paradise full of every fruit] because, among other things:

modo de passione et de resurrectione Domini salutaria praedicantes . . . modo uersuum repetitione quaedam nobis sacramenta pandentes . . . postremo supernis laudibus feliciter inhaerentes, beata copia, inexplicabile desiderium, stupenda profunditas. Non potest animus fidelis expleri, qui coeperit inde satiari.²¹

[at times, they proclaim the saving passion and resurrection of the Lord; at other times, through the repetition of verses, they make clear to us the certain mysteries . . . finally, happily inhering within divine praises are their blessed abundance, unappeasable longing, and astounding depth. The faithful mind that has begun to be nourished by them cannot be filled.]

Cassiodorus imagines the psalms as a garden whose fruits nourish us without filling us, leaving us constantly yearning for still more psalms to devour. These particular fruits are allegorical, pointing always to Christ. Properly understood, they clarify biblical mysteries and incline us to moral behavior. The depth of the psalms is *stupenda* and can, for Cassiodorus, scarcely be exhausted. His massive commentary attests to the profundity he sees in the psalms. Their profundity lies not just in their meaning but in the formal beauty that allows them to become a “thesaurus in pectore”²² [treasure chest in the heart]. Cassiodorus speaks repeatedly of the psalms’ *suauitas* [sweetness], a term that Mary Carruthers argues powerfully to be a medieval aesthetic category²³ and that Cassiodorus himself aligns with the singing or chanting of the psalms in the liturgy.²⁴ By drawing us through their beauty to study them, the Psalms, for Cassiodorus, lead us to contemplation of Christ.

¹⁸ Friedrich Ohly, “Synagoge und Ecclesia. Typologisches in mittelalterlicher Dichtung,” *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 312-37, at 315.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 322.

²⁰ This phrase is usually taken to be an allusion to Song of Songs 4:12: “Hortus conclusus soror mea, sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus” [My sister, my spouse, is an enclosed garden, a sealed fountain]. Biblical translations are taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

²¹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I-LXX*, ed. M. Adreien, CCSL 97 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958), 4.

²² Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 22.

²³ Mary Carruthers, “Sweetness,” *Speculum* 81.4 (2006): 999-1013; revised in her *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 80-107.

²⁴ See especially *Expositio Psalmorum*, 4-6.

Yet even such allegorical readings rely on the foundation of history and order the lives of Christians within it. In his magisterial study of medieval exegesis, Henri de Lubac follows his chapter on literal interpretation with these opening words: “So now we must pass . . . to allegory.”²⁵ The Christian exegete cannot—must not—stop at expounding the literal sense of Scripture. To do so would fail to recognize that Scripture, and history itself, is divinely inspired. It is therefore necessary to pass from the literal to the allegorical, acknowledging that “what the whole Old Testament prefigures is the whole mystery of our redemption.”²⁶ Despite its massive sweep and mystical nature, typological interpretation of the Bible is not in de Lubac’s account abstract or ideal. On the contrary, the mystery of Christ and his church is “entirely concrete”:

It does not exist in an idea. It does not consist in any atemporal truth or detached speculation. This mystery is a reality in act, the realization of a Grand Design; it is therefore, in the strongest sense, even something historical, in which personal beings are engaged.²⁷

Typological interpretation is a way of understanding the structure of history, which itself necessarily reveals and is determined by the mystery of Christ. As historical beings, individual actors exist within its structure and participate in its continuance. The tropological sense thus reveals the ways that individuals must engage in salvation history. Tropology is moral instruction, but because it ought to derive from an achieved understanding of scripture *ad litteram* and typologically, it is moral instruction with an implicitly historical dimension. When medieval exegetes investigate the anagogical sense, it makes plain the eternal punishment or reward for actions taken in the present day. As the direct consequence of an individual’s actions, the anagogical future impinges upon his or her present day. In this sense, it always lies before a Christian subject. Tropology and anagogy therefore realize the historical structure implied by the literal and typological senses by locating present-day individuals within it. In its broad sweep from scriptural history to the present day and the end of time, the practice of exegetical interpretation produces a subject who at once follows biblical example and works to advance salvation history to its necessary conclusion.

Plan of the Dissertation

The chapters that follow chart the political effects of exegetical theory across a wide range of Latin and Old English genres. The first two chapters treat the formation of individual subjects. Chapter 1, “The Teaching of History at King Alfred’s Court,” shows how the notoriously incongruent texts translated by King Alfred’s court circle are all, in fact, produced as histories in their Old English versions. Indeed, the Alfredian translators’ most basic impulses are drawn from literal exegesis through which they seek always to clarify the historical and moral import of the Latin text they translate, whether that text is the Psalms or Boethius’s Neoplatonic *Consolation of Philosophy*. In the former, the translator(s) appends a historical preface to each psalm and consistently rejects the readings offered by the overwhelmingly allegorical commentary tradition in favor of those offered by the slight (and comparatively non-prestigious) literal-historical commentary tradition. In the latter, the translator(s) begins the text by inserting a biography of its

²⁵ de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, II: 83.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

author, treats the *Consolation* as Boethius's personal speech, establishes the historical origins of his philosophy, and then imports a moral value to replace the Latin text's more ethical concerns. Taken with the para-Alfredian history known as the Old English *Orosius*, the Alfredian translations display a single overarching hermeneutic, one that produces a court aware of the way their own historical resonances and commitments impose political relations in their present day.

Chapter 2, "The Spiritual Sense of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*," builds upon this foundation by investigating how Abbot Ælfric's vernacular homilies produce a historicizing identity for English Christians as part of the political project of the Benedictine monastic reforms. Breaking from previous scholarship's emphasis on Ælfric's sources and Old English prose style, this chapter shows how his homiletic writings interpellate individual (and possibly unlearned) English Christians as actors in salvation history by explaining correct liturgical practice as a structured tropological action. This chapter's study of Ælfric's historical method, particularly in his homilies on the Assumption of Mary and the Feast of the Circumcision, reveals how Ælfric's homilies reform English subjects as a part of the political project of the English Benedictine monastic reforms. Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, by presenting its readers and hearers as successors to the exemplary individuals of scriptural history, thus interpellate reformed English subjects as both actors in the present and successors of the scriptural past, always partaking of these two times at once in the hope of achieving eternal reward.

The second half of this dissertation turns to way Anglo-Saxon authors use exegetical theory to frame social institutions within salvation history. Chapter 3, "Tenorial Exegesis in the Tenth-Century Diplomas," considers a group of Anglo-Latin legal texts, demonstrating the extent to which exegetical theory was becoming political practice over the course of the tenth century. These diplomas, known primarily for their pyrotechnic Latin style borrowed from the extremely demanding writer Aldhelm, are much more than exercises in hermeneutic Latin. Their elevated brand of Latinity brings with it not just rhetorical display but, embedded in this rhetoric, a specifically exegetical analysis of tenorial politics and obligations. Showing first how this implicit hermeneutic works in a foundational group of diplomas written by the draftsman Æthelstan A, the chapter then turns to the later diplomas of the Benedictine monastic reforms. These diplomas use exegetical theory to inscribe both reformed monasteries and the English nobility as actors helping Christ and the Virgin Mary to reproduce the lost paradisiacal state of humankind in the present day. In explicating these neglected texts, Chapter 3 brings to bear on them a number of new sources and parallels, at once illuminating and disclosing the reformers' political thought as exegetical. In these diplomas, exegetical theory materializes as a way of mediating and imposing social relations by placing them explicitly in salvation history.

My final chapter, "Typological Convention in the Classical Verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*," shows how four poems in the *Chronicle* frame the West Saxon royal line, and ultimately the English kingdom, as working in concert with the divine plan to advance world history to its inevitable conclusion. Beginning with the archetypally Germanic poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*, this chapter examines how the poem's formulaic conventions resonate with those of biblical, heroic, and other historical verse. These conventions are used to indicate specific points in the structure of history, and by drawing on these conventional temporalities, *Brunanburh*'s formulas write the battle into larger narratives of English and ultimately salvation history. Later poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* similarly revisit and revise *Brunanburh*'s poetics to comment on their own historical moments. The chapter concludes with a reading of *The Death of Edgar* as a simultaneously nostalgic and critical poem. In showing how historical time inheres in Old English poetic formulas and how poets use these formulas to imagine the

time that they themselves inhabit, this chapter challenges the standard scholarly notions of what is traditional about Old English traditional poetics and how it produces social meaning.

This dissertation thus unifies several modern disciplinary practices—the historical and literary, Latin and vernacular, philological and theoretical—to show how exegetical theory structures Anglo-Saxon textual communities and political practice. It traces exegetical theory in works from the law to the liturgy, from philosophy to heroic poetry. These disparate genres reveal the central and pervasive place of exegetical thought in Anglo-Saxon ideology and self-presentation at the level of the West Saxon scholar and nobleman (in the Alfredian translations), the reformed English subject (in Ælfric's homilies), the royal monastic foundation (in the hermeneutic diplomas of the tenth century), and the expanding West Saxon hegemony over the island of Britain (in the *Chronicle* poems). Putting these genres into conversation with one another allows an expansive, integrated view of how the pressures of the world's last age framed life in England. This dissertation shows the Anglo-Saxon political subject living in historical tension between the scriptural past and the coming Judgment, shaped by salvation history at the same time that he or she worked to advance it toward its necessary end. Exegetical theory thus moved far beyond the pages of monastic commentators and the walls of the schoolroom, ordering the lives of Anglo-Saxons and the purposes of their social institutions according to the social logic implicit in the practice of scriptural interpretation.

Chapter 1: The Teaching of History at King Alfred's Court

With its unprecedented explosion of vernacular literary and historical writing, the court of King Alfred the Great (r. 871-99) has been recognized since its own time, and was recognized by its own members, as an important moment in the development of English as a written medium.¹ On the one hand, Alfred's court circle produced numerous histories, from Asser's account of his reign to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, that represented the king in such a positive light as to constitute a "personality cult."² On the other, they produced Old English translations, traditionally but probably incorrectly attributed to Alfred himself, of four major Latin works: Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*, Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, Augustine of Hippo's *Soliloquia*, and the first fifty psalms (in prose).³ These texts constitute not only a program of royalist education but also, in doing so, a substantial body of ninth-century political thought.⁴ This chapter contends that such political thought was rooted in literal exegetical practice and world-historical thought, through which the Alfredian writers seek to clarify the historical and moral import of the texts they translate. The Prose Psalms, the Old English *Boethius*, and the Old English *Orosius*, a translation of the fifth-century author Orosius's world-historical *Historiarum aduersum paganos libri septem* [Seven Books of History Against the Pagans] that was also produced in Alfred's Wessex,⁵ show this interpretative practice at work in texts translated from disparate genres, beginning with history and spiraling outward to ethical philosophy. This chapter argues that these varied translations, reading their sources *ad litteram*, are all, in fact, produced as histories in their Old English versions. From the Old English *Orosius*'s sense of history's moral structure to the *Boethius*'s historical analysis of politics and rulership, these texts shape in Alfred's Wessex an audience newly aware of its own historical resonances and tropological commitments within the progress of salvation history.

The Alfredian translations were central to Alfred's attempt to reconstitute the languishing English educational tradition in the wake of the Viking wars as well as to expand it into the vernacular.⁶ Alongside the flourishing literary activity at his court, Alfred recruited several

¹ On the Anglo-Saxon tradition of Alfredian authorship and wisdom, see Malcolm Godden, "Alfredian Prose: Myth and Reality," *Filologia Germanica* 5 (2013): 131-58.

² Anton Scharer, "The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court," *EME* 5.2 (1996): 177-206. See also his earlier article "König Alfreds Hof und die Geschichtsschreibung: Einige Überlegungen zur Angelsachsen Chronik und zu Assers *De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi*," *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Vienna and Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994), 443-58. On Alfred's reputation after Anglo-Saxon England, see Simon Keynes, "The Cult of King Alfred the Great," *ASE* 28 (1999): 225-356.

³ On Alfred's authorship of these texts, see Malcolm Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?" *Medium Ævum* 76.1 (2007): 1-23; Janet Bately, "Did King Alfred Actually Translate Anything? The Integrity of the Alfredian Canon Revisited," *Medium Ævum* 78.2 (2009): 189-215; and David Pratt, "Problems of Authorship and Audience in the Writings of King Alfred the Great," *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Patrick Wormald and Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 162-91.

⁴ On Alfredian political thought, see Janet L. Nelson, "The Political Ideas of Alfred of Wessex," *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1993), 125-58; David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Francis Leneghan, "Royal Wisdom and the Alfredian Context of *Cynewulf and Cyneheard*," *ASE* 39 (2010): 71-104.

⁵ For context, see Janet Bately, "Old English Prose Before and During the Reign of Alfred," *ASE* 17 (1988): 93-138, at 97.

⁶ On the destruction of English libraries, see Helmut Gneuss, "King Alfred and the History of Anglo-Saxon Libraries," *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honor of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. Phyllis

teachers to Wessex from beyond its borders. Among these teachers were four men from Mercia, where a nascent tradition of translating Latin histories into English was developing, and the Welsh Asser, who modeled his biography of Alfred on Einhard's life of Charlemagne.⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* shows awareness of contemporary Irish learning,⁸ and John the Old Saxon and Grimbold of St. Bertin additionally joined the court from the Continent.⁹ According to Asser, Alfred established a school "omnibus pene totius regionis nobilibus infantibus et etiam multis ignobilibus . . . In qua schola utriusque linguae libri, Latinae scilicet et Saxonicae, assidue legebantur, scriptioni quoque uocabant"¹⁰ [for practically all the noble children of the whole region and also many who were not noble . . . In this school books of both languages, Latin and English, were assiduously read, and they also devoted themselves to writing]. The school that Asser describes may well be apocryphal,¹¹ but the Preface to the Old English *Pastoral Care* famously describes the educational reforms as a major social movement among the free men of Wessex:

[E]al sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angel kynne friora manna, þara þe þa speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to liornunga oðfæste, þa hwile þe hie to nanre oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first þe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan: lære mon siððan furður on Lædengeðeode þa þe mon furðor læran wille & to hierran hade don wille.¹²

[All those youths who are now among the free men of the English, those who have the means that they may apply themselves to that, should be set to learning until they are able to read English writing well, as long as they are fit for no other employment. And afterwards let one teach further in the Latin language those one wishes to teach further and to advance to ecclesiastical (lit. "higher") rank.]

Rugg Brown, Georgia Ronan Crampton, and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 29-49. For standard accounts of Alfredian literature and education, see Dorothy Whitelock, "The Prose of Alfred's Reign," *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London: Thomas Nelson, 1966), 63-107; Janet Bately, "Old English Prose Before and During the Reign of King Alfred," *ASE* 17 (1988): 93-138; and Michael Lapidge, "Schools, Learning and Literature in Tenth-Century England," *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 1-48, at 5-12.

⁷ On Mercian writing, see Bately, "Old English Prose," 98-118. Concerning Asser's stylistic relationship to Einhard, see Marie Schutt, "The Literary Form of Asser's 'Vita Alfredi,'" *EHR* 72, no. 283 (1957): 209-20; for direct borrowing from Einhard, see Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 54-55. For Einhard's life itself, see Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH Scriptores 25 (Hannover: MGH, 1911).

⁸ The 891 annal notes the death of Swifneah, "se betsta lareow þe on Scottum wæs"⁸ [the best teacher who was among the Irish], *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A Collaborative Edition: MS A*, ed. Janet Bately (Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1986), 54, s.a. 891.

⁹ Little is known about John's origins beyond the fact that he came from Saxony. For a still useful biographical study of Grimbold, see Philip Grierson, "Grimbold of St. Bertin's," *EHR* 55, no. 220 (1940): 529-61; see additionally Janet Bately, "Grimbold of St. Bertin's," *Medium Ævum* 35.1 (1966): 1-10.

¹⁰ *Life of King Alfred: Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, with an Article on Recent Work on Asser's Life of Alfred by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 58, chapter 75.

¹¹ Michael Lapidge finds no evidence of English schools in his magisterial survey: "Schools, Learning and Literature," *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066*, 5-12.

¹² *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. Henry Sweet, EETS os 45 (London, 1871), 7.

However wide the reach of these educational reforms, they appear to have been designed to render young West Saxon men literate in their native language and ultimately to shape the kingdom's administration. In this context—the interconnections between an imported, educated elite and those free men yet in the process of learning to read their native language—the interpretative mode and aims of the translations attain particular interest, for they imagine and produce a self-consciously historical readership.

Indeed, West Saxon readers of the Alfredian translations encountered each of these generically incongruent Latin texts—a world history, a biblical book used in elementary education and the liturgy, and a treatise on philosophical ethics—as a work of history. Approaching their Latin sources through a more or less uniformly exegetical interpretative model, the Alfredian translators construct models of world history that negotiate the present as a part of this history, a present that gains meaning only through juxtaposition with and comparison to the larger structure of salvation history. In constructing their works, the translators first establish the literal sense of their sources and, having thus established the history that the text narrates, describe the spiritual senses of this history. They apply these higher, usually typological and tropological, senses either to the text's original protagonists (as in the case of Boethius) or explicitly to its present-day readers (as in the case of the Old English Prose Psalms). In exploring this strategy, this chapter first takes the Old English *Orosius*, whose late-antique Latin source was a world history, as an example of the way Alfredian translators understood the moral structuration of history. In rewriting this text's philosophically inflected Augustinian history as a straight historical narrative interleaved with exegetical remarks upon the significance of particular events or individuals, the Old English translator(s) transposed the temporalities of classical history into those of salvation history. The chapter then turns to the Prose Psalms to show how their translations frame individuals as acting within the context of salvation history. Taking a predominantly *ad litteram* approach to the psalms, this Old English text runs counter to the allegorical grain of early medieval Psalms commentary. It focuses instead on the Psalms as the utterances of the historical King David, taking them as examples for later biblical figures from Ezechias to Christ as well as the West Saxon reader him- or herself. The chapter closes by exploring how the Old English *Boethius* extends this thinking to individuals as specifically political actors within salvation history. This text blends the *Consolatio*'s classical references with biblical history in order to illuminate Boethius's situation as a political prisoner and, by corollary, the position and obligations of a West Saxon reader as a member of the kingdom. Together these three texts show how the Alfredian translators used exegetical theory to negotiate both their own role and that of their kingdom within salvation history, implicitly constructing themselves and their imagined West Saxon audience as moral and political actors in the historical unfolding of the world.

The Old English *Orosius* and the World Until Now

Orosius's Histories, written in response to the Gothic depredations of Rome, advances an account of a divinely ordained world history with moral implications for local readers of his present day. *Orosius* does not write an exegetical account of history *per se*. However, in addressing his history to Augustine of Hippo, who appears to have commissioned it,¹³ he frames

¹³ “Praeceptis tuis parui, beatissime pater Augustine” [I have obeyed your instructions, most blessed father Augustine], *Orosius, Historiarum aduersum paganos libri VII*, ed. Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Zangemeister (Vienna,

the events of world history in such Augustinian terms that he has been called a “Geschichtstheologe.”¹⁴ Orosius makes a historical argument that modern times, i.e., those after Christ’s coming, are better than those of the pagan past.¹⁵ Indeed, he argues that his Christian readers ought implicitly to recognize the City of God in their own times. Orosius, addressing Augustine, describes the Earthly City thus:

Praeceptas mihi, uti aduersus uaniloquam prauitatem eorum, qui alieni a ciuitate Dei . . . pagani uocantur siui gentiles quia terrena sapiunt, qui cum futura non quaerant, praeterita autem aut obliuiscantur aut nesciant, praesentia tamen tempora ueluti malis extra solitum infestatissima . . . infamant.¹⁶

[You had instructed me to write against the arrogant wickedness of those who are strangers from the City of God and are called pagans . . . or otherwise gentiles because they know of the things of this world. These men, as they do not look the future and have either forgotten or are ignorant of the past, besmirch the present as a time particularly full of evils, far beyond those which are always with us.]¹⁷

According to Orosius, pagans do not understand the past, do not look to the future, and know only the things of this world. In short, they treat their present moment as historically unique, failing to understand it in the context of salvation history. Because they lack this understanding, pagans believe the present to be worse than it actually is, at least as seen from Orosius’s own world-historical perspective.¹⁸ Orosius will go on to catalogue all the historical miseries he can to persuade his readers to share his own perspective on their times. He describes the providential logic of this history: “regnasse mortem auidam sanguinis, dum ignoratur religio quae prohiberet a sanguine; ista inluscente, illam constupuisse”¹⁹ [Death, greedy for blood, had reigned when there was no knowledge of Religion which keeps bloodshed at bay. For when Religion spreads

1882), I.1, 1. Translation from *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, trans. A. T. Fear (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 31.

¹⁴ “Indem er [i.e., Orosius] historisch argumentiert, wird sein Werk zur Geschichtschronik; indem aber Gott sich darin als Herr der Geschichte erweist, wird es zum Erzeugnis einer bestimmten Geschichtsinterpretation, wird Orosius zum Geschichtstheologen,” Hans Werner-Goetz, *Die Geschichtstheologie des Orosius* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), 43. For further studies of Orosius’s sources, historical models, and intellectual context, see Benoit Lacroix, *Orose et ses idées* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1965); Theodor E. Mommsen, “Orosius and Augustine,” *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Eugene F. Rice, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959), 325-48; Henri Irénée Marrou, “Saint Augustine, Orose et l’augustinisme historique,” *La storiografia altomedievale*, 2 vols. (Spoleto: Presso la sede del centro, 1970), I: 59-87; Justus Cobet, “Orosius’ Weltgeschichte: Tradition und Konstruktion,” *Hermes* 137.1 (2009): 60-92; and Peter van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁵ For patristic background on the idea that Christianity “was making a positive contribution to the well-being of the Roman empire [sic],” see Theodor E. Mommsen, “St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of *The City of God*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Rice, 265-98, quoted at 279.

¹⁶ Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, I.9, 2.

¹⁷ *Seven Books of History*, trans. A. T. Fear, 32.

¹⁸ On the actual relations between Orosius’s view of history and that of the pagans, see Arnaldo Momigliano, “Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.,” *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 107-26.

¹⁹ Orosius, *Histories*, I.14, 2-3.

forth its light, death is confounded].²⁰ Readers who come to understand Orosius's contention that life is better now than it has ever been should therefore look to Christianity, turning from their old pagan gods. This argument, perhaps unsurprisingly, also underlies the Old English translation, but the *Orosius*, written centuries after the fall of Rome and the widespread institutionalization of Christianity, effectively reduces Orosius's frequent emotional appeals and Augustinian thesis in favor of a commentary on a literal, historical account.

The Old English translator presents not so much an argument about the nature of history as an account of historical events seasoned with laments on men's ignorance of the times. Both he and Orosius offer a history with Christ at the center and implications for the present day, and neither he nor his Old English translator often look to the future. That is, they view world history through the lenses of the literal, typological, and tropological senses but not the anagogical. This interpretative scheme is, incidentally, the same one that Gregory uses, although any direct relationship between his *Moralia* and this text is unclear.²¹ Like his source, the Old English translator begins immediately with a description of world geography, but the Old English text famously adds to it the reports of Ohthere and Wulfstan on the geography of northern Europe.²² This addition, perhaps a tenth-century interpolation, inserts Alfred's kingdom into Orosian world history, giving it a broader context than a history like Asser's might at first suggest.²³ Although the translator's present day is also much later than that of Orosius,²⁴ he nevertheless makes many of the same points as his source about history and, particularly, the difference between life under the Old Dispensation and the New. However, he does so in a less explicitly argumentative way, omitting Orosius's programmatic introduction, excising the moral judgments and emotional appeals that Orosius embeds in his historical narration.

Yet the Old English *Orosius* has a strong sense of how history works and to what ends it does so. History progresses from the difficulties of life before Christ's redemptive act to the comparative ease of life since then. The *Orosius*'s laments typically comment on this progression, sometimes in an overtly didactic way. For instance, after a discussion of Alexander the Great's life and death, the *Orosius* remarks: "Eala, cwæð Orosius, on hu micelre dysignesse men nu sindon on þeosan cristendome. Swa þeh þe him lytles hwæt unieðe sie, hu earfeðlice hi

²⁰ *Seven Books of History*, trans. Fear, 33.

²¹ See my introduction on Gregory's scheme, 4-5. Bately does not note Gregory among the sources she identifies: *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, EETS ss 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), lxi-lxiii. Bately's sourcing has been criticized for its neglect of intermediate sources. See Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49 n. 84; and Malcolm Godden, "The Old English *Orosius* and its Sources," *Anglia* 129 (2011): 297-320. Bately advances a new source model in "The Old English *Orosius*," *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. Nicole Guenther Discenza and Paul E. Szarmach (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 313-43, at 335-37.

²² For historical information, see Bately, *Old English Orosius*, lxxi-lxxii. For studies and context, see the essays collected in *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages Along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context*, ed. Janet Bately and Anton Eglert (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2007). Nicole Guenther Discenza describes the Old English *Orosius*'s engagement with world geography in her "A Map of the Universe: Geography and Cosmology in the Program of Alfred the Great," *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and Nicholas Howe (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2006), 83-108, at 89-91.

²³ Janet Bately argues that this passage is a later addition to the ninth-century text: "Old English Prose," 117. See also Godden, "The Old English *Orosius* and its Context: Who Wrote It, for Whom, and Why?" *Quaestio Insularis* 12 (2011): 1-30, at 7. Stephen J. Harris argues that this text uses Christendom as a context for English identity: "The Alfredian World History and Anglo-Saxon Identity," *JEGP* 100.4 (2001): 482-510.

²⁴ On the translator's "multilayered temporality," see Mary Kate Hurley, "Time and Translation in the Old English *Orosius*," *JEGP* 112.4 (2013): 405-32, quoted at 407.

hit gemænað. Oðer þara is, oððe hie nit nyton, oððe hi hit witan nyllað, an hwelcun brocum þa lifdon þe ær him wæron”²⁵ [Alas, says Orosius, in how great a foolishness are people in Christendom now! Although some small thing is difficult for them, how painfully they complain about it. It is one of two cases: either they do not know, or they do not wish to know, in what afflictions those who lived before them were]. The translator attributes this passage explicitly to Orosius the Latin author, but as Janet Bately remarks, it is actually “[a]n almost complete rewriting” of the source’s appeal to the hard-hearted reader.²⁶ In place of this appeal is a stern admonition. Those Christians who complain about their misery are either ignorant or, worse, willfully so. This comment highlights the translator’s point in relating Alexander’s biography. It does not appear to be worth knowing in itself, and it does not possess clear tropological value like a similar tale from an Old Testament history would. According to the translator, it attests rather to the misery of life before Christ and therefore to the fact that every Christian should be thankful for what they have and the time in which they live. Where the Latin source uses pagan history as evidence that Christianity is not to blame for the Roman Empire’s dire straits, that history is, in the Old English translation, turned to the moral instruction of individual readers.

The *Orosius*’s ways of reckoning time pin the events of pagan history to the framework of salvation history, implicitly including its present-day readers in its timeline(s). Like its source, the *Orosius* describes world history as the progression of the four kingdoms of Babylon, Greece, Africa, and Rome.²⁷ The *Orosius* calculates the events of these four kingdoms in various ways, ordinarily counting years from the foundation of Rome but also from the creation of the world and before or after Christ’s birth. Thus, for example, it reckons the date of the Laecedmonian wars against the Greeks: “þætte ær gewearð ær Romeburg getimbred wære, þæt wæs from frymðe middangeardes feower þusend wintra 7 feower hund 7 twa 7 hundeatig, 7 æfter þæm þe hio getimbred wæs, wæs ures Dryhtnes acennes ymb seofon hund wintra 7 vtiene”²⁸ [it earlier happened before Rome was built, that was 4,482 years from the beginning of the world, and after Rome was founded, our Lord’s birth was 715 years afterward]. Here world history, Roman history, and salvation history are all triangulated against one another. At another point, the text describes events that occur “[o]n þæm eahtateoþan geare his rices, þa Crist wæs ahangen”²⁹ [in the eighteenth year of his (Tiberius’s) rule, when Christ was crucified], giving the year according to both Roman regnal date and biblical history. Elsewhere, it incorporates a typology into the progression of pagan history, stating that “Abrahame was gehaten Cristes cyme on þæm twæm 7 on feowerteoþan wintra þæs þe Ninus ricsade on Babylonia”³⁰ [the incarnation was promised to Abraham in the forty-second year that Ninus ruled in Babylon]. The translator imports Old Testament history into the Latin’s account, and in doing so, he finds it suitable to read pagan history exegetically. Ninus is, by implication, situated against Abraham’s meaning in salvation history, and the secular history of the Latin is intertwined with biblical accounts of Babylonian history. In an unusually forthcoming moment, the *Orosius* describes propositionally the logic behind presenting these twin histories together: “ealle onwealdas from him sindon, we witon eac þæt ealle ricu sint from him”³¹ [all power is from him (i.e., God). We know that all kingdoms are

²⁵ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, III.ix, 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 262. The source is Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, III.20.5-13, 88.

²⁷ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately., 36.

²⁸ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, I.xiv, 35.

²⁹ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, VI.ii, 135.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, VI.i, 133.

³¹ *Ibid.*

from him]. It follows from this point that all pagan history must be accounted for within the span of the world history whose progress God has ordained. This timespan includes the West Saxon reader for whom the *Orosius* is meant, and the kingdoms that God grants must also include the West Saxon one of which the contemporary reader was a subject.³² In this way, the *Orosius*'s world history once more gestures implicitly, and in various ways, toward its moral import for the imagined reader of its present day.

Though it is only rarely framed in typological terms, this tropologically oriented history nevertheless turns upon Christ's coming. The translator undoes the claims of Roman historiography in order to prove this point. He writes that "se Romana gelp swiþost"³³ [the greatest boast of the Romans] is their conquest of many other peoples and kings. If these are the good times that the Romans boast of, they ought to consider how these times were for the conquered peoples. What enriched Rome impoverished other peoples. Roman triumphs came about only through the suffering of the vanquished, and Roman triumphs were only made possible by the kings who "on cacernum lægon, oþ hie deaðe swulton"³⁴ [lay in prisons, until they suffered death]. By considering the perspectives of the conquered as well as the victorious, the *Orosius*'s world-historical approach gives the lie to triumphalist Roman historiographies and, specifically, to Roman claims that their times were good. Having exposed this flaw in the Romans' reasoning, the translator turns to the nature of true freedom: "Ac for þon hit is us uncuð 7 ungeliefedlic for þon þe we sint on þæm friþe geborene þe hie þa uneaðe hiera feorh mid geceapedon. Þæt wæs siþþan Crist geboren wæs þæt we wæron of ælcum þeowdome aliesde 7 of ælcum ege, gif we him fulgongan willað"³⁵ [But for this reason it is unknown and unbelievable to us, because we were born in that peace which they with difficulty bought with their lives. That was after Christ was born that we were redeemed from all servitude and every fear, if we wish to follow him]. In the source for this passage, Orosius writes that "in otio autem, quod illi post imperium Caesaris natiuitatemque Christi tenuiter gustauerunt, nos nascimur et senescimus; quod illis erat debita pensio seruitutis nobis est libera conlatio defensionis"³⁶ [We are born into, and grow old in, that peace of which they had only the first taste after the rule of Caesar and the birth of Christ. What was for them a compulsory levy of slavery, is for us a voluntary contribution for our defense].³⁷ The Old English translator here, as he often does, turns Orosius's historical argument into a teaching moment for individual readers. Orosius speaks of a literal peace and a literal servitude achieved after the coterminous events of Augustus's rule and Christ's birth. The Old English translator describes a freedom from fear, filtering his source's description of servitude through the New Testament theology of sin as servitude. Christ proclaims in John 8:32 that "ueritas liberabit uos" [the truth shall make you free], and in Galatians 5:1, Paul admonishes "State, et nolite iterum iugo seruitutis contineri" [Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage] before describing how Christian faith liberates debtors to the law. For the Old English translator, understanding this spiritual freedom is the point of relating Roman history. The freedom he describes is not so much a freedom from

³² See further Godden, "The Old English *Orosius* and its Context," 21-23. On the way the *Orosius* treats God's dispersion of power throughout the world and ultimately to the English, see William A. Kretzschmar, Jr., "Adaptation and *Anweald* in the Old English *Orosius*," *ASE* 16 (1987): 127-45.

³³ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, V.i, 113.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 113-14.

³⁶ Orosius, *Historiarium*, ed. Zangemeister, V.1.12, 143.

³⁷ *Seven Books of History*, trans. Fear, 208.

political domination or slavery as a freedom from the world, a way of living that was unknown to people whose lives came in the time before Christ. Christ's birth therefore makes a qualitative difference to the individual's experience of history, even if his birth is not at all times the organizing principle of Orosian world history.

Despite this general reticence about spiritual interpretations other than the tropological, the *Orosius* does take Octavian's reign as a typological sign of Christ's own kingdom. According to the Old English translator, Octavian "monig tacen self gedyde þe eft gewurdon, þeh he hie unwitende dyde on Godes bisene"³⁸ [performed many signs himself which afterward came about, although he did them unknowingly according to God's example]. Octavian promulgates three commands, bringing different peoples together and returning foreigners to their father's homeland. According to the Old English translator, each of these three commands signifies true belief and "ures fæder oeðle, þæt is . . . heofonrice"³⁹ [our father's homeland, i.e., the heavenly kingdom]. He narrates each command separately, following it with a gloss on its allegorical meaning. These exegetical readings are not in the Latin source, and while Bately notes possible influence from Bede, they appear to be the translator's own work.⁴⁰ The translator develops this reading of Octavian's reign when narrating the Roman conquest of the Persians. After the Persians were defeated, they took to Roman law. According to the *Orosius*, they came to love this new rule more than their own:

hie . . . swa swiþe þone frið lufedon þæt him leofre wæs þæt hie Romanisce cyningas hæfden þonne of heora agnum cynne. On þæm wæs sweotole getacnod þæt nan eorþlic man ne mehte swelce lufe 7 swelce sibbe ofer eallne middangeard gedon swelce þa wæs. Ac heo for þæm wæs Crist on þæm dagum geboren wæs, þe sibb is heofonwara 7 eorðwara.⁴¹

[They loved that peace so greatly that it was dearer to them that they should have Roman kings than (kings) from their own race. In that, it was clearly signified that no earthly man can bring about such love and such peace over all the earth as there was then. But the peace was because Christ was born in those days, who is the peace of heaven-dwellers and earth-dwellers.]

The Latin source is more restrained concerning the historical meaning of Christ's birth: "in ipso imperio Caesaris inluxisse ortum in hoc mundo Domini nostri Iesu Christi liquidissima probatione manifestum est"⁴² [it is obvious from crystal-clear evidence that the birth in this world of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, shone its light on Caesar's realm].⁴³ The Old English translator gives "sweotole getacnod" [clearly signified] for "manifestum est" [it is obvious], turning Orosius's observation into an interpretative act. The Old English translator's statement that this peace signifies Christ's birth follows the basic point of the Latin, but he also writes that the Persians do not submit to Roman rule because they believe it superior to their own. He appears to find their willing submission contrary to human nature, attributing this peace to Christ and then

³⁸ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, Vi.xiii, 131.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 319.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, III.v, 59.

⁴² Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, III.8.7, 73.

⁴³ *Seven Books of History*, trans. Fear, 121.

noting that Octavian also “sweotole getacnade” Christ’s birth by fleeing at this time from the performance of the customary offerings. The events of Octavian’s reign thus signify, according to the Old English translator, Christ’s coming, the peace he brings, and the heavenly joy that awaits each Christian.

The Old English *Orosius* makes a turn toward ecclesiastical history after Christ’s birth, including and highlighting general information on the martyrs and the early persecutions of the Christians in general.⁴⁴ This turn coincides with the later section of the text, when, as is common in the Alfredian translations, the translator begins to radically condense his source material. We learn that during the joint reigns of Gallienus and Valerianus “bebudon hie begen cristenra monna ehtnesse. Ac hrædlice on hie begen com Godes wracu”⁴⁵ [they both commanded the persecution of Christian people, but God’s wrath swiftly came upon them both]. The Persians capture Valerianus, and internal wars wrack Gallienus’s portion of the empire. This account is related in the Latin source as well,⁴⁶ but the translator chooses to include it even when he passes over so much other material. He similarly includes accounts of the persecution ordered by Godenric, king of the Goths,⁴⁷ and of the martyrdom of a certain African man named Firmus.⁴⁸ In the case of Firmus, the translator even adds some dialogue, reporting that, at the moment of his death, Firmus “cwæð to ðæm folce, ‘Doð nu swa ge willen’”⁴⁹ [said to the people, “Do now as you wish”]. In the Old English, Firmus addresses all the people of Africa (rather than of Carthage in the Latin) and gives them verbal permission to kill him, where in the Latin he only “percussori iugulum ultro praeuit”⁵⁰ [willingly offered his throat to the executioner].⁵¹ The Latin ends here, but the Old English account closes by stating that Firmus “wearð Cristes martyre”⁵² [became Christ’s martyr]. The text’s roll call of historical persecutions recalls the experience of its West Saxon readers, who were beset by the pagan Vikings throughout much of Alfred’s reign. The idea of invasion as a divine punishment is also a common refrain in Anglo-Saxon writing.⁵³ The analogy between the experience of the martyrs and that of the West Saxons brings to this idea a long historical perspective, at once placing English readers in a line of historical actors and teaching them how to understand the nature of their afflictions from this world-historical perspective. Freed from sin and aware of the difficult times before Christ’s birth, they should accept their own circumstances with spiritual peace and the hope of heavenly joy.

The Old English translator thus tracks the narrative of his Latin source against salvation history, explaining to his West Saxon readers how they may come to know peace through historical interpretation. Although Orosius’s *Histories* is already a work of history, the translator reduces its eloquent account to a bare historical narrative and, in the manner of an exegetical

⁴⁴ On Orosius’s place in the genre of ecclesiastical history, see Glenn F. Chesnut, “Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, and the Later Patristic and Medieval Christian Historians,” *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 687-713, at 697-99.

⁴⁵ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, VI.xxiv, 144-45.

⁴⁶ Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, VII.xxii.3-13, 260-62.

⁴⁷ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, VI.xxxiii, 151-52. For the source, see Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, VII.xxxii.9-14, 277-78.

⁴⁸ *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, VI.xxxiv, 152. For the source, see Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, VII.xxxiii.5-7, 279.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Orosius, *Histories*, ed. Zangemeister, VII.xxxiii.7, 279.

⁵¹ *Seven Books of History*, trans. Fear, 382.

⁵² *Old English Orosius*, ed. Bately, VI.xxxiv, 152.

⁵³ Godden, “Old English *Orosius* and its Contexts,” 23-25.

glossator adding commentary, places the substance of Orosius's historical argument in asides at the end of some chapters. He pegs the events described in his source to the timeline of Christian history, adding to Orosius's reckoning of time the A.D. chronology popularized by Bede.⁵⁴ The translator explains how, before Christ's birth, those events contrary to pagan religion and human nature signified Christian peace and, after Christ's birth, focuses on the martyrs who function as models for Christian behavior in the present day. His treatment of the shape of history acts as a heuristic for the other Alfredian translations considered in this chapter, and his implicit emphasis on the peace of Christ that the West Saxon subject should experience in the face of worldly hardships resonates with the political stances taken by the translators of the Psalms and of Boethius's philosophy.

The Individual and the Old English Prose Psalms

Because the Old English Prose Psalms frame the scriptural history of King David as a series of historical events performed once more by their West Saxon audience, these Prose Psalms are open to royalist interpretations as well as general tropological readings. The Old English translations explain each psalm as they translate it, adding glosses that instruct the reader how to understand the verse line by line, or even word by word as a historical example to be lived in his or her own life. They produce in this way readers who are penitent members of the English church,⁵⁵ but they also produce subjects loyal to the West Saxon king during a time of invasion and military conflict.⁵⁶ The linchpin of the Prose Psalms' historical interpellation is their *ad litteram* approach to the psalms. Among the exegetical approaches in commentary traditions available to the translator of the Prose Psalms, the literal method that he chose is the least intuitive. The vast majority of psalm commentaries available to the translator focused on allegorical, especially typological, exegesis. Of such allegorically oriented commentators, the Old English translator occasionally relies on Cassiodorus, Augustine, Jerome, and Pseudo-Jerome. However, he prefers the fifth-century scholar Theodore of Mopsuestia.⁵⁷ Theodore was one of the principal exponents of the Antiochene school of exegesis, which also included John Chrysostom and his (and Theodore's) teacher Diodore. These commentators believed that allegorical readings, especially those of Origen, obscured the historical value of the Bible.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See Olaf Pedersen, "The Ecclesiastical Calendar and the Life of the Church," *Gregorian Reform of the Calendar*, ed. G. V. Coyne, M. A. Hoskin, and O. Pedersen (Vatican City: Specola Vaticana, 1983), 17-74, at 54-59.

⁵⁵ Compare the earlier Carolingian emphasis on royal penance: Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ See Simon Keynes, "Alfred the Great and the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons," *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Disenza and Szarmach, 13-46, at 19-26.

⁵⁷ Theodore was a rarity; Patrick P. O'Neill notes only two other instances of reliance on Theodore in the Anglo-Saxon period. See his "Latin Learning at Winchester in the Early Eleventh Century: The Evidence of the Lambeth Psalter," *ASE* 20 (1991): 143-66, at 153-55. That Theodore was the ultimate source of the Translator's literal interpretation was first shown by J. Douglas Bruce in "Immediate and Ultimate Sources of the Rubrics and Introductions to the Psalms in the Paris Psalter," *MLN* 8.2 (1893): 36-41. Bruce subsequently made the argument more comprehensively in his *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Book of Psalms Commonly Known as the Paris Psalter* (Baltimore, 1894), 55-93. On the sources of the Old English Prose Psalms in general, see Patrick P. O'Neill, "The Old English Introductions to the Prose Psalms of the Paris Psalter: Sources, Structure, and Composition," *SP* 78.5 (1981): 20-38; and "Introduction," *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation*, 1-96, at 31-44.

⁵⁸ For overviews of literal exegesis during the Middle Ages, see M. L. W. Laistner, "Antiochene Exegesis in Western Europe During the Middle Ages," *The Harvard Theological Review* 40.1 (1947): 19-41; and Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 14-19. For an edition and magisterial study of the Antiochene biblical glosses produced by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and his colleague Hadrian, see

Although much of their work either did not reach the Latin West or did not survive at all, Theodore's commentary on the psalms did so in the Latin translation of Julian of Eclanum. Along with a later epitome that was added to Julian's translation, this work achieved some popularity in the West.⁵⁹ In this commentary, Theodore has little patience for allegorical readings and consistently emphasizes a historical, Davidic interpretation of the psalms. Where other commentators provide elaborate Christological explanations of the psalms, Theodore frequently contextualizes the psalm within David's reign or simply reasserts the meaning of the words on the page. To take a striking example of this tendency, the Psalmist says that "lingua mea adhesit faucibus meis"⁶⁰ [my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws]. Cassiodorus explains that "lingua" refers to apostolic preaching,⁶¹ but Theodore says simply: "hoc uenit ex nimio timore"⁶² [this comes from great fear]. The Old English translator takes Theodore's consistent emphasis on the interpretation of the Psalms *ad litteram* yet one step further, not just explicating the Psalms historically but actually writing them as histories.

The Prose Psalms build their moral instruction and political interpellation on a foundation of history. Each Prose Psalm comes with an introduction explaining the history of the psalm's recital. These three- or four-part introductions delineate the psalm's historical meaning, naming its Davidic context; sometimes its second historical meaning, which is always a reference to another Old Testament figure, usually Ezechias, who recited the psalm; its typological meaning, which usually refers to Christ's recitation of the psalm; and its tropological meaning, referring to the individual reciting the psalm in the present day. The historical introductions thus underscore the point that, in reading a given psalm, one is reading the words of David, Ezechias, Christ, and "ælc welwillende man þe þisne sealm singð"⁶³ [every well-willing man who sings this psalm]. Embedding the reader in the history of David, Ezechias, and Christ, the historical introductions make the practice of reading the Psalms a tropological one by placing the reader in this lineage of morally freighted historical figures.⁶⁴ They frame the psalm not as a timeless text but as the speech of historical actors, a recurrent deed that the reader iterates once more in the present day. This unusual division, derived from Irish psalters, privileges literal interpretation more than was

Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian, ed. Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Both as a shorthand and because it is not known how fully Theodore's commentary and the Epitome were mixed, separated, or transmitted at all in the Old English translator's copy, I refer to these texts interchangeably as "Theodore." On literal, and especially Theodoran, exegesis in the British Isles, see Robert L. Ramsay, "Theodore of Mopsuestia in England and Ireland," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 8 (1912): 452-97; Bernhard Bischoff, "Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter," *Mittelalterliche Studien*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966-67), I 205-73; Pádraig Ó Néill, "Irish Transmission of Late Antique Learning: The Case of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary on the Psalms," *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 68-77; G. T. Dempsey, "Aldhelm of Malmesbury and the Paris Psalter: A Note on the Survival of Antiochene Exegesis," *Journal of Theological Studies* 38.2 (1987): 368-86.

⁶⁰ Psalms 21:16.

⁶¹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 197.

⁶² Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Expositionis in Psalmos: Iuliano Aeclanensi interprete in Latinum uersae quae supersunt*, ed. Lucas de Coninck, CCSL 88A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 110.

⁶³ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O'Neill, 102 *et passim*.

⁶⁴ On this point, see Carol Scheppard, "Prophetic History: Tales of Righteousness and Calls to Action in the *Eclogae Tractatorum in Psalterium*," *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Burton van Name Edwards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 61-73.

conventional in the early medieval West.⁶⁵ In framing the Psalms as historical speeches, the Old English translator follows to the end the logic implicit in the *ad litteram* interpretation of his sources, treating them as the actual words spoken by David in context. When the West Saxon reader repeats David's words, this historical interpretation becomes a tropological practice that brings the historical particularity of David's royal speech to the present day of Wessex.

Continental commentaries provide context for the idea that the recitation or study of the psalms is in itself a historically grounded, tropological practice. In his *De psalmodia usu*, Alcuin says that prophets understand that their prophecies are a gift at those times when the spirit of prophecy is not upon them. At one such moment, the prophet Eliseus "prophetiae spiritum sibi deesse agnouit, psaltem fecit applicari, ut prophetiae ad hunc spiritus per laudem psalmodiae descenderet, atque eius animum de futuris repletet"⁶⁶ [recognized that the spirit of prophecy was absent from him and had a singer sing so that the spirit of prophecy might descend to him through the praise of psalmody and fill his spirit concerning future things]. For Alcuin, the psalms prophesy Christ; their allegorical sense is in this way not so much founded upon their literal sense as part and parcel of it. He considers the psalms to work in a similar way for the contemporary student as they did for Elisha:

In psalmis itaque inuenies, si intenta mente perscruteris, et ad spiritualem intellectum perueneris, Domini Uerbi incarnationem, passionemque, et resurrectionem, atque ascensionem. In psalmis inuenies tam intimam orationem . . . In psalmis inuenies confessionem peccatorum tuorum . . . In psalmis confiteris infirmitatem tuam et miseriam, et per id ipsum misericordiam Dei ad te prouocas.⁶⁷

[In the Psalms you will find, if you search with an attentive mind and come to the spiritual understanding, the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of the Word of the Lord. In the Psalms you will find inmost prayer . . . In the psalms you will find confession of your sins . . . In the Psalms you will confess your weakness and misery, and thereby call forth the mercy of God to you.]

According to Alcuin, the psalms contain a plenitude of divine mysteries. He first describes the allegorical sense of the Psalms, if one is able to attain to this understanding. He immediately afterward describes the tropological sense of the Psalms, which is here specifically connected to penitence and confession. The Psalms may be recited as prayers, and in the section that follows, Alcuin explains the appropriate psalm for each circumstance in which one may find oneself. The recitation of some psalms is suited to penance, some to joy, some to thanks, some to affliction, and so on. Although Alcuin attributes prophetic significance to the psalms, their main purpose for him is to fit each Christian's experience of life in the present day to a precise scriptural mold.

The related anonymous text *De laude psalmodia* draws out further the connection of scriptural history, recitation of the Psalms, and their tropological sense that is the hallmark of the Old English Prose Psalms. This text relies even more heavily than Alcuin's on the idea that history is contained and repeated in the psalms: "Dum cogitas psalmos Christus in mente tua est;

⁶⁵ See note 57.

⁶⁶ Alcuin, *De Psalmodia usu*, PL 101, 465B. Alcuin's reference is to 4 Kings 3:15. Eliseus requests a minstrel, and "[c]umque caneret psaltes, facta est super eum manus Domini" [and when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 465C-D.

dum ore decantas, Christus in ore tuo est”⁶⁸ [When you reflect on the psalms, Christ is in your mind; when you chant with your mouth, Christ is in your mouth]. In this account, the psalms do not just signify Christ typologically; they actually cause him to be present in pious individuals. The text explains further: “Psalmi expositiones totius legis Moysis et prophetarum. Psalmi continent in se uetus et nouum testamentum . . . Psalmi sunt quasi mare, in quo omnium scripturarum flumina confluent”⁶⁹ [The psalms are explanations of the whole law of Moses and of the prophets. The psalms contain the old and new testament in themselves . . . The psalms are like the sea, in which the streams of all the scriptures flow together]. This passage helps to clarify the logic of the fourfold introduction, in which the psalms are acted out over and over again through history, from David until the present day. However, where this text imagines the psalms as transhistorical or as a meeting point of all historical and interpretative possibilities, the Old English translator founds his tropology on the reiteration of historical speech and, presumably, the accompanying re-enactment of historical action. Like Alcuin, the *De laude psalmodum* goes on to explain the circumstances in which one might recite each psalm. Such specific explanations are not provided in the Old English Prose Psalms, but where Alcuin and the author of the *De laude psalmodum* each give only the *incipit* of the psalm in question, the Old English version glosses each psalm in some detail in the course of his translation of it. In doing so, they interpret the text and explain to the reader how the words of the psalm should shape his or her own life.

Psalm 21 shows how the Old English translator’s emphasis on literal interpretation rewrites his source as a history. No introduction is extant for this psalm due to a loss in the manuscript; nonetheless, the translated psalm itself offers compelling evidence of the translator’s method here. To resolve cruces in his text, he is happy to rely on literal readings transmitted in allegorically oriented commentaries. For example, he translates “in me”⁷⁰ from verse fourteen as “ongean me”⁷¹ [against me], a reading that borrows from Cassiodorus, who writes that “*In me autem dixit contra me*”⁷² [“in me,” however, means against me]. Similarly, he renders the “framea” [spear, sword] of verse 21⁷³ as “heora sweordum”⁷⁴ [their swords], a translation that depends on Cassiodorus and, ultimately, Augustine, who explains: “*Framea enim gladius est*”⁷⁵ [a *framea* is a sword]. However, when the translator makes additions to the text or gives a translation that bears much interpretative weight, he almost always relies on Theodore or the epitome of Theodore, if he relies on anyone at all. There are, as well, a number of occasions when the translator literalizes without the authority of Theodore, adding his own glosses that emphasize the psalm as a record of historical speech. He includes dialogue markers to explain who is speaking, adding “and cweðað”⁷⁶ [and they say] to verse 8 and “and cweþe to him”⁷⁷ [and

⁶⁸ Jonathan Black, “Psalm Uses in Carolingian Prayerbooks: Alcuin and the Preface to *De Psalmodum Usu*,” *Mediaeval Studies* 64 (2002): 1-60, at 46. The transmission of this passage is problematic; see Black’s introduction, 7-15.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Psalms 21:14. Quotations of the Old English translator’s source are taken from the Roman Psalter: *Le Psautier Romain et les autres anciens psautiers*, ed. Robert Weber (Vatican City: Libreria Vaticana, 1953).

⁷¹ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 123.

⁷² Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmodum*, 196.

⁷³ Psalms 21:21.

⁷⁴ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 123.

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmodum*, 1-50, ed. Clemens Weidmann, CSEL 93 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 128.

⁷⁶ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 122.

say to them] to verse 23. Such markers, used to clarify that the words following are no longer David's own, have no parallel in the Latin psalm. Here, the translator does not mark a return to David's speech, but in other psalms he interjects a phrase like "cwæð se witega"⁷⁸ [says the prophet] to note that David is speaking once more. These markers clarify, reinforce, and to some extent invent the historical context of the psalm's composition. Through such treatment, the psalm becomes not a poem *per se* but a transcript of a dialogue imagined to take place between David and his enemies.

This translation practice interpellates the reader as a participant in the actions and, more importantly, the subject position that the psalm narrates. Although the translator often intervenes in this psalm, he sometimes chooses just as powerfully to reject the interpretations of all earlier scholars and simply translate the words in front of him. We can see both practices at work in the translation of Psalm 21:7, "ego autem sum uermis et non homo obprobrium hominum et abiectio plebis"⁷⁹ [But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people]. This verse receives a great deal of attention in the Latin commentaries. Augustine explains:

Unde non homo? Quia Deus. Quare ergo sic se abiect ut diceret: Uermis? An quia uermis de carne sine concubitu nascitur, sicut Christus de Maria uirgine? Et uermis, et tamen non homo. Quare uermis? Quia mortalis, quia de carne natus, quia sine conubitu natus. Quare non homo? Quia *in principio erat Uerbum, et Uerbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Uerbum.*⁸⁰

[Why not a man? Because he is God. Why does he therefore humble himself so that he says a "worm?" Is it because a worm is born from flesh without sexual intercourse, just as Christ from the Virgin Mary? Both a worm, and not a man. Why a worm? Because he is mortal, because he is born from flesh, because he is born without sexual intercourse. Why not a man? Because "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."]

In order to explicate this passage, Augustine must first explain away the apparent paradox of Christ being represented as a worm. After that, he turns to the famous opening lines of the Gospel of John to explain the passage, showing that Christ is in fact the Word, not a man. Cassiodorus picks up on Augustine's explanation, noting that this verse works "per figuram dicitur tapinosin"⁸¹ [through the figure called tapinosin]. Theodore simply says that David is not similar to his forefathers because he is "longe a maiorum nobilitate degenerans"⁸² [for a long time falling away from the nobility of the ancestors]. The allegorical commentators' assumption that the "uermis" must be Christ runs counter to the Old English translator's general emphasis on a Davidic interpretation, and for his part, the Old English translator completely ignores their readings and mostly ignores even Theodore. He instead gives the line as "Ic eam wyrme gelicra ðonne men, for þam ic eom worden mannum to leahtrunge and to forsewennesse, and ic eom ut

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ed. O'Neill, 123.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 100. This example comes from Psalm 2: 4.

⁷⁹ Psalms 21:7.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 125.

⁸¹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 193.

⁸² Theodore, *Expositionis in Psalmos*, 109.

aworpen fram him of heora gesomnunga swa þes wurm”⁸³ [I am more like a worm than a man, because I have become as a reproach and an object of contempt to men, and I am thrown out by them from their gathering like the worm]. This addition, which has no firm source in any commentary I know, explains the “uermis” merely as an object of disgust and assumes in contrast to Augustine and Cassiodorus that David, not Christ, is the subject “ego.” Moreover, the West Saxon reader is also the subject of “ego,” cast out of the gathering of men and in need of God’s mercy.

The Old English translator takes David to prophesy Christ and the Church in Psalm 44, a prophecy that the reader repeats about him- or herself in reading this text. When David composed this psalm, the translator writes, he was “oferdrenct mid þy Halgan Gaste; and on eallum þam sealme he spræc ymb Fæder and ymb Sunu and ymb þa halgan gesamnunga Cristenra manna geond ealre eorðan. Sona, on þam forman ferse se Fæder spræc þurh Dauid be Cristes acennesse”⁸⁴ [inebriated with the Holy Ghost; and in this whole psalm he spoke about the Father and about the Son and about the holy gatherings of Christian men around all the earth. Immediately, the Father spoke through David about Christ’s birth in the first verse]. Reading this psalm as a prophecy of Christ requires typological interpretation for its full historical understanding, and many of the translator’s added glosses concern Christ specifically. For example, he translates and glosses “lingua mea calamus scribae uelociter scribentis,”⁸⁵ [my tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly] as “Min tunge ys gelicost þæs writeres feþere þe hraðost writ. (Þæt ys, Crist se ys word and tunge Godfæder; þurh hine synt ealle þincg geworht)” [My tongue is most like the pen of a scribe that writes very quickly (that is, Christ is the Word and tongue of God the Father; through him are all things made)]. As usual, the translator first provides the words that David said before interpreting them. His reading here does not rely heavily on any previous commentator.⁸⁶ Instead, the best parallel for this translation is the first verse of the Gospel of John: “In principio erat Uerbum, et Uerbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Uerbum . . . Omnia per ipsum factum sunt”⁸⁷ [In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by him]. Although this gloss is basically typological, it serves to explain the meaning of God’s words spoken through David rather than to uncover the hidden meaning of the psalm. However, because David prophesies about not only the Father and the Son but also “þa halgan gesamnunga Cristenra manna” [the holy gathering of Christian men], reading this psalm invokes the Christian church of which the present-day reader is a member. This tropological emphasis can be seen throughout the glosses added to the psalm, as when the “populum tuum” [your people, i.e. God’s people] of verse 11 are glossed “þæt ys, eall Cristnu gesamnung”⁸⁸ [that is, the entire Christian gathering], turning the referent from the Israelites to the community of Christians. This psalm also makes some lexical translations that adapt their source to the West Saxon political structure, e.g. “ealdormannum”⁸⁹ [earls] for “principes”⁹⁰ [princes], and that shift the text’s focus subtly toward

⁸³ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 122.

⁸⁴ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 154.

⁸⁵ Psalms 44:2.

⁸⁶ O’Neill notes echoes of Pseudo-Jerome and the *Glosa Psalmorum ex traditione seniorum*; see *Old English Psalms*, 255. While helpful, these parallels do not fully account for the translator’s addition.

⁸⁷ John 1:1 and 1:3.

⁸⁸ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 155.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Psalms 44:11.

tropology, e.g. “ryhtwisnesse”⁹¹ [righteousness] for “mansuetudinem”⁹² [mildness]. The West Saxon reader of this psalm thus announces his or her own membership in the Christian, and especially the English, religious community.

The only partially preserved Psalm 50, in which David repents his adultery with Bathsheba, interpellates the reader not just as a member of the Church but as a penitent one. In this psalm, David prays to God asking forgiveness for his sin; the translator explains in his introduction that David sang this psalm “hreowsiende”⁹³ [lamenting]. The other historical introductions reinforce the penitential nature of the psalm. David’s lamentation is thus, in the implicit historical narrative of these introductions, the first of many lamentations to come. He first “witgode on þam sealme be Israele folce, hu hy sceoldan hreowsian hyra hæftnyd on Babilonia”⁹⁴ [prophesied in this psalm about the people of Israel, how they had to lament their captivity in Babylon]. In the third introduction, which is usually Christological, David is said to prophesy concerning Saint Paul, who had to repent his persecution of Christians before becoming an apostle.⁹⁵ Finally, he prophesied “be ælcum rihtwisum men . . . hu hy sceoldon syngian and eft hreowsian”⁹⁶ [about every righteous man, how he must sing and afterward lament]. The Babylonian captivity, Paul, and righteous men are all implicated in the historical trajectory that the psalm foretells, creating an arc from David to the West Saxon reader that binds them together with these events in scriptural history. The reader of this psalm thus continues a long tradition of penance, carrying on in the present day what began during Old Testament times.

In an interesting development of historical reading, some psalms point clearly to the politics of a West Saxon reader’s present day. Psalm 2, for example, draws an implicit parallel between David and Alfred. In its first, Davidic interpretation, by far the longest of the three interpretations given, the translator explains that this psalm is called “‘Dauides sealm,’ for þæm he is hys sealm gecweden for þi he seofode on þæm sealme and mænde to Drihtne be his feondum, ægðer ge inlendum ge utlendum, and be eallum his earfoðum”⁹⁷ [“David’s psalm” because it is his psalm, spoken because he complained in that psalm and lamented to the Lord about his enemies, both domestic and foreign, and about all his difficulties]. David Pratt argues that the Old English prose psalms are “strongly suggestive of Alfred’s own leadership in Viking warfare.”⁹⁸ This first historical interpretation focalizes the question of royal leadership specifically through the lens of enemies within and without the kingdom, doing so during a time not only of foreign invasion but also the increasing power of Wessex over the island. The later historical interpretations also focus on one’s enemies and persecutors. According to the text, Christ sang this psalm about the Jews, and “swa deð ælc þæra þe þysne sealm sincgð be his sylfes feondum”⁹⁹ [and so does each of those who sings this psalm about his own enemies]. The psalm itself features advice directly from God to David, who tells him to teach judges and to accept teaching lest God become angry. These admonitions come with a reward, God tells David

⁹¹ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 155.

⁹² Psalms 44:5.

⁹³ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 163.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* The biblical account of Paul’s conversion is Acts 9:1-20.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 100.

⁹⁸ Pratt, *Political Thought*, 252.

⁹⁹ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 100.

in this psalm: “þinne anwald ic gebræde ofer ðeoda gemæro”¹⁰⁰ [I will broaden your power over the boundaries of peoples]. In the context of Alfred’s kingdom, this divine speech may well have called to mind both the educational reforms and the simultaneously defensive and expansionist geopolitics of Wessex. As Richard Abels writes, moreover, “[r]epentance and reform were as urgent priorities to Alfred as a stronger standing army.”¹⁰¹ The tropological sense of this psalm implicitly links the kingdom’s spiritual reform with its military defense.

Glossing the biblical text beyond the authority of any previous commentator, the Old English translator inserts into Psalm 21 (also discussed above) tropological readings that echo the warfare and sectarian divisions of his own day. In this verse, David says that “circumdede runt me uituli multi tauri pingues obsederunt me”¹⁰² [many calves have surrounded me: fat bulls have besieged me]. Augustine explains this verse *ad litteram* and provides a simple lexical gloss: “Populus et principes; populus, uituli multi; principes, tauri pingues”¹⁰³ [The people and the princes; the people are the many calves; the princes are the fat bulls]. Cassiodorus expands this idea by explaining that the people are actually “populi . . . Iudaeorum” [the people of the Jews] and that the princes are actually “principes Iudaeorum” [the princes of the Jews], thus taking the passage to be Christological as he usually does.¹⁰⁴ However, the Old English translator once more ignores the possibility of a Christological interpretation altogether: “Me ymbhringdon swiðe mænige calfru (þæt synt, lytle and niwe fynd), and þa fættan fearas me ofsæton (þæt synd, strengran fynd)”¹⁰⁵ [Very many calves (i.e., small and new enemies) surrounded me, and the fat bulls (i.e., stronger enemies) beset me]. The glosses here probably depend on the epitome of Theodore, who says that the calves are “fortibus aetate prima inimicis”¹⁰⁶ [strong enemies in their youth], although the epitome itself does not extend this reading to the bulls.¹⁰⁷ Even if the Old English translator is following the epitome, he expands this Theodoran reading by glossing the bulls as well as the calves. Understood *ad litteram*, the enemies here are presumably David’s, but when considered tropologically, they also become those of the person reading the psalm. Because of the translator’s insistence that the act of reading a psalm re-enacts earlier history, these glosses focalize and direct the tropological force of this psalm toward the reader’s own enemies. For a West Saxon of Alfred’s time, such a reference might have brought the Vikings to mind. Regardless, it would have resonated with the large-scale military commitments of his or her own day. At once royalist in their focus on King David and hegemonic in their interpellation of the West Saxon subject, these glosses work to produce both a strong kingship and a loyal subject.

It is the Old English translator’s *ad litteram* translation of “Christus,” once more in Psalm 2, that echoes most specifically with Alfred’s kingship. Even the ordinarily literal Theodore gives a typological interpretation of this psalm,¹⁰⁸ whose Latin text refers to David as “christum

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰¹ Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Longman, 1998), 219.

¹⁰² Psalms 21:13.

¹⁰³ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 126.

¹⁰⁴ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, 196.

¹⁰⁵ *Old English Psalms*, ed. O’Neill, 123.

¹⁰⁶ Theodore, *Expositionis in Psalmos*, 109.

¹⁰⁷ O’Neill does attribute the language of this passage to the epitome, speculating that the Translator’s “distinction in strength between two types of enemy may simply be based on a natural contrast between male calves and bulls,” *Old English Psalms*, 205.

¹⁰⁸ Theodore, *Expositionis in Psalmos*, 10-17.

eius” [his (i.e., God’s) anointed] and, five verses later, says: “Dominus dixit ad me filius meus es tu”¹⁰⁹ [The Lord hath said to me, “Thou art my son”]. Where the Latin psalm laments that the enemies are rising against the Lord and “aduersus christum eius,” [against his Christ], the Old English reads “wið þam þe he to hlaforde geceas and gesmyrede”¹¹⁰ [against that one whom he (i.e., God) chose and anointed as lord]. For “christum,” the Old English translator gives “hlaford,” the conventional Old English word for any lord secular or divine. He glosses “hlaford” with “gesmyrede” [anointed], thus defining *christus* specifically in its Old Testament context and ignoring its nearly inevitable typological sense.¹¹¹ The idea of David as an anointed king would moreover have had very specific ramifications for an Alfredian audience: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* claims that Alfred was anointed as a child in Rome in 853.¹¹² This almost obstinately literal interpretation of *christus* tropologically grounds Alfred’s kingship in the historical tradition of David’s own. Alfred is the anointed king of the English just as David is the anointed king of the Israelites. This analogy brings to a point the translation’s allusions to royal leadership during warfare and the kingdom’s tribulations. The Old English translation of this verse presented West Saxon readers with the example of David’s kingship during circumstances similar to those of the present day, and it gives them a pointed reminder that Alfred’s kingship has God’s sanction no less than did David’s. This moment, in conjunction with the Prose Psalms’ emphasis on penance and membership in the Church, produce an English subject whose loyalty, far from wandering, becomes stronger during times of national hardship. Whether interpellating a humbly penitent English reader or specifically reinforcing Alfred’s kingship, the Old English Prose Psalms thus inscribe their readers within the temporalities of David’s reign, Christ’s life, and their own present day.

The Political Histories of the Old English *Boethius*

The best-known moment of political theory in the *Boethius* is its description of the three estates of society, a globalizing account of the organization of society. This section is virtually unprompted by the source passage in the *Consolatio*, and as the first such description in any vernacular language, it has received much scholarly attention.¹¹³ In this passage, Lady Philosophy’s Old English counterpart Mod says that these estates—those who pray, those who fight, and those who work—are the king’s tools, without which “nan cyning his cræft ne mæg

¹⁰⁹ Psalm 2:7.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ See further Patrick P. O’Neill, “The Prose Translation of Psalms 1-50,” *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Discenza and Szarmach, 256-81, at 261-62.

¹¹² *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS A*, ed. Bately, 45, s.a. 853; Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 7. Janet L. Nelson raises objections to the accuracy of these reports in “The Problem of King Alfred’s Royal Anointing,” *JEH* 18.2 (1967): 145-63. See, however, Anton Scharer, *Herrschaft und Repräsentation: Studien zur Hofkultur König Alfreds des Großen* (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 11-38.

¹¹³ This description attracted the notice of no less an eminence than Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 99-101. See further Nelson, “Political Ideas of Alfred,” 140-47; Timothy E. Powell, “The ‘Three Orders’ of Society in Anglo-Saxon England,” *ASE* 23 (1994): 103-32, at 103-8; Nicole Guenther Discenza, *The King’s English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 97-98; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 287-95; and Leneghan, “Royal Wisdom and the Alfredian Context,” 88-89. For the Carolingian background of this idea, see Dominique Iogna-Prat, “Le ‘baptême’ du schéma des trois ordres fonctionnels: L’apport de l’école d’Auxerre dans la seconde moitié du IXe siècle,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 41.1 (1986): 101-26; and Edmond Ortigues, “L’Élaboration de la théorie des trois ordres chez Haymon d’Auxerre,” *Francia* 14 (1986): 27-43.

cyðan”¹¹⁴ [no king can show his skill].¹¹⁵ But the *Boethius* also, and more centrally than in this moment, has much to say about how rulers and political subjects should behave, treating politics and kingship through the exegetical analysis of historical *exempla*. Susan Irvine argues, for example, that the Old English translation turns Hercules into a “prototype for the ideal Christian Roman ruler,” showing how classical figures could become models for modern behavior.¹¹⁶ In addition to such general *exempla*, Wisdom frequently draws precise parallels between ancient kings and Boethius’s present day. Like the *Orosius*, the *Boethius* incorporates the classical references of its source into the framework of biblical history, locating classical events and figures in relation to biblical ones or, in the case of pagan mythological narratives, establishing their historical basis. The dialogue of the *Boethius* thus becomes not only a history itself but also provides a frame narrative for numerous shorter histories. Whenever the text narrates a classical historical narrative in the voice of Wisdom, it explains the tropological relevance of this *exemplum* for our understanding of the good, and the good frequently becomes a quality that rulers possess or lack. These *exempla* shed light on right behavior in Boethius’s own political situation and, by extension, that of the West Saxon reader. Working through the moral implications of these various political histories, the Old English *Boethius* advances a nuanced understanding of, if not quite a thesis about, the nature of contemporary political power.

The *Boethius* opens with a historical introduction that frames the entire text as the speech of historical actors responding to specific political and moral pressures. After its table of contents and an Alfredian preface, which Nicole Discenza argues to be a later addition to the original translation,¹¹⁷ the text proper of the *Boethius* begins with this introduction. It provides key background history to the production of the text, explaining who Boethius is and why he has been thrown into prison. This historical introduction is a departure from the Latin source, which begins with Boethius already in prison, lamenting the decline of his fortune. In fact, this passage does not rely on the *Consolatio* at all but rather on the Carolingian *uitae Boethii* that, sometimes along with other material such as further *uitae* or a metrical treatise, were often added as prefatory material in Latin manuscripts of the *Consolatio*.¹¹⁸ But where the Latin manuscripts add these *uitae* as a kind of *accessus*, this material becomes part of the main text in the Old English translation. According to the Old English *Boethius*, the king Theodoric ascended to the throne at the time of Rome’s sack: “he was cristen, þeah he on þam Arrianiscan gedwolan þurhwunode”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ *Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius’s De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), I: 277.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II: 26.

¹¹⁶ Susan Irvine, “Wrestling with Hercules: King Alfred and the Classical Past,” *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, ed. Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 171-88, at 185.

¹¹⁷ Nicole Guenther Discenza, “Alfred the Great and the Anonymous Prose Proem to the *Boethius*,” *JEGP* 107.1 (2008): 57-76.

¹¹⁸ The *uitae* are edited in *Anicii Manlii Seuerini Boethii philosophiae consolationis libri quinque accedunt eiusdem atque incertorum opuscula sacra*, ed. Rudolf Peiper (Leipzig, 1871), xxix-xxxv. Concerning these *uitae* as a source for the Old English *Boethius*, see John H. Brinegar, “‘Books Most Necessary’: The Literary and Cultural Contexts of Alfred’s *Boethius*,” Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000, at 100-5. For a discussion of how the *Boethius* reworks these sources, see Nicole Guenther Discenza, “The Unauthorized Biographies of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius,” delivered at the First Annual Symposium of the Alfredian Boethius Project, University of Oxford, July 2003. Retrieved from <http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/boethius/Symposium2003.html>, accessed 14 October 2014.

¹¹⁹ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 243.

[he was Christian, although he persisted in the Arian heresy].¹²⁰ This identification of Theoderic's heresy places him in salvation history as a Christian who follows not Christ but the heretic Arius. He is thus opposed to the progress of the true church, and indeed, he wages war against it: "þæt wæs toeacan oðrum unarimedum yflum þæt he Iohannes þone papan het ofslean"¹²¹ [in addition to countless other evils he ordered the killing of John the pope].¹²² In these troubled times, the learned and righteous consul Boethius "ongeat þa manigfealdan yfel þe se cyning ðeodric wið þam cristenandome and wið þam Romaniscum witum dyde"¹²³ [perceived the manifold evils which King Theoderic did against Christianity and the Roman counsellors].¹²⁴ Remembering the law under the old rulers, Boethius writes secret letters to the ruler of Constantinople to request his aid, and Theoderic has Boethius imprisoned for this act. The Boethius of the Latin *Consolatio* is a man who has forgotten philosophy, and the *uitae* attribute Theoderic's deeds to his tyranny and say that Boethius acted "eius dolos effugere gestiens"¹²⁵ [greatly wishing to flee his treacheries]. However, the Boethius of the Old English text is a politician who seeks at once to restore subverted law and to repair damages against orthodox Christianity. The translation thus conflates Roman political history with the history of the early church and constructs Boethius as an agent attempting to correct the progress of them both.

Imprisoned and despairing at the end of the first chapter, Boethius must learn to dispel from his mind the confusion caused by false stories. Once he has been placed in prison, Boethius is so "on his mod gedrefed"¹²⁶ [troubled in his mind]¹²⁷ that he "gefeoll niwol ofdune on þa flor and hine astrehte swiðe unrot, and ormod hine selfne ongan wepan and þus singend cwæð"¹²⁸ [fell prostrate down on the floor and stretched himself out, full of sorrow, and desponding, began to weep for himself and said, singing as follows].¹²⁹ In the Old English translation, Boethius's imprisonment is presented as the immediate cause of his sorrow, and his imprisonment is itself caused by his attempt to restore just rule to the people of Rome. In an important sense, the entire text that follows is prompted by an imprisoned, treasonous subject's need for moral education and elucidation. When Wisdom (not Lady Philosophy) comes to Boethius, he lays out an essentially historical and interpretative project rather than a philosophical one. By helping Boethius to draw perspective on his present situation through the interpretation of historical narratives, Wisdom will disabuse him of the false notion that he is unfortunate. As Boethius becomes more skillful at understanding texts *ad litteram*, Wisdom will advance his education to include the interpretation of poetic fictions. Wisdom tells him:

Ac hit nis git se tima þæt ic þe healicor mæge onbryrdan, forðam hit is ælces modes wise þæt sona swa hit forlæt soðcwidas swa folgaþ hit leasspellunga. Of þam þonne onginnað weaxan þa mistas þe þæt mod gedrefað, and mid ealle fordwilmað þa soþan gesiehþe swelce mistan swelce nu on þinum mode sindan.¹³⁰

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, II: 4.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, I: 243.

¹²² *Ibid.*, II: 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, I: 243-44.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, II: 4.

¹²⁵ See *Uita I* in *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii*, ed. Peiper, xxx.

¹²⁶ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 244.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, II: 5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 244

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 250.

[But it is not yet the right time for me to inspire you more deeply, for it is the way of every mind that as soon as it forsakes true sayings it follows false stories. From that then there begin to grow the fogs which afflict the mind, and such fogs as are now in your mind utterly confound the true vision.]¹³¹

Wisdom offers here a kind of program statement. According to him, Boethius's depression is caused by following false stories ("leasspellunga") rather than true sayings ("soðcwidas"). In the *Boethius*, these terms do not simply refer to true and false statements. Rather, they are genre terms referring to history and fiction. Wisdom's stated mission is thus to turn Boethius from the fictions that cloud his mind to the history that will bring him clarity. Wisdom will, in effect, teach Boethius to read *ad litteram*, reversing the logic of the Latin source text not merely to draw examples from narratives about historical rulers and subjects but rather to build political morals upon their foundation.

Wisdom's program statement relies on a distinction between history (*historia*) and fiction (*fabula*) as different literary genres. Isidore of Seville defines what, at least archetypally, these terms meant for early medieval readers. He says that a *historia* is "narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in preterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur,"¹³² [a narration of things done; through it, those things which were done in the past are known]. In Old English, *historia* is often called *gerecednyss* [narration], *gewyrde* [speech], *racu* [narrative], and *soðspell* or *soðsaga* [true story].¹³³ These terms indicate a particular understanding of *historia*, pointing to its narrative quality and its truth claim. Of these possible Old English translations, the *Boethius* tends to prefer *soðspell*, although its lexical translations are not necessarily internally consistent or capable of being stably defined. Isidore writes that a *fabula*, on the other hand, describes things that "non sunt res factae, sed tantum loquendo fictae"¹³⁴ [are not things done, but were only invented by speaking]. There are three kinds of *fabulae*: "Fabulas poetae quasdam delectandi causa finxerunt, quasdam ad naturam rerum, nonnullas ad mores hominum interpretati sunt"¹³⁵ [Poets have invented some *fabulae* for the sake of entertainment, some are to be interpreted concerning the nature of things, and some concerning human morals]. In Old English, *fabula* is often called an *ydel (bi)spellung* [idle narration] or *unnyt spræc* [unuseful speech].¹³⁶ The *Boethius* also sometimes refers to fictions as *ealde lease spell* [old lying stories] or simply *leasung* [lying]. Although the *Boethius* does not explicitly define the different types of *fabulae* it includes, it does differentiate among them. Wisdom will recount more than one *fabula* to Boethius, but he will always explain how these fictions are to be interpreted. In many cases, they are not actually to be understood as fictions at all but rather as history that has been obscured by liars. Even when, in a rare exception, Wisdom dismisses the classical figure Orpheus as purely fictional, he becomes the basis for a discussion of how one ought to understand the relationship between body and mind tropologically. Nor does the Old English *Boethius* present *fabulae* for analysis until chapter thirty-five of the book's forty-one total, when Boethius is well advanced in

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, II: 9.

¹³² Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), I.xli.18-19.

¹³³ *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, s.v. "historia."

¹³⁴ *Etymologiae*, ed. Lindsay, I.xl.4.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, I.xl.13-15.

¹³⁶ *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, s.v. "fabula."

his learning. As Susan Irvine points out, these “false classical stories were justifiable because truths could be expressed through them,” and they could “fulfill the same function as scripture” in the *Boethius*.¹³⁷ Irvine’s useful point does not go far enough. I argue that these stories do not simply fulfill the same function as scripture. They sometimes actually *are* scripture that has been misrepresented, and at other times they have a non-scriptural literal sense that provides the basis for tropological interpretation and education.

In Chapter 16, Wisdom explains to Boethius the many-sided historical resonances and dimensions of unjust rulership. He throws Theoderic’s wicked reign into relief against the example of the notorious Roman emperor Nero. Wisdom first informs Boethius that worldly power is not a good in itself when, his mind afflicted by the fogs of false stories, he “ne gemunon ne eac ne ongitað þone hefoncundon anweald and þone weorðscipe”¹³⁸ [neither remember(s) nor understand(s) the heavenly power and honor].¹³⁹ Wisdom draws for him a long line of men to whom honor, i.e. wealth and power, came despite their unworthiness:

weorðscipe . . . gif he becymð to þam eallra wyrrestan men and to þam þe his eallra unweorðost bið, swa he nu dyde to þis ilcan Æodrice, and eac ær to Nerone þam casere and oft eac to manegum heora gelicum, hu ne wile he þonne don swa swa hy dydon and git doð, eall ða ricu þe him under beoð oððe awer on neaweste forslean and forheregian swa swa fyres lig deð dryne hæðfeld, oððe eft se byrnenda swefl þone munt bærnð þe we hatað Ætne, se is on þam ealonde Sicilia, swiðe onlice þam micelan flode þe giu on Noes dagum was?¹⁴⁰

[(H)onor, if it comes to the worst of all men and to one who is the most unworthy of it, as it has recently done to this same Theoderic and also previously to the emperor Nero and also often to many people like them, will he not want to do then just as those did and still do, destroy and ravage all the kingdoms that are under them or anywhere nearby as fire’s flame does a dry heath or again as the burning sulphur burns the mountain which we call Etna, which is on the island of Sicily, just like the great flood which formerly was in Noah’s days?]¹⁴¹

In this passage, Theoderic joins a line of unworthy rulers stretching back to Nero and, implicitly, those whom the great flood destroyed. Like the historical introduction’s opposition of Theoderic’s heresy and the true church led by Pope John, the lineage of rulers that Wisdom draws here folds Roman history into the larger world history known from the Bible, and it once again aligns Theoderic against the necessary progress of salvation history. Unworthy rulers are so much a part of the course of world history that Wisdom compares them to natural disasters. While this comparison figuring Theoderic as the purgative flood is a slightly odd one, the effort at historical analysis and analogy makes a point. Political power and those who wield it stand in relation to all of world history before them, and God ineffably disposes them just as he does the course of nature. Boethius’s plight can thus only be fully grasped through this kind of

¹³⁷ Susan Irvine, “Ulysses and Circe in King Alfred’s *Boethius*,” “*Doubt Wisely*”: *Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (New York: Routledge, 1996), 387-401, at 390.

¹³⁸ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 271.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 23.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 272.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II: 23.

interpretation. As Wisdom shows him, his present course of action must be determined in light of historical *exempla* that accrue meaning through their juxtaposition with earlier history rather than possessing meaning in themselves.

Having made this point about Theoderic, Wisdom offers Boethius the historical lineage of his own failed political resistance. His struggle mirrors that between King Tarquin the Proud and his counsellors:

[P]u mæge gemunan þæt eowre eoldran giu Romana witan on Torcwines dagum þæs ofermodan cyninges for his ofermettum þone cynelican naman of Romebyrig ærest adydon. Ond eft swa ilce þa heretohan þe [hine] ær utdrifon, hi woldon eft ut adrifan for hiora ofermettum, ac hi ne mihtan; forþam þe se æfterra anweald þara heretogena þam Romaniscum witum git wyrs licode þonne se ærra þara cyninga.¹⁴²

[You (Boethius) can remember that *your* ancestors of old, the counsellors of the Romans, first removed the kingly name from Rome, in the days of Tarquin the proud king, because of his arrogance. And afterwards similarly they wanted again to drive out the consuls who had driven him out because of their arrogance, but they could not; for the subsequent domination of the consuls pleased the Roman counsellors still worse than the earlier domination of the kings.]¹⁴³

According to Wisdom, the end of the Roman kingdom came when Boethius's own ancestors deposed Tarquin for his arrogance. Unlike Boethius, his ancestors were successful in their attempt to overthrow a tyrant, but their efforts ultimately bore no greater fruit than his own. The counsellors wished to expel the consuls who assumed the Roman rulership no less than they did Tarquin, and they wished to do so for exactly the same reason. Tarquin is removed "for his ofermettum" and the consuls despised "for heora ofermettum." Only the number of the proud changes in these formulations. Moreover, Wisdom explains, the counsellors' successful overthrow actually made matters worse. In this example, political resistance is, at best, useless. At its worst, it replaces a known evil with an unknown but greater one.

Where his ancestors were effectively punished for their successful sedition, Boethius's unsuccessful rebellion is particularly illuminated by that of the dissident Liberius. After taking part in a conspiracy against an unjust emperor, Liberius was tortured for refusing to give up his co-conspirators. Rather than giving in to despair, however, Liberius remains defiant:

[H]e þa beforan þone graman cyning gelæd wæs and he hine het secgan hwæt his geferan wæron þe mid him ymbe siredon, þa forceaw he his tungan and wearp hine þærmid on þæt neb foran. Forþam hit gewearð þæt þam wisan men com to lofe and to wyrðscipe þæt se unrihtwisa cyning teohhode to wite.¹⁴⁴

[He was led before that cruel king and he [the king] ordered him to say who his companions were who conspired with him, then he bit out his tongue and cast it into his

¹⁴² *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 272.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, II: 23. Emphasis by Godden and Irvine.

¹⁴⁴ *Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 273.

face. And so it came about that what the unjust king had intended as a torment to him became a source of praise and honor for the wise man.]

Liberius's consolation is effectively that of a martyr. What should have been a torture redounds to his praise, and the violence done to his body is a sign of his wisdom. Although Liberius is persecuted here for political reasons rather than religious ones, the two domains are virtually inseparable in Boethius's case. In both instances, politics and power are framed in moral terms of just and unjust behavior. Political resistance becomes moral resistance. Having made this historical point, Wisdom draws a tropological point out of the story: "Hwæt is þæt demma þæt ænig man mæge oðrum don þæt he ne mæge him don þæt ilce? Gif he ne mæg, oðer man mæg"¹⁴⁵ [What injury is that which any man can do to another that he cannot do the same to him? If he cannot, another man can].¹⁴⁶ According to Wisdom, Boethius and Theoderic's positions could easily be interchanged. Because political power is passing and mutable like all other worldly things, Boethius should realize the foolishness of placing his hopes in it or, indeed, in his own transient body.

Wisdom presents Boethius with two further examples of the transience and ultimate worthlessness of political power. The Egyptian king Bosiris would greet guests in a friendly manner before betraying and killing them. His reign ends when Jove's son Hercules comes to him. Although Bosiris plans to treat Hercules like the others, "wearð he strengra and adrencte hine, swiðe ryhte be Godes dome, swa swa he manigne oðerne dyde"¹⁴⁷ [he (Hercules) proved the stronger and drowned him, very justly by the judgement of God, as he had done to many others before].¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Regulus wins a great victory over the Africans and has them bound and yoked. Shortly thereafter, however, he is himself bound by their chains. Only one tropological interpretation is given for both these stories: "Hwæt wenst þu þonne hwæt [godes se] anweald sie þonne he on nane wisan his agnes cræftes ne mæg forbugan þæt he þæt ilce yfel ne geþafige oðrum monnum þæt he ær oðrum dyde? Hu ne is se anweald þonne þær nauht?"¹⁴⁹ [What good do you think power has when it can in no way by its own virtue prevent the man suffering the evil from other men that he did to others before? Is not power then worthless in such cases?]¹⁵⁰ According to Wisdom, the point of these stories is not that unjust rulers come to bad ends, even when, like Bosiris, God judges that their demise is well-earned. As he showed by the examples of the Roman consuls who replaced Tarquin and Liberius's persecutor, unjust rulers do not necessarily suffer any worldly consequences for their actions. However, the repeated "oðrum" here shows how easily any action done *to* others may soon be done *by* them in return. Even when these rulers do not receive worldly justice, their power is not in itself useful or even good, since it can be lost in a moment and is fleeting in any case.

The philosophical discussion of the *Consolatio*'s prose becomes at the end of this Old English chapter a tropological explanation of the ultimate triviality of political power in comparison to personal morality. Where the *Consolatio* uses these classical figures as illustrations of its point that worldly fortune is not a good in itself, the Old English translator takes them as the ground of his argument. For him, these narratives become not examples of a

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I: 273.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II: 24.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I: 274.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II: 24.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I: 274.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II: 24.

point already made so much as small histories from which a moral is inferred. Even the rhetoric of Wisdom's statements about power and the good point to the way they follow from the immediately preceding *exempla*. He demands Boethius's comprehension of the import of these *exempla*: "Hwæt wenst þu, gif se weorðscipe and se anweald his agnes þonces god wære and his selfes anweald hæfde, hwæþer he wolde þam forcuðestum monnum folgian swa he nu hwilcum deð?"¹⁵¹ [What do you think, if honor and power was good by its own will and had control of itself, would it follow the most wicked men as it now does some people?].¹⁵² This question synthesizes the various narratives Wisdom has presented in order to present a general thesis about the nature of honor and power. Wisdom demands again: "Hu ne wast þu þæt hit nis nauht gecynde ne nauht gewunelic þæt ænig wiðerweard þing bion gemenged wið oðrum wiðerweardum, oððe ænige geferrædenne wið habban?"¹⁵³ [Do you not know that it is not natural or customary for any adverse thing to be mixed with other things opposite to it, or to have any companionship with it?].¹⁵⁴ Any individual man who does good does so because he is good through God, and one who does evil is evil through the devil. It is better to be good than to have worldly fortune, and since power is not in itself a good thing to have, one must be a good person for one's power to be helpful. Wisdom sums up and expands in this way the particular accounts he gave of each historical narrative along the way, producing from the facts of these histories a body of moral knowledge that applies, historically, to Boethius but, in the present day of its translation, to a West Saxon reader.

The end of the chapter completes an envelope pattern upon Nero, turning the Latin source verse into final evidence against the importance of temporal power. The Latin follows its argument in the prose with a verse meditation on Nero's disastrous rule.¹⁵⁵ The Latin verse mentions the burning of Rome in passing, but the Old English translator expands on this reference and gives it a historical precedent: "se het æt sumum cyrre forbærnan ealle Romeburg on anne sið æfter þære bisene þe gio Trogiaburg barn. Hine lyste eac geseon hu seo burne, hu lange and hu leohte be þære oðerre"¹⁵⁶ [(he) on one occasion ordered the whole city of Rome to be burnt at once, following the example when the city of Troy burnt long ago. He wanted also to see how it burnt, how long and how brightly in comparison with the other city].¹⁵⁷ As in the case of Theoderic's imprisonment of Boethius, Nero's desire to burn down Rome gains significance from comparison to the historical *exemplum* ("bisene") of Troy. Nero wants to know how Rome will burn compared to Troy, but the Trojan history does not fit his situation closely. Troy was burned by the invading Greek armies, not its own rulers. The rest of Nero's unkingly behavior neatly reverses the *exempla* presented so far in the *Boethius*. Where Rome's counselors overthrew Tarquin for his pride and Boethius tried to overthrow Theoderic for his evil deeds, Nero kills his own counselors. Boethius worries at points about the health of his family, while Nero has his mother, brother, and wife put to the sword. But, Wisdom says, he was no less happy

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I: 274.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, II: 24.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, I: 274.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II: 24.

¹⁵⁵ *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii philosophiae consolatio*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, CCSL XCIV (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), II.m.vi, 31-32. On the Old English translator's treatment of Nero, see further Paul E. Szarmach, "Alfred's Nero," *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. Charles D. Wright, Frederick M. Biggs, and Thomas N. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 147-67.

¹⁵⁶ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 276.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II: 25-26.

for that. Moreover, he has power over the entire world despite his evil deeds: “wæs him no þy læs underþeod eall þes middangeard from eastewardum oþ westewardne and eft from suðewardum oð norðewardne”¹⁵⁸ [all this world was none the less subjected to him, from the east to the west and again from the south to the north].¹⁵⁹ Despite acting in exactly the opposite way that he ought, Nero has the greatest temporal reward of any of the rulers discussed in this chapter. The Latin verse ends by lamenting Nero’s wickedness once more, but Wisdom ends with another rhetorical question that makes his tropological point bluntly: “Hu ne was þær genog sweotol þæt se anweald his agenes ðonces god næs þa se god næs þe he to com?”¹⁶⁰ [Was it not clear enough from this that power was not good in itself when he to whom it came was not good?].¹⁶¹ Wisdom’s treatment of Nero thus concludes and counterpoints his discussions of Theoderic, Tarquin, and other rulers with a forceful historical argument against belief in the intrinsic good of worldly power.

The Old English *Boethius* builds political instruction upon fictions no less than histories, particularly in its turn to the “stronger medicines” (“ualidiora remedia”)¹⁶² that Lady Philosophy promises in the *Consolatio*. Wisdom situates pagan poetry as a historical production no less than the Old English translator situates all of the *Consolatio* as one. Wisdom sings didactically of the archetypal pagan poet Homer:

Peah Omerus se goda sceop þe mid Crecum selest was, se was Firgilius lareow (se Frigilius wæs mid Lædenwarum selest), þeah Omerus on his leoðum swiðe herede þære sunnan gecynd and hiore cræftas and hiore biorhto, ne mæg heo þeah ealle gesceafta gescinan, ne þa gesceafta þe heo gescinan mæg ne mæg hio ealle endemest gescinan, ne ealle innan geondscinan. Ac nis þam ælmihtigan God swa, þe is scyppend eallra gesceafta. He geseohþ and þurhseohð ealle [his] gesceafta ændemest. Pone mon mæg hatan buton lease soþe sunne.¹⁶³

[Though Homer the good poet who was best among the Greeks, who was Virgil’s teacher (this Virgil was the best among the Latin-speakers), though Homer in his poems greatly praised the sun’s nature and its virtues and its brightness, yet it cannot shine on all creatures, nor can it shine on all the creatures it can shine on together, not shine on them all inwardly. But that is not so with the almighty God, who is creator of all creatures. He sees and sees through all his creatures together. That one cannot untruthfully be called the true sun.]¹⁶⁴

The Latin verse of the *Consolatio* that lies behind this passage begins by quoting in Greek Homer’s praise of the all-seeing sun, and then it points out that, unlike the sun, the “magni conditor orbis” [Maker of this great universe]¹⁶⁵ can see the depths of the earth and the ocean. The Old English translator adds to this description a historical introduction explaining first who

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 276.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 26.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 277.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II: 26.

¹⁶² *Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. Bieler, I.pr. v.34-35, 14.

¹⁶³ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 374.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II: 91.

¹⁶⁵ *Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. Bieler, V.m.ii.7, 91.

Homer is (the best poet among the Greeks) and then what influence he had on subsequent pagan literature (he was Virgil's teacher, and Virgil was his Latin counterpart). He follows his source in noting that Homer's praise is incomplete, but he adds to this the identification of the "conditor" with "æلميhtigan Gode" [almighty God], who not only sees all his creatures but sees them inwardly. He builds into his translation here a tropological point about God's knowledge of one's inward soul. His final claim that one may call God "buton lease soþe sunne" [without lying the true sun] follows the *Consolatio's* "uerum . . . solem,"¹⁶⁶ but his addition of the phrase "buton lease" shows him separating fiction, "lease spell," from history. Having established that Homer's poetry is not fully correct, or at least not doctrinally correct, the translator takes this moment to instruct the reader in the truth: namely, God is the true sun. This moment is also roughly paradigmatic of the other, more fully recounted mythological fictions in the *Boethius*. When a story cannot be considered historical, the translator (via Wisdom) tells us so. He proceeds in such cases to explain the origin of the story and to justify its inclusion in the *Boethius* by explaining it tropologically.

The story of the gigantomachy shows how history may become clouded by fiction while retaining its tropological and political value. One of the *Consolatio's* discussions of the good mentions this episode in passing: "Accepisti..in fabulis lacescentes caelum Gigantas; sed illos quoque, uti condignum fuit, benigna fortitudo disposuit"¹⁶⁷ [You have read in stories of the giants challenging heaven; but those too, as was wholly right, a kindly strength put in their proper place].¹⁶⁸ Wisdom expands upon this moment, taking it as an example of the point that only "disig mon oððe eft þa wiðerwierdan englas"¹⁶⁹ [a foolish man or again the rebellious angels] would fight against their creator. He narrates at some length the "fabulis" [fictions] that tell of the giants challenging heaven:

Hwæt ic wat þæt þu geherdest oft reccan on ealdum leasum spellum þætte Iob Saturnes sunu sceolde beon se hehste god ofer ealle oðre godas, and he scelde bion þæs heofenes sunu and scolde ricsian on heofenum. And scoldon gigantas bion eorþan sunu, and þa sceoldon ricsian ofer eorðan . . . Þa sceolde þam gigantum ofþincan þæt he hæfde hire rice, woldon ða tobrecan þone hefon under him.¹⁷⁰

[I know that you have often heard tell in old fictions that Jove the son of Saturn was supposedly the highest god over all the other gods, and he was the son of heaven and ruled in the heavens. And giants were supposedly the sons of earth and ruled over earth . . . Then the giants were envious that he had their kingdom and wanted to destroy heaven under him.]¹⁷¹

The giants are destroyed by a storm for their disobedience, and their works are cast down. This Roman mythological narrative, which takes the place of the *Consolatio's* allusion to unnamed fictions, provides a narrative illustration of Wisdom's point about the wisdom of obeying God.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, V.m.ii.14, 91.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ed. Bieler, III.pr.xii.59-61, 61.

¹⁶⁸ *Boethius: Theological Tractates [and] The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 303.

¹⁶⁹ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 333.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 333.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, II: 64.

However, this narrative of an earthly ruler's disobedience to heaven is no mere allegory. Wisdom explains that it is to be considered neither as simply a part of pagan mythology nor even Roman: "Ðyllice leasunge hi worhton, and mihton eaðe secgan soðspell gif him þa leasunga næron swetran, and þeah swiðe gelic þisum"¹⁷² [Such false stories they made, and could easily have told a true story if the lies had not been sweeter to them, and yet one very like these].¹⁷³ Although they are lies told for the sake of lying, these fictions are not so far from the truth. Wisdom notes that they could have told a "soðspell" that would have been similar to their lies had they chosen to do so. In fact, he explains, their lies are merely the distortion of what did happen. They can, if one knows how, be read *ad litteram*:

Hi mihton secgan hwylc dysig Nefrod se gigant worhte. Nefrod wæs Chuses sunu; Chus wæs Chaames sunu, Chaam Noes. Se Nefrod het wyrcean anne tor on þam felde þe Sennar hatte, and on þære ðiode þe Deira hatte swiðe neah þæ hi wolden witon hu heah hit wære to þam hefone and hu þicke se hefon wære and hu fæst, oððe hwæt þær ofer wære.¹⁷⁴

[They (the giants) could have said what folly the giant Nimrod worked. Nimrod was the son of Chus; Chus was Ham's son, Ham Noah's. This Nimrod ordered the building of a tower on the field that was called Sennar, and in the nation that was called Deira, very near the city which is now called Babylon. They did that because they wished to know how high it was to heaven and how thick it was and how firm, or what was above it.]¹⁷⁵

The giants' fictions prove to have not just a historical basis but an Old Testament one. What the giants presented as a war of envy against heaven was, in point of fact, actually an undue degree of astronomical curiosity. The giant in question is Nimrod, whose lineage can be traced back three generations to Noah, and the war against heaven is the well-known construction of the Tower of Babel.¹⁷⁶ According to Wisdom, God casts down this tower, kills many, and divides the speech of Nimrod's people into seventy-two languages.¹⁷⁷ Once Wisdom strips away the fictional elements from this pagan mythological fiction, he reveals a biblical history underlying it. Normal exegetical analysis can then proceed, allowing Wisdom to ascertain the tropological sense of this history (and thus of the fiction of the giants' rebellion). This is in fact exactly what he does: "Swa gebyreð ælcum þara ðe winð wið þam godcundan anwealde"¹⁷⁸ [So it befalls everyone who contends against the divine power].¹⁷⁹ This moral repeats and concludes that which began this story, explaining what befalls those foolish men who resist God. In this passage, Wisdom does not merely treat his mythological source in a manner influenced by scriptural exegesis; he actually performs an exegetical analysis upon it. In addition to explaining

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, I: 334.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, II: 64.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, II: 64.

¹⁷⁶ For the Tower of Babel story, see Genesis 11:1-9.

¹⁷⁷ On the tradition of the seventy-two languages after Babel, see Hans Sauer, "Die 72 Völker und Sprachen der Welt: Ein mittelalterlicher Topos in der englischen Literatur," *Anglia* 101 (1983): 29-48; and Sauer, "Die 72 Völker und Sprachen der Welt: Einige Ergänzungen," *Anglia* 107 (1989): 61-64.

¹⁷⁸ *Old English Boethius*, Godden and Irvine, I: 334.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 64.

the necessity of divine obedience, this analysis implicitly shows what is at stake in this obedience for a kingdom's ruler. The rebellious king will be overthrown and his people splintered.

The tropological sense of pagan narratives shapes moral subjects no less than it does moral rulers. Another mythological account in the *Boethius*, that of Ulysses's visit to Circe, shows how these stories have relevance to a Christian of Boethius's day. The story of Ulysses and Circe begins after a largely expository chapter about "þam ofermodan rican and unryhtwisan"¹⁸⁰ [the arrogant and wicked rulers],¹⁸¹ and it casts this chapter's points into narrative form. Like both the *Boethius* itself and many of the narratives that it recounts, this one opens with some historical context: "Hit gebyrede gio on Troiana gewinne þæt þær wæs an cyning þæs nama wæs Aulixes"¹⁸² [It happened long ago in the Trojan war that there was a king there whose name was Ulysses].¹⁸³ This part of the narrative appears not as fiction but as a series of events placed on the timeline already familiar from Nero's historical models. According to the Old English translator, the Trojan War lasted ten years and pitted Agememnon's Retians against Ulysses's Ithacans.¹⁸⁴ Ulysses, fleeing from the war, was driven ashore on an island in the Mediterranean Sea. The account's descent into fiction begins on this island:

Pa wæs þær Apollines dohtor, Iobes suna. Se Iob was hiora cyning, and licette þæt he sceolde bion se hehsta god, and þæt dysige folc him gelyfde forþam ðe he was cynecynnes and hy nyston nænne oðerne god on þæne timan, buton hiora cyningas hi weorþodon for godas. Pa sceolde þæs Iobes fæder bion eac god, þæs nama wæs Saturnus, and his suna swa ilce ælcne hi hæfdon for god.¹⁸⁵

[The daughter of Apollo, son of Jove, was there. This Jove was their king, and pretended to be the highest god, and the stupid people believed him because he was of their royal line and they knew no other god at that time, but honored their kings as gods. Jove's father, whose name was Saturn, was also supposed to be a god, and his sons likewise, the people took each of them as a god.]¹⁸⁶

The story of a deceiving, island-dwelling King Jove is common in medieval narratives about Troy and the rise of Roman idolatry. In this tradition, there really were historical figures named Jove and Saturn, but they were mere men worshipped as gods by their ignorant subjects.¹⁸⁷ Ulysses falls in love with Apollo's daughter Circe after landing on this island. He immediately forsakes his royal duties, abandoning his kingdom and the right rule of his men so that he may instead remain with Circe. His men cannot tolerate this behavior: "for hiora eardes lufan and for þære wræce tihodon hine to forlætenne"¹⁸⁸ [because of their love of their (home)land and their misery planned to leave him].¹⁸⁹ When Ulysses abandons his subjects on an island, they

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 345.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II: 4.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, I: 350.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, II: 74.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 350-51.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, I: 350.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II: 74.

¹⁸⁷ On the theoretical background of this narrative, see my "Euhemerism and the Veiling of History in Early Scandinavian Literature," *JEGP* 116.1 (2017): 24-44, at 30-35.

¹⁸⁸ *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, I: 350.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 75.

themselves plan to abandon him. Instead of rebelling like the Roman counselors or standing mutely defiant like Liberius, these exiled subjects intend to return to their sovereign soil.

Coding a historical narrative in fiction, the example of Ulysses's men reveals, with proper interpretation, a lesson about how to be a good political subject. Liars—not Ulysses's men themselves—later begin to invent stories about these marooned men. They say that Circe “þa men forbredan and weorpan hi an wilde deora lic and siððan slea on þa racentan and on cospas”¹⁹⁰ [transformed the men and cast them into the bodies of wild animals and afterwards put them in chains and fetters].¹⁹¹ Except for Ulysses, each man is turned into an animal, and when he speaks, he can only do so by producing the sound proper to the animal he has become. The men have become like animals in all external respects but have retained their human minds: “Ælcne mete hi onscunedon þe men etað and wilnodon þara þe deor etaþ. Næfdon hi nane anlicnesse manna, ne on lichomon ne on stemne, and ælc wisste þeah his gewit swa swa he ær wisste. Pæt gewit was swiðe sorgiende for þam ermðum þe hi drogan”¹⁹² [They shunned all food that men eat and sought those that beasts eat. They had no likeness to men, in body or in voice, and yet each knew his mind as he did before. The mind was greatly grieving for the miseries that they endured].¹⁹³ Reason draws from this narrative a generalized moral:

Be swilcum and be swylcum þu miht ongitan þæt se cræft þæs lichoman bið on þam mode, and þætte ælcum men ma deriað his modes unþeawas þonne his lichoman mettrumnes. Þa unþeawas þæs modes tioð eallne þone lichoman to him and þæs lichoman mettrumnes ne mæg þæt mod eallunge to him getion.¹⁹⁴

[By such you can see that the virtue of the body is in the mind, and that every man is more injured by his mind's vices than by his body's weakness. The vices of the mind draw the whole body to it, and the body's weakness cannot draw the mind wholly to it.]¹⁹⁵

According to Reason, the point of this story is that the mind's vices are worse and more transformative than the body's; however, implicit in his call for mental control and stability lies the rejection of political resistance or instability. The narrative loses its historical specificity and its overt political valences in his interpretation, and a widely applicable tropological sense takes their place. It nevertheless frames this sense through the *exemplum* of subjects who rebel against the king that failed them. This point is useful for the rebellious subject Boethius to remember as he is confined in his prison cell, foolishly allowing his physical circumstances to draw him into despair. It applies to the readers of the Old English *Boethius* as well, reminding them of their obligation to remain in control of their minds despite the pressures of external, here envisioned as political, circumstances. Nor should the wicked expect to enjoy the rewards of their misused temporal power: “Pær hi þone unnyttan anweald næfdon þe hi wenað þæt hi habbað, þonne næfdon hi swa micel wita swa hi habban sculon”¹⁹⁶ [If they did not have the useless power that

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 350.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, II: 75.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, I: 351.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, II: 75.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, I: 351.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, II: 75.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I: 351.

they think they have, then they would not have such great punishment as they are bound to have].¹⁹⁷ Wicked rulers will be punished for their actions, even if that punishment is not presently apparent. This story shows the necessity for subjects to discipline their minds, but read in context, it also suggests that subjects must remain loyal, or at least lawful, even in the face of a poor ruler. The sins of the king are not theirs to repair, but the sins of the kingdom are.

Reason's extended moral reflection upon this story reflects and continues the mixture of tropology and politics already established in the Old English *Boethius*. His tropological analysis extends the animal metaphor to include those people who, like Boethius at the beginning of the text, do not know how to interpret narratives correctly: "Swa bioð þa synnfullan mod ablend mid hiora yfelan willan þæt hi ne magon gesion þæt lioht þære beorhtan soðfæstnesse, þæt is se hehsta wisdom. Ac him bið swa fuglum and þam diorum þe magon bet locian on niht þonne dæg. Se dæg blent and þiostrað hiora eagan, and þære nihte þiostro hi onlihtað"¹⁹⁸ [So are the sinful minds blinded by their evil will so that they cannot see the light of the bright truth, that is the highest wisdom. But it is for them as for those birds and animals which can better see at night than by day. The day blinds and darkens their eyes, and the darkness of the night makes them light].¹⁹⁹ Taking the good as evil and the evil as good, the sinful are like nocturnal creatures that cannot see in the light of day. Such, says Reason, were Ulysses's men; lacking wisdom, they were more like wild animals than humans. Reason drives home the tropological point behind all of this discussion at the end of the chapter:

Ne þæt is nan riht þæt mon þone yfelan hatige, ac hit is rihtre þæt him mon mildsige. Þæt is þonne hiora mildsung þæt mon wrece hiora unþeawas be hiora gewyrhtum. Ne sceal nan mon siočne monnon and gesargodne swencan, ac hine mon sceolde lædan to þam læce þæt he his tilige.²⁰⁰

[Nor is it right to hate the evil man, but it is more just to have mercy on him. This then is their mercy, that one punishes their vices according to their merits. No one ought to oppress a sick and afflicted person, but one should take him to the doctor so that he may look after him.]²⁰¹

This conclusion turns obedience into a potentially merciful act. Not only will rulers like Theoderic, Nero, Tarquin, and Ulysses who use their power for evil rather than good receive their just reward from God, they are actually to be pitied for their evil after the manner of the ill. Rather than rebel against (or "oppress") a sick person, one ought to try to set him or her on the road to moral recovery. In a text that continually points to the ultimate futility of political resistance, this moment shows obedience to be a Christian virtue, even or especially obedience to a wicked ruler.

The association of the Old English *Boethius* with the Alfredian court drives home the tropological application of these stories not just to the historical individual Boethius but also to West Saxon readers. Compare, for example, the opening of Alfred's law code: "Æt ærestan we lærað, þæt mæst ðearf is, þæt æghwelc mon his að 7 his wed wærlice healde. Gif hwa to

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, II: 75.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 355.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, II: 78.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 357.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, II: 79.

hwæðrum þissa genied sie on woh, oððe to hlafordsearwe oððe to ængum unryhtum fultume, þæt is þonne ryhtre to aleoganne þonne to gelæstanne”²⁰² [In the first place we enjoin you, as a matter of supreme importance, that every man shall abide carefully by his oath and his pledge. If anyone is wrongfully constrained to promise either of these: to betray his lord or to render aid in an unlawful undertaking, then it is better to be false than to perform it].²⁰³ Although the maintenance of the Anglo-Saxon legal system relied on oath- and pledge-keeping,²⁰⁴ this law nevertheless prizes loyalty above honesty if the two should ever come into conflict. We see here the tropological argument of the Old English *Boethius* written as a law: obey the king. This injunction was no doubt on the minds of those who read the Old English translation. This text at once argues and reminds the reader that, on the one hand, temporal power is vain and, on the other, one should nevertheless be loyal to its holder. Attempting to overthrow an unjust ruler may backfire as it did for Boethius, but even a successful rebellion may cause a turn for the worse, as it did when Boethius’s ancestors deposed Tarquin. Indeed, the example of Ulysses’s men shows that one ought not be angry with an unjust ruler but rather pity him for his immoral state. The figure of Wisdom (or Reason) in this text thus shows Boethius, and the Anglo-Saxon reader by extension, that proper interpretation of historical *exempla* will lead to moral behavior and an emotional recovery from politically induced despair. Such a recovery, in the *Boethius*, consistently means obedience to one’s ruler regardless of the way he uses the power of his office.

Conclusion

Translating their various source texts all as morally significant histories, the Alfredian translations seek to produce a West Saxon readership who understand their place in history as well as the moral and political obligations that come with it. The Old English *Orosius* shows how exegetical theory could render even a Christian history still more historical and morally pointed. Indeed, the translator approaches his source’s historical argument as a commentary rather than a unified philosophical or theological thesis about the nature of historical eras. The Old English Prose Psalms produce the individual West Saxon reader as a penitent and loyal subject within this history, implicitly arguing a continuity between David’s Israel and Alfred’s Wessex. The Old English *Boethius* takes the historical thought behind each of these texts as a given. It considers the source and nature of a ruler’s power, and it likewise explains to subjects how their loyalty is a moral requirement as much as a legal or purely political one. Each of these texts figures its imagined audience as a moral actor in the political history of the world to their present day, demanding their humble loyalty to the king. The next chapter will turn to Ælfric’s Old English homilies to show how the exegetically produced political lessons of the Alfredian translators became widely applicable moral lessons for all reformed English Christians.

²⁰² *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. F. Liebermann, 3 vols. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1903-16), I: 46, Af 1-1.1.

²⁰³ *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. and trans. F. L. Attenborough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 62.

²⁰⁴ See Matthias Ammon, “‘Ge mid wedde ge mid aþe’: The Functions of Oath and Pledge in Anglo-Saxon Legal Culture,” *Historical Research* 86, no. 233 (2013): 515-35.

Chapter 2: Liturgical Subject Formation and Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*

Despite the exegetical and doctrinal focus of his *Catholic Homilies*, Ælfric opens the project with a word on his own institutional lineages and allegiances. He writes in the Old English preface to the First Series: “Ic ælfric munuc . . . wearð asended on æþelredes dæge cyninges fram ælfeage biscope aþelwoldes æftergengan to sumum mynstre ðe is cernel gehaten þurh æðelmæres bene ðæs þegenes. his gebyrd 7 goodnys sind gehwær cuðe”¹ [I Ælfric, a monk, was sent in the time of King Æthelred by Bishop Ælfheah, Æthelwold's successor, to a certain minster that is called Cerne through the petition of the thegn Æthelmær. His lineage and virtue are known everywhere]. Ælfric possesses a distinguished ecclesiastical lineage. He was trained by the renowned scholar Bishop Æthelwold, whose successor Bishop Ælfheah sent him to live at Cerne Abbas. He was sent there during King Æthelred's reign by the nobleman Æthelmær, the son of the ealdorman Æthelweard and a member of the West Saxon royal household,² a man whose royal ancestry and virtue Ælfric says are widely known. Ælfric here places himself both within the English Benedictine monastic reforms spearheaded by Æthelwold and as a client of a member of the royal house, working for a patron who is as virtuous as he is powerful. Ælfric's preface flags his participation in both the ecclesiastical and the governmental aspects of the Reforms. Ælfric explains liturgy in these texts as a structured tropological practice, locating those Christians who participate in it as actors in the sixth age of world history. This chapter argues that, in the process of expounding the day's readings, Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* inculcate in his imagined audiences a Reformed Christian identity, producing them as moral subjects of the English kingdom.

Ælfric's mediation as translator and as exegete would have been fundamental for many English Christians. For non-monastic members of his audience, with limited access (if any) to the Latin of the Bible and to those manuscript books containing it, scriptural history existed primarily as it was excerpted, arranged, presented, and explicated through the liturgy of the mass and especially through vernacular homilies like Ælfric's.³ There is no firm evidence that the Old English homilies handed down in surviving manuscripts were ever actually delivered to a live audience,⁴ but Ælfric clearly intended his own to be read as a part of mass.⁵ He probably

¹ *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series: Text*, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 174, lines 44-48. The *Catholic Homilies* are hereafter abbreviated as *CH*. I have repunctuated the text and expanded its abbreviations.

² On their patronage of Ælfric, see Catherine Cubitt, “Ælfric's Lay Patrons,” *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 165-92, at 176-79. See also Mechthild Gretsch, “Historiography and Literary Patronage in Late Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Æthelweard's *Chronicon*,” *ASE* 41 (2012): 205-48, at 209-12.

³ On Ælfric's exegesis, see Paul E. Szarmach, “Ælfric as Exegete: Approaches and Examples in the Study of the *Sermones Catholici*,” *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. Patrick J. Gallacher and Helen Damico (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 237-47. On Ælfric's theology, see Aaron J. Kleist, *Striving with Grace: Views of Free Will in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 166-212. Concerning Ælfric's view on salvation history, see Peter Clemoes, “Ælfric,” *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 176-209, at 187-90.

⁴ For a skeptical view of the success of early medieval preaching, see R. Emmet McLaughlin, “The Word Eclipsed? Preaching in the Early Middle Ages,” *Traditio* 46 (1991): 77-122.

⁵ For a wide overview of medieval sermon performance, see Beverly Mayne Kienzle, “Medieval Sermons and their Performance: Theory and Record,” *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 89-124. See also Augustine Thompson, “From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event,” *Preacher, Sermon and Audience*, ed. Muessig, 13-37.

envisioned both monastic and lay audiences for his English homilies and that these homilies might be read publicly or in private.⁶ Mary Clayton argues further that his homilies' most important intended function was "reading to a lay audience," to be performed "in the context of general preaching to the people, rather than the monastic one of the night Office."⁷ Backed by Carolingian precedent (in Latin), Ælfric himself had a clear idea of when one ought to preach to one's public. In a letter to Bishop Wulfsgie of Sherborne, designed to be read by Wulfsgie in his own voice, Ælfric describes a design for pastoral care: "Se mæssepreost sceal secgan sunnandagum and mæssedagum þæs godspelles angyt on englisc þam folce"⁸ [The priest must relate the meaning of the Gospel to the people in English on Sundays and festivals].⁹ Ælfric says in the preface to the second series of the *Catholic Homilies* that he writes "auditoribus simplici locutione"¹⁰ [in simple language for listeners],¹¹ and as Malcolm Godden points out, the liturgical use of these homilies is similarly implied by Ælfric's assertion in the accompanying Old English preface that "ic ðohte þæt hit wære læsse æðryt to gehyrenne gif man ða ane boc ræt on anes geares ymbryne and ða oðre on ðam æfran geare"¹² [I thought that it would be less tedious to hear if one read one book in the course of one year and the other in the next year].¹³

For many of the English faithful, Ælfric's homilies not only shaped the way one responded to scriptural history but constituted nearly one's entire engagement with it. Anglo-Saxon readers rarely encountered the Bible as a single book. Instead, manuscripts of individual books or groups of books were produced, especially, as discussed below, those books used for the liturgy. The liturgy presents scripture piecemeal as a series of readings performed in the course of celebrating of Christ and his saints. Its *temporale* cycle arranges scripture not as a

⁶ Mary Clayton, "Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach with the assistance of Deborah A. Oosterhouse (New York: Garland, 2000), 151-98, at 175-89, performs a landmark study of the use of Ælfric's homilies and saints' lives. Clayton builds on Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 25-59; and Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 80-114. See further Wilhelm G. Busse, "Sua gað ða lareowas beforan ðæm folce, & ðæt folc æfter: The Self-Understanding of the Reformers as Teachers in Late Tenth-Century England," *Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Ursula Schaefer (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1993), 58-106, at 60-63; and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xxi-xxix. On audiences as they are rhetorically constructed by homiletic texts, see Mary Swan, "Constructing Preacher and Audience in Old English Homilies," *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 177-88.

⁷ Clayton, "Homiliaries and Preaching," 177-78. In addition to the suggestion that Old English homilies were read during the nocturns, it has been suggested by Gatch (though not generally accepted) that they were read during an hour known as the prone, *Preaching and Theology*, 37-38 and 42. Concerning preaching and the late medieval office of the prone, see U. Berlière, "Le prône dans la liturgie," *RB* 7 (1890): 97-104, 145-51, and 241-46.

⁸ Bernhard Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics in altenglischer und lateinischer Fassung*, repr. with supplement by Peter Clemoes (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 14.

⁹ On the perhaps aspirational nature of Ælfric's own statement, see Joyce Hill, "Reform and Resistance: Preaching Styles in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *De l'homélie au sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, 1993), 15-46, at 22-23.

¹⁰ *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series Text*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1, line 11.

¹¹ However, see Gittos, "Ælfric, Rhetoric, and 'the Education,'" 241-45.

¹² *CH II*, ed. Godden, 2, lines 35-37.

¹³ Godden, *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, xxiii. However, Godden elsewhere suggests that *CH II* may have had a different intended audience than *CH I*, perhaps being directed more at the clergy than the average parishioner: "The Development of Ælfric's Second Series of *Catholic Homilies*," *ES* 54 (1973): 209-16, at 215-16.

series of books and testaments but rather in the order of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and its *sanctorale* cycle extends this narrative logic to the saints of the church. Scholars have noted a basic congruity between Ælfric's homilies and the times of year and liturgical festivals for which they were written, emphasizing particularly their instructional purpose throughout the different seasons of the liturgical year.¹⁴ Robert K. Upchurch writes that Ælfric's homilies, focused intently upon exegesis of the day's Gospel reading, provide the laity with "opportunities to meditate on Scripture" and that his texts "deepened the laity's understanding of and participation in the rituals themselves."¹⁵ This chapter argues that Ælfric's homilies do more than just deepen their audience's engagement with or understanding of scripture. By analyzing and explaining each day's readings through the terms of exegetical theory, these texts actually work to produce such an understanding in the first place.

Ælfric considers the English faithful to be always already a part of salvation history because the Gospel text implies them, prescribing their behavior and signifying its implications in the hereafter. Licensed and patronized by the kingdom's rulers, Ælfric's homilies work to produce not only faithful Christians but also faithful English subjects. These texts moreover had an impact on English audiences far beyond Eynsham. Sent to Canterbury and disseminated throughout southern England,¹⁶ they were widely copied after Ælfric's death around the year 1010. They contributed directly to, and formed a major part of, English intellectual history for more than a century after they were written, from the tenth century until well after the Norman Conquest.¹⁷ The interpellation that they perform thus had far-reaching effects in England long after the Reforms themselves had ended as a political and ecclesiastical movement. To set the stage for Ælfric's extension of scriptural history to his imagined audience, this chapter first discusses the history and background of Ælfric's interpretative strategy, especially as he himself establishes a simultaneously literal and spiritual approach in the course of reading, translating, and updating his sources. His homilies work to establish scriptural history even as they stage it in the present day. Ælfric's homilies rejecting the apocryphal elements of the Feast of the Assumption show him sifting through the competing scriptural histories that were current in the

¹⁴ Clare A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 106-32; Stephen J. Harris, "The Liturgical Context of Ælfric's Homilies for Rogation," *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 143-69; and M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), 17-18. Bedingfield's study further "emphasize[s] the way in which this [liturgical] experience has been extended to the laity," *ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵ Robert K. Upchurch, "Catechetical Homiletics: Ælfric's Preaching and Teaching During Lent," *Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Magennis and Swan, 217-46, at 217 and 222.

¹⁶ Clemoes, "Introduction," *CH I*, 134-68, at 164. On manuscript evidence for the use of the *CH* in Ælfric's own parish and their adaptation elsewhere soon afterward, see Jonathan Wilcox, "Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care," *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 52-62.

¹⁷ The bibliography on this subject is large and rapidly proliferating. However, on reception of the *CH*, see Mary P. Richards, "Innovations in Ælfrician Homiletic Manuscripts at Rochester," *Annuaire Medievale* 19 (1979): 13-26; Mary Swan, "Old English Made New: One Catholic Homily and its Reuses," *Leeds Studies in English* 28 (1997): 1-18; Swan, "Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* in the Twelfth Century," *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 62-82; and Elaine Treharne, "Making their Presence Felt: Readers of Ælfric, c. 1050-1350," *Companion to Ælfric*, 399-422. On Ælfric as an *auctoritas* after his death, see Hugh Magennis, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and Cotton Julius E.vii: Adaptation, Appropriation and the Disappearing Book," *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 99-109.

England of his day, establishing for his audience which stories about Mary's death are true and which are false. Conversely, his homily for the Feast of the Circumcision shows how he approaches scriptural history when there is neither a false history to combat nor indeed almost any historical information to draw on at all. Ælfric shows in these homilies how scriptural history spiritually signifies the Anglo-Saxon faithful, and he explains how liturgical observance always embodies the historical times narrated in scripture and reproduces them in the present day. This chapter therefore concludes with Ælfric's engagement with the temporal mechanics of salvation history. These mechanics underlie the possibility of salvation history as a history, and they rely no less on a simultaneously literal and spiritual interpretation than do his expositions of a given day's readings. Throughout the homilies in question, Ælfric balances literal and spiritual exegesis to produce his audience members as faithful members of the English church and, by the same token, as faithful subjects of the English kingdom.

The Liturgical Context of Ælfric's Homilies

For Ælfric, typology and tropology are two sides of a single coin. The spiritual sense of the scriptural history that Ælfric explicates in his homilies both prefigures the life of each Christian of his day and describes this life morally. But in order to understand how Ælfric's homilies interpellate the faithful as actors in salvation history, one must first establish how the liturgy shaped and mediated one's access to scripture in the early Middle Ages. While the two volumes of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* are the earliest known liturgical homiliaries written in the vernacular,¹⁸ they borrow their principle of organization and their basic function from Latin books compiled by continental scholars. Homiliaries traditionally borrowed heavily from the works of the Fathers, but in Carolingian collections, we begin to see books that draw on a wider range of sources and that sometimes leave the Fathers behind almost altogether.¹⁹ Paul the Deacon's homiliary, commissioned by Charlemagne and perhaps the most influential such book, contains two hundred forty-four homilies in liturgical order, arranged according to the progression of the church year just as are the *Catholic Homilies*.²⁰ Such Carolingian collections are in fact some of the major sources for Ælfric's own homilies even when he appears to quote the Fathers directly.²¹ The openings of his own homilies, especially those in *CH I*, often allude to

¹⁸ See the wide overview of Milton McC. Gatch, "The Achievement of Ælfric and his Colleagues in European Perspective," *The Old English Homily & its Backgrounds*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppé (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), 43-73. On Old English homiletic writings in general, see J. E. Cross, "Vernacular Sermons in Old English," *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 561-96.

¹⁹ Thomas N. Hall, "The Early Medieval Sermon," *The Sermon*, ed. Kienzle, 203-69, especially at 212-21. A distinction is commonly made between patristic and Carolingian homiliaries. See, for example, Jean Longère, *La prédication médiévale* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983), 35-54.

²⁰ On Paul the Deacon's homiliary and knowledge of it in Anglo-Saxon England, see Cyril L. Smetana, "Paul the Deacon's Patristic Anthology," *Old English Homily & its Backgrounds*, ed. Szarmach and Huppé, 75-97. On what can be known about the copy of it that Ælfric used, see Joyce Hill, "Ælfric's Manuscript of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary: A Provisional Analysis," *The Old English Homily*, ed. Kleist, 67-96.

²¹ The seminal studies are Cyril L. Smetana, "Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary," *Traditio* 15 (1959): 163-204; and Smetana, "Ælfric and the Homiliary of Haymo of Halberstadt," *Traditio* 17 (1961): 457-69. See further the work of Joyce Hill: "Ælfric and Smaragdus," *ASE* 21 (1992): 203-37; "Ælfric's Sources Reconsidered: Some Case Studies from the Catholic Homilies," *'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (New York: Routledge, 1996), 362-86; "Translating the Tradition: Manuscripts, Models, and Methodologies in the Composition of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*," *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. Donald Scragg (Cambridge: D. S.

their performative context within both the mass and the liturgical year.²² They frequently refer to the day's reading, "þe we nu gehierdon of þæs diacones muðe"²³ [which we now heard from the deacon's mouth]. Ælfric occasionally points to the day's epistle in addition to the Gospel, explaining the unity of these readings. In his homily for Ascension Day, for example, he writes: "Lucas se godspellere us manode on þissre pistolrædinge" [Luke the evangelist admonished us in this epistle reading]. After translating and discussing the epistle, he turns to the day's Gospel: "We habbað nu geræd lucas gesetnysse embe cristes upstige. Nu awende we ure smeagunge to þam oþrum godspellere marcum"²⁴ [We have now read Luke's text about Christ's ascension. Now we turn our attention to the other evangelist, Mark]. The epistle reading for this day is Acts 1:3-15, but Ælfric harmonizes it with Luke 24:50-53 and cites Luke, who also wrote Acts, without further comment.²⁵ Moments like this one show both how Ælfric intends his text to be used—in the mass, as an exposition of the day's readings—and how he works through different scriptural passages to establish an orthodox reading of biblical narrative. Such analytical work, invisible to a reader or listener, interprets the biblical text before it ever reaches an audience.

Indeed, the schedule of liturgical readings shaped readers' perception of scripture even when they were reading the Gospel as a text unto itself. Anglo-Saxon books of scripture were almost always partial, and except perhaps notionally, readers would not have been accustomed to treating the Bible as a single book.²⁶ Only one pandect, Codex Amiatinus, survives from early Anglo-Saxon England, though others are known to have been produced. Even after the Carolingian boom in Bible production, most Bibles were partial.²⁷ Scripture was rather presented in individual books, usually those (such as psalters) designed for education and scholarship or, perhaps more fundamentally, for liturgical use.²⁸ Of such books, by far the most commonly available were Gospel books and psalters.²⁹ These are exactly those books needed for the performance of mass and the divine office as well as for the basic education of monks, books whose prime uses included liturgical reading. Physical copies of certain books of the Bible were thus, in a practical sense, closely associated with worship, and the availability of a given book of the Bible had largely to do with its prominence in the liturgy. Manuscript glosses and rubrics provide further evidence that Anglo-Saxon scholars saw the Gospel books in specifically

Brewer, 2003), 241-59; and "Ælfric's Manuscript of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary," *The Old English Homily*, ed. Kleist, 67-96.

²² See further Roy Liuzza, *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, 2 vols., EETS 304 and 314 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994-2000), II: 223-24. For Carolingian background, see Thomas L. Amos, "Preaching and Sermon in the Carolingian World," *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas L. Amos, Eugene A. Green, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), 41-60.

²³ *CHI*, X, 258, lines 3-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, XXI, 348, lines 94-95.

²⁵ Godden, *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 166.

²⁶ For a concise overview of the kinds and distribution of Bible manuscripts, see Richard Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30-31.

²⁷ Marsden discusses Amiatinus and biblical production at Wearmouth-Jarrow in *Text of the Old Testament*, 107-201. For a brief history of copies of the Bible in late Anglo-Saxon England, see Richard Marsden, "'Ask What I Am Called': The Anglo-Saxons and their Bibles," *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. John L. Sharpe III and Kimberly van Kampen (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 145-76, at 157-62.

²⁸ For a magisterial study of Anglo-Saxon liturgical books and Old English terms for them, see Helmut Gneuss, "Liturgical Books in Anglo-Saxon England and their Old English Terminology," *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 91-141.

²⁹ For these books, see Gneuss, "Liturgical Books in Anglo-Saxon England," 105-9 and 114-16.

liturgical terms even when reading privately. Latin Gospel books from both England and the Continent may contain glosses marking verses where a particular feast day's reading begins (and sometimes ends).³⁰ Every manuscript of the Old English Gospels is glossed, both in this way and with headings referring to the Latin text.³¹ Such glosses do not necessarily imply that these books were used as lectionaries or read aloud during the mass,³² but they do show how deeply ingrained liturgical ritual was in the reception and reading of the Gospels.³³ According to Ursula Lenker, in fact, "the insertion of the bilingual Old English-Latin rubrics is not subsidiary, but integral to the general design of the whole manuscript [i.e., Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS Ii.2.11]."³⁴ We see here how the production of a Gospel-book, even one intended for personal use, presupposed the mass as a fundamental element of a reader's experience of scripture.

The schedule and performance of liturgical readings also shaped the way the Anglo-Saxon faithful would have perceived the form of scriptural history. The readings for a given year, and especially for the *temporale* cycle, effectively harmonize the Gospel narrative, presenting Christ's life as a single narrative rather than as four similar but occasionally differing accounts. At times, Ælfric himself harmonizes Gospel accounts, as in his Easter Day homily in *CHI*. The reading for this day is Mark 16:1-7, but Ælfric supplements it with details from Matthew, Luke, and other parts of Mark.³⁵ At other times, a similar harmonization obtained in the selection of readings from one feast to another. Various collections of pericopes, each of them performing this same harmonizing function, were available in Anglo-Saxon England.³⁶ Ælfric relied on a system now known as Roman Type 3, associated particularly with the English

³⁰ For example, such glosses provide some of the earliest evidence of the Gallican lectionary. See the edition and study of Pierre Salmon, "Le système des lectures liturgiques contenu dans les notes marginales du Ms. Mp. th. q. 1^a de Wurzburg," *RB* 61 (1951): 38-53. On this problem in Anglo-Saxon Gospel books, see Ursula Lenker, *Die westsächsische Evangelienversion und die Perikopenordnungen im angelsächsischen England* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1997), 98-114. Although I refer in this chapter to Lenker's book, it is available in English epitome as "The West Saxon Gospels and the Gospel-Lectionary in Anglo-Saxon England: Manuscript Evidence and Liturgical Practice," *ASE* 28 (1999): 141-78.

³¹ Roy Liuzza, "Who Read the Gospels in Old English?" *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson*, ed. Peter S. Baker and Nicholas Howe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 3-24, at 12-14; and Liuzza, *Old English Version of the Gospels*, II: 208-20. Lenker, *Die westsächsische Evangelienversion* deals with this matter at several points. For a study of Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.2.11, see pages 251-56, and concerning Latin Gospel books following the Roman order of readings, see pages 400-12.

³² Liuzza, "Who Read the Gospels," 12-14; Liuzza, *Old English Version of the Gospels*, II: 220-21. Lenker, *Die westsächsische Evangelienversion*, 286-90, takes it as "vermutlich" that the Old English Gospels were used "im Rahmen der Predigt" (at 290). She argues that, while these texts were not used in the liturgy itself, they may have been used as prompts for homiletic composition; see her "The Rites and Ministries of the Canons: Liturgical Rubrics to Vernacular Gospels and their Functions in a European Context," *The Liturgy of the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. Helen Gittos and M. Bradford Bedingfield (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2005), 185-212, at 198-204. Richard Marsden writes: "Old English translations [of the Gospels] were used as adjuncts to the Latin, which remained sacrosanct. They may have had a role in the education of young monks learning Latin . . . their use by noble and pious laymen is probable," in his "Ask What I am Called," 162.

³³ Frederick J. Tupper, Jr.'s tabulation of these rubrics as a calendar shows how thoroughly the Old English Gospel covered the year's progress: "Anglo-Saxon *Dæg-Mæl*," *PMLA* 10.2 (1895): 111-241, at 187-201.

³⁴ Lenker, "Rites and Ministries of the Canons," 193.

³⁵ Godden, *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 119-27.

³⁶ For the available systems, their period of use, and their origin, see the table in Lenker, *Westsächsische Evangelienversion*, 177.

Benedictine monastic reformers.³⁷ The cycle of liturgical readings also presents scriptural history in a much different way than any reading of the individual Gospels as a text could. Rather than offering a continuous, even harmonized, narrative of Gospel history, the cycle of liturgical readings sets this history forward piecemeal. Individual episodes of Christ's life comprise the focus of each week's reading, especially over the course of the *temporale*. The *sanctorale* extends this history typologically by juxtaposing the day's Gospel reading with saints' lives. This cycle ties each episode to a specific time of the year, and it integrates each episode into the larger liturgical commemoration of Christ's life and the mystery of his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Moreover, the schedule and performance of liturgical readings created an intrinsically typological element in the faithful's relationship to the sacred history it presented. Within the mass itself, the Gospel reading always follows the epistle (though separated by the intervenient chants). During the Easter season, the epistle reading was taken from either the Acts of the Apostles or the Pauline Epistles. According to Josef A. Jungmann, this reading was chosen not simply as a complement to the Gospel but "for its prophetic worth and its value as an illustration of the New Testament."³⁸ In addition to this typological principle of selection, the presentation of the epistle would have been simpler than that of the Gospel in order to emphasize its importance in comparison.³⁹ The Gospel reading was introduced with the words "in illo tempore" [in that time], sometimes with the appended clause "dixit Iesus discipulis suis" [Jesus spoke to his disciples].⁴⁰ Ælfric translates these phrases only irregularly, but either way, he frequently quotes the name and title of the day's evangelist: e.g., "lucas se godspellere awrat on cristes bec"⁴¹ [Lucas the Evangelist wrote in Christ's book]. These introductory words establish the pastness of the events in the Gospel, thus making possible a typological relation between Christ's "illo tempore" and Ælfric's present day. The celebration of the eucharist in the mass reinforces this typological relation by bringing the body of Christ into each Christians' experience of and participation in contemporary worship.⁴² Even those who did not receive the communion themselves would have observed the elevation of the host, a ritual bringing the body of Christ into the contemporary act of worship. Intervening between the Gospel and communion was the only element of the service that took place in a language every Anglo-Saxon could have understood: Ælfric's homily.

For all those Christians not versed in scriptural exegesis, the homily's analysis of the day's reading at once explicated and mediated its meaning. For his own part, Ælfric was closely acquainted with the idea that every element of mass signified and re-enacted scriptural history, especially as that idea had been advanced by Amalarius of Metz's massive commentary known

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 188-202. As Milton Mc. Gatch, writes, "the ordering of the liturgical life of monks and nuns was a central objective . . . of the late Anglo-Saxon monastic reform," in "The Office in Late Anglo-Saxon Monasticism," *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 341-62, at 341.

³⁸ Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1951), I: 396.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I: 419-21.

⁴⁰ See Lenker, *Westächsische Evangelienversion*, 84-85.

⁴¹ *CH I*: II, ed. Clemoes, 190, line 8.

⁴² Despite the continental debate about the real presence, most early medieval scholars took the eucharist to signify the church. For an overview, see Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey*, trans. Gemma Simmonds (London: SCM Press, 2006), 13-36.

as the *Liber officialis*.⁴³ Embattled during his own lifetime both politically and theologically,⁴⁴ Amalarius was tried as a heretic toward the end of his life.⁴⁵ Indeed, a contemporary Lyon glossator accuses the first three books of the *Liber officialis* of being “insanae mentis locutio” [the speech of an insane mind], “stultissimum mendacium” [a very stupid lie], and “mira uanitas et execrabilis dementia” [remarkable foolishness and execrable derangement].⁴⁶ Amalarius has nevertheless been widely credited with bringing the allegorical interpretation of liturgy to the early medieval mainstream.⁴⁷ His work was also widely influential in the Benedictine monastic reforms in tenth-century England and particularly influential on Ælfric’s *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (*LME*), a customary for his own house of Eynsham based on the *Regularis concordia* but relying also, for many added interpretative details, on Amalarius’s commentary.⁴⁸ In his *LME*, Ælfric often provides information about rites to be performed on specific days, especially those of Holy Week, before explaining how the performance of these rites commemorates scriptural history.⁴⁹ His text thus combines the genres of monastic customary and liturgical commentary, and in doing so, it figures liturgical ritual as the spiritual repetition of important events from the scriptural past in the present day. In Ælfric’s understanding, liturgical ritual is the spiritual fulfilment of scriptural history.

⁴³ *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, ed. Jean-Michel Hanssens, 3 vols. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948-50), hereafter referred to as *AEOLO*.

⁴⁴ For biographical information, see Hanssens, “Amalarii uita,” in *AEOLO*, ed. Hanssens, I: 58-82. Hanssens gives a thorough textual history of the *Liber officialis* in *AEOLO*, ed. Hanssens, I:120-200. For further biographical information and, especially, discussions of the complicated textual history of the *Liber officialis*, see Christopher A. Jones, *A Lost Work by Amalarius of Metz: Interpolations in Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS. 154* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2001), 17-20 and 140-78; and Eric Knibbs, “Introduction,” in *On the Liturgy: Amalar of Metz*, ed. and trans. Knibbs, 2 vols., DOML 35-36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), vii-xxxvi.

⁴⁵ See Hanssens, *AEOLO*, I: 77-79. On theological opposition to Amalarius, see André Wilmart, “Un lecteur ennemi d’Amalarius,” *RB* 36 (1924): 317-29; Adolf Kolping, “Amalar von Metz und Florus von Lyon: Zeugen eines Wandels im liturgischen Mysterienverständnis in der Karolingerzeit,” *ZKT* 73.4 (1951): 424-64; Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, *Florus von Lyon als Kirchenpolitiker und Publizist: Studien zur Persönlichkeit eines karolingischen “Intellektuellen” am Beispiel der Auseinandersetzung mit Amalarius (835-838) und des Prädestinationsstreits (851-55)* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1999), 21-71.

⁴⁶ These glosses tend to recycle the same objections more or less formulaically. They are edited in Hanssens, *AEOLO*, III: 567-80.

⁴⁷ Rudolf Suntrup writes: “Mit seiner Liturgieerklärung stößt Amalar auf das lebhaftere Interesse seiner Zeitgenossen und bereitet einer neuen Volksfrömmigkeit den Boden, aber dies sind nur die Auswirkungen seiner aus genuin wissenschaftlichem Interesse aufgenommenen Arbeit,” *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1978), 31-121, at 51. See also Anders Ekenberg, *Cur Cantatur? Die Funktionen des liturgischen Gesanges nach den Autoren der Karolingerzeit* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 9-29. Concerning liturgical innovation during the Carolingian period, see Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections*, trans. John Halliburton, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 77-84. On allegorical expositions of the liturgy in the early Middle Ages in general, see Reinhard Meßner, “Zur Hermeneutik allegorischer Liturgieerklärung in Ost und West,” *ZKT* 115.3 (1993): 284-319; and Meßner, “Zur Hermeneutik allegorischer Liturgieerklärung in Ost und West (Schluß),” *ZKT* 115.4 (1993): 415-34.

⁴⁸ Although Amalarius is not Ælfric’s sole source for the exegetical interpretation of liturgy, Christopher A. Jones has shown that Anglo-Saxon commentators on the liturgy “subsisted on a fairly restricted diet” of sources: “The Book of the Liturgy in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Speculum* 73.3 (1998): 659-702, at 701. On Ælfric’s customary in particular, *Ælfric’s Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, ed. Christopher A. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 59-68.

⁴⁹ Jones writes: “More than any other single feature, the interpolation of liturgical commentary from the *Liber officialis* of Amalarius of Metz distinguishes the *LME* as a project quite distinct from the *Concordia*,” *LME*, ed. Jones, 59.

Ælfric's investment in an understanding of scripture—and, by corollary, of liturgical ritual—that is at once literal and spiritual pervades his work. He distinguishes clearly between these senses at many points in his writings, but it is not always obvious what exactly he considers the spiritual sense to be. Take, for example, the preface of his Old English translation of Genesis: “We secgað eac foran to þæt se boc is swiþe deop gastlice to understandenne, and we ne writap na mare buton þa nacedan gerecednisse. Þonne þincþ þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealdan gerecednisse, ac hit ys swiþe feor þam”⁵⁰ [We say also in advance that the book is very deep to understand spiritually, and we do not write any more than the bare narrative. Then it seems to the unlearned that all the understanding is enclosed in the simple narrative, but it is very far from that]. It concerns Ælfric that his audience might not understand the “gastlic” [spiritual] sense of scripture, but what exactly does he mean by this term? According to the *Dictionary of Old English*, *gastlic* means primarily “of or pertaining to, affecting or concerning the soul, spirit; spiritual as opposed to physical, bodily, carnal.” It may additionally refer to the ecclesiastical, as opposed to the secular.⁵¹ Where Ælfric usually takes scriptural history to signify *lichamlice* [literally] and *gastlice* [spiritually], most medieval exegetes name at least an allegorical/typological and a tropological sense alongside the literal one. Ælfric's conflation of these higher senses into a single spiritual sense may be due partly to the lack of a suitably differentiated vocabulary in English, but it is also telling of the way he imagines these senses to work. Understood spiritually, the Gospel reading for any given day arranges the life of each Christian within salvation history and renders it intelligible in both historical and moral terms.

Establishing a History for the Present

Ælfric's exegetical theory, equal parts literal and spiritual, frames liturgical ritual for his imagined audience as the continuing fulfilment of biblical promises. Ælfric structures most of his homilies in the same basic way. He begins by introducing the day's reading, perhaps naming its author and quoting its *incipit* in Latin. He usually refers to the day's Gospel reading but occasionally uses the epistle reading.⁵² He then proceeds to translate the reading into Old English. Ælfric either follows this reading with an exegetical explanation of the reading or intersperses such commentary throughout his translation. This exegesis, which Ælfric usually calls the *trahnung* [exposition], lies at the heart of the homily form. In fact, the Old English word *trah* [homily or homiliary] appears to have been back-formed from the verb *trahnian* [to expound].⁵³ This relation bespeaks the close connection between the homily and exegetical commentary for a speaker of Old English, and whether or not an Anglo-Saxon could have

⁵⁰ “Old English Preface to the Translation of *Genesis*,” *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, corrected reprint (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1996), 116-19, at 117.

⁵¹ *Dictionary of Old English: A-H Online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2016), s.v. “gastlic.”

⁵² This practice can vary. In the idiosyncratic Easter homily *CH II:XVI*, for instance, he uses the readings for the Monday and Wednesday offices of that week. See Godden's discussion, *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 500-1.

⁵³ Max Förster, “Die liturgische Bedeutung von ae. *trah*,” *Anglia Beiblatt* 53 (1942): 180-84, at 181. This etymology is accepted by Helmut Gneuss, “Linguistic Borrowing and Old English Lexicography: Old English Terms for the Books of the Liturgy,” *Problems of Old English Lexicography: Studies in Memory of Angus Cameron*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1985), 107-29, at 116-17. See further Gneuss, “Liturgical Books in Anglo-Saxon England,” at 122-25. Godden simply renders *trah* as “exposition,” *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Godden, s.v. “trah,” 773.

described the formation of these words analytically, s/he must surely have noticed their self-similarity. In moving from the bare Latin text to increasingly sophisticated interpretations of it, Ælfric thus structures most of his homilies according to his own stated interpretative principles. He gives the literal sense of the day's reading, which he makes available through his translation and in his explanatory asides, and reveals the spiritual sense through his *trahnung*. This spiritual sense, both typological and tropological, prescribes the ways that his imagined audience must help advance the necessary progress of salvation history, especially by participating in the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Ælfric finds it so important for his audience to achieve a correct literal understanding that he sometimes sets the record straight where it has erred. He famously denounces the “mycel gedwyld on manegum engliscum bocum”⁵⁴ [great error in many English books] that he finds, preferring the Alfredian translations to other vernacular texts before him.⁵⁵ Ælfric refuses to treat the Nativity of Mary or St. Thomas because he considers unorthodox the apocryphal material that has accrued to their legends. The most telling such moment, however, is Ælfric's rejection of the apocryphal elements surrounding the Assumption of Mary. This feast is so important that he includes a homily for it in each volume of the *CH*, and the tradition of the Assumption has become so historically inaccurate in his time that he also excoriates it in each volume.⁵⁶ This narrative, concerning Mary's bodily assumption to heaven at the end of her life, was current in Ælfric's England. Most prominently, the Blickling Homilies include an Old English version of this legend that circulated before the time of Ælfric's writing, and it was also copied in two eleventh-century manuscripts, Cambridge, Corpus Christi 198, Gneuss/Lapidge no. 64, and Cambridge, Corpus Christi 41, Gneuss/Lapidge no. 39.⁵⁷ As he tells his audience, Ælfric has it on the authority of a letter he believes to be written by Jerome (but actually by the ninth-century Carolingian scholar Paschasius Radbertus) that such narratives are apocryphal. While he does not say so explicitly, one therefore could not interpret this text spiritually even if it were an otherwise useful writing. In place of the apocryphal elements of this legend, he substitutes in each homily two historically accurate and thus edifying texts: respectively, an accurate account of Mary's life and the day's Gospel reading.

Contrary to his usual practice, Ælfric begins the First Series version of this homily not with the day's reading but with a short biography of Jerome. According to Ælfric, who incorrectly attributes Paschasius Radbertus's work to Jerome, the Father wrote a letter explaining the subject to “sumum halgan mædene hyre nama wæs eustochium 7 to hyre meder paulam”⁵⁸ [a certain holy maiden whose name was Eustochius and her mother Paula]. He explains that Jerome was a holy priest knowledgeable in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and that he not only translated the

⁵⁴ *CHI*, ed. Clemons, 174, line 51.

⁵⁵ On Ælfric's complicated relationship to these translations, see further Godden, “Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents,” *Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Magennis and Swan, 139-63.

⁵⁶ On Ælfric's rejection of apocryphal material in general, see Hill, “Reform and Resistance,” 25-30.

⁵⁷ For editions and the fullest discussion of these texts, see Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For further discussion, see Malcolm Godden, “Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition,” *Old English Homily and its Background*, ed. Szarmach and Huppé, 99-117, at 100-1; and Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 232-34. Treating his First Series homily, Rebecca Stephenson argues that Ælfric was probably not responding to the Blickling narrative *per se*: “Assuming Virginité: Tradition and the Naked Narrative in Ælfric's Homily on the Assumption of the Virgin,” *Writing Women Saints in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 103-20, at 107-8.

⁵⁸ *CHI*, ed. Clemons, XXX: 429, lines 5-6.

Bible from Hebrew into Latin but was also the author of “menigfealdum trahtbocum þe he mid gecneordum andgite deopþancellice asmeade”⁵⁹ [many other expositions (i.e., homilies or commentaries) that he subtly devised with studious understanding]. Having established Jerome’s authority as an orthodox scholar, Ælfric quotes him at length.⁶⁰ There is no doubt, he says, that many of his audience members have heard how the blessed Mary was taken to heaven on this day. Simultaneously reading the letter to his audience and directly admonishing them with its words, Ælfric finishes this thought with the reason that he needs to explain the nature of this festival day: “þy læs ðe eow on hand becume seo lease gesetnyss, þe ðurh gedwolmannum wide tosawen is 7 ge ðonne þa gehiwedan leasunge for soðre race underfoð”⁶¹ [lest this lying text come to your hand, which is widely scattered among heretics and you then accept that feigned lying as a true narrative]. Ælfric sees a danger that parishioners who rely naively on the expositions of heretical preachers will accept their fictional embellishments upon the Assumption as true scriptural history.⁶² This need for correct scriptural authority is presumably why Ælfric introduces Jerome as the Bible’s translator, since no one could be better positioned than Jerome to know what the Bible says and what it does not. However, in the face of widespread illiteracy and actively heretical preachers like the Blickling homilist, Ælfric himself must play the part of Jerome for his imagined audience.

The correct knowledge of true scriptural history is at issue in this homily, but so is the correct understanding of its spiritual senses. Since understanding Mary’s life *ad litteram* will have ramifications for present-day action and the future of the soul, it is crucial that Ælfric’s parishioners first understand an accepted factual account. Ælfric corrects any misapprehensions about Mary’s death. Christ certainly gave her a dwelling in heaven, but “[n]is geræd on nanre bec nan swutelre gewissung be hire geendunge buton þæt heo nu todæg wuldorfullice of þam lichaman gewat”⁶³ [one reads in no book a clearer certainty about her end than that she gloriously departed from the body on this day]. The triple negative emphasizes the impossibility of knowing more about Mary’s end than the day on which she died, and embedded in this construction are the nonexistent “bec” [books] that truthfully recount Mary’s assumption. For an audience who cannot access any “bec” at all themselves, Ælfric drives home the point that there simply are not any to be consulted here, and he discounts the legitimacy of apocryphal books in the process. He relays Mary’s burial place—on Mount Josephat, where there is a church in her honor—and supplies details of her life drawn from his pseudo-Hieronimian source. Ælfric writes of this biographical and loosely interpretative material: “ðes pistol is swiðe menigfeald us to gerecenne 7 eow swiðe deop to gehyrenne. Nu ne onhagað us na swiðor be ðam to sprecenne”⁶⁴ [this letter is very complicated for me to tell and very deep for you to hear. It is not fitting for us to speak further about it]. At the same time that he asserts the depth of his source (and does so in the same terms he uses to describe the depth of scripture), Ælfric denies the need to interpret it explicitly. He has by his own account treated Mary’s *uita* more or less *ad litteram*, leaving the spiritual senses unexplained in order to first establish a correct historical account

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 15-16.

⁶⁰ On the particulars of Ælfric’s adaptation of his source, see Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 235-40.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 430. For the source of this passage, see Paschasius Radbertus, *De assumptione sanctae Mariae uirginis*, ed. Albert Ripberger, CCCM 56C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 111-12, at 7.53-54.

⁶² On Ælfric’s (presumably unknowing) acceptance of some apocryphal narratives, see Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 237-38.

⁶³ *CH I*, ed. Clemons, XXX: 431, lines 65-66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 435, lines 185-86.

shorn of apocryphal embroidery. Without such an account, Ælfric's imagined audience will be unable to follow reliably the model that Mary presents for their own action.

Ælfric instead narrativizes the spiritual implications of Mary's *uita*, describing the typological and anagogical aspects of her death as historical events. He argues, for instance, that "þæt heofonlice werod togeanes his agenre meder sendan wolde þæt hi mid ormæhtum leohte 7 unasecgendlicum lofsangum hi to þam þrymsettle gelæddon, þe hire gegearcod wæs fram frymðe middaneardes"⁶⁵ [(Christ) wished to send that heavenly host to his own mother that they should lead her with great light and inexpressible songs of praise to that throne that was prepared for her from the beginning of the world]. Mary has had her own throne in heaven since the world's creation, long before she was born. Her historical role as Christ's mother was thus appointed from the beginning of time; she has simply come to fulfill it in the Gospel accounts of her life. Her assumption to heaven is saintly, and her place among the saved has always been a foregone conclusion both because of her virtuous life and because her personal salvation is necessary in order for history to advance according to God's divine plan. Her saintly luminosity is so great that Ælfric describes her in astronomical terms, brighter than the moon "for ðan þe heo scinð buton ateorunge"⁶⁶ [because she shines without fading] and "swa swa sunne mid leoman healicra mihta"⁶⁷ [just as the sun with the light of holy power]. Ælfric's narrative in this homily explains what happens to the body and soul of the saved; in doing so, it corrects the spurious histories and misleading anagogies of other preachers. The Blickling homily on the Assumption, for example, has the apostles draw Mary up and set her "on þæm fægran neorxna wange"⁶⁸ [in that fair paradise].⁶⁹ After removing her soul to heaven, Christ consults the apostles about Mary's body and decides to bring it to heaven as well.⁷⁰ Christ commands the archangel Michael to bring Mary's body before the Lord, and then "þa apostolas on heora mægene hofan Marian lichoman up mid wolcnum & hine þa asetting on neorxna wanges gefean. & nu syndon gesette þa apostolas inhlet æ bodian hire"⁷¹ [the apostles in their strength lifted Mary's body up in the clouds and set it in the joy of paradise. And now the apostles are appointed by lot to always proclaim her abroad]. In addition to saying more than anyone can know about Mary's end, this narrative confuses key aspects of what should be the anagogical sense of Mary's *uita*.⁷² Her body and soul arrive in heaven under separate cover, and it is unclear whether or how they are reunited. The Blickling narrative also confuses the role of the apostles in salvation history, whose task it is to proclaim Christ throughout the world, not his mother. Ælfric corrects the bare narrative promulgated by poorly informed and heretical preachers, but he also implicitly corrects their interpretations of this narrative's spiritual meaning in order to set forth an orthodox interpretation for his imagined audience.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 432, lines 94-97.

⁶⁶ *CH I*, ed. Clemoes, XXX: 433, lines 118-19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 119-20.

⁶⁸ *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century from the Marquis of Lothian's Unique MS A.D. 971*, ed. and trans. R. Morris, EETS os 58, 63, and 73, repr. as one volume (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 143.

⁶⁹ On the poorly understood compound *neorxnawang*, see Alan K. Brown, "Neorxnawang," *NM* 74.4 (1973): 610-23.

⁷⁰ *Blickling Homilies*, ed. Morris, 157.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Compare Jennifer Neville's remark that, in the Blickling homily, the "image of Mary is not a particularly good model for emulation," "Selves, Souls, and Bodies: The Assumption of the Virgin in Anglo-Saxon England," *Miracles and the Miraculous in Medieval Germanic and Latin Literature*, ed. K. E. Olsen, A. Harbus, and T. Hofstra (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004), 141-54, at 149.

While it is hardly possible to know anything about Mary's death, Ælfric takes her sorrow for Christ as a model for saintly action and the liturgical experience of his imagined audience. His close engagement with the liturgy is suggested by his treatment of the Annunciation earlier in this homily, which is about the Ave Maria more than the Gospel text.⁷³ In his narration of Mary watching before the cross, Ælfric presents her not as a martyr in the literal sense of having died for the faith but as a spiritual martyr. When Christ died on the cross, she suffered vicariously:

(H)ire sawul wæs swiðe geangsumod mid micelre þrowunge þa ðe heo stod dreorig forn angean cristes rode 7 hire leofe cild geseah mid isenum næglum on heardum treowe gefæstnod. Nu is heo mare þonne martyr for þan ðe heo þrowade þone martyrdom on hire sawle þe oþre martyres þrowodon on heora lichaman . . . his þrowung swa swa swurd þurhferde hire sawle.⁷⁴

[Her soul was very much afflicted with a great passion when mournful she stood before Christ's cross and saw her dear child fastened on the hard tree with iron nails. Now she is more than a martyr because she suffered that martyrdom in her soul which other martyrs suffered in their bodies . . . His (Christ's) passion pierced her soul like a sword.]

Ælfric here attributes to Mary the characteristics that we might have expected to see in the suffering Christ, using language that treats Mary's pain doubly as emotional and physical. Her soul is afflicted with "þrowunge," a word that can simply mean suffering but that often refers specifically to a martyr's passion.⁷⁵ In the midst of this "þrowung," she stands "dreorig" before the cross. "Dreorig" refers to a sorrowful or mournful emotional state; it has often been denoted "bloody" or "gory."⁷⁶ In this sentence, Ælfric externalizes Mary's internal emotional pain, treating it both literally as a mortal sorrow and metaphorically as a martyrdom. Piercing her soul like a sword and ending this segment of the homily, Christ's passion is a final blow. If Mary cannot literally be a martyr, Ælfric suggests, she is nevertheless more than a martyr because she suffers the agony of the crucifixion of her Son. Mary thus stands as an example for all those future saints who will actually die the death and to present-day Christians who commemorate the crucifixion yearly in the Easter cycle and weekly in the communion. There is in effect a kind of historical double-voicing here. At the same time that Mary offers a model for later martyrs, she stands as an example to the Anglo-Saxons who will follow in her footsteps, teaching them how one ought to experience the liturgy emotionally.

Ælfric builds upon Mary's *uita* a series of tropological injunctions and anagogical assurances, tying them particularly to his audience's observance of the day's feast. He sets up

⁷³ Stephenson, "Assuming Virginity," 113.

⁷⁴ *CH I*, ed. Clemoes, XXX: 433-34, lines 137-41.

⁷⁵ *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 1072-73, s.v. "þrowing."

⁷⁶ This denotation is especially common in poetic use as in lines 1416b-17a of *Beowulf*, where Beowulf's retainers wrongly infer that he has died in battle with Grendel's mother: "wæter under stod/ dreorig ond gedrefed"⁷⁶ [the water beneath stood bloody and disturbed]; *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 49, ll. 1416b-17a. Fulk et al. define this word specifically (and only) as "blood-stained, gory," 365, s.v. "dreorig." See, however, the definition in the *Dictionary of Old English, A-H*, s.v. "dreorig," which contests this meaning.

these points by repeating that Mary “witodlice” [certainly] died and went to heaven on this day. He moves into tropological exhortation by immediately repeating this history once more:

Seo heofenlice cwen wearð todæg generod fram þyssere manfullan worulde. Eft ic cweþe: fægnað for þan ðe heo becom orsoglice to þam heofenlican botle. Blissie eall middaneard for þan ðe nu todæg us eallum is þurh hire geearnungum hæl geyht. ðurh ure ealde moder euan us wearð heofenan geat belocen 7 eft þurh marian hit is us geopenod þurh ðæt heo sylf nu todæg wuldorfullice inferde.⁷⁷

[The heavenly queen was rescued today from this sinful world. Again I say: Rejoice because she came securely to that heavenly palace. Let all the world rejoice because today salvation is gained for us all through her merits. The gate of heaven was locked to us through our old mother Eve, and it was opened again to us through Mary, who gloriously entered it herself today.]

Mary’s unique entry into heaven is, Ælfric writes, the reason for the day’s feast. His audience are exhorted to rejoice for Mary’s salvation, and they ought specifically to rejoice because Mary’s good works make possible their own salvation. Ælfric here draws a tropological sense from the historical event of Mary’s death and salvation, but the point he makes is not that his audience ought simply to focus on heaven or flee evil. He exhorts them rather to liturgical commemoration, a structured celebration of the way Mary’s virtue ramifies in the present day and, considered anagogically, a promise of eternal life for every Christian. In following the model of Mary’s life and works, Ælfric and his audience also help to continue Mary’s reversal of Eve’s sin. By drawing out the traditional typology between Eve and Mary, Ælfric thus implicates his own parishioners in this historical progression from Old Dispensation to New. Ælfric further establishes the typological nature of present liturgical ritual in his next words:

God þurh his witegan us bebed þæt we sceolon hine herian 7 mærsian on his halgum, on þam he is wundorlic. micele swiðor gedafenað þæt we hine on þyssere mæran freolstide his eadigan meder mid lofsangum 7 wurðfullum herungum wurþian sceolon for þan ðe untwylice eall hire wurðmynt is godes herung.⁷⁸

[God commanded us through his prophets that we should praise him and glorify in his saints, in whom he is glorious. It is much more befitting that we should praise him with songs of praise (i.e., hymns and canticles) and worthy praises on this great festival of his blessed mother, because all her worthiness is undoubtedly praise of God.]

According to Ælfric, liturgical participation in this feast-day thus is a necessary fulfilment of not only the typological understanding of Mary’s life but also the command of the prophets. This praise moreover redounds to God, whose commands Eve subverted, the prophets relayed, Mary performed, and the parishioners today celebrate. Ælfric’s interpretation of the day’s readings places his parishioners in an unbroken chain of historical events and individuals, from Eve to the liturgical reading and song of their present day. Understanding Mary’s *uita* correctly thus allows

⁷⁷ *CHI*, ed. Clemons, XXX: 434, lines 161-67.

⁷⁸ *CHI*, ed. Clemons, XXX: 434-35, lines 167-72.

English Christians to take their place as actors helping to advance both their own personal salvation and the unfolding history of the world.

In his homily on the Assumption in CH II (homily XXIX), Ælfric reverts to his normal homiletic structure, using the day's reading to further expound the orthodox history of Mary's death and assumption. Where the first series homily turns upon the historical purpose of the day's Marian liturgy, Ælfric focuses in this version partly on a routine exposition of the day's Gospel reading. First, however, he reminds his audience that, one year ago on this day, "Jerome" "adwæscte ða dwollican gesetnysse þe samlærede men sædon be hire forðsiðe"⁷⁹ [extinguished the heretical accounts that partially learned men reported about her death]. He attributes this information to his source text, but it is available to Ælfric's vernacular audience only through his own partial and reordered translation. He frames himself as a conduit of historical knowledge, passing Jerome's complete learning directly to an English audience who require this information. Beginning his homily with this reminder also sets a certain tone for the homily to follow, which is in most other respects quite mundane. Ælfric states his wish to speak about the day's Gospel reading, the story of Mary and Martha related in Luke 10:38-43, before giving the Latin incipit of this reading and translating the rest into Old English. As Ælfric notes, "Ne sprecð þis godspel nan ðing sinderlice be cristes meder, ac man hit ræt swa ðeah gewunelice æt hire mæssan for ðære cyrclican gesetnysse"⁸⁰ [This Gospel reading does not say anything in particular about Christ's mother, but it is nevertheless customarily read at her mass by ecclesiastical decree]. Ælfric continues in this homily his admonitions against belief in the unorthodox elements of many Assumption narratives, but he now turns to a fairly commonplace treatment of the reading. The main point of this day's homily is not to urge liturgical participation in Mary's spiritual martyrdom but rather good Christian living in general.

Loosely following the "trahtnunge" [exposition] of Augustine, Ælfric treats the New Testament history of Martha and Mary as a model for present action and the hope of future reward. "On ðisum twam geswustrum," says Ælfric, "wæron getacnode twa lif: þis geswincfulle ðe we on wuniað and þæt ece ðe we gewilniað"⁸¹ [in these two sisters were signified two lives: the laborious one in which we dwell and that eternal one which we desire]. The day's Gospel reading thus presents a history with a double signification, pertaining to the necessary work of life on earth and the recompense for this labor.⁸² God stands behind the labors these women perform: "Fela ðing sind geworhte, ac an is se ðe geworhte heofenas and eorðan, sæ and ealle gesceafta. þa ealle gescop and geworhte an god, se ðe ana is soð god"⁸³ [Many things were created, but one is he who made heaven and earth, the sea and all creation. One God created and made all that, he who is alone the true God]. This statement, catechetical in its simplicity and pointed in its introduction to a homily partly meant to overthrow false narratives, shows all works and all history to proceed ultimately from God. Although Ælfric does not elaborate upon the point, this knowledge provides the necessary pivot into the tropological reading to follow and the analogical interpretation of Mary. The good works that one must perform are not self-

⁷⁹ *CH II*, ed. Godden, XXIX: 255, lines 3-4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 255, lines 18-20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 256, lines 38-40.

⁸² Concerning the varied interpretations of this passage by late antique and Anglo-Saxon writers, see Mary Clayton, "Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England," *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 147-75, at 149-51.

⁸³ *CH II*: XXIX, ed. Godden, 256, lines 47-49.

evident from this passage, but since they can be inferred from other passages of scripture, Ælfric enumerates them: “On ðisum wræcfullum life we sceolon earmra manna helpan. we sceolon ða hungrian fedan, nacode scrydan, cuman underfon, hæftlingas ut alysan, ða ungeðwæron gesibbian, untrume geneosian, deade bebyrian”⁸⁴ [In this life of hardship we must help poor people. We must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, receive strangers, free prisoners, reconcile those at discord, visit the sick, (and) bury the dead]. That he gives the corporal works of mercy as the tropological sense of this reading again stresses the general nature of his instruction, an exhortation to a moral life rather than a detailed treatment of doctrine. It also extends this tropological sense beyond the *CHI* homily’s focus on liturgical experience, calling upon Ælfric’s imagined audience to do good deeds in their daily lives.

Ælfric does, however, return at the end of this homily to the historical and moral significance of his imagined audience’s participation in the day’s liturgy. After the reading has been “sceortlice getrahtnod”⁸⁵ [briefly expounded], he returns to the specific tropological point of the day:

we secgað eow þæt nan man hine ne sceal beladian þæt he godes cyrcan ne gesece . . .
Hwæt wille we eow swiðor secgan be ðisum symbeldæge buton þæt maria cristes modor
wearð on ðisum dæge of ðisum geswincfullum middanearde genumen up to heofenan rice
to hire leofan suna ðe heo on life abær, mid ðam heo blissað on ecere myrhðe a to
worulde.⁸⁶

[We say that no one should excuse himself such that he should not seek God’s church . . .
What more do we want to say about this feast-day except that Mary, Christ’s mother, was
on this day taken up from this laborious earth to the heavenly kingdom to her dear son,
whom she bore in life, with whom she rejoices forever in eternal joy?]

As in the first series homily on the Assumption, Ælfric enjoins his audience to participate in church services (even if, he notes, church is a long way from home). They cannot otherwise participate in liturgy or receive homiletic instruction, and there is a risk that they would then fail to understand their obligation to moral action. Linking Mary’s *uita* to his *trahtnung* of the day’s Gospel, Ælfric echoes his own earlier language about the two lives, one “geswincful” [laborious] and “wræcful” [miserable], the other “ece” [eternal] and “eadig” [blessed].⁸⁷ When he describes Mary’s assumption from the laborious present world to the blessed heavenly kingdom in these same terms, he figures her life and death as a spiritual fulfilment of the historical events narrated in the day’s reading. Ælfric himself previously said that the connection between the reading and Mary’s death was obscure, but he links Mary’s *uita* to the *gastlice andgit* of the Gospel. This connection extends further to Ælfric’s audience through their participation in the day’s liturgy. Instructing his imagined audience to attend church and take part in worship, Ælfric seeks to apply scriptural history to their daily lives and to position them appropriately in respect to the deeds and lessons of this history.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 258, lines 83-86.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, line 110.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 258-59, lines 110-19.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 256-59, *passim*.

These two homilies on the Assumption exemplify what Ælfric sees as the danger that false history and incorrect historical interpretation present the Anglo-Saxon faithful. At the end of the Second Series homily, he makes explicit the opposition between the false history of heretics and the true history of faithful teachers:

Gif we mare secgað be ðisum symbeldæge þonne we on ðam halgum bocum rædað þe ðurh godes dihte gesette wæron, ðonne be we ðam dwolmannum gelice þe be heora agenum dihte oððe be swefnum fela lease gesetnysse awriton. ac ða geleaffullan lareowas Augustinus, Hieronimus, Gregorius, and gehwilce oðre þurh heora wisdom hi towurpon.⁸⁸

[If we should say more about this feast day than we read in those holy books which were arranged through God's disposition, then we would be like those heretics who wrote many lying texts according to their own disposition or dreams. But those faithful teachers Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, and certain others overcame them through their wisdom.]

He divides books of history into, on the one hand, those written according to God's disposition and, on the other, those written according to human disposition. He envisions these books to express competing histories, the single true history that has been divinely revealed and many false histories arising from humans' capricious natures or dreams. The scribe of Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.3.28, possibly a member of Ælfric's own scriptorium, emphasizes the orthodox writers Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory by placing a point after each of their names.⁸⁹ The heretics that they defeat, by contrast, are anonymous. Leaving the heretics nameless (even when Latin authors like Pseudo-Melito can be identified) consigns them to a dead past.⁹⁰ Ælfric performs this effective censorship elsewhere in his writings as well. After describing the Chrism Mass in his *LME*, for example, he instructs his monks: "In Cena Domini et in Parascheue et in Sabbato non pergimus ad pacem propter osculum fide pacis, quo Iudas tradidit Christum" [On Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday we do not exchange the (kiss of) peace, on account of the kiss of false peace by which Judas betrayed Christ].⁹¹ Foregoing the usual exchange, the brothers symbolically relegate Judas's kiss to a single deed that is now over and done. The historical betrayal that his kiss signifies is thereby stricken from the spiritual commemoration of liturgical ritual. In his second Assumption homily, Ælfric in effect explains the logic by which he suppresses fictions and certain past events: "Læte gehwa aweg ða dwollican leasunga ðe ða unwæran to forwyrde lædað and ræde gehwa oððe hlyste þære halgan lare ðe us to heofenan rice gewissað gif we hi gehyran wyllað"⁹² [Everyone should leave those heretical lies which lead the unwary to destruction, and everyone should read or hear that holy teaching which guides us to the heavenly kingdom if we wish to hear it]. His problem is that a false account, interpreted as though it were history, leads to sin and thence to damnation, whereas scriptural history, properly interpreted and applied in one's own life, leads to salvation. This statement moreover points to the necessity of attending church and participating in liturgical

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 259, lines 119-25.

⁸⁹ This manuscript is Clemoes and Godden's K. See their discussions in *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, 24-25 and 68-69; and *CH II*, ed. Godden, xliii.

⁹⁰ On the Latin tradition of the Assumption, see Clayton, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 66-100.

⁹¹ Ælfric, *LME*, ed. Jones, 130-31.

⁹² *CH II*, ed. Godden, XXIX: 259, lines 130-33.

ritual. Without the accurate scriptural knowledge attained through divine services and, for most members of his audience, from vernacular homilies, Anglo-Saxon Christians will have no way of knowing which accounts are true, and they will have no way of knowing how their own actions are both dictated by and help to advance salvation history.

Time and the Spiritual Sense

Where the Assumption homilies show Ælfric displacing heretical lies with orthodox history, his homily for the Feast of the Circumcision teases out the present-day spiritual significance of a passage whose text is short and whose historical meaning is obscure. This homily turns entirely on Luke 2:21: “(Et) postquam consummati sunt dies octo, ut circumcideretur puer, uocatum est nomen eius Iesus, quod uocatum est ab angelo priusquam in utero conciperetur” [And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb]. Ælfric’s close analysis of this single verse reveals his own interpretative procedures and investments to a degree not fully possible in a homily on a longer reading. Indeed, this homily is almost entirely composed of interpretative writing. Circumcision appears to have been unknown in Ælfric’s England. There is virtually no evidence that any Jews were present in England before the Norman conquest.⁹³ As Ælfric writes, “[w]en is þæt eower sum nyte hwæt sy ymbsnidenys”⁹⁴ [I expect that some of you do not know what circumcision is].⁹⁵ Indeed, he removes from his Old Testament translation most references to this practice, presumably because they “would need too much explication in order to be understood figuratively.”⁹⁶ When he touches on the subject in his homily at all, it is to inform his audience that the custom of physical circumcision is no longer practiced.⁹⁷ Rather than explicate at length the details of this ancient custom, Ælfric follows the standard practice of emphasizing the spiritual consequences of circumcision. This traditional interpretation was first put forward by Paul:

Circumcisio quidem prodest, si legem obserues: si autem praeuaricator legis sis, circumcisio tua praeputium facta est. Si igitur praeputium iustitias legis custodiat, nonne praeputium illius in circumcisionem reputabitur? Si iudicabit id quod ex natura est praeputium, legem consummans, te, qui per litteram et circumcisionem praeuaricator legis est? Non enim qui in manifesto, Iudaeus est: neque quae in manifesto, in carne, est

⁹³ For the slight evidence otherwise, see David J. Wasserstein, “The First Jew in England: ‘The Game of the Evangel’ and a Hiberno-Latin Contribution to Anglo-Jewish History,” *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, ed. Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 283-88.

⁹⁴ *CH I*: VI, 225, line 49.

⁹⁵ The Anglo-Saxons’ complicated relationship with Jewish history, especially their complicated identification with it, has been the subject of a number of studies. See Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Andrew P. Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006); and Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁹⁶ Rebecca Barnhouse, “Shaping the Hexateuch Text for an Anglo-Saxon Audience,” *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin C. Withers (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 91-108, at 103. On the lexicography of Old English terms for “penis,” see Roberta Frank, “Sex in the *Dictionary of Old English*,” *Unlocking the Wordhord: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 302-12, at 304-5. Ælfric’s own translation of the circumcision story is in *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric’s Libellus de ueteri testamento et nouo*, ed. Richard Marsden, EETS 330 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37-39.

⁹⁷ *CH I*, ed. Clemons, VI: 226, lines 79-80.

circumcisio. Sed qui in abscondito, Iudaeus est: et circumcisio cordis in spiritu, non littera: cuius laus non ex hominibus, sed ex Deo est.⁹⁸

[Circumcision profiteth indeed, if thou keep the law; but thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. If, then, the uncircumcised keep the justices of the law, shall not this uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not that which by nature is uncircumcision, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? For it is not he is a Jew, who is so outwardly; nor is that circumcision which is outwardly in the flesh: But he is a Jew, that is one inwardly; and the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.]

Although Anglo-Saxon exegetes like Bede and Alcuin picked up this tropological reading of circumcision, there is little vernacular evidence other than Ælfric's writing for knowledge of or attitudes toward the practice.⁹⁹ In his homily for the day, Ælfric supplies his audience with the requisite historical knowledge of this obscure practice, explaining not only that the history presented in the day's reading has a spiritual sense but also how this history conditions his parishioners' present action and use of their own bodies.

In the absence of audience knowledge of this Jewish custom, Ælfric explains the history of circumcision and why Christ underwent the procedure. Following Haymo of Auxerre, Ælfric turns first to Abraham, explaining that he was “ærest manna ymsniden be godes hæse”¹⁰⁰ [the first man circumcised according to God's command]. Without further transition, he goes on to translate the story of Abraham's covenant with God, found in Genesis 17:1-23. Both Abraham and Sarah's new names and the rite of circumcision are a sign of this covenant, and it is for this reason, Ælfric explains, that Christ was circumcised while the English of the present day are not:

Ða heold abrahames cynn symle syððan godes wed 7 se heretoga moyses 7 eall israhela mæigð. Ealle hi ymsnidon heora cild on þam eahteoðan dæge 7 him naman gesceopon oþ ðæt crist on menniscnysse acenned wearð, se þe fulluht astealde 7 þære ealdan æ getacnunge to gastlicere soðfæstnysse awende.¹⁰¹

[Then Abraham's line always afterward observed God's pledge, and the leader Moses and all the family of Israel. They all circumcised their children on the eighth day and gave them names until Christ was born in human form. He established baptism and turned the signification of the old law to a spiritual truth.]

Ælfric does not identify Christ figurally with circumcision to quite the same degree as Haymo, who more or less equates the two: “uitiorum praeputii . . . amputator, Dominus scilicet Iesus Christus”¹⁰² [the pruner of the foreskin of vices, namely the Lord Jesus Christ]. In Ælfric's

⁹⁸ Romans 2:25-29.

⁹⁹ For context, see Samantha Zacher, “Circumscribing the Text: Views on Circumcision in Old English Literature,” *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 89-118.

¹⁰⁰ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 224, lines 12-13.

¹⁰¹ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 225, lines 43-48.

¹⁰² Haymo of Auxerre, “Homilia XIV: In circumcissione domini,” *PL* 118, cols. 90D-107B, at 91C.

account, Christ was circumcised because he followed Jewish custom from Abraham to his own day, and it was only during his own life that Christ replaced the literal sign of circumcision with the spiritual one of baptism. This explication relates the Old Testament history to the day's New Testament reading, both grounding it historically and setting the stage for the reading's application to Ælfric's own audience.

Ælfric considers that correct behavior in his present day is both structured by the Jewish custom of circumcision and a break with this custom under the New Dispensation. On the one hand, Ælfric's audience is currently celebrating the Feast of the Circumcision, thus commemorating the sign that God set between himself and Abraham. In so doing, they extend this covenant into their present day. On the other hand, he and his audience are neither descended directly from Abraham nor circumcised themselves. According to Ælfric, the sacrament of baptism has replaced the ritual of circumcision, yet baptism is not exactly a replacement of circumcision. Circumcision is a sign inscribed on the body, visible to anyone who should look, while baptism leaves no lasting physical trace. The "gastlicere soðfæstnysse" that Ælfric points to is a matter of behavior and custom rather than permanent alteration of the body: "Nis nu alyfed cristenum mannum þæt hi ðas ymbsnidenysse lichamlice healdon, ac þeahhwæðere nan mann ne bið soðlice cristen buton he þa ymbsnidenysse on gastlicum þeawum gehealde"¹⁰³ [It is not now believed by Christian people that they should observe this circumcision literally, but nevertheless no person is truly Christian unless he observe circumcision in spiritual customs]. "Lichamlice" here plays upon the word's two-fold meaning: Christians of Ælfric's day do not observe Jewish custom *lichamlice* in the sense of interpreting Old Testament precedent *ad litteram*, but neither do they do so in the sense of observing it bodily. So how exactly ought an Anglo-Saxon man still in possession of his foreskin—or, indeed, an Anglo-Saxon woman—work to advance scriptural history and promulgate God's covenant in his present day?

The answer, according to Ælfric, is that one ought to regulate every part of the physical body rather than alter any single part of it. For the Christian, circumcision becomes a spiritual discipline, a matter of reason and deliberate choice:

Gif ge willað æfter menniscum gesceade lybban þonne sind ge gastlice ymbsnidene. Gif ge þonne eowere galnysse underðeodde beoð, þonne beo ge swa se witega cwæð: Se man þa ða he on wurðmynte wæs he hit ne understod. He is for ði wiðmeten stuntun nytenum 7 is him gelic geworden . . . Ne sceole we for þi synderlice on anum lime beo ymbsnidene, ac we sceolon ða fulan galnysse symle wanian 7 ure eagan fram yfelre gesihðe awendan 7 earan fram yfelre heorcunge, urne muð fram leasum spræcum, handa fram mandædum, ure forwylmys fram deadbærum siðfæte, ure heortan fram facne.¹⁰⁴

[If you wish to live according to human reason, then you are spiritually circumcised. If you then are subject to your lust, then you are as the prophet says: "The man, when he was in honor, did not understand it. He is therefore compared to dumb beasts and has become like them" . . . We must not therefore be circumcised specially in one organ, but we must always bewail foul lust and turn our eyes from evil sight, and our ears from evil listening, and our mouth from lying speech, (our) hands from sins, our insteps from deadly paths, our hearts from evil.]

¹⁰³ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 226, lines 79-81.

¹⁰⁴ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 227, lines 91-95 and 102-6.

It is the operation of reason that allows Ælfric's parishioners to control their desires through spiritual discipline. As Cassiodorus writes in his encyclopedic *Institutiones*, reason defines the state of being a human: "Homo est quod rationali conceptione et exercitio praeest animalibus cunctis"¹⁰⁵ [A human is that which excels all the animals in rational conception and practice]. Ælfric quotes Psalms 48:13 on this point, attributing it to "se witega" [the prophet]: "Et homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit. Comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis" [And man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like them]. Spiritual observance of the custom of circumcision is, in this account, at once a continuation of Jewish practice, the necessary outcome of human reason, and the fulfilment of the Psalmist's prophecy. Spiritual circumcision extends to every limb of the body, limbs whose potential for the commission of specific sins Ælfric enumerates.

In presenting this interpretation of the day's reading, Ælfric packages for his audience the deep historical argument implicit in his sources. Both Haymo and Bede list the body parts that must be spiritually circumcised, but Haymo works through the matter in detail. "Quid," he asks, "per praeputium [significatur], nisi peccatum?"¹⁰⁶ [What is signified by the foreskin, if not sin?]. Soon after he has argued this point, Haymo goes through body parts one by one, adducing Bible verses for each one to show that it too must be circumcised. Of his first example, the eyes, he writes: "Circumcidendi sunt oculi ab illicito uisu, ne uideant mulierem ad concupiscendam eam"¹⁰⁷ [The eyes must be circumcised from illicit sight, lest they should see a woman to desire her]. To support this point, he quotes Matthew 5:28, in which Christ warns against looking upon a woman lustfully.¹⁰⁸ He then moves outward to the psalms, first quoting Psalms 118:37 on the necessity of looking away from vanity¹⁰⁹ and then Psalms 24:15 on always looking to the Lord.¹¹⁰ He ends with Job 31:1, returning to the theme of looking away from women (here virgins).¹¹¹ Although Haymo provides no commentary on his selection of verses, this sequence of verses in effect makes a typological argument and then a literal one. He first cites Christ's own words, which offer a precept as well as a model for present action. Moving to the Old Testament for further support, Haymo shows the Gospel verse to follow at the end of a line of scriptural history and prophecy. All of this material acts as a foundation for the tropological message—that we ought to turn our eyes from evil—and thus provides copious direction for action in the present day. Haymo works through most of the bodily senses in this same manner.

¹⁰⁵ Cassiodorus, *Cassidori Senatoris Institutiones*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, 2nd printing (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 121. Although illustrative, this text is not well attested in surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, appearing only in Cambridge, University Library R.15.14, Gneuss/Lapidge no. 185. Michael Lapidge notes a few other instances of this text's manuscript transmission in Anglo-Saxon England: *The Anglo-Latin Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 138, 169, and 296.

¹⁰⁶ Haymo, "Homilia XIV," *PL* 118, col. 95C.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, cols. 95D-96A.

¹⁰⁸ "Ego autem dico uobis: quia omnis qui uiderit mulierem ad concupiscendam eam, iam moechatus est eam in corde suo" [But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart].

¹⁰⁹ "Auerte oculos meos, ne uideant uanitatem; in uia tua uiuifica me" [Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity; quicken me in thy way].

¹¹⁰ "Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, quoniam ipse euallet de laqueo pedes meos" [My eyes are ever toward the Lord: for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare].

¹¹¹ "Pepigi foedus cum oculis meis, ut ne cogitarem quidem de uirgine" [I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin].

Ælfric, in his usual manner, epitomizes this material.¹¹² He has already adduced historical context for the practice and continuing importance of circumcision, and by abbreviating Haymo, he focuses all of the audience's attention on the tropological point of bodily discipline. Rather than work through all of scriptural history once more, he lets this point stand at the end, and therefore as the culmination, of the narrative already put forward.

Spiritual circumcision similarly encompasses the name "Christian" that Ælfric's audience members take upon themselves, realizing in their group identity the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. Abraham and Sarah each receive prophetic new names as a mark of this covenant.¹¹³ "Abraham," Ælfric explains, means "manegra þeoda fæder"¹¹⁴ [father of many peoples], and "Sarra" means "ealdor, þæt heo nære synderlice hire hiredes ealdor geciged"¹¹⁵ [ruler, that she will never be named separately from the ruler of her household]. Thus he explains that Abraham's new name points to the future, directing attention away from his historical existence in itself. It looks rather to his significance as a precursor, especially of Christ but also of Christians. The text of Genesis glosses Abraham's name, which Ælfric balances with a gloss on Sarah's name drawn from Bede.¹¹⁶ Sarah's name too directs attention away from her own historical significance, but while Abraham's name prophetically signifies future generations, Sarah's binds her to Abraham. According to Ælfric, Christians take on a new name, one that likewise signifies their participation in Abraham's legacy. He writes:

Gif we swa fram leahtrum ymsnidene beoð þonne bið us geset niwe nama, swa swa se witega isaias cwæð: God gecigð his þeowan oþrum naman. Eft se ylca witega cwæð: ðu bist gecigen niwum naman þone ðe godes muð genemnode. Se niwa nama is Cristianus, þæt is cristen. Ealle we sind of criste cristene gehatene.¹¹⁷

[If we are thus circumcised from sins, then a new name is appointed for us just as the prophet Isaiah says: "God names his people by another name." Again the same prophet says: "You are named by a new name which the mouth of God created." The new name is "cristianus," i.e. Christian. We are all named Christians from Christ.]

Cut off from sin, Christians retain their given names but take on a new group identity as spiritual members of the peoples descended from Abraham through Christ. Ælfric takes Isaiah's words, quoted from Isaiah 65:12 and 62:2 respectively, as both a retrospective description of Abraham's renaming and a prophetic explanation of present practice.¹¹⁸ Named after Abraham's literal descendant Christ, Ælfric's audience participate in an understanding of his name through their

¹¹² On Ælfric's methods of abbreviation and clarification, see Christopher A. Jones, "Meatim sed et rustica: Ælfric of Eynsham as a Medieval Latin Author," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 8 (1998): 1-57, at 21-41; and Stephenson, *Politics of Language*, 162-71.

¹¹³ On biblical names in Ælfric's writing, see Fred C. Robinson, "The Significance of Names in Old English Literature," *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 185-218, at 186-92.

¹¹⁴ *CH I*, ed. Clemons, VI: 225, line 35.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, line 38.

¹¹⁶ See Bede, *Opera homiletica*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), XI: 73-79, at 76.

¹¹⁷ *CH I*, ed. Clemons, VI: 227, lines 107-11.

¹¹⁸ Ælfric relies on Bede here as well. See Bede, *Opera homiletica*, ed. Hurst, XI: 76.

spiritual circumcision. They become, as he writes, “abrahames cynnes æfter soþum geleafan”¹¹⁹ [of the line of Abraham according to true belief].

In addition to fleshing out the historical logic underlying these Pauline spiritual readings, Ælfric places his audience explicitly in world history. His source Haymo remarks on the dual historical meaning of Christ’s circumcision: “Circumcisio enim Isaac, Domini circumcisionem significabat. Circumcisio uero Domini nostram geminam circumcisionem significat, moderni scilicet temporis et futuri”¹²⁰ [The circumcision of Isaac signified the circumcision of the Lord. The circumcision of the Lord signifies our double circumcision, in the present time and the future one]. Here Haymo once again draws a typological connection between, on the one hand, the way the Old Testament signified Christ and, on the other hand, the way Christ signifies the faithful of the present day. His verb tenses—imperfect rather than perfect for the Old Testament, present for the New—suggest both the continuing relevance of Christ’s example to his audience and the bygone but not necessarily completed nature of literal circumcision. Moreover, Christ’s circumcision signifies not only the spiritual circumcision of this homily’s audience but also, and at the same time, their future circumcision in eternal life. Ælfric, quoting Bede,¹²¹ extends this temporal logic using terms that, while maintaining Haymo’s typology, are anagogical and world-historical:

Se eahteoþa dæg þe ðæt cild on ymbsniden wæs getacnode þa eahteoþan ylde þyssere worulde on þære we arisað of deaþe ascyrede fram ælcere brosnunge 7 gewemmednysse ures lichaman. Ðæt stænene sex þe ðæt cild ymbsnað getacnode þone stan þe se apostol cwæð. Se stan soðlice wæs crist.¹²²

[The eighth day on which the child was circumcised signified the eighth age of this world on which we will arise from death, separated from all corruption and defilement of our bodies. That stone knife that circumcised the child signified the stone that the apostle said. The stone truly was Christ.]

This analysis figures Christ as an instrument of personal salvation. He is the knife that cuts away our sin, leaving us with undefiled bodies. Read spiritually as Ælfric has just done, this act also requires a circumcision of all one’s bodily limbs. This bodily discipline now will, through Christ’s intervention, grant us incorruptible bodies in the future. The eighth day on which Isaac’s circumcision took place further signifies the eighth and final age of the world, when the body will be resurrected for judgment. This Old Testament text, according to Ælfric, signifies Christ’s grace in its typological sense, the physical discipline of the present day in its tropological sense, and the promise of eternal life in its anagogical sense. Although he does not explain or disambiguate these interpretative senses for his audience, Ælfric thus explains present-day action in a world-historical context. His audience in the seventh age of the world lives in a state of tension between the *littera* of scripture and the impending judgment, and their actions must always reflect this historical reality.

¹¹⁹ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 228, line 114.

¹²⁰ Haymo, “Homilia XIV,” *PL* 118, col. 92B.

¹²¹ Bede, *Opera homiletica*, ed. Hurst, 77 and 79.

¹²² *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 228, lines 121-25.

Ælfric explicitly situates his audience within the progress of all of world history in other homilies as well, instructing his imagined audience about their role in this history. Such historical interpellation makes up much of the allegorical analysis of his Second Series homily for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany. This homily narrates and explicates Christ's first miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding feast.¹²³ According to John 2:6, this water was contained in six vessels and meant for the "purificationem Iudaeorum" [the purifying of the Jews]. Ælfric explains that this miracle signifies the fulfilment of the old law (the water) through the New Dispensation (the wine). More specifically, however, he explains that these "six wæterfatu wæron afyllede mid halwendum wætere boclicra gewrita"¹²⁴ [six water vessels were filled with the healing water of writings in books] and, later in the homily, that they "getacnodon six ylða ðyssere worulde"¹²⁵ [signified six ages of this world]. While Ælfric's count of the ages of the world differs here from that above, he displays no doubt about the division. The first age was antediluvian, the second spanned from the Flood to the patriarch Abraham, the third from Abraham to King David, the fourth from David to the Babylonian captivity, the fifth from the Captivity until Christ's incarnation, and the sixth from Christ to the present day, "mid ungewisre geendunge astreht oð antecristes tocyme"¹²⁶ [stretched forth with an uncertain ending until the Antichrist's arrival]. Each of these vessels signifies a discrete era in the life of God's chosen people, and Ælfric reads events and persons in each age of the Old Testament typologically as signs of Christ. Where Ælfric explains the typological significance of the first five ages, he turns in the sixth age to tropological instruction. He counts three grades of Christian life: marriage for the sake of procreation rather than lust, widowhood according to right law, and, at the highest grade, virginity. However, the sixth age too has a typological dimension. Christians do not signify Christ but, coming after him, "magon clypian soðlice to criste þæt he sparode þæt gode win oð his agenum tocyme, þæt he scencð nu geond his gelaðunge oð ende þises middaneardes"¹²⁷ [can truly call our to Christ that he saved that good wine until his own arrival, which he now pours over his church until the end of this world]. He presumably refers here to the song and prayer of liturgical commemoration. His audience ought to call out to Christ through the framework offered by the day's Gospel reading. The history it recounts signifies their current celebration, and it does so against the backdrop of the entirety of salvation history.

Ælfric occasionally opens his scope from the place of his imagined audience in the temporalities of world history to a theoretical description of the way liturgical practice embodies and inhabits these temporalities. He shows not only an interest in the place of liturgical celebration within salvation history but also a desire to grasp the temporal dimension of this history. In doing so, he explains how particular historical time(s) come to be embodied, celebrated, and spiritually re-enacted through the liturgy. In his Second Series homily for Septuagesima, for instance, he notes that the time between Septuagesima and Holy Saturday is one hundred and seventy days, a commemoration of the one hundred and seventy years of the Babylonian captivity.¹²⁸ However, much of his exposition shows how the day's reading on the parable of the sower signifies the progress of time—the time of the world, the day, and one's

¹²³ The Gospel for this day is John 2:1-11.

¹²⁴ *CH II*, ed. Godden, IV: 32, lines 92-93.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, lines 83-84.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 90-91.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV: 39, lines 291-93.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, V: 49-50, lines 242-52.

own life.¹²⁹ Ælfric explains that the vineyard signifies Israel and the Church. The workers are God's forerunners and teachers, and their arrival throughout the day signifies the ages of the world: "Eornostlice se ærmerigen wæs fram adam oð noe, se undern fram noe oð abraham, se middæg fram abraham oð moysen, se non fram moyse oð drihtnes tocyme, seo endlyfte tid fram drihtnes acennednyse oð ende þises middaneardes"¹³⁰ [Truly the dawn was from Adam to Noah, the third hour from Noah to Abraham, the middle of the day from Abraham to Moses, the ninth hour from Moses until the Lord's arrival, the eleventh hour from the Lord's incarnation until the end of this world]. Ælfric's imagined audience reenact the ages of the world through their daily participation in the divine office, proceeding from Adam to their own present time.¹³¹ The times of the monastic day are therefore also eras in salvation history, which advances inevitably just as the day does. He explains that the parable's idle workers are the heathens, while Christians must engage in good works. Ælfric's reading furthermore shows the urgency of performing this correct action in the present moment, since it is the eleventh hour of the world and the end is drawing near. Ælfric further explains how the stages of human life mirror the hours of the day and, implicitly, the ages of the world:

Witodlice ures andgites merigen is ure cildhad. [U]re cnihtad swylce underntid on þam astihð ure geogoð, swa swa seo sunne deð ymbe þære ðryddan tide. Ure fulfremeda wæstm swa swa middæg, for ðan ðe on midne dæg bið seo sunne on ðam ufemestum ryne stigende swa swa se fulfremede wæstm bið on fulre stencðe þeonde. Seo nontid bið ure yld, for ðan ðe on nontide asihð seo sunne, and ðæs ealdigendan mannes mægen bið wanigende. Seo endlyfte tid bið seo forwerode ealdnyss þam deaðe genealæcende, swa swa seo sunne setlunge genealæhð on þæs dægges geendunge.¹³²

[Truly the morning of our understanding is our childhood. Our boyhood is like the third hour in which our youth ascends, just as the sun does around the third hour. Our full maturity is just as noon, because in the middle of the day the sun is climbing into that uppermost course just as full maturity is thriving in full strength. The ninth hour is our age, because the sun sets in the ninth hours, and the strength of the aging man is waning. The eleventh hour is decayed old age nearing death, just as the sun nears its setting at the end of the day.]

In this reading, the course of a human life is like that of the sun. It rises, achieves full flower, and sets. Like people coming to righteousness in the different ages of the world, Ælfric says, individuals are led to good works in different stages of their lives. Because they match the course of the sun, the stages of life also progress like the canonical hours, from "undern" [terce] to "seo endlyfte tid" [vespers]. In the course of any one day's liturgical devotion, monks ritually enact the motion of time on the literal level, commemorating salvation history, and the spiritual one, signifying tropologically their own lives and daily routines. Liturgy, through the daily performance of the office and the annual feast day for Septuagesima, thus frames a participant's time in moral terms whose scope is at once world-historical and quotidian.

¹²⁹ The Gospel for the day is Luke 8:4-15.

¹³⁰ *CH II*, ed. Godden, V: 43, lines 62-65.

¹³¹ On the exegesis treating the ages of man in this parable, see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 80-88.

¹³² *Ibid.*, V: 44, lines 92-101.

At the end of his homily for the Feast of the Circumcision, Ælfric turns from the adumbration and explanation of world history to the reckoning of time and the subject of temporality. In doing so, he effectively treats the theoretical framework that underlies his treatments of the individual Anglo-Saxon's role within salvation history. Ælfric describes here competing ways of reckoning time in much the same way that he described competing histories in his Assumption homilies. There has been, he explains, much confusion about which day is the first of the year. "We habbað oft gehyred" [We have often heard], he says, that this day begins the year, but "we ne gemetað nana geswutelunge on cristenum bocum hwi ðes dæg to gearas anginne geteald sy"¹³³ [we do not find any explanation in Christian books why this day is reckoned the year's beginning]. As with the details of Mary's death, there are many books that one may consult on the subject, and most of them are wrong.¹³⁴ Ælfric counts the old Roman system of using this day, a practice that began "on hæðenum dagum" [in the heathen days] and that many continue "for nanum godcundlicum gesceade ac for þam ealdan gewunan"¹³⁵ [according to no divine reason, but old custom]. He notes additionally the Hebrew calendar, which uses the spring equinox; the Greek calendar, which uses the summer solstice; the Egyptian calendar, which places the year's beginning in harvest-time; and "sume ure þeningbec" [some of our service-books] and "ure gerimbec"¹³⁶ [our books of computus], which follow none of these calendars but instead begin the year on Christmas day. Each of these systems stands on ancient precedent, and taken together, they offer the chronologist a choice among all the seasons for the first day of the year.¹³⁷ The distinctions among these systems, however, is not merely academic. To reckon time inaccurately makes it impossible to schedule Christian worship at the proper times. Because time is fundamental to historical understanding, failure to apprehend it correctly necessarily leads to sinful and foolish action.

Ælfric establishes the first day of the year not through mathematical computation or calendrical reckoning but rather by interpreting scripture *ad litteram*. In point of fact, he writes, the year begins "on þam dæge . . . ðe se ælmihtiga scyppend sunnan 7 monan 7 steorran 7 ealra tida angin gesette"¹³⁸ [on that day when the almighty Creator set the sun, the moon, the stars, and all times]. In this logic, the year began when time did. This day was March 18th, and because there was nothing in the firmament beforehand, it followed three days when there was no time. Ælfric explains: "On þam feorðan dæge gesette se ælmihtiga ealle tunglan 7 gearlice tida 7 het þæt hi wæron to tacne dagum 7 gearum"¹³⁹ [On the fourth day, the Almighty placed the stars and the annual times, and he commanded that they be a sign of the days and years]. The passage and division of time is therefore an intrinsic feature of the world that is legible in the stars, not merely a description of nature or a human addition to it. Ælfric finds time inscribed in nature, but

¹³³ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 228, lines 129-32.

¹³⁴ Concerning the historical development of computus (and therefore those methods of time-reckoning that might have been available to Ælfric), see Georges Declercq, *Anno Domini: The Origins of the Christian Era* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000); Olaf Pedersen, "The Ecclesiastical Calendar and the Life of the Church," *Gregorian Reform of the Calendar: Proceedings of the Vatican Conference to Commemorate its 400th Anniversary 1582-1982*, ed. G. V. Coyne, M. A. Hoskin, and O. Pedersen (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Scientiarum, 1983), 17-74; and Faith Wallis, "Introduction," *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxxiv-lxxxv.

¹³⁵ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 228, lines 136-37.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 138 and 140.

¹³⁷ On what seasons an Anglo-Saxon might have thought there were, see Earl R. Anderson, "The Seasons of the Year in Old English," *ASE* 26 (1997): 231-63.

¹³⁸ *CHI*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 229, lines 141-43.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 153-54.

he also finds it “[s]wa swa se heretoga moyses on þam alicum bocum awrat”¹⁴⁰ [just as the chieftain Moses wrote in those books of law].¹⁴¹ In place of his usual reference to a patristic or Carolingian *trahnung*, Ælfric takes as an authority for his reckoning Bede’s computistic treatise *De temporum ratione*.¹⁴² He approaches time here in much the same way that he approaches Mary’s *uita* or the Gospel reading for a given day: by adducing scriptural examples and arriving at their correct historical understanding through exegetical interpretation.

Established *ad litteram*, calendrical reckoning—in essence, how one practices time—also has tropological implications for Ælfric’s imagined audience. Because the Christian calendar’s celebration of Christ and the Hebrew calendar’s reckoning both begin on the day of creation, liturgical time is a fulfilment of the Hebrew calendar much as circumcision of the limbs is a fulfilment of the literal circumcision of Abraham and his lineal descendants. It also reproduces the time of creation, before sin was introduced into the world, in the present day while it ritually reproduces the time of Christ’s life in the present day. Ælfric remarks of those people who practice a competing (and therefore unorthodox) calendrical time: “Nu wigliað stunte men menigfealde wigelunga on þisum dæge mid micclum gedwyld æfter hæðenum gewunan ongean hyra cristendom”¹⁴³ [Now foolish men prognosticate many sorceries on this day with great error according to heathen custom, against their Christianity]. The “stunte men” who observe the wrong first day recall the person who, being spiritually uncircumcised, has “stuntum nytenum . . . gelic geworden”¹⁴⁴ [become like foolish animals]. For Ælfric, the correct reckoning of time marks human reason no less than does the discipline of one’s body. Reckoning time according to the wrong calendar is a heretical act, a “gedwyld” like that of the Marian Assumption narratives, that leads not just to sin but to sorcery after the heathen custom. Ælfric lists here a number of prognostics, apparently referring to texts like those now preserved in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. iii.¹⁴⁵ Prognostic texts predict the success or failure of a given action (whether travel, birth, or bloodletting) by the day on which it is performed. Ælfric rejects these practices as unacceptable for his imagined audience. For example, he writes that some people “nellað heora þing wanian on monandæge for angynne þære wucan. ac se monandæg nis na fyrrest daga on þære wucan, ac is se oþer. se sunnandæg is fyrrest on gesceapenyse 7 on endebyrdnyse 7 on wurþmynte”¹⁴⁶ [do not want to perform bloodletting on Monday because of the beginning of the week. But Monday is not the first day of the week, but the second. Sunday is first in creation, rank, and honor].¹⁴⁷ Ælfric does not take issue here with bloodletting *per se* but rather with the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, lines 144-45.

¹⁴¹ As Godden notes in his *Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 51, Ælfric refers in this passage specifically to Exodus 12:2: “Mensis iste uobis principium mensum: primus erit in mensibus anni” [This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be first in the months of the year].

¹⁴² For Bede’s discussion of the first day of the year, see *Bedae opera de temporibus*, ed. Charles W. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1943), 190-93, section VI. On a “political theology of time” in Bede’s computus and related theoretical issues, see Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 105-14.

¹⁴³ *CH I*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 229, lines 162-64.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 227, lines 94-95.

¹⁴⁵ See further *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics: An Edition and Translation of Texts from London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii*, ed. and trans. R. M. Liuzza (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011).

¹⁴⁶ *CH I*, ed. Clemoes, VI: 229, lines 167-70.

¹⁴⁷ On the difficult expression “heora þing wanian,” see Max Förster, “Vom Fortleben antiker Samellunare im englischen und in anderen Volkssprachen,” *Anglia* 67-68 (1944): 1-171, at 60-61. Compare the interlinear glosses

improper calculation of the day on which it is (or is not) performed. Prognostics are heretical because they rely on false interpretations of scripture. Adhering to the orthodox liturgical calendar ensures that one will not fall into such errors, and it ultimately inscribes each of the Anglo-Saxon faithful as a responsible actor within the morally articulated structure of salvation history.

Conclusion

Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* provide what, for many Anglo-Saxons of his day, would have been their main engagement with the text of scripture. It would also have been the most important explanation they received of liturgical practice, from the meaning of the day's Mass to the organization of the church year. These engagements were, this chapter has argued, always already mediated and structured by Ælfric's own use of exegetical theory, and they were situated within the political context of the English Benedictine reforms. Ælfric, trained by royally promoted ecclesiastics and placed in his monastery by the West Saxon nobleman Æthelmær, typically translates the day's reading and explains its tropological application to his imagined audience's lives. He works to establish the correct historical grounding for the Feast of the Assumption, rejecting those apocryphal elements it has acquired and explaining instead how Mary models the liturgical experience of present-day Christians. Participating in the rituals for this feast, in Ælfric's reading, places Anglo-Saxon Christians squarely in the tradition of Mary and those saints who work to reverse Eve's introduction of sin into the world. The Feast of the Circumcision, on the other hand, has almost no known history behind it. Ælfric counters this problem by providing context from the Old Testament and showing how the historical practice of circumcision extends spiritually to the entire body of the uncircumcised Christian. The problem of time—its reckoning, practice, and significance—lies behind his homilies for these feasts and behind the possibility of history at all. Ælfric treats this problem variously, showing how liturgical practice arranges a Christian's time in a necessarily typological and tropological way. Throughout his *Catholic Homilies*, Ælfric interpellates the Anglo-Saxon faithful as an actors in salvation history, working to produce moral English subjects by showing how Christian worship retraces the steps of Christ, his forerunners, and his saints in the vanishing sixth age of the world.

“blod lætan oððe wanian” and “blod wanian” for “sanguinem minuere” in *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics*, ed. Liuzza, 124 *et passim*.

Chapter 3: Tenorial Exegesis in the Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Diplomas

A diploma preserved in the archive of Christ Church, Canterbury affirms the joint sale of land by King Alfred (r. 871-99) and Archbishop Æthelred to one Liaba in the year 893. This diploma opens:

+ In nomine almo trino diuino ego Elfred rex cum consensu et licentia atque consilio sapientium meorum pro spe remunerationis eterne. + ego Eðered archiepiscopus et omne domus mea familie mee de ecclesia Christi omnes concedimus Liaban fili Birgwines istam agellam qoð nos nominamus.¹

[In the name of the bountiful Trinity, I, King Alfred, with the consent, permission and advice of my counselors in hope of eternal reward. + I, Archbishop Æthelred and all the house of my familia of Christ Church, give to Liaba Birgwine's son this parcel of land, which we name (as follows).]

Neither king nor archbishop undertakes this act solely on his own initiative. They need each other, whether because they hold this parcel of land together or for some other reason, and the sale works for a common end as well as for individual gain. For his part, Alfred gives the land in “spe remunerationis eterne” [hope of eternal reward]. Trading royal land for episcopal sanction—and therefore, presumably, divine grace—is a common topos in Anglo-Latin diplomas; that the king and archbishop both sign this diploma thematizes the concrete exchange behind this theological aspect of diplomatic rhetoric. The individual action taken by Alfred and Æthelred is furthermore represented as the consensus of the larger groups of which each is a member. Alfred secured the help and support of his *witan* [counselors] to make the sale. Æthelred, on the other hand, speaks for his church and his ecclesiastical family in allowing the land to Liaba. The negotiated and corporate nature of the diploma seen here will be foundational to this chapter, which studies the implicit hermeneutics of diplomas issued in the tenth century. No diplomas survive from a fifteen-year period during the reign of Alfred's successor Edward (r. 899-924).² However, from the reign of Alfred's grandson Æthelstan (r. 924/925-39) following this gap through the end of the tenth century, the diplomas change immediately and drastically. Whereas S 344 contains so many grammatical errors that it has, in Simon Keynes's words, “become symbolic of the sorry state of literacy in Latin at Canterbury at about the time of Alfred's accession,”³ diplomas after the gap demonstrate a sudden and very high competence in

¹ S 344, *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. Walter de Gray Birch, 3 vols. (London, 1885-99), II.1: 153-55, at 153. I have retained this diploma's errors of Latinity but not attempted to reproduce them in my translation. Throughout this chapter, I have drawn on the valuable resource <<http://www.esawyer.org.uk>>.

² See David N. Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992), 151-53; and Simon Keynes, “Edward, King of the Anglo-Saxons,” *Edward the Elder, 899-924*, ed. N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (New York: Routledge, 2001), 40-66, at 55-56.

³ Simon Keynes, “Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas,” *Kingship, Legislation, and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Brian W. Schneider (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 17-180, at 73.

Latin.⁴ The basic political and ecclesiastical concerns seen in S 344 would moreover be expressed with a stylistic elevation and theoretical sophistication unprecedented in Anglo-Saxon diplomas. Inaugurated by the draftsman known as Æthelstan A, such elevation had not been seen in Anglo-Latin writing since the seventh-century author Aldhelm's work three centuries before, and these tenth-century diplomas form a distinct Anglo-Latin genre in the stylistic tradition of Aldhelm.⁵ This chapter argues that they also form a body of political theory strongly influenced by his and others' exegetical concerns, using exegetical theory to negotiate and inform real-world social and political relations.

Although the theological nature of medieval (and modern) political thought is a commonplace,⁶ the Anglo-Saxons gave this theology a specifically and explicitly exegetical spin. In Anglo-Saxon England, the concept of tenure relied upon reciprocity, on the one hand, between the vassal and his king and, on the other hand, between the king and God. As Richard P. Abels writes:

Bookland was, in effect, a type of *do-ut-des*. A Christian king gave a free gift to God in hope of receiving from Him the free gift of grace . . . This exchange of gifts confirmed the relationship of lordship that existed between a king and his Lord God in much the same way that reciprocal prestation signified, and by signifying effected, a lordship relationship between a man and his secular lord.⁷

In fact, the logic of Æthelstan A's diplomas turns on a quotation from Luke 6:38: "Date et dabitur uobis" [Give, and it shall be given to you]. Placing this quotation in the center of his *flebilis fortiter detestanda* proems, Æthelstan A in effect turns these diplomas into exegetical

⁴ On English (not just West Saxon) learning in Alfred's time and the apparent emphasis on pragmatic rather than literary writing, see Jennifer Morrish, "King Alfred's Letter as a Source on Learning in England in the Ninth Century," *Studies in Earlier English Prose: Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), 87-107, at 92-97. On the state of English libraries at this time, see Helmut Gneuss, "King Alfred and the History of Anglo-Saxon Libraries," *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honor of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Georgia Ronan Crampton, and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 29-49. On the importation of continental learning and liturgy during Alfred's reign, a development that likely had its influence on Æthelstan A, see Jesse D. Billett, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England 597- c.1000* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2014), 142-47.

⁵ Simon Keynes writes that it is "no coincidence" that these stylized diplomas began to be issued the year after Æthelstan took control of Northumbria, arguing that they are "symbolic of a monarchy invigorated by success." See his "England, c. 900-1016," *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume III c. 900-c. 1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 456-84, at 470. D. A. Woodman too calls it "no coincidence" in his "Æthelstan A and the Rhetoric of Rule," *ASE* 42 (2013): 217-48, at 219. See also this suggestion made by Eric John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), 50. On the hermeneutic style in Anglo-Latin and the imitation of Aldhelm, see respectively Michael Lapidge, "The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature," *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 105-49, and Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 239-98.

⁶ See respectively (and archetypically) Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), and Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Pertinent to this chapter's interests is 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, 1987).

⁷ Richard P. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 48.

analyses of this scripture's political ramifications. His treatment of tenure would prove both durable and flexible over the course of the century.

The alliterative diplomas issued in the 940s and 950s demonstrate both these qualities, varying Æthelstan A's scriptural quotation along two lines.⁸ A brief survey shows that they also quote scripture insistently and almost incessantly. The first kind of quotation continues Æthelstan A's focus on "do-ut-des." One diploma also quotes Luke 6:38,⁹ and two more quote from Matthew 10:8: "gratis accepistis, gratis date" [freely have you received, freely give].¹⁰ A fourth diploma refers to both II Corinthians 9:7, "hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus" [for God loveth a cheerful giver] and Matthew 22:21, "Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris, Caesari: et quae sunt Dei, Deo" [Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's].¹¹ This last reference continues the previous diploma's emphasis on giving, but at the same time that it reinforces the analogy between temporal and divine governance, it also enjoins the recipient of the land to pay both his taxes and his tithes. The second type of scriptural quotation has to do with God's creation of the world. One diploma simply opens with Genesis 1:1: "In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram" [In the beginning God created heaven, and earth].¹² A short prologue on the divine order of nature follows. More suggestively, the diploma S 472 opens by quoting the "prophetica Salomonis sententia" [prophetic statement of Solomon] recorded in Ecclesiasticus 1:1: "Omnis sapientia a Domino Deo est: et cum illo fuit semper, et est ante aeuum" [All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all time].¹³ The rest of the proem begins with the words "qui uidelicet," a conventional way to begin an exegetical gloss, before explaining in some detail the sense of this verse, which this draftsman also takes to be about the divine order of nature. His proem says that God is the "auctor uerus" [true author] who created everything "iuxta meritorum qualitatem"¹⁴ [according to the quality of its merits]. King Edmund (r. 939-46), it would happen, mirrors this divine order in his rule of the kingdom. It follows that the politics of his land grant ought also to mirror this order. In the same way that Æthelstan A builds his diploma upon the foundation of Luke 6:38, these draftsmen build theirs upon various but closely interrelated scriptural citations.

Each of these types of quotation transcodes the politics of land tenure in exegetical terms. Moreover, the variety of verses that they bring to bear on these two ways of figuring tenure suggests that these diplomas' draftsmen not only understood tenure in exegetical terms but that they actively sought new ways to express it thus. Self-conscious though the draftsmen of the alliterative diplomas are in this regard, Æthelstan A and the author of the Pershore diploma thought through the exegetical frame of tenure in far greater detail than any of the alliterative draftsmen did. In order to understand the political implications and use of such transcoding, this chapter first discusses the diplomas' production and use, establishing the extent to which the diplomas were socialized texts that displayed "the textual presence and activities of many

⁸ This group contains S 472-73, 479, 484, 520, 544, 548-50, 556-67, 566, 569, 572, 633, and 1606. For further discussion, see Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred the 'Unready' 978-1016: A Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 82, n. 185.

⁹ S 556, *The Early Charters of Eastern England*, ed. C. R. Hart (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), 155-56, at 155.

¹⁰ S 572, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, III.3:687-88, at 687; S 633, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, III.1: 114-15, at 114.

¹¹ S 484, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, II.2: 506-7.

¹² S 569, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, III.1: 73-74, at 73.

¹³ S 472, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, II.2: 472-73, at 472.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

nonauthorial agents.”¹⁵ Diplomas represent the work of their draftsmen, but they are typically written in the voice of the king or, as above, of a church leader, and these voices themselves speak for the consensus of a larger group. The diploma moreover binds this group to at least one other individual in a legal transaction, producing a text of real and immediate social importance. This chapter then turns to the exegetical mode found in Aldhelm’s work, one of the diplomas’ single most important sources, before focusing on the diplomas themselves. Æthelstan A remains the paradigm of the “do-ut-des” approach, using exegetical method to think through the nature of tenurial holding and the political obligations that it entails. In the second part of the chapter, two diplomas from the first generation of the Benedictine monastic reforms set their foundations very particularly in the divinely appointed history of the world. These diplomas explicate salvation history in typological terms and rhetorically integrate their new monastic foundations into it. Their investment in typological temporalities furthermore reinforces, and in some cases discloses, the rhetorical practice seen in other documents written by the first-generation leaders of the Benedictine reforms. Over the course of the tenth century, Anglo-Latin diplomas reveal exegetical theory becoming political practice, a way of mediating and imposing social relations by inscribing them in the morally charged temporalities of salvation history.

Diplomas in Historical and Literary Context

One of the key sources for Anglo-Saxon history, diplomas have come to be viewed in recent scholarship less as records of legal history than as legally productive documents in their own right. Diplomas were intrinsically social texts, embedded in a series of ritual actions and political negotiations. They were, as Geoffrey Koziol has demonstrated for the contemporary West Frankish kingdom, performative documents “issued in order to institute, publicise, and memorialise a crucial alteration in the political regime.”¹⁶ That is, Anglo-Saxon diplomas do provide records of legal history, but they also *made* legal history in the process of being drafted and published. Their content had to be agreed upon before they could be drafted. Once drafted, their publication took place at an assembly minimally including the transacting parties and their associates. At this assembly, a given diploma’s acceptance was often ritually dramatized, and its witness list was drawn up. In this context, the diplomas’ exegetical mode necessarily both reflected and affected concrete political relations such as those of an assembly on the king’s itinerary. Diplomas’ tropological exhortations are therefore not merely literary topoi. They are deeply theorized sets of instructions aimed at real audiences no less than are homilies or biblical translations, and they aim to produce serious and specific effects in the world.

Although diplomas are documents of court culture that typically promulgate and ratify courtly legal actions, the precise relationship of diploma production to the court has been a matter of debate. In a series of important articles on the subject, Pierre Chaplais saw in the diplomas’ exegetical focus evidence that they were written at religious foundations by ecclesiastics.¹⁷ Chaplais’s arguments about the production of the diplomas have been superseded

¹⁵ Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 76.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: The West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 3.

¹⁷ Pierre Chaplais, “The Origin and Authenticity of the Anglo-Saxon Diploma,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3.2 (1965): 48-61. At page 52, he remarks: “What authenticity can the land-book have had, which was obvious to the contemporaries and is no longer evident to us? It was in my view a purely religious and ecclesiastical one.” For Chaplais’s full arguments about the production and ecclesiastical use of Anglo-Saxon diplomas, see additionally his “The Anglo-Saxon Chancery: From the Diploma to the Writ,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3.4 (1966): 160-

by Simon Keynes's work to establish the existence of a royal chancery.¹⁸ However, the term "chancery" may exaggerate the size of the institution it describes. The draftsman Æthelstan A, for example, seems to have constituted the entire royal chancery by himself during the period of his activity.¹⁹ "Chancery" may also suggest too clear-cut a division between the royal court and the minster's scriptorium. Charles Insley has shown, for example, that late diplomas extant from southwestern England were at least sometimes produced regionally rather than nationally and that scribes may occasionally have been borrowed from minsters to serve at a nearby assembly.²⁰ It is clear that there existed some kind of central writing office or royally employed draftsmen in late Anglo-Saxon England, but the draftsmen in question may well have received ecclesiastical educations or even have been members of a monastery when they were not working at an assembly. Different agencies produced diplomas in a variety of institutional arrangements, many of which are now difficult or impossible to uncover. Nevertheless, there did exist a "mainstream" diplomatic tradition in the tenth century,²¹ and it appears to have been associated especially with the royal court's itinerary whether or not it was integral to the court itself.

Regardless of their draftsmen's exact origins or educations, the tenth-century royal diplomas represent both the consensus of numerous voices and these voices' formal acceptance of the diploma's terms. Most tenth-century diplomas appear to have been drawn up in a more or less continuous process at the assemblies where they were published, and the transfer of a diploma would have been an important part of many assemblies.²² In one of the major studies to date of the Anglo-Saxon diplomatic tradition, Keynes establishes that most tenth-century diplomas were produced shortly before the ceremony of conveyance at which they were published.²³ This production presumably took place after a process of negotiation during which the land to be transferred and the payment for it were settled upon, although little evidence exists for this process in an Anglo-Saxon context.²⁴ Even in the absence of direct evidence, it is likely that diplomas reflected real conversations occurring at English royal assemblies.²⁵

76; "Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas on Single Sheets: Originals or Copies?" *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3.7 (1968): 315-36; "Who Introduced Diplomas to England? The Case for Augustine," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3.10 (1969): 526-42; and "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited," *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 41-51.

¹⁸ Keynes first made this argument in *The Diplomas of King Æthelred the "Unready."* Concerning the diplomas of Æthelstan, see specifically pages 42-44. For further studies on the subject, see his "Regenbald the Chancellor (*sic*)," *ANS* 10 (1987): 185-222, and his "Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 226-57. Keynes's work was made possible especially by Richard Drögereit, "Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?" *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 13.3 (1935): 335-436.

¹⁹ See Simon Keynes, "England, c. 900-1016," 470; and Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 72.

²⁰ Charles Insley, "Charters and Episcopal Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West," *EME* 7.2 (1998): 173-97, at 184-97.

²¹ The term is that of Keynes, "Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas," 60.

²² On the ceremony of conveyance, see Roach, "Public Rites and Public Wrongs: Ritual Aspects of Diplomas in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England," *EME* 19.2 (2011): 182-203, at 185-92. On the different reasons for which assemblies were convened in the tenth century, see Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 48-67.

²³ Keynes, "Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas."

²⁴ On what can be known about it, see Rory Naismith, "Payments for Land and Privilege in Anglo-Saxon England," *ASE* 41 (2012): 277-342, at 302-4. See further James Campbell, "The Sale of Land and the Economics of Power in

The ceremony of conveyance also took place at these assemblies, in the presence of the king and the *witan*.²⁶ Royal assemblies, along with the opportunities for ritual display and social networking they provided, have emerged in current scholarship as an integral feature of Anglo-Saxon kingship,²⁷ and the office of the kingship was probably discharged through at least some degree of personal charisma on the king's part.²⁸ Such kingship required the king's personal interaction with the *witan*, whose consent he needed in order to rule effectively. King Æthelred's (r. 978-1016) re-accession after the death of the Danish king Swein Forkbeard is the most striking example of this point. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *witan* sent after Æthelred to be their king again if he "hi rihtlicor healdan wolde þonne he ær dyde"²⁹ [would rule them more rightly than he previously did]. For his part, Æthelred had to promise that he "him hold hlaford beon wolde 7 ælc þæra ðinga betan þe hi ealle ascunodon, 7 ælc þara ðinga forgyfen beon sceolde þe him gedon oþþe gecweden wære, wið þam ðe hi ealle anrædlice butan swicdome to him gecyrdon"³⁰ [would be a loyal lord to them and make good each of those things which they all hated and that everything would be forgiven that was done or said to him, as long as they all turned to him resolutely without betrayal]. Here Æthelred and his *witan* negotiate the conditions of his return to the throne, a remarkable testament to the corporate nature of the Anglo-Saxon kingship.³¹ The witness lists of the diplomas testify equally to this kind of collaboration and negotiation, a reminder that, in Anglo-Saxon England, the political was almost always personal.

If diplomas were social texts, they were also sacral ones. Little is known concretely about the ceremony of conveyance and its attendant rituals, but the slim surviving evidence describes the ceremony in ecclesiastical terms. These rituals are often taken to be central to a diploma's social effectiveness, especially among the laity.³² The Fontmell diploma of c. 670 provides the best known description of such a ceremony: "Nam earundem supradictarum cespites pro ampliori firmitate euuangelium superposui, ita ut ab hac die tendendi, habendi, pussidendi (sic)

Early England: Problems and Possibilities," *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London: London and Hambledon, 2000), 227-45.

²⁵ See Charles Insley, "Assemblies and Charters in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages*, ed. P. S. Barnwell and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 47-59.

²⁶ Keynes, "Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas," 68-92.

²⁷ See Julia Barrow, "Demonstrative Behaviour and Political Communication in Later Anglo-Saxon England," *ASE* 36 (2007): 127-50; Levi Roach, "Hosting the King: Hospitality and the Royal *Iter* in Tenth-Century England," *JMH* 37 (2011): 34-46; and Roach, "Public Rites and Public Wrongs." On the political importance of ritual more generally, see Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997). The study of ritual inaugurated by the articles anthologized in this book sparked intense discussion in Carolingian studies. See particularly Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Julia Barrow, "Playing by the Rules: Conflict Management in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Germany," *EME* 11.4 (2002): 389-96; and Geoffrey Koziol, "The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?" *EME* 11.4 (2002): 367-88.

²⁸ See especially Roach, "Hosting the King."

²⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS C*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 98, s.a. 1014.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ On the context of this passage, see Alice Sheppard, *Families of the King: Writing Identity in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 96-99.

³² See Susan Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word," *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 36-62, at 44-46.

in omnibus liberam et firmam habeat potestatem”³³ [For I have placed sods of these above-mentioned holdings on the Gospel for the greater confirmation, that he may thus have firmly and freely in all matters the power of holding, having, and possessing]. This diploma suggests a ritual in which the conveyance of land was considered a religious matter.³⁴ According to this diploma, a certain Wigheard places the soil of the land granted on the Gospel, which was probably located on an altar. He thereby links the land unambiguously to the biblical text. A significantly later diploma mentions that the Mercian king Æthelbald placed on an altar a sod of the land granted along with “cunctos libellos prememorati cenobii”³⁵ [all the deeds of the aforementioned monastery (of Christ Church, Canterbury)].³⁶ Here too land is linked to ecclesiastical books; in this case, however, it is linked to as many of them as possible rather than to the Gospels alone. Such scraps of evidence imply a close connection between land and book in Anglo-Saxon thought and practice, a connection borne out in a wide variety of writings from the period.³⁷ In the diplomas themselves, land and tenurial possession come to be explicated in the same way as were the Gospels and other books used in ceremonies of conveyance: through exegesis, according to the senses of scripture.

Directly or indirectly, the tenth-century Anglo-Latin royal diplomas also approach land tenure through the close reading and imitation of Aldhelm’s writing. After his death in 709 or 710, some of Aldhelm’s most important works (particularly the *Enigmata* and perhaps the *Carmen de uirginitate*) were out of circulation in England by the ninth century and were only re-imported by Continental scholars during the early tenth century.³⁸ The *Prosa de uirginitate* is attested by at least one ninth-century English manuscript.³⁹ However, the tenth-century tradition of intensively glossing this text relies primarily on a single exemplar; this fact implies that study of the *Prosa* was suddenly rejuvenated in the early tenth century and then promulgated to the rest of England from a single center.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the inscription of the Æthelstanian praise poem

³³ S 1168, in *Diplomas of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3. See further *ibid.*, 8, and Insley, “Rhetoric and Ritual in Late Anglo-Saxon Diplomas,” *Medieval Legal Process: Physical, Spoken and Written Performance in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marco Mostert and P. S. Barnwell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 109-21, at 113.

³⁴ See Geoffrey Koziol’s remark of Carolingian diplomas and diplomatic ritual that “linking the prologue’s invocation of divine authority with the donation or protection of material goods, is the hinge of it all,” in *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 90. On the ritual significance of *firmatio*, *firmare*, and related technical terms for the act of confirming a charter, see Georges DeClercq, “Between Legal Action and Performance: The *firmatio* of Charters in the Early Middle Ages,” *Medieval Legal Process*, 55-73.

³⁵ S 1258, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. Birch, I.2: 405-7, at 405.

³⁶ Translation by Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), no. 79, 468-70, at 469.

³⁷ See Scott Thompson Smith, *Land and Book: Literature and Land Tenure in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

³⁸ Michael Lapidge, “Latin Learning in Ninth-Century England,” *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 409-54, at 419-22. For a fuller discussion of the transmission of Aldhelm’s works, see Blanche B. Boyer, “Insular Contribution to Medieval Literary Tradition on the Continent,” *Classical Philology* 42.4 (1947): 209-22, at 213-22.

³⁹ Lapidge, *ibid.*, 421.

⁴⁰ See Scott Gwara, “Manuscripts of Aldhelm’s ‘Prosa de Virginitate’ and the Rise of Hermeneutic Literacy in Tenth-Century England,” *Studi medievali* 3rd ser. 35.1 (1994): 101-59, at 110. For a discussion of the curricular purpose of Aldhelm’s writings, see Rebecca L. Stephenson, “Deliberate Obfuscation: The Purpose of Hard Words and Difficult Syntax in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England,” PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004, 23-68, especially 59-68.

“Archalis clamare triumuir” in a manuscript containing Aldhelm’s *Enigmata* and the prose *Carmen de Uirginitate* “points,” as Mechthild Gretsch argues, “in an oblique way to the veneration in which Aldhelm was held in King Æthelstan’s circle.”⁴¹ Aldhelm’s stylistic influence on literary production at Æthelstan’s court has been well documented.⁴² Less well documented is his intellectual influence there, but Æthelstan A borrows Aldhelm’s exegetical practice almost wholesale. Although later draftsmen reformulate the terms of this exegesis, they model their work on Æthelstan A’s in many respects, and they may have read Aldhelm themselves. Their diplomas’ hermeneutic Latinity thus brings with it not just rhetorical display but, embedded in this rhetoric, a specifically exegetical analysis of tenurial politics and obligations.

A collection of saints’ lives, Aldhelm’s *De uirginitate* builds tropological and anagogical instruction on the foundation of historical *exempla*.⁴³ In the opening of his *Prosa de uirginitate*, Aldhelm says that he reads with a “naturali quadam . . . latentium rerum curiositate”⁴⁴ [a certain natural curiosity about hidden things].⁴⁵ This statement indicates Aldhelm’s interest in the “sensus mysticus” [spiritual sense] of the letter, but his interest is specifically in the tropological and anagogical senses.⁴⁶ Aldhelm has comparatively little interest in typological interpretation. When he performs such readings, they tend to be brief and done in passing. In his *Carmen de uirginitate*, Aldhelm writes:

antiquae . . . narret littera legis
 Illustrem patres uitam duxisse priores
 Qui uentura Dei prompserunt flamine sancto
 Dona salutaris dum Christus saecula beauit.⁴⁷

[The letter of the ancient law tells how our ancestors led an excellent life, and by holy inspiration proclaimed the future gifts of God, when the Saviour Christ blessed the world.]⁴⁸

⁴¹ Gretsch, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 347. For the poem, see Michael Lapidge, “Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan,” *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 49-86, at 60-61.

⁴² See Drögereit, “Angelsächsische Königskanzlei,” 361-69; Donald A. Bullough, “The Educational Tradition in England from Alfred to Ælfric: Teaching *utriusque linguae*,” *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 297-334, at 303-5; Smith, *Land and Book*, 37-47; Woodman, “Æthelstan A and the Rhetoric of Rule,” 220-25.

⁴³ Because of their shared purpose and because Æthelstan A quotes both prose and poetry, I treat the prose and verse halves of the *De uirginitate* as a single *opus geminatum* rather than two separate works. See Peter Godman, “The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin,” *Medium Ævum* 50.2 (1981): 215-29, at 220-21. However, Bill Friesen argues that the halves should be treated separately: “The *Opus Geminatum* and Anglo-Saxon Literature,” *Neophilologus* 95.1 (2011): 123-44, at 136-37.

⁴⁴ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, MGH AA 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 229.

⁴⁵ Translations of the *Prosa* are taken from *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1979).

⁴⁶ Cf. Michael Herren: “We might tentatively conclude that despite Aldhelm’s repeated use of ‘fourfold,’ the schema is really threefold,” “Aldhelm the Theologian,” *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), I: 68-89, at 73.

⁴⁷ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 363, lines 244-47.

He also occasionally describes an Old Testament figure typologically, as when he interprets Abel's death as a type of Christ's innocence and passion in the *Prosa*,⁴⁹ but such instances are infrequent. Rather, Aldhelm constantly strives after the anagogical and, most of all, the tropological senses of the *uitae*. At times, he expounds upon the nature of morality or the virtue of virginity, as in the allegorical battle of the virtues and vices that follows the *uitae* of the *Carmen*,⁵⁰ but even here he has recourse to biblical *exempla* that illustrate specific virtues and vices. Throughout the text, he virtually conflates historical narratives with their moral import.

As in the Alfredian texts examined in my first chapter, then, the literal and tropological senses are often almost indistinguishable in Aldhelm's *opus geminatum*. Aldhelm explains how the saints provide examples of virginity and spiritual purity:

Et quidem uniuersa haec, quae per gimnosofistas exerceri deprompsimus inter scolares saecularium disciplinas, apud uestri discipulatus industriam non exterioris hominis motibus aguntur, sed interioris gestibus geruntur, siquidem microcosmum id est minorem mundum ex duplici et gemina materiae substantia constare uestrae sagacitatis solertiam non arbitror latere, quin potius, sicut exterioris hominis natura, qui in propatulo formatus uisibiliter conspicitur, haud difficillime deprehendi potest, ita interioris qualitatem, qui caelesti afflatus spiraculo iuxta geneseos relatum creditur, a uestra prudentia membratim et particulatim subtiliter inuestigatam reor.⁵¹

[And truly all these things, which we have singled out as being performed by athletes among the teachable skills belonging to worldly matters, are not, according to the industry of your discipline, performed with the motions of the outer man, but with the actions of the inner man, given that I do not think it concealed from your wisdom that the microcosm—that is, the “smaller world”—consists in a two-fold and twin substance of material; but rather, just as the nature of the outer man—having been formed in open view is seen clearly—can be perceived with no difficulty, so the quality of the inner man—who is believed to have been breathed in by the divine Spirit according to the account of *Genesis*—has, I think, been subtly investigated bit by bit and stage by stage by your intelligence.]⁵²

This passage silently glosses II Corinthians 4:16: “Propter quod non deficimus: sed licet is, qui foris est, noster homo corrumpatur, tamen is, qui intus est, renouatur de die in diem” [For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day]. For Aldhelm, however, the outer man too will ideally remain (sexually) uncorrupted, and he has chosen here to recount the “disciplinas” [teachable skills] of the virgins chosen specifically for their exemplarity and their ability to shape the reader's own life. By drawing upon this scriptural analogy between the *exterior* [outer] and *interior* [inner] man, he also explains how these lives ought to fulfill this tropological function. What athletes do with their

⁴⁸ Translations of the *Carmen* are taken from *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985).

⁴⁹ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 312.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 452-65, lines 2446-2761.

⁵¹ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 230-31.

⁵² *The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 60-61.

outer selves, saints do with their inner selves. Just as athletes win praise for their physical prowess, the saints deserve praise for their moral excellence. If the outer man is in plain sight, the inner man can be extrapolated from his appearance. In this way, the actions of the saints are illustrative of their spiritual performance, and their physical virginity is emblematic of their moral purity.⁵³ Presented with a historical account of a saint's life, the capable reader will understand the tropological sense of the account in this way, taking it as a model for his or her own physical actions and therefore for his or her own moral choices.

Aldhelm also insists upon the anagogical sense of the lives he recounts, both mentioning the eternal reward of particular virgins and establishing the importance of the anagogical sense as an interpretative principle for the work as a whole. For Aldhelm, the anagogical sense is essentially tied to the tropological one. It allows the reader to understand his or her future reward for present physical and spiritual chastity, thereby providing further encouragement to a chaste life. Many of the individual lives have an anagogical ending in which the saint ascends to heaven. This is particularly true in the *Carmen*, where the ascent to heaven is a recurrent motif at the conclusion of the *uitae*'s martyrdom scenes, as when Teucla is killed in an arena:

Purpureo sanctam perfundens sanguine carnem
Martira perpetui dum scandit limina caeli.⁵⁴

[Bathing her holy body in red blood, as a martyr she ascended to the threshold of eternal heaven.]⁵⁵

Those saints who are not shown ascending to heaven may still be promised their reward; for instance, the *Prosa* says that Eulalia is “caelesti inscribitur albo”⁵⁶ [inscribed in the heavenly register].⁵⁷ Aldhelm also notes more than once the anagogical implications of the *uitae* as a whole. In the *Carmen*'s description of Eulalia, she is not inscribed in the Book of Life. Instead, Aldhelm makes a general proclamation that she pursued a life of virginity so that she might be rewarded by God:

castae uirtutis amator . . .
Qui solet assiduis castos armare triumphis
Militibusque suis portam reserare per aethram,
Dum uincunt sancti fallentis proelia mundi.⁵⁸

[the lover of chaste virtue . . . who is accustomed to open the gate of heaven to His soldiers when these saints win the battles of this deceitful world.]⁵⁹

⁵³ Concerning Aldhelm's treatment of virginity, chastity, and marriage, see further Sinéad O'Sullivan, “Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*—Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?” *Peritia* 12 (1998): 271-95, at 280-95.

⁵⁴ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 436, lines 2007-8.

⁵⁵ *The Poetic Works*, trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 147.

⁵⁶ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 300.

⁵⁷ *The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 113.

⁵⁸ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 436, lines 2018 and 2020-22.

⁵⁹ *The Poetic Works*, trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 147.

This description points to Eulalia's own acceptance into heaven, but it also suggests that all virgins may receive the same reward as Eulalia. The anagogical sense of the *uitae* is so important to Aldhelm's treatment of them that he concludes the entire *Prosa* by calling his readers "caelestis patriae participes"⁶⁰ [participants in the celestial homeland],⁶¹ and proclaims at the end of the *Carmen* that "uirginibus . . . confertur gloria regni"⁶² [the glory of the Kingdom is granted to virgins].⁶³ In the very last words of the text, Aldhelm writes of his hope that "adduci merear Christo regnante per aethram"⁶⁴ [(I might) deserve to be led to rest while Christ reigns throughout the heavens].⁶⁵ Throughout both the prose and metrical versions of his *De uirginitate*, Aldhelm thus emphasizes the tropological and anagogical implications of a series of historical narratives. As this chapter hopes to show, the Anglo-Latin diplomas, influenced by Aldhelmian hermeneutics, also emphasize the tropological and anagogical implications of the history that they effect. They carefully situate the land grants they perform against the narrative of salvation history, scrupulously aware that this history is intrinsically moral and that our choices now will have consequences at its end.

Giving, Receiving, and Æthelstan A

The draftsman Æthelstan A is a shadowy but not altogether unknown figure, best known as an early practitioner of the hermeneutic style of Latin that would become popular in tenth-century England.⁶⁶ He was most likely English.⁶⁷ It has been suggested further that he was a Mercian,⁶⁸ perhaps Bishop Ælle of Lichfield,⁶⁹ but such identifications must remain uncertain. The dates of his life are not known except for 928-35, the years during which he wrote his diplomas. Although there is some variation of types, the approximately twenty diplomas attributed to him display a high degree of standardization in form and exegetical mode. Such standardization is partly the nature of the diploma, a formulaic document employing the same basic elements throughout much of Anglo-Saxon history: an invocation of divine aid; a proem on a commonplace topic; a dispositive clause naming the grantor, grantee, and terms of possession; a boundary clause describing the land in surveyor's terms; a blessing or anathema; a dating clause; and a witness list. Æthelstan A uses these same elements but elaborates upon them to an unprecedented degree. His work is divisible into two main groups of diplomas identified by their

⁶⁰ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 323.

⁶¹ *The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 132.

⁶² *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 471, lines 2893-94.

⁶³ *The Poetic Works*, trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 167.

⁶⁴ *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 471, line 2904.

⁶⁵ *The Poetic Works*, trans. Lapidge and Rosier, 167.

⁶⁶ The first thorough stylistic description of Æthelstan A's work—as well as the first identification of Æthelstan A as a single individual—was by Richard Drögereit, "Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?" 361-69. The most recent study of this draftsman is Ben Snook, *The Anglo-Saxon Chancery: The History, Language and Production of Anglo-Saxon Charters from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), 86-124.

⁶⁷ See Mechthild Gretsch: "We do not know for certain who 'Æthelstan A' was, whether of English or foreign extraction, although the boundary clauses in his two surviving single-sheet diplomas, written in impeccable Old English, would seem to indicate an Englishman," *Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, 336.

⁶⁸ Michael Wood, "'Stand Strong Against the Monsters': Kingship and Learning in the Empire of King Æthelstan," *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Patrick Wormald and Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 191-217, at 201.

⁶⁹ *Diplomas of Abingdon Abbey: Part I*, ed. Susan Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Diplomas 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 102.

incipits. The *flebilis fortiter detestanda* diplomas were produced from 931-33,⁷⁰ and the *fortuna fallentis saeculi* diplomas were produced from 934-35.⁷¹ Written in King Æthelstan's voice, each type of Æthelstan A's diplomas begins with a long proem lamenting the moral state of the era, sometimes contrasting it anagogically with the happiness of heaven. The dispositive section describes the land grant in tropological and anagogical terms, saying that the land is being given so that Æthelstan may enjoy the delights of heaven, including the "angelica ymnidicæ iubilationis organa mellifluaque uernantium rosarum odoramina"⁷² [angelic organ of the rejoicing of hymnody and the honey-flowing perfumes of vernal roses]. The anathema is again anagogical. As Chaplais writes, these anathema clauses are typical of Anglo-Saxon diplomas in that they "[do] not provide for any secular penalties . . . but only for religious sanctions to be meted out on the Day of Judgment."⁷³ In Æthelstan A's anathema clauses, Judgment Day is described in detail, and those who might violate the terms of the diploma are ordinarily warned that they will join the traitor Judas in hell. The Æthelstan A diplomas conclude with unusually long witness lists. These witness lists again emphasize the sacral nature of the grant; Æthelstan, whose signature always begins the list, typically signs with an X, a "signo sanctę semperque adorandę crucis"⁷⁴ [sign of the holy and always to-be-adored cross].

Æthelstan A amplifies the tropological and anagogical senses of his "do-ut-des" Gospel citation, using his own historical moment as the foundation for these spiritual senses. In his innovative study of tenorial discourse in Anglo-Saxon literature, Scott Thompson Smith writes that Anglo-Latin diplomas "[cast] the possession of land in the rhetoric of salvation and eternal time," a rhetoric that "essentially denies history while remaining acutely aware of historical pressure."⁷⁵ For Æthelstan A, this chapter argues, such rhetoric expresses his underlying exegetical hermeneutic. When exegetes focus on the tropological (e.g., Gregory in his *Moralia in Iob*) or the allegorical (e.g., Cassiodorus in his *Expositio Psalmorum*), they do so as a deepening and enrichment of the literal sense. For his part, Æthelstan A takes the spiritual senses as a deepening and enrichment of his own historical time and of the grants that his diplomas effect. He inscribes his signatories in a temporality that, in contrast to the fixed and eternal structure of salvation history of which it is a part, is always swiftly passing. The one-sentence proem of his S 413, a typical example of the *flebilis fortiter detestanda* type, works within the structure of salvation history in order to establish the moral and, contingently, the eternal stakes of the land grant that it records for June 20, 931:

Flebilis fortiter detestanda totillantis seculi piacula diris obscene horrendęque mortalitatis circumsepta latratibus non nos patria indempte pacis securos, sed quasi fetide corruptile in uoraginem casuros prouocando ammonent ut ea toto mentis conanime cum casibus suis, non solum despiciendo sed etiam uelud fastidiosam melancolie nausiam abhominando fugiamus, tendentes ad illud euuangelicum, "Date et dabitur uobis;" qua de re infima quasi peripsima quisquiliarum abiciens, superna ad instar preciosorum

⁷⁰ These diplomas include S 412-13, S 416-19, and S 422-23, and S 1604.

⁷¹ These diplomas include S 379, S 407, S 425-26, and S 458.

⁷² S 425, *Diplomas of Christ Church Canterbury: Part II*, ed. N. P. Brooks and S. E. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 866.

⁷³ Chaplais, "Origin and Authenticity of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Diploma," 52.

⁷⁴ *Diplomas of Christ Church Canterbury: Part II*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, 867.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Land and Book*, 28-29.

monilium eligens, animum sempiternis in gaudiis figens, ad nasciscendam melliflue dulcedinis meniam perfruendamque infinite leticie iocunditatem.⁷⁶

[The lamentable, strongly to be detested sins of the tottering world, surrounded by the dire howling of foul and horrible death, admonish us—who are not secure in the peace obtained in the homeland but as if about to fall into a chasm of stinking corruption—by challenging that we ought to flee them through the full courage of mind, not only by despising them but also by abhorring them just as the nauseating vomit of melancholy, holding to the Gospel, “Give, and it shall be given to you,” therefore casting away the vilest things as if the filth of refuse, choosing heavenly things on the model of costly necklaces, fastening the mind in eternal joys, to swimming in the sea of honey-flowing sweetness and completely enjoying the delight of infinite happiness.]

The proem’s concern with the land grant itself is not immediately apparent. Instead, it sets the stage on which the grant takes place. The first words of the diploma describe the world as “totillans” [tottering] under the weight of sin, surrounded by death. The language of the proem is overwhelmingly moral, describing the appropriate reaction to sin—it is greatly to be detested—and the wages of sin—horrible death, which is calling out to us—in no uncertain terms. This nominal phrase contains in itself a coherent tropological message, but this message’s relationship to the literal sense is rather more vexed than in, for example, the Old English *Boethius*. Instead of relying on a stable historical narrative as a foundation for tropological instruction, the force of this nominal phrase relies on the faltering of history. Sin ought to be detested precisely because history is evanescent, tottering already and hemmed in on all sides by death. In short, the consequences of present actions are never far away.

The transience of worldly things is of course a common topos in Anglo-Saxon literature, but here this topos specifically unites the concerns of tropological instruction and tenurial uncertainty. The transience topos frequently notes the passing nature of tenurial holding elsewhere as well. To take what is perhaps one of the best-known passages in all of Old English literature as an example, *The Wanderer* says that:

Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,
eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð!⁷⁷

[Here is property transient, here is friend transient, here is man transient, here is kinsman transient, all this earth’s frame will become emptiness!]

In *The Wanderer*, these lines act as the summation of the *ubi sunt* passage.⁷⁸ However, for the audience of a diploma, this topos would have evoked a very specific temporal concern: *laenland* [loan-land]. *Laenland* is land that, rather than being granted in (theoretical) perpetuity like

⁷⁶ S 413, *Diplomas of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. Kelly, 100. I have modified the editorial punctuation to reflect the fact that the proem is a single sentence.

⁷⁷ *The Exeter Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records vol. III (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 137, lines 108-10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, particularly lines 92-93.

bocland [book-land], is land “held of a superior” and therefore alienable.⁷⁹ Of course, even *bocland* is held of the king—who himself ultimately holds his kingdom of God—and is therefore alienable. According to Christine Fell, the Old English *Soliloquies* uses *laene* [transient] as the opposite of *ece* [eternal] and expresses a theological concept in tenurial terms: “[e]arth is *laenland*, heaven is *bocland*.”⁸⁰ She notes that *Genesis A* treats Paradise as *laenland*, a reading of the poem that Smith has presented at length, showing that Adam and Eve must forfeit Paradise as punishment for their disobedience.⁸¹ Seen in this light, the “totillans saeculum” [tottering world] of S 413 embodies the contingent nature of both history and tenurial possession. The proem’s spatializing description of death, whose dire howling surrounds the world, reinforces the confluence of exegetical and tenurial discourse by representing death as existing at the borders of the territory that the audience inhabits.

The middle section of the proem draws out further the precarious and morally charged nature of tenurial possession, tensions that will not be fully resolved until the end of the proem. The audience of the diploma is described as “non . . . patria indempte pacis securos, sed quasi fetide corruptile in uoraginem casuros” [not secure in the peace obtained in the homeland but as if about to fall into a chasm of stinking corruption]. This aside represents the *patria* [homeland] as something that has not yet been gained, despite the fact that S 413 itself gives Æthelstan’s “fidelo ministro” [faithful servant] Ælfric twenty hides of land that are to be his “sine iugo detestande seruitutis”⁸² [without the yoke of detestable servitude]. If, as Fell writes, *bocland* is heaven, Ælfric is not there yet, his twenty hides notwithstanding. Indeed, no one can be secure in the peace of heaven until she or he has passed beyond history by experiencing death, resurrection, and judgment. This tension is inherent in the very grammar of the parallelism “securos . . . casuros.” Although the words are exact rhymes, they are grammatically dissimilar. *Securus* is an adjective and has no temporal significance in itself; those who are *securus* in heaven are no longer subject to the vicissitudes of history. *Casurus*, on the other hand, is a future participle, pointing to the “fetide corruptile . . . uoraginem” [chasm of stinking corruption] that always lies between the worldly present and the future attainment of heaven. Having laid out the tension between heaven and sin, possession and forfeiture, the proem provides the tropological instruction that we ought to flee “ea” [them]. To find the antecedent of “ea” and, with it, the things that one ought to flee, one must return to “piacula” in the first line, a grammatical dependence that embeds the literal insecurity of the preceding lines in an envelope pattern of tropological instruction. “Ea” itself is accusative. To find the verb that governs it and, with this verb, the key to the tropological instruction given in the *ut*-clause, one must read forward to “fugiamus” [we should flee], passing first through an ablative construction telling the reader how hard he will have to try to follow this tropological instruction properly—it will require “toto

⁷⁹ On the kinds of land tenure practiced in Anglo-Saxon England, see Frederic William Maitland and Frederick Pollock, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1898), II: 60-62, quoted at 61. For more recent assessments, see Susan Reynolds, “Bookland, Folkland and Fief,” *ANS* 14 (1991): 211-27; Stephen Baxter and John Blair, “Land Tenure and Royal Patronage in the Early English Kingdom: A Model and a Case Study,” *ANS* 28 (2005): 19-46; and Martin J. Ryan, “‘Charters in Plenty, If Only They Were Good for Anything’: The Problem of Bookland and Folkland in Pre-Viking England,” *Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters*, ed. Jonathan Jarrett and Allan Scott McKinlay (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 19-32.

⁸⁰ Christine Fell, “Perceptions of Transience,” *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 172-89, at 174.

⁸¹ Scott Thompson Smith, “Faith and Forfeiture in the Old English *Genesis A*,” *MP* 111.4 (2014): 593-614, at 609-11.

⁸² S 413, *Diplomas of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. Kelly, 100.

mentis conanime” [the full courage of mind]—and then through another parallelism enjoining the reader to despise and abhor the vomit of sin. The intellectual work of the proem is part and parcel of its syntax, which renders the mutual dependence of the exegetical senses grammatically as well as theoretically.

The latter half of the proem brings to a point its injunction to hate and flee sin, framing the reward for doing so in anagogical terms. Up to this point, the tropological instruction of the proem has been negative, saying what one ought not do rather than what one actually ought to do. Stated crudely, one ought not sin. After the conclusion of the “ut ea . . . fugiamus” clause, the proem makes a turn toward positive instruction and toward the anagogical. At the same time that we flee and hate sin, we will be “tendentes ad illud euuangelicum, ‘Date et dabitur uobis’” [holding to the Gospel, “Give, and it shall be given to you”]. These words are Christ’s to his apostles, but in the context of this proem, they are also Æthelstan’s to his vassals. As noted above, they encapsulate the fundamental idea of how land tenure works. Another parallelism follows: “quasi peripsima quisquiliarum abiciens, superna ad instar preciosorum monilium eligens, animum sempiternis in gaudiis figens” [casting away the vilest things as if the filth of refuse, choosing heavenly things on the model of costly necklaces, fastening the mind in eternal joys]. This series of participles progresses from worldly things to heavenly ones, rising from the tropological to the anagogical. The syntax of this series reflects the exegetical logic of the proem: by fleeing and hating sin, one chooses heavenly things and fastens the mind upon them. The purpose of and reward for doing so become clear in the final words of the proem; by focusing upon heavenly things, one focuses on “nasciscendam melliflue dulcedinis meniam perfruemdamque infinite leticie iocunditatem” [swimming in the sea of honey-flowing sweetness and completely enjoying the delight of infinite happiness]. In a single sentence, the proem thus introduces, explicates, and settles the tension between tenurial possession and historical contingency, a tension that is tropologically charged and anagogically resolved. In its basic structure, the proem follows the standard conventions of exegesis by quoting scripture and explicating its senses. At the same time, the proem makes for rather unusual exegesis, treating the literal foundation of its tropological and anagogical admonitions in a way that is, at best, queasy.

The dispositive clause, which contains the actual terms of the grant, places the proem’s tropological instruction within the context of tenurial holding and the lordship relations inherent in it. The opening of the clause explains the hierarchy of these relations: “Ego Æthelstanus rex Anglorum, per omnipatrantis dexteram tocius Britannie regni solio sublimatus, quendam telluris particulam meo fideli ministro Ælfrico, id est .xx. cassatorum in loco quem solicole æt Þæclesfeld uocitant, tribuo”⁸³ [I Æthelstan, king of the English, raised to the throne of the entire kingdom of Britain by the right hand of all-accomplishing God, give a certain small piece of land to my faithful servant Ælfric, that is twenty hides in the place which the inhabitants call “æt Þæclesfeld”]. Ælfric holds his hides of Æthelstan, who in turn holds them of God. Ælfric’s tenure is a reward for his faithful service. Æthelstan’s tenure is not explicitly described as a reward for his service, but he holds it only because God allows him to do so. At the same time, Ælfric is granted the land that he may hold it “sine iugo detestande seruitutis”⁸⁴ [without the yoke of detestable servitude]. In the logic of Anglo-Saxon land tenure, it is not possible to hold land without service to one’s lord, be that service material in the form of the common burdens of

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

fortification, bridge maintenance, and *fyrð* service or be it moral in the form of faithful worship of God.⁸⁵ As a free man, Ælfric is free of servitude in that the land is his own and he need not work it himself, but his good service nevertheless brings with it the responsibility of further good service to his tenants, to Æthelstan, and ultimately to God. The freedom of tenure is in this way described tropologically as a freedom gained through correct behavior.

The dispositive and boundary clauses re-introduce the contradiction between eternal possession and the passing of history.⁸⁶ Ælfric is granted the land and all its useful features, which he “*liberaliter et eternaliter quamdiu uiuat habeat*”⁸⁷ [freely and eternally may have as long as he lives]. Even as a theoretically permanent grant of *bocland* is made, the diploma reminds Ælfric that he is hemmed in by death. After his death, his successors are to hold the land “*in perpetuum*”⁸⁸ [in perpetuity] despite the fact that the proem has already described the transience of the world. The vernacular boundary clause, which defines the boundaries of the grant with relationship to specific landmarks, begins and ends with a stretch of land that runs between “*þone stan*” [that stone] and “*þam hæðenan byrgelsan*”⁸⁹ [that heathen burial place]. That this description of the property limits is defined by a heathen burial place further implies the transience of any one person’s tenure and indeed of the historical period in which he lives. Ælfric is well rewarded for his faithful service by receiving this land, but as it is described in the diploma, his land is literally “*mortalitatis circumscripta*” [surrounded by death] just as the end of his tenure will be bounded by his own death. Because Ælfric’s time of possession will be fleeting even if the possession itself may last, he ought, in Æthelstan A’s logic, to be aware of his role in the larger history of which he is a part, a history in which the hope of a future heavenly reward manifests itself in his present actions as lord and tenant.

As mentioned above, the anathema clause neglects the possibility of temporal punishment for violation of the diploma in favor of eternal punishment. It warns: “*Si autem quod absit aliquis diabolico inflatus spiritu hanc mee donationis breuiculam infringere temptauerit, sciat se nouissima ac magna examinationis die cum Iuda proditore suisque impiis complicitibus eterna confusione edaci bufa cherontis periturum flammis*”⁹⁰ [If however, God forbid it, anyone inflated with diabolic spirit should be tempted to violate this brief document of my donation, he ought to know that on the final and great day of judgment he will perish in flames with the traitor Judas and his impious accomplices in eternal confusion, the slag of devouring hell]. Infringing upon the rights granted in the diploma is in this description less a legal offense than a moral one, and individuals who might be tempted to disregard the diploma are not merely bad subjects but puffed up with sin by the devil. Some of Æthelstan A’s diplomas specify that this infringement is a sin of pride: it is committed by “*aliquis tipo supercillii turgens*”⁹¹ [anyone swelling with the

⁸⁵ On the common burdens and book-right, see Eric John, *Land Tenure in Early England: A Discussion of Some Problems* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1960), 64-79; Nicholas Brooks, “The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England,” *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemons and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 69-84; Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation*, 43-57; and Rosamond Faith, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 94-99.

⁸⁶ See Smith’s remarks concerning S 416’s rhetorical opposition of worldly decay and heavenly bliss in *Land and Book*, 43-44.

⁸⁷ S 413, *Diplomas of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. Kelly, 100.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ E.g., S 426 in *Diplomas of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 352.

fever of arrogance]. Similarly, the punishment for this particular sin is only judicial in the anagogical sense of the Last Judgment. Infringing on the diploma is punishable by death in the flames of hell, but this death will not take place until history has already ended. It is at this point in the anathema clause that infringing upon the diploma is finally staged as a kind of treachery, since the criminal will suffer “cum Iuda proditore” [with the traitor Judas]. Treachery against the king is framed here as treachery against God. In this sense, perishing in hell is also a kind of eternal execution. Many of Æthelstan A’s diplomas are even more detailed than S 413 about what awaits those arrogant individuals who do not respect the land grant described by a given diploma. For example, the *fortuna fallentis saeculi* diploma S 425 additionally describes Judgment Day: “tuba perstrepende archangeli bustis sponte dehiscentibus somata iam rediuiua relinquentibus”⁹² [the trumpet of the archangel loudly resounding, tombs gaping of their own accord giving up now resurrected bodies]. Such descriptions serve further to underscore the anagogical focus of the anathema clause, emphasizing that the criminal’s true punishment comes only after he has already died physically.

Æthelstan A frames land tenure in a way that is explicitly and ineluctably biblical. He treats both tenure itself and the bonds and obligations inherent in it through the imitation and application of Aldhelm’s writings, an act that was, in early tenth-century England, cutting-edge scholarship. Land is held ultimately of God. It is the temporal reward for faithful service, and temporal sins against the land grant will accordingly receive eternal punishment. Nevertheless, interpretative practices appropriate to scripture and ancient history cannot be translated smoothly to present politics, which are not yet finished. Permanent and sacral in theory, they are contingent and often all too transient in worldly practice. The present world is filled with execrable sins, not least of which is the pride that infringes upon land grants. Kings change their minds or die, land must be defended and can be won or lost, the tenant will die, and his lineage may end. Using the tools contemporary exegetical theory provides to think through the problems and possibilities of land tenure and political lordship, Æthelstan A puts these matters in world-historical perspective. For him, the present moment always signifies future punishment or reward, and one’s eternal fate hangs at least partly upon one’s observance of his diplomas’ terms.

Winchester and Pershore in the Order of Things

The grants for Benedictine monasteries at Winchester and Pershore elaborate the topos of divine order, legitimating Benedictine monasticism on grounds that are simultaneously legal, historical, and scriptural. I deal first with one of the pivotal moments in the Benedictine reforms: the foundation of the New Minster at Winchester in 966. I then turn to the *Orthodoxorum* diploma for the foundation of the minster at Pershore, which is at once elaborately exegetical and thoroughly immersed in the ideological rhetoric of the reforms. S 745, the New Minster Foundation diploma, is one of the foundational documents of the English Benedictine monastic reforms. This is true in the sense that it is literally a foundational document, granting the land where the diploma’s author Æthelwold would become bishop and Swithun would be sainted.⁹³ It

⁹² S 425, *Diplomas of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, 867.

⁹³ On Æthelwold’s authorship of this diploma, see Dorothy Whitelock, “The Authorship of the Account of King Edgar’s Establishment of Monasteries,” *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Merritt*, ed. James L. Rosier (Paris: Mouton, 1970), 125-36, at 131-33; and Michael Lapidge, “Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher,” *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066*, 183-211, at 189-92. For general information about Æthelwold, see those essays (including Lapidge’s) collected in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988).

is also true in that this diploma, which contains customary material and was to be read to the brothers of Winchester annually, sets forth some of the foundational principles of Benedictine monasticism in England, including the expulsion of secular clergy from the monastery and the right of the monks to elect an abbot from their own congregation, alongside other rules of monastic life, including a moratorium on eating and drinking outside the refectory except in the case of illness.⁹⁴ Before discussing the monastic life, however, its proem describes the world's creation, focusing especially on its proper order. This proem inscribes the monastic principles that it will expound in the morally charged temporality of creation, a historical time that monastic life reflects and reproduces in the present day. This diploma thereby frames Æthelwold's brand of monasticism within the most authoritative origin narrative possible, figuring monastic life as not just the right thing to do in Winchester but the only appropriate way to live at all.

This diploma immediately stresses the importance of divine order. In the proem's opening words we learn:

Omnipotens totius machinae conditor ineffabili pietate uniuersa mirifice moderatur que condidit. Qui coaeterno uidelicet uerbo quaedam ex nichilo edidit. quaedam ex informi subtilis artifex propagauit materia. Angelica quippe creatura ut informis materia. nullis rebus existentibus diuinitus formata. luculento respndit uultu. Male pro dolor libero utens arbitrio. contumaci arrogans fastu. creatori uniuersitatis famulari dedignans. semetipsum creatori equiperans. aeternis baratri incendiis cum suis complicibus demersus iugi merito cruciatur miseria. Hoc itaque themate totius sceleris peccatum exorsa est.⁹⁵

[The almighty Creator of the whole scheme of things guides marvelously with ineffable love everything which he has created. He, through the co-eternal Word, so to speak, formed certain things "out of nothing" and, like a fine craftsman, created certain other things out of shapeless matter. An angelic creation indeed, as shapeless matter given shape by divine influence when no other things existed, it was resplendent with a bright countenance. Alas, when making bad use of its free will, assuming with stubborn arrogance, disdaining to serve the Creator of the Universe, placing itself equal to the Creator, it plunged into the eternal fires of the Abyss with its confederates, and is deservedly tormented with eternal misery. The sin of all wickedness also arose from this same theme.]⁹⁶

God is here referred to as not God, the Lord, or the Father but the "omnipotens totius machinae conditor" [almighty Creator of the whole scheme of things]. This is God as architect, a being who regulates that which he has established. The medium of his regulation is his "pietate ineffabili" (ineffable love). The metaphor of God as a builder whose love sustains the universe acts as a guide for much of what follows. With Christ, the co-eternal word ("coaeterno uerbo"), God speaks creation into existence. By both reminding us of John 1:1 and retaining scripture's

⁹⁴ S 745 in *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, ed. Sean Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 100-1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁹⁶ The translation is that of Alexander R. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 74-75.

emphasis on God's verbal creation of the world, Æthelwold places a two-fold emphasis on the capacity of the world's structure to be interpreted like language, i.e., its capacity to be interpreted exegetically. The first creation described here (but not in Genesis) is that of the angelic order; unfortunately, however, not all angels respected the grand design of which they were a part. The angelic creation refused to serve its creator and placed itself equal to him, earning itself eternal damnation. As the above quotation's final string of singular nominatives indicates, Æthelwold is not dealing here with the story of Lucifer's rebellion and fall but with the entire angelic order at once. The problem for him at this moment is not that one angel or even a group of angels rebelled but that the entire order refused to perform its appointed role in God's scheme. This disorderly conduct is, he informs us, the origin of all sin.

The history of the world from the creation of man through Christ's death and resurrection mirrors this originary pattern except that, through Christ's grace, man can be redeemed. Like the angels, man is formed from unformed material and treated grammatically as a single class; unlike the angels, God must breathe the breath of life into humans. God's apparent plan is that man will be subject to him "quatenus eius exsecutura posteritas angelorum suppleret numerum celorum sedibus superbia turgente detrusum"⁹⁷ [until his descendants to come should make good the number of angels driven out, full of pride, from the dwellings of Heaven].⁹⁸ Man should, in fact, actually replace the angels in the order of the world.⁹⁹ An enumeration of man's paradisiacal virtues (e.g., humility and joyful charity) follows, an enumeration that is in effect the tropological sense of the historical time man spends in Paradise. These virtues inhere in man in the time before the Fall just as the angelic order "luculento resplenduit uultu" [was resplendent with a bright countenance] before its fall. Once the devil persuades Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, things fall apart: "Uita desiit. mors inoleuit. Uirtutum caterua recedente. uitiorum cumulus successit"¹⁰⁰ [Life ceased, death implanted (itself). The crowd of virtues withdrawing, a heap of vices took their place].¹⁰¹ Unlike the angels, however, man will get a chance to repair the natural order of things and to return to his paradisiacal state. This repair is effected by Christ, born to Mary to whom the New Minster is dedicated. After harrowing hell, Christ "supernis angelorum coetibus consociauit. ut cum eo communi contubernio fruente. bonitate perspicui. uirtutum omnium ubertate referti. expertes peccati. omni contagione priuati. sine fine post diem iudicii restauratis corporibus exultantes regnarent"¹⁰² [associated with a celestial company of angels, so that they might reign forever with him after the day of judgment, delighting in a common dwelling, manifest in goodness, filled with an abundance of all virtues, free from sin, bereft of all contamination, exulting in restored bodies].¹⁰³ In Christ's resurrection, humans have rejoined the angels in the order of the world. The end of this passage enumerates the virtues of heavenly dwelling just as the proem earlier enumerated the virtues of paradisiacal dwelling. The proem, then, returns formally as well as theologically to Paradise.

In his foundation of the New Minster at Winchester, King Edgar likewise seeks to reinscribe the world's first temporality in his own age. Almost immediately after Christ joins the

⁹⁷ S 745, *Charters of New Minster*, ed. Miller, 96.

⁹⁸ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 75.

⁹⁹ On the doctrine of replacement in patristic and Anglo-Saxon writings, see Dorothy Haines, "Vacancies in Heaven: The Doctrine of Replacement and *Genesis A*," *N&Q* 44.2 (1997): 150-54.

¹⁰⁰ S 745, *Charters of New Minster*, ed. Miller, 97.

¹⁰¹ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 78.

¹⁰² S 745, *Charters of New Minster*, ed. Miller, 98.

¹⁰³ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 79. I adapt Rumble's translation slightly here.

angels in a “common dwelling” (“contubernium”), Edgar—here given voice in the first person by Æthelwold—states his own desire to enjoy this common dwelling with Christ and the saints. He says that he has been admonished by the prophet Jeremiah’s words,¹⁰⁴ and “talibus . . . exhortatus doctrinis” [exhorted therefore by such teachings], he wishes to go about “agens Christo faciente in terris quod ipse iuste egit in celis. extricans uidelicet Domini cultura criminum spurcitas”¹⁰⁵ [effecting on earth at Christ’s doing what he himself has justly effected in heaven, namely, clearing the filth of evil deeds from the Lord’s ploughland].¹⁰⁶ The foundation of the New Minster is in this account an act modeled on Old Testament prophecy and Christ’s fulfilment of it. This diploma’s customary elements are of a piece with Edgar’s stated desire to return to man’s paradisiacal state, and its turn to proper monastic behavior similarly frames Benedictine monasticism as the reproduction in the present day of the world’s first historical time.

The politics of Edgar’s reign soon slip into nostalgia for paradisiacal (or heavenly) stability. Edgar hopes that, by expelling the secular clergy and setting the Benedictine monk Æthelgar as abbot over this abbey, “nostri regiminis status uigeret”¹⁰⁷ [the condition of our kingdom might thrive].¹⁰⁸ The interconnection of monastic and secular politics comes to a point immediately afterward: “Hoc subnixae efflagitans deosco. ut quod in suis egi. hoc agat in mihi ab ipso conlatis. scilicet aduersarios nostros deiciens amicos sublimando prouehat. ut inimicos sanctę Dei eclesie deprimens. amicos eius monachos uidelicet beatificans iustificauit”¹⁰⁹ [Humbly requesting this (i.e., that God strengthen the kingdom), I beseech that what I have done for his people, he do for those collected together by himself under me, namely that, in casting down our enemies, he should elevate our friends with advancement, just as I, suppressing the enemies of the holy church of God, have blessedly advanced his friends, namely the monks].¹¹⁰ Æthelwold expresses here the “do-ut-des” relationship of tenurial possession in terms that are, like those seen in Æthelstan A, very much about receiving God’s favor in exchange for temporal service.¹¹¹ If Edgar has cast out the secular clergy, he hopes that his own enemies will likewise be cast out, and if he has advanced the Benedictine monks, he hopes that his own royal tenure will receive similar support. A purely tropological temporality cannot map cleanly onto the present moment, and recovering the stability of Paradise becomes here as much about stabilizing the country as reuniting with the angels.

If this diploma seeks to build the New Minster as a fulfilment of Paradise’s tropological promise, the *Orthodoxorum* diploma S 786 goes even further by writing of the Pershore foundation—and of the Reforms with it—as the typological rectification of Eve’s sin. Six diplomas putatively issued in the years 959-93 comprise the *Orthodoxorum* group.¹¹² They are

¹⁰⁴ Specifically, he is inspired by the words of Jeremiah 1:10: “Ecce constitui te hodie super gentes et super regna, ut euallas, et destruas, et disperdas, et dissipas, et aedificas, et plantes” [Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root up, and pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant].

¹⁰⁵ S 745, *Charters of the New Minster*, ed. Miller, 98.

¹⁰⁶ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ S 745, *Charters of New Minster*, ed. Miller, 99.

¹⁰⁸ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ S 745, *Charters of New Minster*, ed. Miller, 99.

¹¹⁰ Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, 83.

¹¹¹ On social and political motivations behind noble support for the reforms, see Janet M. Pope, “Monks and Nobles in the Anglo-Saxon Monastic Reform,” *ANS* 17 (1994): 165-80, at 172-79.

¹¹² These diplomas are S 658, S 673, S 786, S 788, S 812, and S 876.

associated with the draftsman known as “Edgar A,” who might have been Æthelwold.¹¹³ However, it cannot be ascertained whether “Edgar A” actually wrote all the diplomas that exhibit his distinctive style or whether other draftsmen were simply imitating, or in later periods forging, his work.¹¹⁴ It is furthermore uncertain whether or not most of these diplomas are authentic, but S 786, issued upon the foundation of the monastery in Pershore in the year 972, survives as a single sheet.¹¹⁵ Like other diplomas in the *Orthodoxorum* group, S 786 features one of the most elaborate and discursive proems of all the Anglo-Latin charters. Its proem positions the new foundation in salvation history, narrating the history of the world from the creation of man to the present. Along the way, it makes detours through the Old Testament prophets, early Christian heresies, Mary’s blessedness, and Christ’s divinity. S 786 places the Pershore foundation specifically within the tradition of orthodox interpretations of this history, and it figures this foundation as both the fulfillment of Christ’s promise and, in its dedication to Mary, working toward the resolution of the sin that Eve introduced into the world. In so doing, S 786 settles the interpretative crux that Æthelstan A faced, widening his exegetical scope to encompass all of world history at the same time that it focuses on the particulars of Pershore’s devotional practice.

The proem of S 786 inserts its signatories immediately into a typological history whose immanent tension between sin and forgiveness will be played out in the foundation of Pershore itself. The proem establishes an opposition between those historical types who, like Eve and the serpent, introduce sin into the world and their fulfilments who, like the Virgin Mary, work to remedy Eve’s sin and therefore to render glory to God. It contingently establishes an opposition between the unorthodox and the orthodox whose deeds fulfill those of, respectively, the types and fulfilments presented. The proem opens:

Orthodoxorum uigoris æclesiastici monitu creberrime instruimur ut illi oppido subiecti suppeditantes famulemur, qui totius mundi fabricam miro ineffabilique serie disponens, microcosmum, Adam uidelicet, tandem quadriformi plasmatum materia almo ad sui similitudinem instinctum spiramine, uniuersis que in infimis formauerat uno probandi causa excepto uetitoque preficiens, paradisiacae amoenitatis iocunditate conlaterana ÆEua scilicet comite decentissime collacauit.¹¹⁶

[By the counsel of orthodox men of ecclesiastical strength we are most frequently instructed that we, entirely subjected subjects, serve Him who, arranging the fabric of the whole world in a marvelous and ineffable sequence, set up the microcosm (namely Adam), most fittingly with Eve side by side (namely as a companion) with the joy of paradisiacal delightfulness. Adam was formed at last with four-formed material and inspired with nourishing breath to a likeness of Himself, and He placed him over all things which He had formed in the world below except for one thing forbidden as a test.]¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Lapidge, “Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher,” *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066*, 188-89.

¹¹⁴ See *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000-1), I: cxv-cxxv. For an overview, see Snook, *Anglo-Saxon Chancery*, 159-88.

¹¹⁵ See John, *Orbis Britanniae*, 199-204; Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 98-104; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. Kelly, lxxiv-cxxxi, especially cvi-cxi; and Peter Stokes, “King Edgar’s Charter for Pershore (AD 972),” *ASE* 37 (2008): 31-78.

¹¹⁶ S 786, ed. Stokes, “King Edgar’s Charter for Pershore,” 43.

¹¹⁷ The translation is Stokes’s, in his “King Edgar’s Charter for Pershore,” 74.

Edgar and the monks of Pershore, the participants in the transaction effected by this diploma, are grammatically suppressed and passive in the opening words of this proem. They are simply instructed as a group (“instruimur”); the agent is instead the “orthodoxorum uigoris æclesiastici monitu” [counsel of orthodox men of ecclesiastical strength]. These orthodox men are presumably Dunstan, Oswald, and Æthelwold, the leading Benedictine reformers of their generation and the first three signatories after Edgar on this diploma’s witness list.¹¹⁸ Edgar and the monks are furthermore “oppido subiecti suppeditantes” [entirely subjected subjects]. As in the Æthelstan A diplomas, even the king is a subject because he holds his kingdom of God, and in this diploma, he does so only through the help and instruction of his ecclesiastical leaders. Everyone involved here is entirely subject to divine rule, which can only be mediated and interpreted by the ecclesiastical order.

Having established this worldly hierarchy, the proem launches into a relative clause explaining how human history is instituted and ordered by God. Edgar, his monks, and his nobles are all part of the “totius mundi fabricam” [fabric of the whole world], which God arranges in a “miro ineffabilique serie” [marvelous and ineffable sequence]. This diploma’s actors, i.e. the English Benedictine reformers, are implicitly taking one step in the ineffable sequence of world history. This view of the Reformers is seen in the diploma for the New Minster at Winchester, but it is also shared by Æthelwold’s fragmentary and roughly contemporary reform text *King Edgar’s Establishment of Monasteries*.¹¹⁹ This Old English text describes Edgar’s foundations as a continuation of the first English conversion, a description that places the entire English church within a world-historical frame. This line of the proem also has resonances with the philosophical tradition known to the Anglo-Saxons. In a heavily glossed and well-attested passage of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Providence is defined as divine reason, which “cuncta disponit” [disposes all things], and fate is defined as the “rebus mobilibus dispositio” [disposition of moveable things].¹²⁰ In this passage, Boethius situates human freedom of action against divine disposition and the divinely appointed order of the world. In S 786, the verb *disponere* [to dispose, arrange] is likewise used of God. However, where the *Consolation* discusses the relationship of individual actors to divine providence at length and with a high degree of abstraction, the proem provides the exact points of historical reference its signatories need in order to understand how the establishment of the monastery at Pershore will fit into God’s *dispositio*.

Adam and Eve provide the basic heuristic for all future human actions, which imitate and fulfill either Adam’s initial good example or Eve’s bad one. Adam is “almo ad sui similitudinem instinctum spiramine” [inspired with nourishing breath to a likeness of Himself]. In his paradisiacal state, Adam reflects God’s goodness, and he is placed as lord over all of creation except the Tree of Knowledge. That is, Adam holds Paradise of God here just as he does in *Genesis A* and, in the proem’s emerging historical analogy, just as Edgar holds England of God. Eve is a very fitting companion (“comite decentissime”) for him until, tempted by Satan, she causes the fall: “Laruarica pro dolor seductus cauillatione, uersipellis suasibilisque tergiuersatione uiraginis plectus anathematis alogia ambro pomum momordit uetitum et, sibi ac

¹¹⁸ S 786, *ibid.*, 48.

¹¹⁹ *King Edgar’s Establishment of Monasteries*, ed. and trans. Dorothy Whitelock in *Councils and Synods and Other Documents Relating to the English Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), I: 142-54.

¹²⁰ *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethi Philosophiae Consolatio*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, CCSL 94 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), 4 pr. 6.10, p. 80.

posteris in hoc ærumnoso deiectus sæculo loetum promeruit perpetuum”¹²¹ [Led astray—oh woe!—by diabolical sophistry, enticed by the chameleonic and persuasive virago’s subterfuge, with the prohibition silenced, the glutton bit into the forbidden fruit, was cast down, and fully earned perpetual death for himself and his descendants in the wicked world].¹²² This sentence seeds rhetoric that will be taken up again in the anathema clause; indeed, its rhetoric here is closely related to that of many Anglo-Latin anathema clauses, including those discussed above. Like those individuals who infringe upon land grants, Adam was “laruarica...seductus cauillatione” [led astray by diabolical sophistry]. He ate the forbidden fruit and brought death upon himself and all of his descendants. The diploma does not say so at this point, but death and eternal torment in hell are of course the punishment appointed to contract-breakers.

According to this proem, human history has reflected these conditions of its origin. People are sinful, but the prophets and God’s angel Gabriel nevertheless provide them instruction in proper behavior:

Vaticinantibus siquidem profetis et cælitus superni regis diuturna clandestino presagia dogmate promentibus, nitide orthodoxis eulogium ex supernis deferens, non ut Iudæorum seditiosa elingue fatetur loquacitas, sed priscorum atque modernorum lepidissimam ambiens facundiam, Arrianas Sabellianasque proterendo nenias anagogico infrustrans famine nosque ab obtunsi cæcitate umbraminis ad supernorum alacrimoniam patrimoniorum aduocans.¹²³

[Since the prophets were foretelling and disclosing with hidden doctrine the highest king’s eternal prognostics from heaven, a shining angel (i.e., Gabriel) brought down from on high the good word to the orthodox, not as the factious loquacity of the Jews speaks ineptly, but encompassing the most agreeable eloquence of the ancients and moderns, rendering useless the Arian and Sabellian incantations by crushing them underfoot with mystical speech, and calling us from the blindness of powerless darkness to the tearlessness of heavenly inheritances.]¹²⁴

This passage stages history as a conflict between correct and incorrect speech, doctrine interpreted rightly and wrongly. On the one hand, the prophets make known God’s doctrine (“dogmate”), which they simultaneously foretell and disclose in their privileged position as men who can access this doctrine even under the Old Dispensation. The angel Gabriel similarly discloses God’s true word to Mary. These opening clauses are balanced against the Jews, whose speech is not just uninspired but seditious (“seditiosa”) against the divine order, and the Arian and Sabellian heresies, whose frivolities (“nenias”) have no value or use in the face of the prophets’ and angel’s speech. Indeed, correct doctrine not only crushes heresy but also embraces the “priscorum atque modernorum lepidissimam . . . facundiam” [most agreeable eloquence of the ancients and moderns]. Correct doctrine is at once typological and textual, comprehending the eloquence (“facundia”) of both old and new authors. It is also anagogical. The prophets and Gabriel overcome heresy with anagogical speech (“anagogico . . . famine”), calling people to

¹²¹ S 786, ed. Stokes, “King Edgar’s Charter,” 43.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 74.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 74.

heaven and away from hell. From the time of the prophets to the Annunciation, this struggle over the interpretation of divine doctrine is represented as one of history's prime motivating forces.

The revelation of divine doctrine to Mary is key to the redemption of man from heretical doctrine and, ultimately, to the foundation of the monastery at Pershore. Because the virgin birth effected through Mary provides the solution to the problem begun with Eve, it is also key to the typological view of history that the proem has been developing. The proem highlights that point with its quotation and gloss of John 1:1:

Mirum dictu incarnatur uerbum et incorporatur, scilicet illud de quo euangelista supereminens uniuersorum altitudine sensuum inquit: "In principio erat uerbum et uerbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat uerbum," et reliqua. Qua uidelicet sumpta de uirgine incarnatione antiquae uirginis facinus demitur et cunctis mulieribus nitidis præcluens taumatibus decus irrogatur. Intacta igitur redolente Christi diuinitate passaque ipsius humanitate libertas addictis clementer contigit seruulis.¹²⁵

[Amazing to say, the word is made flesh and is made body, namely that of which the evangelist, towering above with the height of all perceptions, says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," and so on. That is, after this incarnation was taken up from the Virgin, the crime of the ancient virgin is removed and on all women is bestowed glory renowned in its shining marvels. Thus after the sweet-smelling divinity of Christ was left untouched, after his humanity had suffered, happily liberty came to the bounden servants.]¹²⁶

The proem states that, *mirum dictu*, the evangelist's words came to fruition when the word was made flesh. This line calls attention to the diploma's quotation of scripture here; after the quotation, the diploma moves into an explicitly exegetical mode. "Qua uidelicet" [that is] is typical rhetoric used to introduce a gloss upon a scriptural passage in exegetical commentary. In this passage, it serves the same function, and the last two sentences of the proem do indeed perform a fairly standard allegorical interpretation. Other early medieval commentators on John 1:1 discuss Christ's place in typological history, his mystical nature, or, relatedly, the nature of the Trinity.¹²⁷ The draftsman too remarks upon Christ's incarnation here, but he turns the point immediately to Mary, to whom Pershore is dedicated. He states that Christ's passion gave "libertas addictis . . . seruulis" [liberty to his bounden servants]. This point is a theological one, but *libertas* is also a technical term of Anglo-Saxon land tenure meaning a "privilege licensed by kings."¹²⁸ In fact, Edgar says in the dispositive clause that he grants Pershore its land in order

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹²⁷ Cf. Alcuin, *Commentaria in S. Ioannis Euangelium*, PL 100, cols. 737-1008, at 743C-45D; Pseudo-Bede, *In S. Ioannis Euangelium expositio*, PL 114, cols. 633-938, at 637A-39A; and Pseudo-Jerome/Walafrid Strabo, *Euangelium secundum Ioannem*, PL 114, cols. 355-426, at 356B. Like the draftsman of S 786, John Scotus Eriugena mentions here Mary, the Arian heresy, and that the divine word is "haereticam opinionem destruens" [destroying heretical opinion]; however, his commentary is characteristically out of the Carolingian mainstream. See *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugena homilia et commentarius in euangelium Iohannis*, ed. Édouard A. Jeuneau, with the assistance of Andrew J. Hicks, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 166 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 12.

¹²⁸ Julia Crick, "Pristina Libertas: Liberty and the Anglo-Saxons Revisited," *TRHS* 6th ser., no. 14 (2004): 47-71, at 49.

that “huius libertatis altithroni moderatoris clementia merear optinere consortium”¹²⁹ [I may deserve to obtain participation in this liberty by the mercy of the high-throned governor].¹³⁰ Theological and tenorial rhetoric are inseparable here, and Pershore’s newly landed foundation is interwoven typologically into the history of loss and redemption that this proem adumbrates. John 1:1 thus provides the scriptural touchstone for the proem’s entire world history up to this point, just as Luke 6:38 provides the scriptural touchstone for Æthelstan A’s description of the nature of tenorial holding above.

This diploma’s Marian emphasis also reflects the devotional practice of Pershore and, more broadly, of the English Benedictine monastic reforms. Pershore is dedicated to Mary, a fact that the proem gestures toward in its narration of the Annunciation. When the angel Gabriel reveals to Mary that she will give birth to Christ, the proem states:

(A)ngelus supernis elapsus liminibus in aurem intemeratae uirginis ut euangelica promulgant famina stupenda cecinisse uidetur carmina, cui æclesia tota catholica consona uoce altibohando proclamat: “Beata es uirgo Maria que credidisti, perficientur in te quæ dicta sunt tibi a Domino.”¹³¹

[The angel slipped down from the thresholds on high and is seen to have sung amazing songs into the ear of the undefiled virgin, as the evangelical utterances promulgate; the whole (namely catholic) church cries out to her by bellowing high with one voice: “Blessed are you, virgin Mary, you who believed; those things will be fulfilled in you which were told to you by the Lord.”]¹³²

This proclamation echoes Luke 1:45.¹³³ In this verse, Mary’s cousin Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaims Mary’s blessedness. More exactly than the Gospel, however, it echoes an Advent antiphon: “Beata es, Maria, quae credidisti: perficientur in te quae dicta sunt tibi a Domino, alleluia”¹³⁴ [And you are blessed, Mary, that you have believed; those things which are spoken to you by the Lord shall be accomplished in you, alleluia]. The shared direct address (to “Maria”) and the phrase “perficiuntur in te” here particularly suggest that the draftsman is thinking of the liturgy rather than the biblical text itself. Indeed, Mary responds to this benediction in Luke 1:46-55 with a speech that forms the text of the “Magnificat” canticle sung in response to this antiphon (and regularly at Vespers).¹³⁵ In this proem, the entire Catholic

¹²⁹ S 786, ed. Stokes, “King Edgar’s Charter,” 44.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³³ “Et beata, quae credidisti, quoniam perficientur ea, quae dicta sunt tibi a Domino” [And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the lord].

¹³⁴ R.-J. Hesbert, “Un curieux antiphonaire palimpseste de l’Office: Rouen, A. 292,” *RB* 64 (1954): 28-45, at 31. For a revision of Hesbert’s general findings concerning this manuscript, which preserves the earliest standard *cursus romanus* from the medieval West, see K. D. Hartzell, “An English Antiphoner of the Ninth Century?” *RB* 90 (1980): 234-48. On the very slim surviving evidence of antiphoners (or graduals) from Anglo-Saxon England, see Hartzell, “Graduals,” *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Richard W. Pfaff, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 23 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 35-38.

¹³⁵ On Marian devotion in the Benedictine monastic reforms, see Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 61-88; on monastic canticles in Anglo-Saxon England, see Michael Korhammer, *Die monastischen Cantica im Mittelalter und ihre altenglischen*

Church cries out Elizabeth's words to Mary. Scripture is here framed as a liturgical response, sung aloud by the Pershore monks and all the other members of the Church at the same hour. By fusing scriptural history as related in the Gospel text with present history as it occurs at Pershore, the poem writes the worship of the Pershore foundation into the typological history that it unfolds. If Mary helps to overcome heretical doctrine and to fulfill divine scripture in her role as Eve's type, so too do the Pershore monks in their veneration of her.

In the dispositive clause, it becomes clear that the diploma itself participates in the veneration and typological history it describes by granting the monks the land they need to worship. Edgar too takes part in this Marian devotion; he does so simply by granting land and signing the diploma. However, *King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries* also describes Edgar's foundation of new monasteries as the fulfilment of a childhood promise to God and to Mary,¹³⁶ and the Reform foundations of the New Minster at Winchester, Abingdon, and Ramsey were dedicated to Mary as well.¹³⁷ The dispositive clause makes this point explicitly, dedicating the monastery to "genitricque domini nostri semper uirgini Mariae, necnon beato Petro apostolorum principi eiusque coapostolo Paulo"¹³⁸ [Mary the ever-virgin mother of our Lord and also blessed Peter, chief of the apostles, and to his fellow apostle Paul].¹³⁹ Its reference to the apostles Peter and Paul traces the Pershore foundation's lineage into the New Dispensation and places the monastery within the apostolic tradition they represent. The dispositive clause furthermore draws the English royal house into this tradition. The royal style opening this clause links Edgar's wide rule directly to God's support of it; moreover, the *Regularis Concordia*, Æthelwold's customary for Winchester, opens with a royal style describing Edgar's realm much as the dispositive clause does, implying the close relationship seen among tenurial holding, Edgar's rule, and the monastic order.¹⁴⁰ Later in the dispositive clause, Edgar states that Pershore was first given its liberty by his predecessor King Coenwulf, "orthodoxe fidei strenuissimo"¹⁴¹ [the most vigorous in orthodox faith]¹⁴² and that his grant restores the land "ad usus monachorum

Interlinearversionen: Studien und Textausgabe (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976), 10-25; on manuscripts containing canticles, see pages 73-127.

¹³⁶ *King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries*, ed. Whitelock, 147-48.

¹³⁷ For all Marian dedications in the tenth century, see Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 127-28. The New Minster at Winchester was dedicated more generically to "nostro saluatori eiusque genitrici semper uirgini Mariae et omnibus apostolis cum caeteris sanctis" [our Savior and his mother the ever-virgin Mary and all the apostles with the other saints], *Charters of the New Minster*, ed. Sean Miller, 99. For discussion, see Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, xciii; and Charles Insley, "Where Did All the Charters Go? Anglo-Saxon Charters and the New Politics of the Eleventh Century," *ANS* 24 (2001): 109-27, at 117.

¹³⁸ S 786, ed. Stokes, "King Edgar's Charter," 44. Compare the language of this Marian dedication to that of S 745 above. The close similarity suggests that the draftsman of S 786 knew the Æthelwold's work or, at least, that the formulation was important to and circulating in their shared intellectual culture.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴⁰ The royal style of S 786 runs: "Hinc ego Eadgar altithrono amminiculante Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuito triuiatim persistentium basileus" [Hence I Edgar, by the support of the high-throned one ruler of the English and the other peoples living all around far and wide]; see Stokes, "King Edgar's Charter," 44. Compare to the opening of Æthelwold's customary: "Gloriosus etenim Eadgar, Christi opitulante gratia Anglorum ceterarumque gentium intra ambitum Britannicae insulae degentium rex egregius" [Edgar the glorious, by the grace of Christ illustrious king of the English and of the other peoples dwelling within the bounds of the island of Britain], *Regularis concordia anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialumque*, ed. and trans. Dom Thomas Symons (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), 1.

¹⁴¹ S 786, ed. Stokes, "King Edgar's Charter," 44.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 75.

domino nostro Iesu Christo eiusque genitrici Marie, priscis modernisque temporibus”¹⁴³ [to our Lord Jesus Christ and his Mother Mary . . . for the use of monks in times ancient and modern].¹⁴⁴ This language parallels that of the proem. It places Coenwulf alongside the prophets and the shining angel who bring heavenly doctrine to the orthodox, and it places Edgar alongside Mary, and therefore also alongside the monks of Pershore, who each help in their own way to restore mankind to its place in Paradise. As with *libertas* above, the rhetoric of this passage is equally tenorial and theological. The diploma’s language is functionally indistinguishable from that of the doctrine promulgated to the orthodox, and its executors are the orthodox themselves, liturgically imitating the speech of those prophets and saints who came before them. In these ways, the king and the reformed monasteries all implicitly take part in the typological history elaborated in the proem; both their land grants and their liturgical commemoration fulfill and carry on this history.

The anathema clause continues the diploma’s rhetorical admixture of tenure and typological exegesis. This clause continues the diploma’s presentation of the Pershore grant as not only a moral matter but also one of correct historical interpretation. It includes some of the same language as the anathema clauses previously discussed, stating that those whom avarice causes to infringe upon the diploma will go to hell “cum Iuda Christi proditore”¹⁴⁵ [with Judas, betrayer of Christ].¹⁴⁶ However, violators of the diploma’s provisions are also “perfidi” [treacherous], and “nouas sibi hereditarias kartas usurpantes ediderunt”¹⁴⁷ [usurping the hereditary charters, (they) issued new ones themselves].¹⁴⁸ In contrast to, for example, Æthelstan A’s temporally nebulous conditional verbs, this anathema clause places violators in the perfect tense, treating them historically just as it has treated every other actor in the diploma historically. Like the Jews in their “seditiosa loquacitas” [factious loquacity] and the Arian and Sabellian heretics in their “nenias” [frivolities], violators attempt to replace the diploma’s true grant with new, invented ones. Puffed up with pride, they become heretics of the law.

The punishment for violating the terms of the grant is at once temporal and eternal, encompassing excommunication from the church now and from the communion of saints in the hereafter. The anathema states that “in patris et filii et spiritus sancti nomine precipimus ut catholicorum nemo easdem recipiat, sed a cunctis repudiatę fidelibus in anathemate deputentur ueteri iugiter uigente priuilegio”¹⁴⁹ [in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit we have commanded that no catholic should accept these same (spurious) charters but they should be considered as having been repudiated in anathema by all the faithful with the old privilege thriving continually].¹⁵⁰ Where Æthelstan A’s anathema clause sends violators directly to hell, S 786 first casts them out of the community of the faithful. It again contrasts violators as heretics with the lawful as orthodox (“catholicorum”) and their false documents with the true documents of the faithful. Violators must live in anathema, while the old privilege flourishes on. The link between the orthodox and their documents is so strong here that the authentic diplomas become metonyms for their signatories. However, violation of the diploma is more than a matter of

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

interpretative or political community. As a kind of heretic, the violator is “alienatus a consortio sanctæ Dei æclesiæ, necnon et a participatione sacrosancti corporis et sanguinis Iesu Christi filii dei . . . Et cum Iuda Christi proditore sinistra in parte deputatus, ni prius hic digna satisfactione humilis penituerit quod contra sanctam Dei æclesiam rebellis agere præsumpsit”¹⁵¹ [estranged from the community of the holy church of God and likewise from participation in the sacred body and blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . and may he be numbered on the left side with Judas, betrayer of Christ, unless first he shall have humbly repented with due satisfaction that he presumed to act as an insurgent against the holy church of God].¹⁵² That is to say, the violator is forbidden not just the company of Christians but also communion, and unless he performs satisfaction, he will join Judas in hell. This clause’s provision for *satisfactio*, the ritual performance of penance, brings home the temporal nature of this diploma’s anathema clause. *Satisfactio* was a part of dispute settlement and royal presentation in England and on the Continent,¹⁵³ and its inclusion here grounds the anathema clause in present history and politics as well as anagogical futurity.¹⁵⁴

The language of this anathema clause does not merely allude to or mimic the ecclesiastical language of excommunication: at points, it duplicates it. The term “anathema,” of course, already had a long association with excommunication.¹⁵⁵ Within a monastic context, the *Regula Benedicti* provides for the excommunication of a brother who refuses to accept correction (“emendatio”), and it describes the penance (“satisfactio”) required to rejoin the monastic community.¹⁵⁶ The terms used in the Rule track neatly against those used in the anathema clause of S 786. They are expanded significantly in an excommunication formula contained in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 303. This formula’s speaker says of excommunicated individuals that “a liminibus sancte Dei ecclesie sequestramus . . . si ergo ad emendationem atque satisfactionem non uenerint”¹⁵⁷ [I remove (them) from the thresholds of the holy church of God . . . if they do not come to correction and satisfaction]. This formula, like the *Regula* and S 786’s anathema clause, bars the cursed individual from communion unless he performs satisfaction. In fact, the provision for satisfaction is so important to this formula that it twice repeats this condition nearly verbatim after the lines quoted above. S 786 adds to this language the anagogical curse traditional in Anglo-Latin diplomas, drawing out clearly the eternal implications of this present condemnation. However, the excommunication formula also incorporates tenurial language no less than S 786 incorporates ecclesiastical language. In

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁵³ On England, see Catherine Cubitt, “The Politics of Remorse: Penitence and Royal Piety in the Reign of Æthelred the Unready,” *Historical Research* 85, no. 228 (2012): 179-92, and Levi Roach, “Penance, Submission and *Deditio*: Religious Influences on Dispute Settlement in Later Anglo-Saxon England,” *ASE* 41 (2012): 343-71. On the Continent, see especially Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-40* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁴ Levi Roach argues convincingly for the miscibility of eschatological and penitential discourses in legal literature written later than this charter: “Apocalypse and Atonement in the Politics of Æthelredian England,” *ES* 95.7 (2014): 733-57.

¹⁵⁵ See Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 30-44.

¹⁵⁶ See, respectively, chapters 23-28 and 44 in the *Benedicti Regula*, ed. Rudolf Hanslik, CSEL 75 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1960), 78-85 and 110-12.

¹⁵⁷ E. M. Treharne, “A Unique Old English Formula for Excommunication from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303,” *ASE* 24 (1995): 185-211, at 210.

addition to cursing the excommunicate's walking, sitting, sleeping, horse-riding, sailing, speaking, not speaking, eating, and drinking, it curses him "in domo, in agro, in siluis, in aquis"¹⁵⁸ [in the household, in the field, in the forests, in the waters].¹⁵⁹ These terms, with others such as *campus* [field], *pratium* [meadow], *pascuum* [pasture], and *flumen* [river], are conventional in dispositive clauses permitting use of all these features in the land granted. The discursive alloy seen here shows the draftsman of S 786 drawing on a broader intellectual tradition in which land is seen as sacral, and whether or not the draftsman was actually a part of an ecclesiastical institution, his turn to the languages of liturgy and excommunication carries forward his concern about orthodoxy and heresy. According to this draftsman, violators of the diploma must eventually spend eternity in hell with the traitor Judas and the liars Ananias and Saphira.¹⁶⁰ First, however, they are to be excluded from the orthodox community in the present world as well.

Like Æthelstan A, Æthelwold and the draftsman of S 786 inscribe their signatories in salvation history, at once prescribing and legitimating the monastic foundations that their diplomas effect. Æthelwold figures the New Minster as participating tropologically in the temporality of Paradise in the present world. The New Minster is treated as both a return to this originary moment and a fulfilment of it. In Æthelwold's reading, the politics of the fallen world ought also to participate in this temporality, which means that God should strengthen the English kingship and monasteries for their piety. The draftsman of S 786 writes the Pershore foundation as direct participants in the typological history of the world. The Pershore monks too experience the temporal pressure of a swiftly passing world; however, their role is not to return the world to its prelapsarian state but to liturgically assist Mary and Christ in promulgating the New Dispensation. As this section of the chapter has shown, the close connection between tenure and salvation history seen in these diplomas—a connection fostered and produced through exegetical theory—is a foundational assumption for the English Benedictine reformers. The Marian dedications of many reformed monasteries is a nod to their place in typological history, and the language of tenurial exegesis radiates throughout their work, as in Æthelwold's customary, the *Regularis Concordia*, as well as his fragmentary Old English text *King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries*.¹⁶¹ In its ties to the discourse of excommunication, it relies too on a longstanding connection between orthodoxy and community, a connection that it grounds in specifically tenurial language. These diplomas thus regulate both their signatories' lives and the purpose of the institutions they found by inscribing them in the temporalities of salvation history, a mode of regulation made possible through the exegetical analysis of scripture.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ This formula curses the excommunicate very thoroughly, calling on the Trinity and every saint to curse his actions and body parts. This listing technique is strongly reminiscent of the Celtic *lorica* poems. See *The Lorica of Laidcenn and The Leiden Lorica*, in *The Hisperica Famina: II. Related Poems: A Critical Edition with English Translation and Philological Commentary*, ed. Michael W. Herren (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), 76-89 and 90-93. There is some evidence that the Breton scholar Israel the Grammarian may have brought with him to England some Breton Latin poems such as these that influenced the Anglo-Latin hermeneutic style; more to the point, there is some evidence that he and Æthelstan A were in contact with one another. On this point of influence, see Michael Lapidge, "Schools, Learning and Literature," 20-21, and Lapidge, "Israel the Grammarian in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066*, 87-104, esp. 94-95.

¹⁶⁰ It is perhaps relevant to this clause that Ananias and Saphira, whose story is recounted in Acts 5:1-11, attempt to deceive Peter about their profits from the sale of land.

¹⁶¹ *King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries*, in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church: Part I 871-1066*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 142-54.

Conclusion

Anglo-Latin diplomas of the tenth century build their politics upon scripture, interpreted exegetically and promulgated legally. Working along two scriptural axes—one concerning reciprocity and the other concerning the order of the world—these documents explicate the place of the grants they perform in world history, and they continuously remind their signatories that this history has a moral sense with eternal consequences. Working along the first axis, the diplomas of Æthelstan A track Aldhelm's exegetical method onto the nature of tenurial holding and explicate it as a fulfillment and enactment of Christ's words in Luke 6:38. Æthelstan A's work is partly theoretical, but written in a document of conveyance signed by many individuals and issued at royal assemblies, this is legally binding exegetical theory. Working along the second axis, the two diplomas of the English Benedictine monastic reforms studied in this chapter apply exegetical theory to their signatories' lives in a much more concrete way than does Æthelstan A. These diplomas write their foundations and the king who grants them land as actors in typological history; by implication, they write the entire project of the monastic reforms as a stage in typological history. All these diplomas use exegetical theory to write present-day politics as the fulfillment of scripture and a stage in salvation history. The history and future of the world become in them the skeleton key for all present action, at once the context and the point of the social relations in the England that they help to shape.

Chapter 4: Typological Convention in the Classical Verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

In its annal for the year 856, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* traces the West Saxon King Æthelwulf's descent through not only the euhemerized Germanic gods Baldæg and Woden but also the biblical patriarchs, Noah, Methusaleh, Enoch, Seth, and Adam, "pater noster id est cristus"¹ [our father, i.e. Christ].² Taking Adam as both a type of Christ and the ultimate ancestor of the West Saxon kings, the *Chronicle* here places these kings within a typological world history, and the repetitive prose of its annals portrays every king in approximately the same way regardless of his personal accomplishments or the century in which he lived.³ This chapter studies not the *Chronicle*'s terse prose entries but its annals written in classical Old English verse. Although this verse was composed in a variety of genres over a period of more than a century, it too figures the West Saxon (or Cerdicing) dynasty in a typological world-history. Where the prose annals suppress historical distance by describing different events in the same fixed language, the *Chronicle* poems do so through their immersion in the poetic conventions of Old English verse that narrate scriptural history, saints' lives, and the deeds of legendary heroes. This chapter argues that, by formally juxtaposing the West Saxon kings with the events and figures of salvation history from Creation to Judgment Day, the classical verse of the *Chronicle* presents their rule as an inevitable step in the progression of this history. In the implicitly typological practice of this verse, salvation history forms not the backdrop but the very substance of the West Saxon dynasty.

This chapter shows how a group of classical poems in the *Chronicle* track the form of Old English narrative verse and adapt it to current events in Anglo-Saxon England. It focuses on four poems: *The Battle of Brunanburh* in the 937 annal, *The Coronation of Edgar* in 973 (hereafter *CEdg*), *The Death of Edgar* in 975 (*DEdg*), and *The Death of Edward* in 1065 (*DEdw*).⁴ The Old English poetic conventions that these poems draw on often indicate specific moments in the structure of history. By taking up these conventional narrative forms, these

¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS C*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 57, s.a. 856.

² On the ways this genealogy legitimates the West Saxon royal house, see Thomas D. Hill, "The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noe and the West Saxon Royal Genealogical Tables," *Harvard Theological Review* 80.3 (1987): 379-83; Jacqueline Stodnick, "'Old Names of Kings or Shadows': Reading Documentary Lists," *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2006), 109-31; and Renée R. Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 175-78. Concerning the textual and ideological history of the West Saxon genealogies, see Kenneth Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *PBA* 39 (1953): 287-346; David N. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (Leeds: School of History, University of Leeds, 1977), 72-104; Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex," *Peritia* 4 (1985): 21-66; Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts," *Anglia* 104 (1986): 1-32; and Thomas Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 14-38.

³ See Jacqueline Stodnick, "Sentence to Story: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Formulary," *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. Alice Jorgensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 91-111. Concerning the style of the *Chronicle*, see also Cecily Clark, "The Narrative Mode of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Before the Conquest," *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 215-35.

⁴ Unless otherwise cited, poetic quotations are from the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George Phillip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-53). Although *The Death of Alfred* (s.a. 1036) was edited in volume 6, it is not classical verse. For that reason, I do not treat it in this chapter.

Chronicle poems write contemporary events into larger narratives of English, and ultimately salvation, history. *Brunanburh*, perhaps the most traditional poem considered here, has been called “a tissue of heroic formulaic cliché.”⁵ Far from being necessarily unskillful or wooden, however, such “formulaic cliché” is a means of historical reference. As Albert Lord writes when describing his model of oral composition, “[f]ormulas do not point to other uses of themselves; they do not recall other occurrences. It might be said that they embody all previous occurrences.”⁶ John Miles Foley elaborates further: “at least part of the answer to the question of ‘how’ these [conventional poetic] elements function is ‘in the same way each time.’”⁷ When Old English poets place old formulas in new contexts, they therefore import the connotations of the formulaic system associated it. When these formulas are those used for narrative, historical verse, the connotations imported are frequently historical ones.⁸ The diction, type scenes, and motifs used in the *Chronicle* poems thus carry their own traditionally conditioned and, as will be seen, historical associations.

These poems construct a number of disparate genres out of traditional verse form: most notably, history, computus, and the homily. As my first chapter showed, Old English historical narratives rely on literal exegesis to produce tropological, political instruction for the contemporary audience of a given text. As my second chapter showed (and as will be discussed further in this chapter), homiletics and the computistic reckoning of time are also ways of practicing exegetical interpretation with respect to one’s present audience. Although the classical verse of the *Chronicle* presses many genres into service, all of them rely to a greater or lesser extent on the traditional form of Old English narrative verse. In order to clarify how this group of poems uses and recycles the conventions of Old English poetry, it should be noted that the boundary between heroic and other historical poetry is largely a notional one.⁹ It is a scholarly commonplace, for example, that biblical poems contain heroic elements,¹⁰ and heroic, biblical, and other verse often draws on the same stock of conventional vocabulary, formulas, motifs, and

⁵ Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 148.

⁶ Albert Lord, “Perspectives on Recent Work on the Oral Traditional Formula,” *Oral Literature* 1.3 (1986): 467-503, at 492. Emphasis is Lord’s own. For discussion of Lord’s thesis with respect to Old English poetry, see Elizabeth M. Tyler, *Old English Poetics: The Aesthetics of the Familiar in Anglo-Saxon England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), 110-16. On formulas in Old English poetry, see John D. Niles, “Formula and Formulaic System in *Beowulf*,” *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. John Miles Foley (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1981), 394-415; and Anita Riedinger, “The Old English Formula in Context,” *Speculum* 60.2 (1985): 294-317.

⁷ John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 6.

⁸ For example, Paul Battles argues that scenes of migration in *Genesis A* implicitly refer to the “migration myth” in his “*Genesis A* and the Anglo-Saxon ‘Migration Myth,’” *ASE* 29 (2000): 43-66. For the migration myth, see Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁹ See, for example, Heide Estes, “Raising Cain in *Genesis* and *Beowulf*: Challenges to Generic Boundaries in Anglo-Saxon Biblical Literature,” *Heroic Age* 13 (2010).

¹⁰ The presence of these elements is often taken for granted rather than argued, but for such arguments on *Genesis A*, see Andy Orchard, “Conspicuous Heroism: Abraham, Prudentius, and the Old English Verse *Genesis*,” *Heroes and Heroines in Medieval English Literature: A Festschrift Presented to André Crépin on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Leo Carruthers (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 45-58, at 46-47; and on *Judith*, see Hugh Magennis, “Gender and Heroism in the Old English *Judith*,” *Writing Gender and Genre in Medieval Literature: Approaches to Old and Middle English Texts*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 5-18.

type scenes.¹¹ What separates them is not so much their form but the period of history that they narrate. Heroic verse has to do with Migration Period heroes,¹² while other narrative verse may paraphrase the Old Testament, recount saints' lives, or treat doctrinal matters. This chapter therefore does not follow the scholarly custom of treating *Brunanburh* as "heroic" poetry or standard Old English poetic formulas as "heroic" diction. It prefers instead the term "historical poetry" to refer to narrative Old English verse about all historical events and individuals. Just as the literal-historical sense of scripture provides the foundation for the spiritual senses, the conventional form of Old English historical verse is the base upon which the *Chronicle* poems build their exemplary presentations of contemporary English politics.

By applying the conventions of Old English narrative verse to contemporary English kings rather than to the past and future events of salvation history, the classical verse of the *Chronicle* figures these kings as actors with scriptural authority. *Brunanburh*, the first poem in the *Chronicle*, establishes a precedent for the later poems by narrating the *Chronicle's* history of the Cerdicing dynasty in the traditional form of Old English historical verse. *CEdg* opens this form in new directions, using the terms of an emerging vernacular attention to computus to think through its own engagement with historical time and to place Edgar in it. *DEdw* too shows the influence of vernacular computus, but it uses homiletics to frame tropologically the difficulties that surround the royal succession after Edgar's death. *DEdw* takes up the directions these earlier poems point in order to narrate Edward the Confessor's reign, death, and succession in almost explicitly typological terms. In all these poems, the exegetical—and especially the typological—interpretation of history becomes the major framing device for the West Saxon dynasty's expanding and sometimes troubled hegemony over the British isles.

Uniting the Kingdom in *Brunanburh*

Not itself exegetical or biblical in any obvious way, *Brunanburh* nevertheless participates in the late Anglo-Saxon historical ideology that I have traced in the preceding chapters. The *Brunanburh* poet's inheritance of English intellectual tradition can possibly be seen at the level of diction. Donald Scragg tentatively but plausibly links the poet's vocabulary to the usage of Alfred's circle.¹³ More plainly than that, the fact of this poem's inclusion in the *Chronicle* means that it continues the Alfredian legacy of historical writing, or at least that the *Chronicle's* compiler used the poem for this purpose. As my first chapter showed, this historical practice is an intrinsically tropological one. Entries are sporadic for Æthelstan's reign, and there are many barren annals. Nevertheless, the most important events of his reign continue to be recorded as were those of his predecessors, including (in the Mercian register contained by MSS B and C) his 924 accession, his conquest of Scotland, his death, and of course the Battle of Brunanburh. Modern scholars have usually (and reasonably) treated *Brunanburh* as a production of

¹¹ On formulaic narrative elements in Old English poetry, see Donald K. Fry, "Old English Formulaic Scenes and Type-Scenes," *Neophilologus* 52.1 (1968): 48-54.

¹² Roberta Frank, "Germanic Legend in Old English Heroic Literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 82-100, at 83.

¹³ Donald Scragg, "A Reading of *Brunanburh*," *Unlocking the Wordhord: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 109-22, at 118-19.

Æthelstan's reign,¹⁴ situating it within the multilingual context of his court and showing how it legitimates the English royal line.¹⁵ This section responds to both these lines of thought, arguing that the poem's political project is also an intrinsically historical one. The *Brunanburh* poet's use of conventional Old English verse form situates his poem within the tradition of an early—perhaps even an originary—Old English literary form. In its congruence with the *Chronicle*'s nationalist concerns, *Brunanburh* figures the victory it narrates as the latest iteration of a virtually identical series of events stretching back through the Migration Period to the Old Testament patriarchs.¹⁶ In doing so, it positions the battle as both the imitation of these events and the realization of the historical possibilities that they suggest.

Although the poet who wrote *Brunanburh* remains enigmatic, he was likely associated with King Æthelstan's circle. *The Battle of Brunanburh* is preserved in the entry for 937 in *Chronicle* MSS A, B, C, and D, and same poet probably wrote the brief poem *Capture of the Five Boroughs* that follows it in the annal for 942. It is likely but not demonstrable that he was a courtier composing poetry to aid his career advancement (whatever his career might have been).¹⁷ He may or may not have known Latin, and any knowledge we have of the poet and his work must be inferred from internal evidence. Scragg argues cogently that *Brunanburh*, and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* with it, was composed by the annalist for inclusion in the *Chronicle*.¹⁸ Scragg's argument suggests that these poems could both have been composed after 942, but there is no way to prove this point or to show definitively whether or not the poet was active at Æthelstan's court or that of his younger brother Edmund. However, if the poet was not present at Æthelstan's court, he must still have known Æthelstan's deeds at first or second hand, and he would still have written for an audience who shared this same knowledge. The Alfredian Common Stock portion of the *Chronicle* ends in 892, but the similarity of the four copies of the poem should not be taken for granted. Scribes could and did revise poetry as they copied it. Such revision might at times be a result of error or incompetence.¹⁹ However, variation in vernacular copying may equally be considered a sign of "participatory reception and reading,"²⁰ and even a single scribe might alter his own verse, as did the scribe of Exeter Book *Riddle 30*.²¹ The close similarity of the different copies of *Brunanburh* thus shows the scribes' particular fidelity to this text.²² The degree of standardization among the *Chronicle* manuscripts suggests further their promulgation from the royal house, a pattern of transmission that would provide the text with

¹⁴ For an argument to the contrary, see Simon Walker, "A Context for 'Brunanburh'?" *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 21-39.

¹⁵ On multilingualism, see my discussion below. On political legitimation, see below as well as Janet Thormann, "The Battle of Brunanburh and the Matter of History," *Mediaevalia* 17 (1994 for 1991): 5-13; and Thormann, "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Poems and the Making of the English Nation," *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997), 60-85.

¹⁶ On *Brunanburh*'s relationship to heroic history, see Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 194-203.

¹⁷ I extrapolate here from the discussion by Emily V. Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 37-94.

¹⁸ Scragg, "A Reading of *Brunanburh*."

¹⁹ Douglas Moffat, "A Case of Scribal Revision in the Old English *Soul and Body*," *JEGP* 86.1 (1987): 1-8, and Moffat, "Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Old English Verse," *Speculum* 67.4 (1992): 805-27.

²⁰ Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 117.

²¹ Roy Liuzza, "The Texts of the Old English *Riddle 30*," *JEGP* 87.1 (1988): 1-15, at 10-15.

²² On those variants, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 116-22.

authority and help to explain its fixity in manuscript copies.²³ This pattern of transmission would also help to explain *Brunanburh*'s close adherence to Anglo-Saxon intellectual norms, including its implicit presentation of contemporary history within salvation history.

Alongside its absorption with the genre of Old English historical poetry, *Brunanburh* is, as scholars have shown, well in line with the highly conventionalized literary forms that were fashionable at Æthelstan's court. At the most basic level, these literary forms are notably complex. The Aldhelmian style of Æthelstan A is a case in point here. So too are the Latin and Norse praise poems devoted to Æthelstan.²⁴ The fact that *Brunanburh* has struck some modern readers as "a tissue of . . . formulaic cliché, themes, and stylistic variation" points to its participation in this formal mode.²⁵ That an Old English panegyric poem was written at all may be due to the popularity of Latin and Norse panegyric poetry at Æthelstan's court,²⁶ and *Brunanburh* shares some general characteristics with each of these traditions as they are instantiated in the poems devoted to Æthelstan. For example, the extant poetry in each of these languages praises Æthelstan for uniting England. "Carte dirige gressus" says that Æthelstan rules "ista perfecta Saxonia" [with this England made whole].²⁷ According to Egill Skallagrímsson's verse, "fellt iorð und nið ellu" [the land is brought under the descent of Ælle], and "alt er lægra kynfrægri . . . konungmanni"²⁸ [everything is in submission to the king of famous family]. *Brunanburh* makes the same point about the king more discursively than these poems, describing at length the peoples and places that Æthelstan conquers. Yet it is not strictly necessary to find an external impetus for the composition of panegyric poetry in Old English. Old English heroic poetry represents old tales being told to commemorate major events, as when a *scop* [poet] sings about Sigemund's defeat of the dragon after Beowulf's victory over Grendel.²⁹ Old English historical poetry in general frequently praises and blames the deeds of past figures as it recounts their deeds.

Indeed, it is far more difficult to demonstrate specific points of influence that contemporary Latin and Norse court poetry may have had on *Brunanburh* than it is to argue convincingly the likelihood of their generic influence. Samantha Zacher argues for the presence of a Latin pun in the poem, but her claim relates to only one instance of etymological play.³⁰ Paul

²³ Nicholas Brooks, "Why is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about Kings?" *ASE* 39 (2010): 43-70. On the *Chronicle* as a part of the Alfredian educational program, see Nicholas Brooks, "'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle(s)' or 'Old English Royal Annals'?" *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds, and Susan M. Johns (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2012), 35-48, at 45-48.

²⁴ For the Latin poems, see Michael Lapidge, "Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of King Athelstan," *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 49-86. The extant Norse verse consists of one full verse and a refrain by Egill Skallagrímsson and one helming by Gunnlaugr ormsunga Illugason. For this verse, see *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigting*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols. (Copenhagen: Nordisk forlag, 1912-15), I: 34-35 and 194.

²⁵ Stanley and Greenfield, *New Critical History*, 148.

²⁶ I am unaware of any arguments for Latin panegyric as a generic influence on *Brunanburh*. Concerning skaldic influence, see Jeff Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 172-77; and Matthew Townend, "Pre-Cnut Praise Poetry in Viking Age England," *RES* 51, no. 203 (2000): 349-70.

²⁷ Lapidge, "Poems as Evidence," 86.

²⁸ *Skjaldedigting*, ed. Finnur, I: 34.

²⁹ *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, lines 871b ff.

³⁰ Samantha Zacher, "Multilingualism at the Court of King Æthelstan: Latin Praise Poetry and *The Battle of Brunanburh*," *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800-c. 1250*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 77-103, at 100.

Beekman Taylor discusses in some detail the way that the poem links onomastics to the characteristics of different individuals commemorated in the poem.³¹ Such onomastic thought is consonant with that of the Latin poetry devoted to Æthelstan, but this feature is so widespread in Old English poetry that no specific influence can be claimed here.³² While the *Brunanburh* poet may have borrowed some poetic imagery from the skalds, such readings tend to be as conjectural as those concerning Latin stylistic influence.³³ The most compelling such claim is Joseph Harris's strictly delimited argument that skaldic poetry sheds light on the "Feld dunnade/ secga swate" crux of lines 12b-13a.³⁴ The *Brunanburh* poet also owes Old Norse speakers for some of his vocabulary.³⁵ Particularly striking in this respect is the use of the terms "cnear" [ship] in line 35a and "nægledcnearrum" [nailed ships] in line 53b. *Cnear* is a loan from ON *knörr*, which is most familiar as a term for "merchant ship"³⁶ but can also have the valence of "warship" or "longboat" in poetic use.³⁷ While the Norse loan-words in *Brunanburh* need not be explained as borrowings from the skalds in England or even as necessarily poetic borrowings, *cnear* does point to such influence on some level, however broad. This multilingual literary context is important for *Brunanburh*, and the poem is very much a part of the praise-poetry industry that surrounded Æthelstan. At the same time, the amount of scholarship on the subject threatens to overwhelm the ways in which *Brunanburh* stands apart from these possible influences. Indeed, what emerges is not so much a poem interacting with Latin and Norse verse in any direct way as a poem that is particularly English in its form.

Although it is immediately identifiable as a traditional historical poem, *Brunanburh* nevertheless foregrounds its heroes' relationship to the history recounted in the *Chronicle*. In the manuscript copies, the poem begins with the word "Her." Campbell does not print this word in his edition of the poem on the grounds that "it is not part of the poem, but refers to the date which opens the entry."³⁸ His claim is metrically defensible, since *her* is not necessary for the initial on-verse. However, this word could equally be seen as a metrically acceptable unstressed syllable preceding the stressed alliterating syllables in a Type C verse. As Peter Clemoes points out, the word points to the annal number, forming a link between it and the entry it contains.³⁹ Reading the poem's first line in this way situates it firmly within the established form of the earlier *Chronicle* annals, which conventionally designate the opening of each year's annal with the word *her*. *Brunanburh* is in this way one more annal in the line of them going back to Cerdic in 495 and, ultimately, to Caesar's conquest of Britain. By integrating *Brunanburh* into the formal structure of the preceding annals, this opening works to level the historical distinction

³¹ Paul Beekman Taylor, "Onomastics and Propaganda in *Brunanburh*," *ANQ* 7.2 (1994): 67-68.

³² See Robinson, "Significance of Names."

³³ John D. Niles, "Skaldic Technique in *Brunanburh*," *SS* 59.3 (1987): 356-66.

³⁴ Joseph Harris, "Brunanburh 12b-13a and Some Skaldic Passages," *Magister Regis: Studies in Honor of Robert Earl Kaske*, ed. Arthur Groos et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 61-68.

³⁵ Dietrich Hofmann, *Nordisch-Englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit* (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1955), 165-67.

³⁶ "[A] *ship*, esp. a kind of *merchant-ship*, opp. to *langskip*," s.v. *knörr*, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, 2nd ed. by William A. Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 347.

³⁷ According to the *Lexicon poeticum*, the term means "skib, især handelsskib, men også et sådant der brugtes til kamp," s.v. *knörr*, *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, ed. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, 2nd ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: S. L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1931), 342.

³⁸ *Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. Alistair Campbell (London: William Heinemann, 1938), 96.

³⁹ Peter Clemoes, "Language in Context: *Her* in the 890 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*," *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 27-36, at 28.

between rulers such as, on the one hand, Cerdic and Alfred and, on the other, Æthelstan and Edmund.⁴⁰ This opening similarly works to level the distinction between the events narrated in this poetic annal and those in the earlier annals.

Like a great many of the annals preceding it, *Brunanburh* describes the military expansion of West Saxon rule over the island. *Chronicle* annals recurrently combine the same three narrative elements: the name(s) of individuals, the name of the place(s) where they are, and the description of a battle or conquest. For example, the annal for 495 reads: “Her cuomon twegen ealdormen on Bretene, Cerdic 7 Cynric his sunu, mid .v. scipum in þone stede þe is gecueden Cerdicesore 7 þy ilcan dæge gefuhton wiþ Walum”⁴¹ [Here two chieftains came to Britain, Cerdic and his son Cynric, with five ships to that place which is called Cerdicesora and that same day (they) fought against the Welsh]. In this annal, the progenitors of the West Saxon royal house first arrive on the island, and ethnic conflict follows immediately as Cerdic establishes the kingdom that will one day become Æthelstan’s. The Alfredian annals provide a more immediate referent, narrating the Viking defense through the almost constant reiteration of names, places, and battles as they trace the progress of the wars across the south of what was then becoming Anglo-Saxon England. The annal for 886 describes the West Saxon occupation of London in similar terms:

Her for se here eft west þe ær east gelende 7 þa up on Sigene 7 þær wintersetl namon. Þy ilcan geare gesette Ælfred cyning Lundenburh, 7 him all Angelcyn to cirde þæt buton deniscra monna hæftniede was; 7 hie þa befæste þa burg Eþerede aldormen to haldonne.⁴²

[Here the army, which previously landed in the east, travelled back west and then up to the River Seine and took winter quarters there. In that same year, King Alfred occupied London, and all the English turned to him except those in the captivity of the Danes. He then entrusted that city to Ealdorman Æthelred to rule.]

This occupation was crucial to the extension of West Saxon hegemony over the southern part of the island.⁴³ Even in this annal, which does not appear to describe a military victory, the occupation is sketched as the enlargement of the Cerdicings’ territory through military means. These two annals narrate events that happen almost four centuries apart, but they have roughly the same structure and, in a sense, roughly the same content. Each annal specifies who fought (or conquered) where, when he did so, and very little else. Each annal also narrates how either Cerdic himself or one of his descendants established and enlarged the land that will become or is presently England. The repetition of these elements puts them front and center in the *Chronicle*’s narrative, tracing Cerdic’s lineage and constructing the land the Cerdicings rule as an “imaginable territorial concept” by continually naming the places within it.⁴⁴ The Cerdicings

⁴⁰ See further Stodnick, “Sentence to Story.”

⁴¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS A*, ed. Janet Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. David Dumville and Simon Keynes 3 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), s.a. 495, 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, s. a. 886, 53.

⁴³ On the historical process and significance of the submission of Mercia to Alfred, see Simon Keynes, “King Alfred and the Mercians,” *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, ed. Mark A. S. Blackburn and David N. Dumville (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 1-45, especially 19-34.

⁴⁴ Jacqueline Stodnick, “What (and Where) is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* About? Spatial History,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 86.2 (2004): 87-104, quoted at 104.

continually reenact and reproduce the actions of Cerdic himself. That they do so in the same terms as those used for Cerdic suggests the exactness of their reenactment, but it also belies the progress of the West Saxon hegemony. The *Chronicle*'s self-sameness reproduces a single historical time of Saxonization throughout, a history that seemingly reoccurs in annal after annal as the kingdom grows and is consolidated over centuries.

Brunanburh too locates Æthelstan and Edmund politically in this narrative of historical time. The poem's emphasis on lineage, place, and conquest are clear from its opening lines:

Her Æþelstan cyning, eorla dryhten,
 beorna beahgifa, and his broþor eac,
 Eadmund æþeling, ealdorlangne tir
 geslogon æt sæcce sweorda ecgum
 ymbe Brunanburh; bordweal clufon
 heowan heaþolinde hamora lafan
 afaran Eadweardes; swa him geæpele wæs
 from cneomægum, þæt hi æt campe oft
 wiþ laþra gehwæne land ealgodon,
 hord and hamas.⁴⁵

[Here King Æthelstan, lord of earls, ring-giver of men, and also his brother, Prince Edmund, obtained eternal glory by fighting at battle with sword-edges around Brunanburh. The sons of Edward cleaved the shield-wall, hewed shields with the leavings of hammers, as was natural to them from their kinsmen, that they often defended the land, treasure, and homes at battle against every enemy.]

The opening line announces Æthelstan as its subject, describing him with two items of variation that are conventional to a lord, establishing the political (“eorla dryhten”) and economic (“beorna beahgifa”) dimensions of his lordship. However, his brother Edmund follows in short order. Their shared presence at the opening of this annal already hints at the importance of royal lineage, and line 7a (“afaran Eadweardes”) specifies their parentage. Lines 7b-8a draw out the relationship, only implicit elsewhere in the *Chronicle*, between the Cerdicing lineage and territorial expansion. Fighting to defend the land, its inhabitants, and its wealth is here presented as an inborn characteristic of the Cerdicings; it “him geæpele wæs fram cneomægum” [was natural to them from their ancestors]. In the narrative logic of the *Chronicle* thus far, cleaving shield-walls and gaining everlasting glory in battle is simply what Cerdicings do.

The middle section of *Brunanburh* continues to use these *topoi* to describe the brothers' victory and, by doing so, to clarify the stakes of that victory. Both of their enemies are named, placed in the context of their own lineage, and dispatched from the island. Constantine, king of the Scots, is “his mæga sceard, freonda befyllend on his folcstede . . . and his sunu forlet on wælstowe wundun forgrunden”⁴⁶ [deprived of his kin, of his friends slain on the battlefield . . . and his sons left on the battlefield, killed by wounds]. Constantine's is the inverse of Æthelstan and Edmund's experience at Brunanburh. While their lineage is strengthened in both its influence and its power, his is destroyed. The poem does not mention that Anlaf (ON *Óláfr*) has

⁴⁵ *Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. Campbell, lines 1-9a.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40b-43.

sons who die in battle, but he does lose seven jarls, disrupting his command structure in much the same way as Constantine's dynasty is disrupted.⁴⁷ The poem further reports the deaths of five unidentified young kings.⁴⁸ Whoever they are, their youth and status similarly emphasize that important foreign royal lineages are destroyed here. *Brunanburh* is also very clear that the surviving enemies exit from the island, leaving it to the Anglo-Saxon victors. By positioning the Scots and Danes as the other of the Anglo-Saxons, the poem further reinforces the expansion of that territory under the control of the West Saxon royal house.

Like *Brunanburh*'s first line, its last lines recall the preceding annals and sign-post the battle's continuation of West Saxon royal history. The poem, and the annal with it, ends by gesturing to its own significance within the history that the *Chronicle* narrates, stating that no greater battle had been fought since the Angles and Saxons first came to the island:

Ne wearð wæl mare
on þis eiglande æfre giete
folces gefylled beforan þissum
sweordes ecgum, þæs þe us secgað bec,
ealde uðwitan, sibþan eastan hider
Engle and Seaxe up becoman
ofer brad brime Brytene sohtan
wlance wigsmiþas, Wealas ofercoman
eorlas arhwate, eard begeatan.⁴⁹

[There has never yet on this island been a greater slaughter of people slain before this by the edges of swords, as books tells us, old scholars, since the Angles and Saxons, bold warriors, glorious lords, arrived here from the east, sought Britain over the broad sea, overcame the Britons, obtained a homeland.]

The poet names his sources, the "bec, ealde uðwitan" [books, old scholars] who have purportedly recorded insular history since at least the Migration. The term *uðwitan* in this passage is something of a crux, but it appears to refer to the earlier annalists, extending possibly to writers of classical history (but not to English scholars like Bede).⁵⁰ If this reading is correct, the poet's language situates the Battle of Brunanburh as the greatest battle not only since the Cerdicings first established their kingdom in England but also among every other act of conquest recorded in the *Chronicle*. It is by implication even greater and more historically significant than Alfred's wars against the Vikings. The wording of this passage specifically recalls that of the annal for 495 (quoted above) that describes the momentous arrival of Cerdic and Cynric to the island. In

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 30b-31a.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, lines 28b-30a. These kings are difficult to identify as historical figures. Axel Seeberg has suggested that they are merely a literary topos: "Five Kings," *SB* 20 (1978-81): 106-13.

⁴⁹ *Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. Campbell, lines 65b-73.

⁵⁰ On the valences of this term, see Janet Bately, "Upwita/Philosophus Revisited: A Reflection on OE Usage," *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2000), 15-36. With Donald Scragg, "Reading of *Brunanburh*," 118, Kathryn Powell lends support to the idea that *uðwita* means here the annalists themselves: "'Ealde Uðwitan' in *The Battle of Brunanburh*," *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 218-36.

Brunanburh as in that annal, the Angles and Saxons sought not England (which did not yet exist as a political entity) or the island itself but Britain (“Bretene”). Where the annal for 495 says only that Cerdic and his son “gefuhtan wið Wealum” [fought against the Welsh], *Brunanburh* states that they “Wealas ofercomon” [overcame the Welsh]. This claim is at once a reference and an adaptation, presenting Cerdic’s battle as a victory over foreign enemies like that at Brunanburh. Cerdic’s battle established the homeland (“eard”) that would become the present-day Anglo-Saxon holdings, and Æthelstan and Edmund have just extended those holdings over most of the island in a glorious and conclusive manner. Although not yet quite typological, their conquest is in this sense both a repetition of earlier annals’ political temporality and a realization of the historical possibility contained within it.

Perhaps *Brunanburh*’s most characteristically and conventionally historical-poetic moment, the beasts-of-battle type scene ties the battle into a history much longer than that encompassed by the *Chronicle*. A poetic convention widely attested in Germanic literatures,⁵¹ this type scene occurs frequently in Old English poems describing battles, both heroic and religious.⁵² It is “ornamental rather than essential,” as Francis P. Magoun writes in his influential study of it, and it is not logically necessary for the narration of the battle.⁵³ Nevertheless, as M. S. Griffiths shows, it almost always follows poetic descriptions of battle and serves to emphasize the intensity of the fight just described.⁵⁴ Many instances of this type scene are brief, as short as two half lines. So *Finnsburh* 34b-35a relates: “Hræfen wandrode, sweart and sealobrun”⁵⁵ [A raven wandered, black and dark-brown]. *Elene* 52b-53a similarly describes a raven’s action and its dark appearance: “Hrefen uppe gol, wan ond wælfel”⁵⁶ [A raven cried aloft, dark and fierce]. Each of these instances borrows the type scene’s import without elaborating it, ending their battle in the same way battles are always said to have ended from the time of the Old Testament through the Migration Period. *Brunanburh*’s beasts-of-battle passage, on the other hand, is among the most detailed in the corpus:

Letan him behindan hræ bryttian
saluwigpadan, þone sweartan hræfne,
hyrnednebban, and þane hasupadan,

⁵¹ On the beasts of battle in Middle High German, see Joseph Harris, “Beasts of Battle, South and North,” *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honor of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. Charles D. Wright, Frederick M. Biggs, and Thomas N. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 3-25, at 8-9. For eddic poetry, see Heinrich Beck, “Die Tiere der Jagd und Walstatt in den eddischen Liedern,” *Das Tier in der Dichtung*, ed. Ute Schwab (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1970), 55-73. To my knowledge, no thorough study of this type scene in skaldic poetry exists.

⁵² *Beowulf*, lines 3024b-27; *The Finnsburh Fragment*, lines 5a-7a and 34b-35a; *The Battle of Maldon*, lines 106-7; *Elene*, lines 27b-30, 52b-53a, and 110b-13a; *Exodus*, lines 162-68; *Genesis A*, lines 1983b-85a, 2087b-89a, and 2159b-61; *Judith*, lines 204b-12a and 294b-96a; *The Wanderer*, lines 81b-83a, and of course *Brunanburh* lines 60-65a. This list is drawn from the comprehensive study of M. S. Griffiths, “Convention and Originality in the Old English ‘Beasts of Battle’ Typescene,” *ASE* 22 (1993): 179-99, at 197-99.

⁵³ Francis P. Magoun, Jr., “The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” *NM* 56 (1955): 81-90, at 83.

⁵⁴ Griffiths, “Typescene,” 182-84.

⁵⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, *ASPR* VI (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 4. Line 34a is a crux that has, according to Dobbie, “undergone more varied emendation than any other passage in the Fragment,” *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Dobbie, 134-35. Magoun considers it to be part of the type scene: “Beasts of Battle,” 86. However, I have followed Dobbie in treating it as part of the preceding sentence. For further discussion, see *Beowulf*, ed. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, 289.

⁵⁶ *The Vercelli Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp, *ASPR* II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 67.

earn æftan hwit, æses brucan
 grædigne guðhafoc, and þæt græge deor,
 wulf on wealde. (Lines 60-65a)

[They left behind them the dark-coated one, the black raven, hard-beaked, to enjoy the corpses, and the gray-coated one, the white-tailed eagle, the greedy war-hawk, and that gray animal, the wolf in the forest, to enjoy the carrion.]

Of the ten elements that Griffiths identifies as possible constituents of this type scene, *Brunanburh* contains nine.⁵⁷ All three possible animals (the raven, the eagle, and the wolf) are present, and each is described with a set of variations. Although this lengthy type scene pauses at the end of the battle to remind the reader of the carnage that has been wreaked, the dead were already described toward the beginning of the poem (lines 15b-17a), and the enemies of the English have already been put to flight. If the beasts of battle ordinarily stress the intensity of combat, *Brunanburh*'s thoroughness in its use of this type scene does so all the more. For a knowledgeable audience, it will also call to mind the battles recounted in other historical poems and place the victory at Brunanburh among them.

Brunanburh's conventional statement that the vanquished parties do not need to rejoice in their defeat further extends the battle's historical frame from creation to the end of time. Old English poets consistently use this motif to tag a moment of defeat that is historically pivotal. Here, for example, Æthelstan and Edmund are the objects of praise, but *Brunanburh* counterpoints its praise by stating that the Scots and Vikings cannot commemorate the occasion in this same way. After the death of his sons and an uncountable number of others from his army, Constantine "hreman ne ðorfte" [did not need to exult] and "[g]elpan ne þorfte" [did not need to boast]. Anlaf and the surviving Vikings similarly "hlehhan ne þorftun" [did not need to laugh] after the battle. This motif is a common one when historical poems narrate moments of irrevocable defeat. After Beowulf dies fighting the dragon alone, Wiglaf admonishes the other retainers: "Nealles folccynig fyrdgesteallum gylpan þorfte"⁵⁸ [The folk-king did not at all need to boast about his military comrades]. Like the *Brunanburh* poet's remarks about Constantine and Anlaf, Wiglaf makes this comment after a decisive defeat in battle; his statement comes just after the king's death and just before the Geats are to be attacked by their neighboring tribes. The Geats' impending doom echoes that of previous actors in salvation history. After God throws the rebelling angels from heaven in *Genesis A*, the poet remarks:

[H]eo on wrace syððan
 seomodon swearte, siðe ne þorfton
 hlude hlihhan ac heo helltrugum
 werige wunodon and wean cuðon,
 sar and sorge, susl þrowedon
 þystrum beþeahte, þearl æfterlean
 þæs þe heo ongunnon wið gode winnan.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Griffiths, "Typescene," 185.

⁵⁸ *Beowulf*, ed. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, p. 98, lines 2873-74a.

⁵⁹ *Genesis A*, lines 71a-77.

[They hovered afterward dark in punishment. They did not need to laugh loudly about their journey, but they dwelled weary in hell-torments and knew woe, pain, and sorrow. They suffered torment covered in darkness, severe punishment because they began to fight against God.]

In this passage, the fallen angels have just failed in their revolt against God and are exiled to eternal punishment—no laughing matter, as the poet draws out their grim plight with three variations on the torment they must wearily endure. He then bookends these torments with reminders of the darkness in which the fallen angels must suffer them. The fall of the angels is a historical fulcrum, setting the pattern for all future disobedience and sinfulness. It is, and suggests by implication that these later battles also are, a moment of irrevocable defeat. The poem *Judgment Day I* extends this motif into the future, using it to underscore an anagogical point:

no þæs gilpan þearf
synfull sawel, þæt hyre sie swegl ongean,
þonne he gehyrweð ful oft halge lare,
brigdeð on bysmer.⁶⁰

[The sinful soul does not need to boast that heaven awaits it, when it very often despised holy teaching, turned it to mockery.]

The sinful soul is on the threshold between history and eternity, and its conduct in life, a kind of strife against God like that of the fallen angels, gives it little to boast about. In fact, it will soon be sent to hell as a punishment for its mockery of holy teaching, fulfilling the negative example of the fallen angels and inscribing the effect of this motif in salvation history from its beginning to the bitter end. The *Brunanburh* poet's application of this motif to Constantine and Anlaf thus resonates with a larger poetic tradition in which not needing to laugh or boast signifies a pivotal defeat of world-historical importance. Seen in this light, Æthelstan and Edmund's victory is of far greater scale than a single military success. For an audience familiar with the formal expectations and structures of Old English poetry, this battle is a turning point in the history of both England and the defeated nations. It recapitulates not only the Cerdicings' previous victories but also God's victory over Satan and his followers (both angelic and human). In placing the English expansion on this world-historical scale, the poet's use of this motif moreover implies the place of the West Saxon royal house in all of history to come. Indeed, the poem's almost utterly predictable conventionality registers the importance of the battle—as well as of Æthelstan and Edmund—in both English and salvation history, from creation to the Migration to Judgment Day.

Edgar in Time

The Coronation of Edgar, the next *Chronicle* poem, commemorates not a battle but a royal assembly on the occasion of Edgar's consecration as king (973). As will be seen, *CEdg* relies and expands upon some of the formal and historical precedents set by *Brunanburh*. However, where *Brunanburh* is very much about the expansion of the West Saxon kingdom over the entire island,

⁶⁰ *Judgment Day I*, lines 68b-71a.

CEdg is deeply implicated in the politics of the English Benedictine monastic reforms.⁶¹ Indeed, Mercedes Salvador-Bello argues that the poem “propagandize[s] reformist ideas.”⁶² I hope to show in what follows that *CEdg* does not “propagandize” the reforms so much as it acts as a figure to their ground. The poem’s function is surely a political one, but its political project is more one of historical interpretation than the simple expression of Benedictine ideals. To this end, *CEdg* draws particularly on the monastic reformers’ interest in computus and the reckoning of time. Designed to reconcile the Hebrew lunar calendar and the Christian solar calendar in order to calculate the date of Easter and other feast days, computus is itself a typological practice.⁶³ As discussed Chapter 2, observing the liturgical time reckoned through computus also implicates modern Christians in the typological structure of scriptural history. There began to appear an Old English computus tradition around 970. The influence of this emerging tradition can be seen in the prose and verse versions of the *Menologium*, a number of brief calendrical texts, and probably Byrhtferth of Ramsey’s later *Enchiridion*.⁶⁴ In fitting the conceptual vocabulary of vernacular computus into the traditional form of Old English poetry, *CEdg* merges the *Chronicle*’s historical imagination with a theoretical grasp of the temporal structure of history as such. Tropologically describing Edgar’s coronation in liturgical time, the poem reckons not only historical time but also the English king’s necessary place in it.

The poem situates Edgar’s coronation formally within the *Chronicle* just as immediately as *Brunanburh* does the battle it narrates, working outward from this dating convention to world-historical time. I cite the poem in full as it appears in the B Text of the *Chronicle*, the manuscript that was copied closest to the events in question:⁶⁵

Her Eadgar wæs, Engla waldend,
 corðre mycclum to kinge gehalgod
 on þære ealdan byrig Acemannesceastre—
 eac hie egbuend oþre worde beornas
 Baðan nemnað. Þær wæs blis mycel
 on þam eadgan dæge eallum geworden
 þone niða bearn nemnað 7 cegeað
 Pentecostenes dæg; þær wæs preosta heap,
 mycel muneca þreat, mine gefræge,

⁶¹ The relationship of *Coronation* to the reforms is most thoroughly argued by Scott Thompson Smith, “The Edgar Poems and the Poetics of Failure in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” *ASE* 39 (2010): 105-37, at 118-22.

⁶² Mercedes Salvador-Bello, “The Edgar Panegyrics in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” *Edgar, King of the English 959-75*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 252-72, at 253.

⁶³ See Olaf Pedersen, “The Ecclesiastical Calendar and the Life of the Church,” *Gregorian Reform of the Calendar: Proceedings of the Vatican Conference to Commemorate its 400th Anniversary 1582-1982*, ed. G. V. Coyne, M. A. Hoskin, and O. Pedersen (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Scientiarum, 1983), 17-74.

⁶⁴ See the foundational study and edition of Heinrich Henel, *Studien zum altenglischen Computus* (Leipzig: Verlag von Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1934). Henel argues that the prose and verse *Menologium* texts shared a common source; see pages 78-91. E. G. Stanley confirms this hypothesis in “The Prose *Menologium* and the Verse *Menologium*,” *Text and Language in Medieval English Prose: A Festschrift for Tadao Kubouchi*, ed. Akio Oizumi, Jacek Fiziak, and John Scahill (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), 255-67. On this poem, see also the useful note by Christopher A. Jones, *Old English Shorter Poems: Volume 1 Religious and Didactic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), xxvii-xxviii.

⁶⁵ See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS B*, ed. Simon Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), xlvi-xlix; and O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 125-35.

gleawra gegaderod; 7 þa agangen wæs
 tyn hund wintra geteled rimes
 fram gebyrdtide bremes cinges,
 leohta hyrdes, butan ðær to lafe
 þa get wæs winter geteles, þæs gewritu secgað,
 seofan 7 .xx.; swa neah wæs sigora frean
 þusend aurnen ða þa þis gelamp;
 7 him Eadmundes eafora hæfde
 nigen 7 .xx., niþweorca heard,
 wintra on worlde ða þis geworden wæs.
 Ond þa on ðam þrittegæþan wæs þeoden gehalgod.⁶⁶

[Here Edgar, ruler of the English, was consecrated as king with a great retinue in that old city of Acemannesceastre—the island-dwellers also name it by another word, Bath. There was great joy for all on that blessed day, which the children of men call and name the day of Pentecost. There was gathered a crowd of priests, a great company of monks, of wise men, as I heard. And then ten hundred years in number had passed from the birth of the glorious king, the shepherd of lights, except that there was yet a remainder of twenty-seven years in number, as writings tell. Thus nearly one thousand years of the lord of victories had passed when this occurred. And Edmund’s heir, brave in battle, had himself been in the world for twenty-nine years when this happened. And then in the thirtieth (year) he was consecrated king.]

As is conventional for *Chronicle* annals, the poem opens with the word “Her,” linking it to every foregoing annal. In *CEdg*, however, *Her* is necessary for the scansion of the first half-line, a Type B verse consisting of only the four required syllables. As in *Brunanburh*, the second half-line is a variation on the first, which names the West Saxon king who is the poem’s subject, but where *Brunanburh* uses the heroic formula “eorla drihten” [lord of earls], *CEdg* calls him “Engla waldend” [ruler of the English]. This line links Edgar to the people he rules by alliteration. The b-verse also plays on the common poetic formula “genitive + waldend.” The formula often refers to a “sigora waldend” [ruler of victories], as it does, for example, five times in *Genesis A*⁶⁷ and in other poems, from *Beowulf*⁶⁸ to *Christ and Satan*.⁶⁹ It often refers to rulership of a people, expressed by the phrase “folca waldend” [ruler of peoples], “þeoda waldend” [ruler of peoples], or “weroda waldend” [ruler of hosts].⁷⁰ *CEdg* inserts Edgar’s rulership into the wide purview of this formulaic system, but the poem specifies that the people ruled are the English. *CEdg* may also, like Gregory in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, be punning on “engla waldend”⁷¹ [ruler of

⁶⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS B*, ed. Taylor, s. a. 974, 55.

⁶⁷ At lines 126, 1112, 1270, 1365, and 1408.

⁶⁸ At line 2875.

⁶⁹ At line 217. See also the *Meters of Boethius*, in Meter 20, line 204.

⁷⁰ For some examples of these formulas, see respectively *Azarias*, line 104 and *The Lord’s Prayer I*, line 10; *Andreas*, line 1451, *Elene*, line 421, and *Thureth*, line 7; and *Daniel*, line 331, *Christ and Satan*, lines 187, 251, 563, and *Andreas*, line 388.

⁷¹ Compare *Christ and Satan*, line 198.

angels] and “Engla waldend”⁷² [ruler of the English]. At the same time, this half-line resonates clearly with Edgar’s imperial styles, which repeatedly call him ruler of the whole island of Britain. Edgar is styled, for example, “totius Britanniae gubernator et rector,” [governor and ruler of all of Britain], “totius Britanniae basileus,” [king of all of Britain], and “rex et primicherus totius Albionis”⁷³ [king and first ruler of all of Britain]. The poem’s opening line thus implicitly imagines Edgar’s rule of the English in the context of salvation history and English history within it, picking up on both the *Chronicle*’s narrative of expanded West Saxon hegemony and, if the *engla/Engla* pun is accepted, the narrative of the English conversion. These levels of reference immediately place both Edgar and the monastic reformers within multiple kinds of historical time.

Having established its historical horizons, the first half of the poem explains the particular occasion that it locates within these horizons: a royal assembly for Edgar’s coronation. Edgar is “to kinge gehalgod” [consecrated as king] in the presence of a “corðre mycclum” [great retinue].⁷⁴ “To kinge gehalgod” adapts the *Chronicle*’s previous formula for accession to kingship, in which a king’s accession to the throne is designated by the verb “fon to” [take control of, succeed to]. Alfred, for example, “feng . . . to Wesseaxne rice”⁷⁵ [acceded to the kingdom of the West Saxons] in 871, and Edgar himself “feng to rice” as a child in 959.⁷⁶ Consecrated in this annal rather than simply next up in the line of succession, Edgar marks a turning point of sorts in the *Chronicle*’s representation of kingship. It will report of many later kings that they simply accede to the kingship, but Æthelred, Edward, and Harold will all be consecrated.⁷⁷ *CEdg* thus marks a shift in the *Chronicle*’s ideology of kingship, treating it in sacral terms for the first time at just the moment when the king throws his support behind the reform of his country’s minsters. His consecration takes place at an assembly filled with his retinue, but *CEdg* emphasizes the presence of the ecclesiastical order in it through the variation “preosta heap, mycel muneca þreat” [a crowd of priests, a great company of monks]. Both “genitive plural + *heap*” and “genitive plural + *þreat*” are common poetic formulas for a retinue or group of individuals, and they sometimes collocate with one another.⁷⁸ *CEdg*’s “preosta” and “muneca” are nevertheless unexampled elsewhere in the corpus. Indeed, *CEdg* is the only Old

⁷² *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), Book II, chapter 1, 132-34. The Old English translator renders Bede’s *Angli/angeli* pun with the word pair *Ongle/engla*, *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Thomas Miller, 4 vols., EETS o.s. 95, 96, 110, and 111 (London, 1890-8), I: 96.

⁷³ Scott Thompson Smith conveniently collects Edgar’s royal styles in his “Edgar Poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” 112.

⁷⁴ DOE translates this line “with/in a great retinue,” *Dictionary of Old English: A-H*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2007), s. v. “corþer.” On the debated word *corþer*, see further E. G. Stanley, “The Meaning of Old English *corþer*, *corþor*,” *N&Q* n.s. 35.3 (1988): 292-94.

⁷⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS A*, ed. Janet M. Bately (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), s. a. 871, 48.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, s. a. 959, 75. Frederick M. Biggs provocatively suggests that the first years of Edgar’s reign were shared in joint kingship with Eadwig, “Edgar’s Path to the Throne,” *Edgar, King of the English*, ed. Scragg, 124-39.

⁷⁷ See Salvador-Bello, “Edgar Panegyrics,” 254, n. 6.

⁷⁸ Examples are legion. For the sake of illustration, consider “magorinca heap” [crowd of retainers] in *Beowulf*, line 730; “manfulra heap” [crowd of sinners] in *Solomon and Saturn*, line 148; “heofonengla þreat” [company of heavenly angels] in *Christ II*, line 492; “feonda þreat” [company of enemies] in *Guthlac A*, line 691; “secga þreata” [company of men] in *Elene*, line 271 and *Andreas*, line 1636; and “wlitig weoroda heap ond wuldres þreat” [beautiful crowd of hosts and company of glory] in *Andreas*, line 870.

English poem to apply these formulas specifically to the ecclesiastical order. In so doing, it at once implicates the Benedictine monks attending Edgar's consecration in a wide poetic scheme of retainers and treats them uniquely within that scheme.

CEdg likewise continues and adapts the *Chronicle*'s project of discursively mapping England. Its opening *Her*—"here" on the manuscript page—is contrasted with a repeated "there" ("þær"): there in Acemannesceastre, which the island dwellers ("egbuend") also call Bath. This aside on the two names of Bath doubly maps the site of Edgar's coronation, and naming the English people "egbuend" situates them geographically once more. The poem says of Bath that "[þ]ær wæs blis mycel . . . þær was preosta heap, mycel muneca þreat" [there was great joy, there was a crowd of priests, a great company of monks]. "Þær wæs blis mycel" is a poetic commonplace, repeated once verbatim and once nearly so in *The Dream of the Rood* and paired with *sib* [peace] in the hagiographical *Guthlac B*.⁷⁹ Also a poetic commonplace is the phrase "blis in burgum" [joy in cities].⁸⁰ *CEdg* treats this familiar half-line periphrastically, pointing to the exact *byrig* in which there was *blis*. In so doing, it both describes the assembly that actually took place and does so in terms borrowed from religious poetry. *CEdg* localizes these other poems' general hagiographical or devotional terms to the particular event of Edgar's consecration just as it suits the "heap . . . þreat" pairing to this occasion.

Although it implicitly signals its contemporary historical context in these ways, much of the poem deals explicitly with the temporality of the assembly narrated. However, *CEdg* has a much more precise relationship to historical time than the simple invocation of it.⁸¹ Edgar's consecration takes place on "þam eadgan dæge . . . þone niða bearn nemnað 7 cegeað Pentecostenes dæg" [that blessed day, which the children of men call and name the day of Pentecost]. That the assembly occurs on Pentecost places it liturgically, aligning Edgar's consecration as king with the commemoration of the gift of the Holy Spirit to men. The diction here also points to the assembly's ecclesiastical context. "Pentecostenes dæg" appears as an identical on-verse in the later Benedictine poem *The Seasons for Fasting*, on the importance of fasting during the Ember days and Lent.⁸² That poem speaks of a Sunday which "Pentecostenes dæg preostas nemnað" [priests call the day of Pentecost]. *Pentecostenes* alliterates with *preostas* in *CEdg* just as in *Seasons for Fasting*, and each poem provides a plural subject who *nemnað* that blessed day Pentecost.⁸³ However, the "niða bearn" [children of men] who call it Pentecost in *CEdg* appear most prominently in that poem, the *Menologium*, and the *Metrical Psalms* of the Paris Psalter.⁸⁴ The *Menologium*, as mentioned above, is a metrical calendar surviving only in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.i, the manuscript containing the C-Text of the

⁷⁹ Verbatim in *Dream of the Rood*, line 139; and "þær is singal blis" at line 141. *Guthlac B* reads "þær is sib ond blis" at line 1082.

⁸⁰ *Christ II*, line 530; *Metrical Preface to the Old English Dialogues*, line 6; *Riddle 8*, line 6; and "swa se burgstede wæs blissum gefylled" [so the city-stead was filled with joy] in *Guthlac B*, line 1317.

⁸¹ For a preliminary discussion of the way this poem places Edgar in salvation history, see Trilling, *Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 203-8.

⁸² *Seasons for Fasting*, line 60a.

⁸³ Mary Richards argues that *Seasons for Fasting* depends upon the homiletic materials of the English Benedictine reformers, "Old Wine in a New Bottle: Recycles Instructional Materials in *Seasons for Fasting*," *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 345-64. On the poet's relationship to the reforms, see further Kenneth Sisam, "'Seasons of Fasting,'" *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 45-60, at 48. As suggested by the parallels adduced here, the poet may also have been using reform texts like *CEdg* in his work.

⁸⁴ The only other attestation of this phrase is "niðða bearn" in *Guthlac B*, line 1097a.

Chronicle. Along with the *Metrical Psalms*, the Paris Psalter (Paris, BNF lat. 8824) contains the Alfredian Prose Psalms, canticles, a litany, and prayers. As Mary Jane Toswell has argued, the *Menologium* was itself probably a reform text.⁸⁵ This phrase, then, appears only in texts with a marked liturgical interest, particularly those with a specific interest in the reckoning of time and, in the case of the *Menologium*, a text contained in a manuscript that also displays such a temporal interest.⁸⁶ Coupled with the poem's liturgical reckoning, such diction marks *CEdg*'s concern with the location of its historical matter in liturgical time.

CEdg itself will, in fact, go on to use conventional poetic language in order to reckon computistically the time of Edgar's coronation. The poem says of this particular Pentecost that "tyn hund wintra geteled rimes fram gebyrdtide bremes cinges, leohta hyrdes" [ten hundred years had passed in number from the birth of the glorious king, the shepherd of lights]. This reckoning ("geteled rimes"), linear rather than cyclical like the liturgical time of the Pentecost, places the coronation in the sixth age of the world. The Old English term *rimcraeft* frequently refers to computus, as indeed it will do in *DEdg*. Byrhtferth of Ramsey uses it to discuss Bede's work in the subject: "[h]e cwæð on þære boc þe he gesette be gerimcraefte, and hig *De temporibus genemde*"⁸⁷ [he spoke thus in the book he wrote about computus and called *De Temporibus*].⁸⁸ As a scholar of the second-generation of the English Benedictine reforms, Byrhtferth illuminates the particular valence that *rim* had within the intellectual culture from which *CEdg* arose. The term also frequently glosses the academic discipline of *arithmetica* [arithmetic], closely allied to computus.⁸⁹ At the same time that *CEdg* draws on this highly specialized discourse, it uses poetic vocabulary to express temporal relationships. *Genesis A* and *Elene* also use the phrase "geteled rimes" to reckon the interval between one point in time and another.⁹⁰ It is ten hundred winters since the birth of Christ, who is not named but only referred to by the variation "bremes cinges, leohta hyrdes" [glorious king, the shepherd of lights]. However, the poem immediately qualifies its reckoning, saying that, "þæs gewritu secgað" [as writings tell], there are twenty-seven years as a remainder ("to lafe"); as in *Brunanburh*, the writings referred to here are presumably the entries in the *Chronicle*, which run continuously from Christ's birth to the present day. In other words, we need to subtract twenty-seven from ten hundred to arrive at the correct date for this annal, which is 973. The poem summarizes the results of this reckoning: "swa neah wæs sigora frean þusend aurnen ða þa þis gelamp" [thus nearly one thousand years of the lord of victories had passed when this occurred]. It emphasizes here once more the millennium separating Christ from Edgar. It also once more turns traditional poetic diction to computistic purposes. "Sigora frea" [lord of victories] is a commonplace in Old English poetry, and it is also part of the larger formulaic system "genitive plural + *frea*." In *CEdg*, however, it replaces the *anno domini* [year

⁸⁵ M. J. Toswell, "The Metrical Psalter and the *Menologium*," *NM* 94.3-4 (1993): 249-57. Thomas Bredehoft mounts an interesting but not ultimately convincing argument that the verse *Menologium* and all four tenth-century *Chronicle* poems were composed by Æthelwold of Winchester in his *Authors, Audiences, and Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 113-30.

⁸⁶ Compare the discussion by Pauline Head, "Perpetual History in the Old English *Menologium*," *The Medieval Chronicle: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle Driebergen/Utrecht 13-16 July 1996*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 155-62.

⁸⁷ *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, EETS s.s. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 66.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 67. On Byrhtferth's relationship to computus and arithmetic, see *ibid.*, xxxiv-lxxiv.

⁸⁹ *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antoinette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009), s.v. "gerimcraeft."

⁹⁰ *Genesis A*, lines 1336 and 2346; and *Elene*, line 2.

of the lord] formulation traditional in annual dating since Bede.⁹¹ “Sigora frean þusend” neatly replaces “A. D. 1000,” retaining even the oblique case for *anno*. This formulation thus further embeds the poem’s traditional poetic usages in a closely worked out—even technical—engagement with the temporal mechanics of salvation history and Edgar’s place in them.

In this portion of the poem, *CEdg* integrates Edgar fully into both the liturgically calculated time of salvation history and the history articulated by Old English poetics. Edgar is “nigen 7 .xx.” [twenty-nine] years old, an a-verse description of his age that echoes the “seofon 7 .xx.” [twenty-seven] in the a-verse three lines up. These lines comprise a miniature formulaic system internal to the poem, associating Edgar’s personal age with that of the sixth age of the world. Each of these half-lines is also alliteratively linked to traditional poetic formulas. “Seofon” alliterates with “sigora frean,” the formula here turned to computistic use, and “nigen” alliterates with “niþweorca heard” [brave in battle]. A similar formula appears only in *Beowulf*, when the poem’s hero says that he will fight Grendel without a sword.⁹² At that moment, the term is used to ornament Beowulf’s speech, contrasting Beowulf’s *niþgeweorca* to Grendel’s *gubgeweorca*:

No ic me an herewæsmum hnagran talige
gubgeweorca þonne Grendel hine . . .
Nat he þara goda þæt he me ongean slea,
rand geheawe, þeah ðe he rof sie
niþgeweorca.⁹³

[I do not claim that I am more lowly in martial vigor of warlike deeds than Grendel . . .
He does not know of those skills that he may strike against me, hew a shield, although he
may be strong in hostile deeds.]

One would not wish to track *CEdg*’s use closely against that in *Beowulf*, but the latter poem sets a precedent as clearly as possible for the martial connotations of *niþweorca*. Almost immediately after describing Edgar this way, however, the closing line of *CEdg* returns to the significance of his age: “Ond þa on ðam þrittigæþan wæs þeoden gehalgod” [And then in the thirtieth (year) he was consecrated king]. Edgar had been king since 959. However, thirty is the canonical age at which a man may become a priest, and Edgar’s consecration at this age symbolically unites secular and ecclesiastical leadership in his person.⁹⁴ This final line therefore renders Edgar’s coronation in the terms of church time while remaining mindful of the secular dimensions of his kingship.

The conclusion of *CEdg* completes an envelope pattern marking the thematic relationship of Edgar’s consecration in the 973 annal to both *Brunanburh* and the *Chronicle* as a whole. *CEdg*’s closing half-line, “wæs þeoden gehalgod” [was consecrated king], mimics and varies line 2b’s “to kinge gehalgod” [consecrated as king]. Just as the opening line connects Edgar to the English through alliteration, the latter portion of *CEdg* repeats this alliterative pattern to link Edgar to his dynasty, calling him “Eadmundes eafora” [Edmund’s heir]. The repeated alliteration

⁹¹ On Bede’s interest in *anno domini* and *anno mundi* dating, see Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 28-34.

⁹² Smith makes this observation, “Edgar Poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” 121.

⁹³ *Beowulf*, lines 678-83a.

⁹⁴ See Adrienne Jones, “The Significance of the Regal Consecration of Edgar in 973,” *JEH* 33.3 (1982): 375-90.

here is in keeping with the *Chronicle*'s focus on the Cerdicings' lineage, and it echoes *Brunanburh*'s description of Æthelstan and Edmund as "eaforan Eadweardes" [Edward's heirs]. The envelope on "gehalgod" goes further, both recalling *Capture*'s envelope on "Eadmund cing/cining" and rendering explicitly sacral the kingship described by the pattern.⁹⁵ This envelope likewise recalls the poem's place in the *Chronicle*, and the 973 annal functions as a kind of versification of the typically terse *fon to* annals describing royal accessions. Although not part of the envelope, *CEdg*'s traditional poetic diction of course places it at least tenuously in the tradition of *Brunanburh*, and its reference to the foregoing *gewritu* also echoes the *Brunanburh* poet's self-conscious reading of the annals before his. At the same time, it gives to Anglo-Saxon politics a particularly monastic interpretation that *Brunanburh* does not appear to imagine. More than any other poem in the *Chronicle*, *CEdg* frames politics as happening in time as well as salvation history, and it works to articulate how contemporary politics can be a part of this history at all.

Edgar Out of Time

Like the poems before it, *DEdg* signals its formal contiguity with both the *Chronicle* and the preceding *Chronicle* poems, especially *CEdg*, and it is usually considered to form a pair with this earlier poem on Edgar. However, where *CEdg* turns the *Chronicle* and Old English poetic forms to the computistic reckoning of a royal coronation, *DEdg* broadens its scope beyond the cloister walls. What is specifically monastic in *CEdg* becomes here homiletic and admonitory. As Chapter 2 argued, homilies build tropological instruction on the foundation of scriptural history. For its part, *DEdg* builds its homiletic admonition and reassurance on the foundation of contemporary history. The poem's homiletic structure frames the succession troubles after Edgar's death as a passing moment before God's restoration of peaceful political order.

DEdg focuses on the transience of the present age from its very first line. Like all the annals and most of the poems before it, it begins with the conventional *Her*. The first line also names "Eadgar Engla cing" [Edgar, King of the English] as the poem's subject. Unlike the poems before it, however, *DEdg* postpones the king and his royal style until the second line:

Her geendode eorðan dreamas
 Eadgar Engla cing, ceas him oþer leoht
 wlitig 7 wynsum, 7 þis wace forlet,
 lif þis læne. Nemnað leoda bearn,
 menn on moldan, þone monaþ gehwær
 on þisse eþeltyrf, þa þe ær wæron
 on rimcræfte rihte getogene,
 Iulius monð, þær se geonga gewat
 on þone eahtoðan dæg Eadgar of life,
 beorna beahgifa.⁹⁶

[Here Edgar, King of the English, ended earthly joys and chose for himself another light, beautiful and pleasant, and abandoned this weak, transitory life. The children of peoples, men on earth, everywhere in this native country (those who were correctly educated in

⁹⁵ Smith makes this observation as well, "Edgar Poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*," 121.

⁹⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS B*, ed. Taylor, s. a. 975, 55.

computus) name that month July, in which the young Edgar, ring-giver of men, departed from life on the eighth day.]

As usual, the name of the king to whom the annal is devoted alliterates with the head stave of the initial b-verse, although in this instance, he has already died by the time he is introduced. This opening passage continues the *Chronicle*'s standard of discursive mapping as well. The English people are connected by variation to the land where they live ("menn on moldan"). Throughout their native country ("eþeltyrf"), those who are properly trained in computus—presumably, those who were trained in reformed monasteries—also know the date of Edgar's death, which is the eighth of July.⁹⁷ The half-line that tells us this, "on þone eahtoðan dæg" [on the eighth day], recalls that half-line near the opening of *CEdg* describing Edgar's coronation, which takes place "on þam eadgan dæge" [on that blessed day]. In the same way that the poem's initial *Her* links it to the opening of every other *Chronicle* annal, this echo suggests some formal continuity between *DEdg* and *CEdg*, the poem it follows after the interval of a single barren annal. This same half-line also occurs in the *Menologium*, linking *DEdg* to this calendrical poem in much the same way as *CEdg* and placing the events that follow in the scheme of liturgical time as it is calculated by the reformed Benedictine monks. The connection that this sentence draws among the native country, the English people, and the computistically learned thus encodes both the monastic reforms and the reckoning of time in the *Chronicle*'s emerging nationalist rhetoric. In *DEdg*, however, these discourses do not celebrate the English people so much as work to reassure them as succession struggles threaten the kingdom. However, they will do so only after the catalogue of national disasters that follow in the poem.

Innovative among the *Chronicle* poems by incorporating homiletic rhetoric and concerns into the poem's treatment of contemporary historical matter, these opening lines contrast the transitory life that Edgar has abandoned with the beautiful and pleasant life he has chosen for himself.⁹⁸ Edgar's reforming reign was one of earthly joys ("eorðan dreamas"), but while the end of the poem completes an envelope pattern promising the return of earthly fruits ("eorðan wæstm"), the middle section catalogues the troubles that take place in the aftermath of Edgar's death.⁹⁹ Like the opening lines of *DEdg*, Old English homilies often contrast the passing troubles of this transitory life on earth with the joys and rest to be found in heaven. For example, the sermon "Be rihtan cristendome" makes exactly this point: "geþence gehwa him sylf, hu sceort and hu earmlic þis læne lif ys. ny yldon we na fram dæge to dæge, þæt we to gode ne gecyrron, forðam we us nyton witod lif æt æfen ne we nyton, þonne we to ure reste gað, hwæðer we moton eft dæges gebidan"¹⁰⁰ [think each one for himself, how short and how wretched this transitory life is. Let us not delay from day to day that we turn to God, because we do not know (if our) appointed life is in (its) evening, nor do we know when we will go to our rest, whether we can

⁹⁷ As Neil D. Isaacs points out, in fact, the longest sentence in *DEdg* (and therefore much of this short poem) is devoted to "naming the death-day," "'The Death of Edgar' (and Others)," *ANQ* 4.4 (1954): 52-55, at 52. Compare *Menologium*, line 3b. On the chronological complications attending this half-line, see Kazutomo Karasawa, "A Note on the Old English Poem *Menologium* 3b on þy eahteoðan dæg," *N&Q* n.s. 54.3 (2007): 211-15.

⁹⁸ It is a matter of some debate whether "wlitig 7 wynsum" should be construed with "Eadgar Engla cing" or "oþer leoht," although I have chosen the latter option based on context. See Smith, "Edgar Poems in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 126. Compare here Hrothgar's words to Beowulf: "ond þe þæt selre geceos,/ ece rædas," [and choose that better thing for yourself, eternal gain], *Beowulf*, ed. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, 59, lines 1759b-60a.

⁹⁹ Smith has advanced this reading in detail in his "Edgar Poems in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 122-37.

¹⁰⁰ Homily XXX, "Be rihtan cristendome," *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchung über ihre Echtheit*, ed. Arthur Napier (Berlin, 1883), 143-52, at 151, lines 14-18.

afterwards wait for a day]; a virtually identical passage occurs in his sermon “Larspell.”¹⁰¹ Here the preacher exhorts his audience to think on the passing and wretched nature of life, which stands in contrast to the rest we will receive after we die. The point is made most concisely in a prayer contained in the manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303: “forgife us soþe sibbe on þise læne life. 7 on þam toweardan ece reste. on heofonan rice”¹⁰² [give us true peace in this transitory life and in that future, eternal rest in the heavenly kingdom]. The speaker of this prayer asks God for peace now and eternal rest in the future. That he does so implies, like Wulfstan’s homily, present unrest that can only come to an end in heaven. In beginning with Edgar’s weak, transitory life, cataloguing present unrest, and promising future reward, *DEdg* thus gives poetic form to a homiletic commonplace. The poem in this way presents the uncertainty and upheaval following Edgar’s death as a passing moment before God will reestablish England’s political order, and therefore its earthly happiness.

This homiletic commonplace also found a home in other Old English poems, especially those with a homiletic structure or explicitly didactic leanings. The roughly homiletic *Exhortation to Christian Living*, for example, warns its audience about the transitory nature of worldly holdings:

Forþam þu sylf ongyte
þæt þu alætan scealt læne staþelas,
eard and eþel.¹⁰³

[Because you yourself understand that you must abandon transitory foundations, the land and native country.]

These things are intrinsically unsteady and transitory, and the Christian will leave them for the “upplīcan eardwīc”¹⁰⁴ [heavenly dwelling-place]. This homiletic opposition between the transitory, troubled present and eternal reward forms the structural principle of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. These poems each open with a description of an individual who experiences worldly cares, detail his sufferings, and close with an exhortation that one hope for heavenly rest.¹⁰⁵ This structure is broadly analogous to *DEdg*’s treatment of the kingdom in the wake of its ruler’s death. Where *DEdg* opens with the “eorðan dreamas” [earthly joys] that Edgar has left

¹⁰¹ Homily XLVI, “Larspell,” *ibid.*, 232-42, at 241, lines 13-17. See also the composite homily editorially titled “The Transience of Earthly Delights”: ““For þam þe we iseoð þis læne lif mid fræcðnesse and mid mycele earfoð ifulled, and ylce dæ3 þis lif wonæð and wursæð; and na lifiende mon ne þurhwunæð on þisse weorlde, ne nan eft to lafe ne wurð” [Because we see this transitory life filled with danger and with great difficulty, and each day this life diminishes and gets worse, and no living man remains in this world, nor does anything remain afterward], *Old English Homilies from MS Bodley 343*, ed. Susan Irvine, EETS o. s. 302 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 199, lines 65-68. On the sources of this homily, which include Vercelli X, see Irvine remarks at pages 183-96. On composite homilies as a class of texts, see Malcolm Godden, “Old English Composite Homilies from Winchester,” *ASE* 4 (1975): 57-65.

¹⁰² Printed in N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 101, no. 57, art. 21.

¹⁰³ *Exhortation to Christian Living*, lines 57b-60a.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, line 78.

¹⁰⁵ For standard interpretations of these poems, see Robert Bjork, “*Sundor æt Rune*: The Voluntary Exile of The Wanderer,” *Neophilologus* 73 .1 (1989): 119-29, reprinted in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 315-27; and Peter Orton, “The Form and Structure of *The Seafarer*,” *SN* 63 (1991): 37-55, reprinted in *Old English Literature*, ed. Liuzza, 353-80.

behind and envelopes on the “eorðan wæstm” [earthly fruits] that the troubled kingdom awaits from God, *The Wanderer* introduces in its first line an “anhaga” [solitary individual] who “are gebideð”¹⁰⁶ [awaits mercy] and exhorts at its end:

Wel bið þam þe him are seceð
 frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð.¹⁰⁷

[It is good for that one who seeks mercy for himself, the Father in heaven as a comfort,
 where stability stands for us all.]

This gnomic conclusion suggests that the “anhaga” will receive his mercy later, if not at present, and that true peace awaits the Christian in heaven rather than on earth, where he currently endures exile and its attendant troubles. As noted in the previous chapter, this poem’s language is strikingly tenorial. The catalogue of troubles in *DEdg* also shows a deep interest in place—and particularly in England—if not quite in land tenure. Bishop Cyneweard “of Brytene gewat”¹⁰⁸ [departed from Britain], proper worship is scorned in Mercia, and the Scandinavian ealdorman Oslac (ON *Áslákr*) is driven across the water, “hama bereafod”¹⁰⁹ [deprived of (his) estate]. The point is not to suggest that these poems are directly related to one another or even that they form a family group. Rather, the comparison allows us to see how *DEdg* adapts this homiletic and poetic commonplace to the narration of current events.

Where *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* narrate the troubles of a generalized and apparently fictional speaker, *DEdg* narrates the very real political problems that were taking place in England. Central to the politics of these years is the “anti-monastic reaction.” These attacks on monasteries were an aspect of the struggle for succession that ensued after Edgar’s death, and behind the poet’s report (“mine gefræge”) of wrong-doing in Mercia lay a court divided along roughly regional lines.¹¹⁰ The ealdormen Æthelwine of East Anglia and Ælfhere of Mercia each appear to have taken the opportunity presented by Edgar’s death to further their own material interests. Edgar had two sons, who were each youths at the time of Edgar’s death. Edward was born to Æthelflæd, first wife of Edgar and daughter of the ealdorman Ordmer, about whom little is known. Æthelred was born to Edgar’s second wife Ælfthryth, the widow of Æthelwold, brother of Æthelwine. Given this affine relationship to Edgar, Æthelwine likely had a stake in maintaining the order that the late king had established.¹¹¹ Ælfhere, on the other hand,

¹⁰⁶ *Wanderer*, line 1b.

¹⁰⁷ *Wanderer*, lines 114b-15.

¹⁰⁸ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS B*, ed. Taylor, s. a. 975, 55.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹⁰ On Edgar’s court and what can be known from charter attestations about the ealdormen who were important to it, see Simon Keynes, “Edgar, *rex admirabilis*,” *Edgar, King of the English 959-75*, ed. Scragg, 3-59, at 31-36. Concerning regionalism, see H. M. Chadwick’s suggestion that Edgar divided the kingdom into four parts: Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumbria in his *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 178. n. 1. To my knowledge, however, few scholars have taken up this idea.

¹¹¹ See the discussion by D. J. V. Fisher, “The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr,” *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10.3 (1952): 254-70, at 268-69. On Æthelwine, see further Cyril Hart, “Athelstan ‘Half King’ and his Family,” *ASE* 2 (1973): 115-44, at 133-37.

appears to have viewed Æthelwine (and his friend Oswald) as a political rival.¹¹² He also used the period after Edgar's death to recoup some of his lands that had been granted to reformed monastic foundations, an action that seems to have been coincident with both the peak of his own power and a re-emergent sense of Mercian identity.¹¹³ As this conflict took place, the earl Oslac was expelled from Northumbria. No information about the circumstances of this expulsion survives, but because he was in charge of the region, the event must have been a major one in insular politics.¹¹⁴ This period of political turmoil did not end until at least the time of Edmund's murder and Æthelred's 983 accession to the throne.

DEdg describes these worldly troubles in the form of a catalogue, formally emphasizing their continuity and relatedness. Each element is introduced with the phrase “ða wearð,” stringing the troubles together formally in “a line of causality that begins with the king [Edgar].”¹¹⁵ The first element of this catalogue narrates the “anti-monastic reaction,” which *DEdg* describes thus:

Da wearð on Myrcum, mine gefræge,
wide 7 welhwær waldendes lof
afylled on foldan— feala wearð todræfed
gleawra Godes þeowa; þæt wæs gnornung mycel
þam þe on breostum wæg byrnende lufan
meotodes on mode; þa wæs mærdða fruma
to swiþe forsawen, sigora waldend,
rodera rædend, þa man his riht tobræc.¹¹⁶

[Then in Mercia, as I have heard, the praise of the Lord was laid low far and wide—many of God's wise servants were scattered. That was a great grief to those who bore a burning love for the creator in their breast and mind. Then the Author of Glories, the Lord of Victories, the Ruler of the Heavens, was too greatly scorned, when people broke his law.]

Without actually naming Ælfhere, this item in the catalogue frames his actions in legal and moral terms. The poem simply says that the scorn of God's praise and the scattering of his servants took place in Mercia, a phrasing that maps the event discursively without naming the specific places or foundations where it occurs, and it says that this action breaks God's law. Nor does the poem mention the dispossession of any monasteries, although the reformed monasteries of Ramsey, Peterborough, Thorney, and Ely were all in Mercia. Rather than focusing on the fact of

¹¹² On their direct conflict over territorial control in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, see A. Williams, “*Princeps Merciorum gentis*: The Family, Career and Connections of Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83,” *ASE* 10 (1982): 143-72, at 164-66.

¹¹³ Williams, “*Princeps Merciorum gentis*,” 161-67. See also Shashi Jayakumar, “Reform and Retribution: The ‘Anti-Monastic Reaction’ in the Reign of Edward the Martyr,” *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson, and David Pelteret (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 337-52, at 341-48.

¹¹⁴ On Oslac, see Keynes, “Edgar, *rex admirabilis*,” 31-32; and for a fuller treatment, Dorothy Whitelock, “The Dealings of the Kings of England with Northumbria in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959), 70-88, at 77-80.

¹¹⁵ Smith, “Edgar Poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” 128.

¹¹⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS B*, ed. Taylor, s. a. 975, 55-56.

the monks' dispossession, *DEdg* foregrounds the grief the monks feel at this infraction against God's law. The half-line "gleawra Godes þeowa" [God's wise servants] signals that these are the reformed monks by echoing the diction of "mycel muneca þreat . . . gleawra" [great company of monks, of wise men] in the preceding poem. To dispossess the monks is in this account to sin against God, and such an action is a sign of the pervasive wickedness of this passing age. Burning in their hearts with the love of God, the monks thus react to the events in Mercia in the only way possible, or at least in the only way institutionally allowed. In so doing, they emphasize the sinfulness of the anti-monastic reaction, and they recall the diplomas' injunctions against individuals who infringe on monastic land holdings.

Oslac's expulsion in the second element of this catalogue moves the poem's geographic focus northward. This event is not treated as an explicitly moral matter like the dispossessions in Mercia. Nevertheless, the passage points formally to its place in this poem's list of transitory earthly troubles:

Da wearð eac adræfed deormod hæleþ,
 Oslac of earde ofer yþa gewalc,
 ofer ganotes bæð, gomolfeax hæleþ,
 wis 7 wordsnotor, ofer wætera geþring,
 ofer hwæles eþel, hama bereafod.¹¹⁷

[Then the brave warrior Oslac, a gray-haired warrior wise and eloquent, was also driven from the native country of the rolling of waves, over the gannet's bath, over the tumult of waters, over the whale's homeland, deprived of his estate.]

This passage uses the language of exile, an established pattern in Old English verse, to narrate Oslac's plight.¹¹⁸ Its statement that Oslac was "eac adræfed" plays on the previous section's claim that the monks were "todræfed." This polyptoton links the two catalogue items formally and continues the moral concerns of the anti-monastic reaction into this section on Oslac's exile. The first and last half-lines envelope on his expulsion ("Ða wearð eac adræfed . . . hama bereafod"), and every half-line between names either Oslac or the sea over which he is driven. These intermediate variations produce a kind of structural synchysis, pulling the audience back and forth between Oslac and the sea he must traverse. Written in tightly controlled *Bogenstil*, they also link Oslac alliteratively and inescapably to this sea.¹¹⁹ The diction of these alliterations moreover recalls that of both historical poetry and other poetic passages with a homiletic bent. Oslac's name is varied three times, each time with standard locutions for a warrior; in fact, he is twice called a "hæleþ" [warrior]. The density of sea kennings here is notable in its own right, but notable too is the link between these kennings and those in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. As Jayne Carroll points out, *The Wanderer* uses formulas similar to *DEdg*'s, and *The Seafarer* shares two kennings with it in three places: "yþa gewealc" at lines 6a and 46b, and "hwæles

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹⁸ Although he does not discuss *DEdg*, this passage meets three (and arguably all) of the four criteria Stanley B. Greenfield considers to constitute the "theme" of exile in his "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Old English Poetry," *Speculum* 30.2 (1955): 200-6, at 201.

¹¹⁹ On stichic style and *Bogenstil*, see E. G. Stanley, *In the Foreground: Beowulf* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 110-14.

epel” in line 60a.¹²⁰ We also see the convention of life as a sea voyage in, for example, the conclusion of Cynewulf’s *Christ II*, a translation of Gregory’s homily on the Ascension.¹²¹ Such parallels reinforce the homiletic aspect of *DEdg*’s narration here. At the same time, this passage inverts the *Chronicle*’s typical concerns. The play on “todræfed . . . adræfed” carries on not only the previous section’s moral concern but also its emphasis on dispossession—rather than the expansion of West Saxon territory—in the wake of Edgar’s death. Just as the monks were scattered from their monasteries, Oslac is driven from his estate. Contrary to the *Chronicle*’s usual practice of mapping the island by naming its places in great and frequently iterative detail, this exilic section focuses on the water around it, and Oslac must now pass over the whale’s homeland (“hwæles epel”) rather than dwell in his own.

All of these misfortunes are couched in computistic terms as well as homiletic ones. The end of the poem turns to the joy that God will once again give to the English, but first it completes the catalogue by narrating the appearance of a comet rather than a political occurrence:

Pa wearð eac ætywed uppe on roderum
 steorra on stapole ðone stiþferhþe,
 hæleð higegleawe hatað wide
 cometa be naman, cræftgleawe menn,
 wise woðboran. Wæs geond werþeode
 waldendes wracu wide gefræge,
 hungor ofer hrusan; þæt eft heofona weard,
 gebette, brego engla, geaf eft blisse gehwæm
 egbuendra þurh eorðan wæstm.¹²²

[Then a star was also revealed in the heavens, in the firmament, which resolute warriors wise in mind, skillful men, wise speakers widely call a comet by name. The Ruler’s vengeance, hunger over the earth, was widely known among the people. Afterward the Guardian of Heavens, Lord of Angels, amended that, gave joy to each of the island-dwellers through the fruits of the earth.]

Cometa [comet] is not a poetic word, and it is in fact not widely attested at all in Old English texts. Most comets appear in the *Chronicle*, and as Smith writes, they “frequently herald disturbance in the human world, including moments of dynastic crisis.”¹²³ The *Chronicle* associates comets in particular with disturbances in the kingdom. A comet appears when King Ecgfrith drives Wilfrid from his bishopric,¹²⁴ when Saint Ecbryht dies,¹²⁵ when Edgar dies, and

¹²⁰ Jayne Carroll, “*Engla waldend, rex admirabilis*: Poetic Representations of King Edgar,” *RES* 58, no. 234 (2007): 113-32, at 126.

¹²¹ This passage comes in *Christ II*, lines 850-66. On *Christ II* and its source, see George Hardin Brown, “The Descent-Ascent Motif in *Christ II* of Cynewulf,” *JEGP* 73.1 (1974): 1-12, reprinted in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed. Robert E. Bjork (New York: Routledge, 2001), 133-46.

¹²² *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS B*, ed. Taylor, s. a. 975, 56.

¹²³ Smith, “Edgar Poems in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,” 135.

¹²⁴ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS A*, ed. Bately, s. a. 678, 31.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, s. a. 729, 35.

when William conquers England.¹²⁶ *Chronicle* manuscripts with only prose in their 975 annal still note the appearance of a comet and implicitly connect it to the year's troubles.¹²⁷ Though an astronomical sign associated with political turmoil, the comet is also inserted into computistic discourse. Computistic explanations of comets' significance are a common part of the *rimcraeft* [computus] that *DEdg* says is known everywhere in England, and this catalogue item emphasizes that "craeftgleawe menn" [skillful men] name this kind of star a "comet." In this context, *craeftgleaw* probably refers specifically to skill in *rimcraeft*. The poem does not say what such men know about a comet besides its name, but drawing on Bede's *De natura rerum*, the second-generation reformers Ælfric and Byrhtferth each discuss this point in their own work in the discipline.¹²⁸ Ælfric is reserved about the import of comets and describes them in basically propositional terms: "Comete sind gehatene þa steorran ðe færlice 7 ungewunelice æteowiað, 7 sind geleomode swa þæt him gæð of se leome swilce oðer sunbeam. Hi ne beoð na lange hwile gesewene, ac swa oft swa hi æteowiað hi gebicniað sum ðing niwes toward þære leode ðe hi ofer scinað"¹²⁹ ["Comets" is the name given to those stars which unexpectedly and strangely appear, and are so radiant that light comes off them like a second sunlight. They are not seen for long, but whenever they appear they signify something new towards the land over which they shine].¹³⁰ For Ælfric, comets are not necessarily good or bad signs in themselves, but they are a sign of changing times for a particular people.¹³¹ It is perhaps noteworthy that comets are ethnically specific in their signification; the comet in *DEdg* appears as a signification of the troubles that the English face rather than some larger problem or news from abroad. For his part, Byrhtferth is unreservedly negative about what comets mean: "An steorra ys genemned cometa; þonne he ætywð, þonne getacnað he hungor oððe cwealm oððe gefeoht oððe tostencednyss þæs eardes oððe egeslice windas"¹³² [A certain star is called a comet; when it appears, it foreshadows famine, pestilence, war, the earth's destruction or terrifying winds].¹³³ The list of troubles that Byrhtferth enumerates here accounts for all those negative events signified by comets in the *Chronicle*; indeed, it reads almost like a commentary on comets in that text. The foreboding sign of the comet marks the pivot between the catalogue and the end of the poem. The comet betokens God's anger at the English people and the hunger in the land, but it is precisely these troubles that will allow God to give solace to the country. In its final reference to the English once more as "egbuendra" and its completion of the envelope on "eorðan wæstm," *DEdg* reminds us that the events it narrates are a part of the *Chronicle*'s ethnic history. It frames this moment in the *Chronicle*'s history as a turning point, a period of affliction before God's grace will restore the kingdom to health and to political order.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, s. a. 1066, 83.

¹²⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: MS F*, ed. Peter S. Baker (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), s. a. 975, 84.

¹²⁸ Bede writes of comets: "Cometae sunt stellae flammis crinitae, repente nascentes, regni mutationem aut pestilentiam aut bella, uel uentos aestusue, portendentes" [Comets are stars hairy with flames, suddenly born, foretelling a change in the kingdom or pestilence or wars or winds or droughts], *De natura rerum*, in *Bedaе venerabilis opera: Pars I Opera didascalica*, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), chapter 24, p. 216.

¹²⁹ *Ælfric's De temporibus anni*, ed. and trans. Martin Blake (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 92.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³¹ See the discussion *ibid.*, 125-26.

¹³² *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Baker and Lapidge, 120.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 121.

Repackaging the *Chronicle* Poems in *The Death of Edward*

Copied in the 1065 annal of the C and D manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, *The Death of Edward* recounts Edward the Confessor's exile, rule, and death, and it establishes Harold as his successor. Uniquely among the poems considered in this chapter, this annal also has a prose frame that recounts the year's events as usual. *DEdw* itself, however, recapitulates many of the stylistic and thematic interests seen in the previous poems. Unlike many of the quasi-poetic annals before it or the quasi-homiletic poem *The Death of Alfred* in the 1036 annal, *DEdw* uses classical Old English poetic meter. It also uses many well-worn poetic formulas and standard poetic diction.¹³⁴ It is, as Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe argues, a poem "meant . . . to sound traditional."¹³⁵ The poem uses the forms and themes introduced by the earlier *Chronicle* poems in order to foreground both Edward's sanctity and his status as king of the English. At the same time, it does not so much figure Edward's place in the whole of salvation history as apply the terms of salvation history to his reign. Edward becomes in *DEdw* a royal saint and his rule a typological restoration of the West Saxon dynasty after the Viking conquest.

DEdw continues (sometimes idiosyncratically) the *Chronicle*'s focus on both mapping the kingdom discursively and the West Saxon hegemony over the island. Like the other *Chronicle* poems, it opens with the word "Her." Unlike them, it does not also begin the annal with this word; indeed, the annal begins with a standard prose opening: "Her on þissum gear foran to Hlafmæssan het Harold eorl bytlian on Brytlande æt Portasihð"¹³⁶ [Here in this year before Lammas (i.e., the first day of August) Earl Harold commanded a fortification to be built in Wales at Portskewet]. The poem's first word can thus only be an imitation of earlier *Chronicle* poems: "Her Eadward kingc, Engla hlaforð"¹³⁷ [Here King Edward, lord of the English]. This line mimics the first line of every tenth-century *Chronicle* poem (except *DEdg*, pointed out above), and like all of these poems after *Brunanburh*, it acts as a kind of royal style. After the opening lines narrate Edward's death, the poem expands upon the lands and peoples that he ruled:

He on worulda her wunode þrage
on kyneþrymme, cræftig ræda,
XXIII, freolic wealdend,
wintra gerimes, weolan britnode,
and healfe tid, hæleða wealdend,
weold wel gepungen Walum and Scottum
and Bryttum eac, byre Æðelredes,
Englum and Sexum, oretmægcum,
swa ymbclyppað cealde brymmas,
þæt eall Eadwarde, æðelum kinge,
hyrdon holdlice hagestealde menn.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ On the place of both *Death of Alfred* and *DEdw* in the Old English poetic tradition, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Deaths and Transformations: Thinking Through the 'End' of Old English Verse," *New Directions in Oral Theory*, ed. Mark C. Amodio (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2005), 149-78.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 168

¹³⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, s. a. 1065, 117.

¹³⁷ *DEdw*, line 1.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, lines 4-14.

[He, the noble ruler, ruler of warriors, dwelled here in the world, in royal majesty, wise in counsel, for a period of twenty-four and a half years in number, dispensed treasures. He, the descendant of Æthelred, ruled very excellently the Welsh and the Scots and also the Britons, the Angles and Saxons, champions as far as the cold seas encompass so that the young warriors loyally obeyed the noble King Edward.]

The poem here describes Edward through a series of variations on traditional diction for lordship. He is twice called a “wealdend” [ruler] at the end of a line, and he dispenses wealth to his warriors. This passage also names the many peoples subjected to Edward in elaborate detail. He rules the Angles and Saxons. Somewhat oddly, this collocation refers not to present ethnic distinctions but to the distant past of the *Chronicle*. It is specifically reminiscent of *Brunanburh*’s reference to the Angles and Saxons who came from over the sea and conquered the Britons.¹³⁹ This passage, in fact, enumerates these conquered insular peoples one by one. It marks their separation from the Angles and Saxons with the interposed b-verse “byre Æðelredes,” linking these people to the West Saxon dynasty that rules them. Such enumeration is a striking example of the *Chronicle*’s drive to map the expansion of West Saxon hegemony over the island. It is all the more striking in light of Edward’s royal styles in his diplomas. The great majority of the roughly thirty surviving diplomas he witnessed refer to him simply as “rex Anglorum” [king of the English] and “rex totius Britanniae” [king of all of Britain].¹⁴⁰ The most loquacious among them say that he is “rex Anglorum omniumque insularum in circuitu persistentium”¹⁴¹ [king of the English and of all the insular (peoples) set up around its edges] and “basileus totius gentis Angul Saxonum ceterorumque popularum in circuitu habitantium . . . gubernator et rector”¹⁴² [king of the whole people of the Anglo-Saxons and governor and ruler of the other peoples dwelling around its edges].¹⁴³ For its part, *DEdw* is far more expansive than even the most extravagant of Edward’s functional legal texts. It names one by one these people in the “circuit” of Edward’s rule. Like much of the *Chronicle* poetry before it, *DEdw* also points to their insular

¹³⁹ See O’Brien O’Keeffe, “Deaths and Transformations,” 169-70.

¹⁴⁰ Typically, the former locution comes in the dispositive clause and the latter in the first position of the witness list. The following diplomas (in chronological order by date of issue) give Edward either these royal styles or ones closely similar: S 997a, Simon Keynes, “The Æthelings in Normandy,” *ANS* 13 (1991): 173-205, at 201; S 1061, *ibid.*, 204; S 998, *Charters of Sherborne*, ed. M. A. O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 74-77; S 1003, James B. Davidson, “On Some Anglo-Saxon Charters at Exeter,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 39 (1883): 259-303, at 292-95; S 1005, John Mitchell Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus aevi saxonici*, 6 vols. (London, 1839-48), IV: 79-80; S 1006, *ibid.*, IV: 88-91; S 999, *ibid.*, IV: 74-75; S 1001, *ibid.*, IV: 91-94; S 1007, *ibid.*, IV: 102-4; S 1008, *ibid.*, 104-6; S 1009, < <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/1009.html> >, accessed 29 November 2016; S 1010, Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV: 97-99; S 1050, *Charters of St Augustine’s Abbey Canterbury and Minster-in-Thamet*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 129-31; S 1017, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 73-75; S 1018, Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV: 113-14; S 1019, *ibid.*, IV: 115-16; S 1021, *ibid.*, IV: 118-21; S 1028, Florence E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, 2nd ed. (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1989), 538-39; S 1033, Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV: 148-50; and S 1034, *ibid.*, 150-51.

¹⁴¹ S 1012, Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV: 94-97, at 94.

¹⁴² S 1022, *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000-1), II: 559-63, at 560.

¹⁴³ See S 1024: “gentis Anglorum et in circuitu degentium populorum monarchiam optinens” [holding the rule of the English people and the peoples living around its edges], Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV: 132. Compare these royal styles also to Edgar’s, to which they are closely similar.

location in its description of the cold seas that encircle them. The poem thus unites under Edward's rule both the historical peoples of the island and those who live on its edges.

Edward's rulership has an explicitly marked element of temporality—especially of transience—no less than did Edgar's coronation and death. Edward ruled here in the world for a time (“þrag”). Lines 6-8 lay out the duration of this time in a series of half-lines: “XXIII . . . wintra gerimes . . . and healf e tid” [a period of twenty-four and a half years]. These half-lines are alternated with, and alliteratively linked to, the half-line variations on Edward's lordship. Before coming to the throne, however, Edward experienced an exile during the Danish conquest, a period of foreign rule that is expressed in almost exactly the same terms as Edward's own:

Wæs a bliðemod bealuleas kyng,
 þeah he lange ær, lande bereafod,
 wunode wræclastum wide geond eorðan,
 syððan Cnut ofercom kynn Æðelredes
 and Dena weoldon deore rice
 Engla landes XXVIII
 wintra gerimes, welan brytnodon.¹⁴⁴

[The innocent king was always cheerful, although deprived of land, he dwelled for a long time previously in paths of exile widely around the earth after Cnut overcame the family of Æthelred and the Danes ruled the beloved kingdom of England for twenty-eight years in number, dispensed treasures.]

Moving into the past with the temporal adverb *syððan*, the poem formally links Edward's reign to that inaugurated by Cnut. It tallies the number of years of Danish rule using the same two half-lines (“number” + “wintra gerimes”) as it did Edward's. The Danes are also like Edward in that they are said to have dispensed treasures; this half-line 21b differs from 7b describing Edward's rulership only in that the verb is now plural instead of singular.¹⁴⁵ *DEdw* here also looks to the past, including that narrated by earlier *Chronicle* poems. During this period of Danish rule, Edward is “lande bereafod” (deprived of land) just as Oslac was in “hama bereafod” (deprived of his estate) in *DEdg*. Edward's estate, however, consists of the entire land of England. Where Oslac was simply driven abroad, Edward dwelled “in paths of exile widely around the earth” (“wræclastum wide geond eorðan”). This language is traditional to Old English poetry, occurring in the Oslac passage of *DEdg* as well as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, those poems I have argued to parallel *DEdg*'s homiletic structure.¹⁴⁶ The use of such language in *DEdw* emphasizes the trackless wanderings of Edward's exile despite the fact that he spent these years not traveling the earth but with his mother Emma's family in Normandy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ *DEdw*, lines 15-21.

¹⁴⁵ The other difference is that line 7b's *weolan* shows evidence of u-mutation typical of West Saxon, while line 21b's *welan* does not; however, I do not take this to be significant to the poem's meaning. On this sound change, see Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 88, §210.

¹⁴⁶ This diction for the path of exile occurs in *Beowulf*, line 1352b; *Christ and Satan*, line 120a; *Seafarer*, line 57a; and *Wanderer*, lines 5a and 32a.

¹⁴⁷ See Elisabeth van Houts, “Edward and Normandy,” *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 63-76.

This passage doubles many of the formulaic usages of those lines describing Edward's kingship in a manner that is implicitly typological. Their verbatim (or nearly verbatim) verbal echoes, their repeated calculations of regnal intervals, and their dispensations of treasure recall Edward's outstanding reign even as the poem narrates Cnut's dynasty. By contrast with its treatment of Edward, the poem does not grace Cnut with a series of variations describing the noble quality of his lordship. Edward is well advised and noble ("cræftig ræda" and "freolic wealdend"). Even during his exile, he was "always" ("a") the king. This adverb elides the succession struggles that occurred after Harthacnut's death in 1042.¹⁴⁸ Together with the poem's silence on the dimensions of Cnut's lordship, it casts Cnut's conquest of the West Saxon line as a mere interlude just as the troubles after Edgar's death were a mere interlude before the resumption of normal dynastic rule. The "kynn Æðelredes" of this passage also recapitulates the "byre Æðelredes" above. In tracing Edward's lineage not to Cerdic or Alfred but to Æthelred, who was deposed by the Viking invaders, the poem emphasizes the continuity of the West Saxon line even through the disturbance of Cnut's conquest. Indeed, in much the same way that *DEdg* frames the kingdom's troubles as a transitory phase to be remedied by God's grace, *DEdw* frames the Danish rule and Edward's concomitant exile as transitory troubles that are overcome by Edward's restoration to the throne.

However, *DEdw* treats Edward's rule less in homiletic terms than in hagiographical ones. The opening lines of the poem point toward this genre:

Her Eadward kingc, Engla hlaford,
sende soþfæste sawle to Criste
on godes wæra, gast haligne.¹⁴⁹

[Here King Edward, lord of the English, sent his righteous soul, his holy spirit, to Christ in God's keeping.]

The tenth-century *Chronicle* poems begin by varying the king's name with traditional epithets (in *Brunanburh* and *Capture*) or by narrating the typical *Chronicle* matter of a king's accession and death (in *CEdg* and *DEdg*). *DEdw* also narrates a king's death, but it does so periphrastically. Edward is not said to die here but rather to send his righteous and holy soul into Christ's keeping. After narrating the Danish rule, the poem makes the point of Edward's sanctity more forcefully:

Syððan forð becom freolice in geatwum
kyningc kystum god, clæne and milde,
Eadward se æðela, eðel bewerode,
land and leode, oðþæt lungre becom
deað se bitera, and swa deore genam
æþelne of eorðan; englas feredon
soþfæste sawle innan swegles leoht.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ For Edward's rise to the throne, see Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 54-62.

¹⁴⁹ *DEdw*, lines 1-3.

¹⁵⁰ *DEdw*, lines 22-28.

[Afterward it happened that the good king, noble Edward, pure and mild, in the best adornments nobly defended the native country, the land and the people, until suddenly bitter death came, and so took the dear nobleman from the earth. Angels carried his righteous soul into the light of heaven.]

Edward is a saint (“clæne and milde”) taken away by bitter death, but he is also a noble ruler. The paronomasia on “æðela” (noble) and “eðel” (native country) links these words etymologically, and their alliteration with “Eadward” builds the king’s defense of England into the form of the line. The next half-line (“land and leode”) continues this project, varying upon “eðel” to show exactly what and whom Edward defended. Upon Edward’s death, the sanctity suggested by line 23b receives confirmation when angels carry Edward’s soul to heaven. Lines 27b-28 compress a conventional topos of hagiography that describes the saint’s ascension in just this way. Compare *Guthlac B*’s description of its holy titular character’s death:

Da wæs Guðlaces gæst gelæded
 eadig on upweg. Englas feredun
 to þam longan gefean, lic colode,
 belifd under lyfte. Ða þær leoht ascan,
 beama beorhtast.¹⁵¹

[Then Guthlac’s blessed soul was led on the way to heaven. Angels carried (it) to that long reward, the body cooled, remained under the sky. Then light shone there, the brightest of beams.]

Here too angels carry the saint’s soul to heaven, performing the action in a b-verse (“englas feredun”) identical to that in *DEdw*. Each passage describes the moral quality of the ascending soul, whether as “righteous” or “blessed,” and each passage describes the heavenly light into which the soul is borne. Such passages also occur elsewhere in both the poetry and prose of Anglo-Saxon hagiography, and they typically feature a company of angels carrying the blessed soul into a shining light.¹⁵² Although Edward’s ascension compresses this motif to a line and a half, the lineage of this scene is unmistakable, and so too is the way it figures Edward’s life and reign.

DEdw transfers Edward’s divinely appointed rulership to Harold, his loyal retainer. In so doing, it once more implies the divine ordination of secular Anglo-Saxon politics and, especially, of the West Saxon royal house. The poem ends:

And se frode swa þeah befæste þæt rice
 heahþunenum menn, Harolde sylfum,
 æþelum eorle, se in ealle tid

¹⁵¹ *Guthlac B*, lines 1305-9a.

¹⁵² Compare Benedict’s vision of Bishop Germanus’s ascension in Wærferð’s Old English translation of Gregory’s *Dialogues*, *Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des grossen*, ed. Hans Hecht, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Georg H. Wigands Verlag, 1900-7), I: 171, Book II, chapter 35, lines 14-22; and Cuthbert’s vision of Aidan’s ascension in Bede’s *Uita metrica Cuthberti* in Werner Jaeger, “Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti,” *Palaestra* 198 (1935), 1-136, at 68, lines 128-34.

hyrde holdlice hærran sinum
 wordum and dædum, wihte ne agælde
 þæs þe þearf wæs þæs þeodkyninges.¹⁵³

[And the wise one so nevertheless entrusted the kingdom to a noble man, Harold himself, the noble earl. He loyally obeyed his lord in word and deed for all time. He did not hesitate at all about anything that was needful for the king.]

The poem's conclusion emphasizes Harold's right to the throne by varying traditional formulas for noblemen, overlooking the fact that he was not actually a Cerdicing but a Godwineson. It similarly emphasizes his right to succession by describing the loyal service he gives to his lord Edward. These formulas parallel those of earlier historical poetry as one would expect. For instance, Guthlac exclaims that he will obey God loyally ("hyran holdlice") in the same terms that *DEdw* uses for Harold's obedience to Edward.¹⁵⁴ This half-line describes secular and divine comitatus relations with equal ease. However, many of *DEdw*'s formulaic usages find parallels not only in historical poetry but also in the *Metrical Psalms*. *DEdw*'s statement that Harold obeyed Edward "in ealle tid" [for all time] corresponds to two half-lines in these psalms.¹⁵⁵ The alliterating half-line, "æþelum eorle," does not have an exact parallel in the *Metrical Psalms*, but it shares a metrical formula with a number of them. That is, it sounds as much like a psalm as it does any other kind of poem.¹⁵⁶ By the time the poem ends with an envelope on "Eadward kinge . . . þæs þeodkyniges," it has made him as much a saint as a king, and the rhetoric of his kingship is typological and biblical. *DEdw* thus brings to a point the historical project inaugurated by *Brunanburh* and developed in the Edgar poems. In this poem, English politics of the eleventh century mirror the typological structure of salvation history, and Edward's sanctity resolves the problem of the Danish rule.

Conclusion

The classical verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* figures the West Saxon kings through poetic conventions otherwise best known from Old English verse narrating the history of scripture, heroes, and saints. Applying these terms to contemporary kings presents them as actors in the salvation history these conventions traditionally narrate, and it presents them as helping to move this history forward no less than Christ, his saints, and the patriarchs did. From *Brunanburh*'s strictly historical verse to the monastically inclined computus and homiletics of the Edgar poems, the classical *Chronicle* verse also presents the West Saxon dynasty through a number of genres. As the earlier chapters of this dissertation have shown, each of these genres has its foundation in the exegetical interpretation of scripture, and each of them tropologically applies lessons learned from the historical analysis of scripture to the behavior of contemporary audiences. The tropological sense of the *Chronicle* poems studied here relies at once on salvation history and contemporary Anglo-Saxon history. These poems narrate the royal politics of their own present day, but as this chapter has argued, salvation history is implicit in the very form of traditional

¹⁵³ *DEdw*, 29-34.

¹⁵⁴ *Guthlac A*, line 604a.

¹⁵⁵ The half-line is "on ealle tid," *Psalms* 105.3, line 3a; and *Psalms* 119.20, line 3a.

¹⁵⁶ That formula is "æþelum Xx." The same metrical formula appears also in *Exodus*, line 186b; *Andreas*, lines 230b, 636a, and 882a; *Phoenix*, line 586b; *Riddle* 43, line 1b; and *Beowulf*, line 1949a. This information is collated by O'Brien O'Keefe, "Deaths and Transformations," 177.

Old English narrative verse. Using this verse to describe contemporary English kings always associates them with other individuals and events in salvation history, which the West Saxon kings repeat and carry on through their own rulership of England.

Conclusion

In school and at church, in legal practice and simply as a member of the English kingdom, the Anglo-Saxon subject was always an actor in the ongoing moral history of the world. Anglo-Saxons understood the politics of their kingdom in light of the scriptural past as well as the prophesied future, and they understood the actions of each individual to help advance the history of the world in the necessary fashion. By explaining how they came to this conception of ethical and political practice, this dissertation has shown how exegetical theory structures Anglo-Saxon textual communities from the classroom to the kingdom. The literary genres considered—school texts, homilies, charters, and chronicle verse—reveal how Anglo-Saxons were interpellated within salvation history at different times of their lives and in widely different circumstances. The practice of scriptural interpretation contained a logic at once interpretative and social, and it located each individual in the unfolding history of the world.

The first half of this dissertation showed how individuals were called to action within salvation history. The Alfredian translations render their source texts, from the Psalms to Boethius's philosophy, as histories. They draw out the moral significance of these histories and translate it to a specifically political significance, showing how loyalty to the king is both a moral and a political requirement. These histories seek to produce a penitent and loyal subject who reproduces the deeds of past kingdoms in the present. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies* both translate and explain scripture, showing how it provides a historical basis for tropological instruction. He explains further how liturgy and Christian worship act as a structured tropology, bringing forth scriptural history in the present day. Situated within the political context of the English Benedictine reforms, *Ælfric* uses this instruction to inculcate in his audience a reformed Christian identity congruent with the desires of both church leaders and the English nobility. The Alfredian translations and *Ælfric's* homilies both work to make the English aware of the history that produced them and of the moral obligation to action that this history entails.

The latter half of the dissertation turned from the individual subject to the institutions that s/he belonged to. The tenth-century diplomas describe the conveyance of land and tenurial holding through the lens of scripture, and their interpretation of it is as much exegetical as legal. These diplomas write their foundations and all individuals related to them as actors in typological history, and they describe how this history produces an order to the world. Monasteries, the king, his nobles, and the monks become in these documents agents whose legal action is also necessarily scriptural. The classical verse of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* narrates the deeds of the West Saxon kings through the same poetic conventions elsewhere used for the history of scripture, heroes, and saints. Using these poetic conventions for contemporary kings figures them as part of the same history that these conventions traditionally narrate, implicitly aligning them with the patriarchs, the saints, and the heroes of the Migration Era. The poems themselves range from *Brunanburh's* traditionally historical verse to the computistically and homiletically invested Edgar poems. The *Chronicle* thus presses several verse genres into service, associating the West Saxon kings with other individuals and events in salvation history whose legacy the kings carry on through their own reigns. These diplomas and poems frame important social institutions no less than individuals within salvation history.

This dissertation thus brings together historical and literary practice, Latin and vernacular texts, and theoretical and philological methods to reveal the social effects of exegetical theory. In doing so, it explains how ideology was produced through literary interpretation, showing how a literary theory informed and animated subjects of the late Anglo-Saxon kingdom.

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