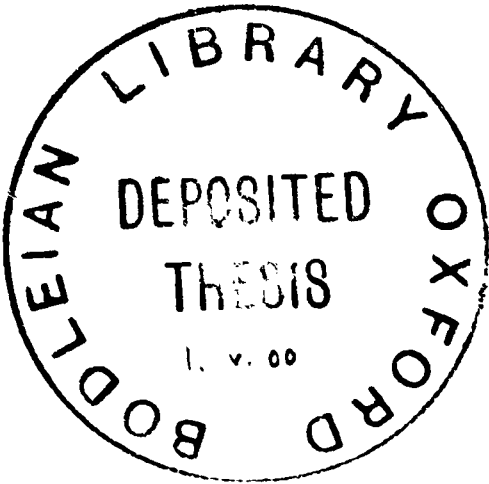


**Dramatic Ritual and Preaching in Late Anglo-Saxon England**

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DPhil  
Trinity 1999**



## Abstract

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My thesis involves an examination of the dramatic liturgical ritual of the late Anglo-Saxon period and its relationship to other aspects of Christian worship, especially vernacular preaching. One particular ritual, the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, has received a tremendous amount of attention by critics of early Western drama, who see in it an emergence of the representational mode of drama that characterizes later medieval drama. Because the rest of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy is less 'representational,' it has been largely ignored when discussing dramatic ritual, so that the *Visitatio* appears singularly brilliant. The *Visitatio*, however, is driven by the same forces that drive equally dramatic liturgical commemorations year-round, climaxing in but not exclusive to the period around Easter. Beginning with an account of late Anglo-Saxon baptism, I examine the liturgy for the high festivals from Christmas to Ascension Day. For each chapter, I describe the liturgical forms for the day and their intended relationships with the participants, focussing on the establishment of dramatic associations between the celebrants and certain figures in the commemorated events. I then compare the liturgical forms with vernacular treatments of a particular festival, looking both for overt instruction and more subtle influence of the liturgy on the preaching texts. Anglo-Saxon preachers and homilists openly assumed the themes and symbolic images of the dramatic ritual in their attempts to make their congregations understand and take on Christian imperatives. Recursively, vernacular preaching helped solidify the meanings of the symbolic elements of the dramatic ritual and their significance to the lives of Christians. Anglo-Saxon appreciation of the dramatic potential of the liturgy was realized both in creative expansion of the liturgy and in the vernacular preaching texts that identified and enhanced this dramatic dynamic.

## Acknowledgements

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**Dramatic Ritual and Preaching in Late Anglo-Saxon England**

I.	Introduction .....	1
II.	Baptism in Anglo-Saxon England .....	17
III.	Christmas and Epiphany .....	43
	a.) The Christmas Octave .....	60
	b.) Epiphany .....	64
IV.	Candlemas .....	74
V.	Lenten Piety and Public Penance .....	101
	a.) Lent .....	103
	b.) Public Penance on the Continent .....	114
	c.) Anglo-Saxon Penance .....	125
	d.) The Anglo-Saxon Liturgy for Public Penance .....	140
	e.) Anglo-Saxon Penance and Adam .....	155
VI.	Palm Sunday .....	165
VII.	Holy Week and Easter .....	191
	a.) Maundy Thursday .....	192
	b.) Good Friday: Adoratio Crucis .....	202
	c.) The Harrowing of Hell and the Easter Vigil .....	222
	d.) Easter Morning and the Visitatio .....	241
VIII.	Rogationtide and the Ascension .....	259
IX.	The End and the Beginning .....	280
	a.) The Anglo-Saxon Dramatic Aesthetic .....	281
X.	Bibliography .....	284

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Abbreviations

ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BC	<i>Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies</i> (Bazire and Cross 1982)
BL	British Library
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CH I	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series</i> (Clemoes 1997)
CH II	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series</i> (Godden 1979)
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
DBL	<i>Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy</i> (Whitaker 1970)
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LME	<i>Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham</i> (Jones 1998)
LSE	<i>Leeds Studies in English</i>
n.s.	new series
o.s.	original series
OEC	Old English Corpus
OR	<i>Ordo romanus / Ordines romani</i> (Andrieu 1931)
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PL	Patrologia Latina
s.s.	supplementary series
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
TBL	<i>The Baptismal Liturgy</i> (Whitaker 1981)

**Abbreviations of Liturgical Witnesses**

Additional 28188	London, BL MS Additional 28188
Æthelwold	The Benedictional of Æthelwold (Deshman 1995)
Anderson	The Anderson (or Brodie) Pontifical (Conn 1993)
Bobbio	The Bobbio Missal (Lowes 1917)
CB	The Canterbury Benedictional (Woolley 1917)
Claudius (I and II)	The Claudius Pontificals (Turner 1971)
Concordia	Regularis Concordia (Symons 1953; Kornexl 1993)
Corpus 41	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41 (Grant 1978)
Corpus 44	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 44 (Corpus-Canterbury Benedictional)
Corpus 163	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 163 (Roman-German Pontifical)
Darley	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 422 (The Red Book of Darley)
Dunstan	The Dunstan (or Sherborne) Pontifical (Conn 1993)
Durham	The Durham Collectar (Corrêa 1992)
‘Egbert’	The ‘Egbert’ Pontifical (Banting 1989)
Gelasian	The Gelasian Sacramentary (Wilson 1894)
Gothicum	Missale Gothicum (Bannister 1917)
Gregorian	The Gregorian Sacramentary (Deshusses 1971)
Lanalet	The Lanalet Pontifical (Doble 1937)
Leofric Collectar	The Leofric Collectar (Dewick and Frere 1914)
Leofric Missal	The Leofric Missal (Warren 1883)
Magdalene Pontifical	The Pontifical of Magdalene College (Wilson 1910)
New Minster	The Missal of the New Minster (Turner 1962)
RGP	The Romano-German Pontifical (Vogel and Elze 1963)
Robert Benedictional	The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert (Wilson 1903)
Robert Missal	The Missal of Robert of Jumièges (Wilson 1896)
Samson	Cambridge, Corpus Christ College MS 146 (The Samson Pontifical)
Stowe	The Stowe Missal (Warner 1906)
Vitellius A.vii	London, BL MS Cotton Vitellius A.vii
Winchcombe	The Winchcombe Sacramentary (Davril 1995)
Winchester Troper	The Winchester Troper (Frere 1894)
Wulstan	The Portiforium of Saint Wulstan (Hughes 1958)

## Dramatic Ritual and Preaching in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Introduction

The study of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy is just coming into its own. The closing decade of the millennium has boasted a string of new tools and resources for dealing with liturgical materials as well as more sophisticated and particular explorations of the relevant witnesses. In particular, a recent collaborative delineation of the liturgical books of Anglo-Saxon England will provide the groundwork for a wide range of liturgical research.<sup>1</sup> The liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church certainly warrants the attention. Although not much can be said about the liturgy before the tenth century,<sup>2</sup> enough (mostly second-hand) evidence exists to paint the picture of a liturgy that reflects the influence of the Irish, Gallican, Roman, and possibly British churches. Before Augustine arrived in Canterbury in 597, he was given a mandate by Gregory to marry the best of local traditions with the practice of Rome, and this approach remained a dynamic in subsequent reforms. This sort of philosophy surely encouraged a diverse liturgy, but the lack of any substantive liturgical witnesses before the tenth century stunts our appreciation of it. We can develop a much clearer picture of the liturgy in the later Anglo-Saxon church, as the Benedictine Revival spurred the production of a plethora of liturgical books and other documentary witnesses to what has been recently referred to as a “period of national liturgical experiment and innovation.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most important of these witnesses, the *Regularis Concordia* drawn up by Æthelwold in the early 970's, echoes Gregory's instruction to Augustine as part of its own mandate, to join the best

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<sup>1</sup> R. Pfaff, ed. *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England* (1995).

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the pre-tenth century Anglo-Saxon liturgical environment, see Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-850* (1995), pp. 125-47; Sarah Foot, “‘By water in the spirit’: the administration of baptism in early Anglo-Saxon England,” in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. Blair and Sharpe (1992), pp. 171-92; and the entries in *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Jones, “The Book of the Liturgy”, *Speculum* 73.3 (1998), p. 685.

of the liturgy of the Frankish churches with local English traditions.<sup>4</sup> The liturgy reflected in the *Concordia* and extant in liturgical books of the tenth and eleventh centuries reveals an interest in creative elaboration, often visual elaboration, and in the translation of the significance of liturgical practice for the laity. These dynamics ruled liturgical reform in the tenth and eleventh centuries and were at the heart of Ælfric's sermons and epistles. The late Anglo-Saxon reformers had a general interest in extending elements of monastic practice to lay observation. Vernacular preaching was an important driving force for this effort. The explanation and expansion of liturgical rituals, as evidenced in the *Regularis Concordia*, was in line with the general tenth- and eleventh-century interest in making the liturgy accessible to the people. My interest here is in the nature of that ritual at this developmental stage and in the ways in which all members of the Anglo-Saxon Christian community were brought into it.

The most famous of these liturgical elaborations has to be the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, the visit to the sepulchre during which the three Marys hear the pronouncement of the angel that Christ has risen and witness the proof of the Resurrection. The *Concordia*'s oft-quoted instructions for the *Visitatio*, performed at Matins on Easter morning, present a ritual that, with its apparent consciousness of costuming, dialogue, and role-playing, "marks the beginnings of liturgical drama in England," according to the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of

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<sup>4</sup> T. Symons, ed. and tr. *Regularis Concordia* (1953). See Symons' discussion of this mix of Frankish and English elements, p. 3.

It has been noted by Joyce Hill ("The 'Regularis Concordia' and its Latin and Old English Reflexes", *Revue Bénédictine* 101 (1991), pp. 299-315), Lucia Kornexl (*Die Regularis concordia und ihre altenglische Interlinearversion* (1993), pp. lvii-lxxxiii), and Christopher Jones (*Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (1998), pp. 21-7, hereafter *LME*) that the *Concordia* has a rather "obscure textual history" (*LME*, p. 21). Symons' 1953 edition is based on the version in London, BL, MS Cotton Tiberius A. iii. For simplicity of discussion, long passages from the *Concordia* are here taken from Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, with his translations, and references are made to Kornexl's edition when pertinent. Similarly, passages from Ælfric's Eynsham Letter are taken from Jones' edition, with his translations. Throughout, I have used published translations of Latin passages where available, providing the Latin where important to the argument. Quotes from liturgical forms have been left in the original Latin.



Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>5</sup> Where did this ‘drama’ come from, in a tenth-century text from Anglo-Saxon England? Is this really something new, the birth of a new form of worship involving a mimetic presentation of Christian history? What is happening in the tenth-century English church that makes critics want to see in it the birth of liturgical drama and, from there, of Western drama in general?

One does not often find the words ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘drama’ spoken together, and for good reason. George Anderson, in his *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, devotes only six pages to “Old English Literature and the Drama.” Pointing out the lack of any extant evidence of secular drama, he looks at poetic passages that “imply drama” or “illustrate a dramatic atmosphere.”<sup>6</sup> His most prominent example is the dialogue between Mary and Joseph in *Christ I*. Old English literature is also rich in monologues and dialogues that, albeit with a very loose definition of the word, one is tempted to interpret as dramatically-inspired. Julia Bolton Holloway has discussed the dramatic Adoration of the Cross ceremony as reflected in *The Dream of the Rood*.<sup>7</sup> Dramatic voice is often explored in relation to poems like *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. Old English sermons and homilies are full of narratives, many of which contain dramatically used direct discourse. Lewis Nicholson discusses dramatic dialogues in the Vercelli homilies, as does Ruth Waterhouse in Ælfric’s saints’ lives.<sup>8</sup>

Still, interpretation of monologues or dialogue from poetry or prose as ‘drama’ depends upon a performance in which a role is undertaken. While it is compelling to imagine

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Lapidge, et al, eds. *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (1999), p. 389.

<sup>6</sup> George Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons* (1949), p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> Julia Bolton Holloway, “‘The Dream of the Rood’ and Liturgical Drama”, in *Drama in the Middle Ages*, eds. Davidson and Stroupe (1990), pp. 24-42.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Clough, “Introduction”, in *The Vercelli Book Homilies*, ed. Nicholson (1991), pp. 1-15; Ruth Waterhouse, “Ælfric’s Use of Discourse in Some Saints’ Lives”, *ASE* 5 (1976), pp. 83-103.

a particularly histrionic preacher presenting such passages mimetically, the fact that they are almost universally subjugated to very down-to-earth instruction and didactic exhortation does not seem to suggest this; at least, it prevents us from calling them ‘drama,’ without corollary evidence indicating how they might have been presented. As for poetic monologues, while I cannot agree with Anderson that “drama . . . demands the interplay of two or more characters,”<sup>9</sup> speculations about the relationship between Old English poetry and ‘drama’ are simply that. For Anderson, because of its compelling use of dialogue between Mary and Joseph in *Christ I* and in the Last Judgement scene in *Christ III*, “the one poem in Old English literature which [in certain parts] comes nearest in form to a play is . . . *Christ*.”<sup>10</sup> While, in his opinion, these passages are “more advanced than liturgical drama” of the same period, their singularity forces him to conclude that, “to judge from the literature which [the Anglo-Saxon] has left behind him . . . it is difficult to see him as the possessor of any strong dramatic sense or the mimetic artist of vivacity and imagination.”<sup>11</sup>

Still, it is to Anglo-Saxon England that critics look for what is probably the most celebrated example of pre-twelfth-century dramatic ritual, the *Visitatio Sepulchri*. There are almost as many theories as to the origin of its central *Quem quaeritis* dialogue as there are critics but, regardless of origin, its use in the *Regularis Concordia* seems to indicate some kind of dramatic sensibility, at least among English monks. Indeed, most of the dramatic rituals of the Easter season to which critics point as the origins of liturgical drama are featured in the *Concordia*. The apparent strength of dramatic ritual in Anglo-Saxon England, compared to the lack of secular drama, prompts Anderson to attribute the dramatic structure of *Christ*’s Mary and Joseph dialogue to the liturgy (specifically the antiphons for Advent).

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<sup>9</sup> Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 207.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 209.

Several critics have recently drawn connections between Old English literature and the liturgy,<sup>12</sup> enough so to suggest that the power of liturgical ritual was perhaps more pervasive than the traditional focus on a handful of rituals (and the *Visitatio* in particular) implies, and that the experience of dramatic liturgy was not confined to the monastery. Generally, however, when these rituals have been discussed it has been in the context of the development of drama, looking forward to the representational drama of the later Middle Ages. There is a tremendous difference between dramatic ritual and the kind of ‘dramatic tradition’ or established ‘theater’ that Anderson is looking for, or the ‘representational mode’ that critics of drama are exploring. In failing to make adequate distinctions between ritual and drama in this period, critics have been unable to decide consistently whether to discuss dramatic ritual like the *Visitatio* as a highly symbolic (and therefore, implicitly, unrealistic) form or as an emerging representational mode. Anderson’s assertion that the Mary and Joseph dialogue is “more advanced” than the ritual demonstrates the tendency of many critics to judge early dramatic ceremonies in terms of the characteristics of later dramas, thereby understating their dramatic power. The *Visitatio* ritual, in particular, tends to be seen as a primitive forerunner of the fairly complex Resurrection plays of the later Middle Ages, particularly in its lack of verisimilitude. The three Marys are monks, wearing copes. They carry thuribles of incense rather than spices. The ‘angel’ at the sepulchre wears an alb and holds a palm-twigg in his hand. The empty linen is held up and presented to the clergy. The actions are ritualistic, not realistic. Such ritualistic expressions, however, would have, for the late Anglo-Saxons, served to draw the participants into the reenactment of Christian history much more effectively than more ‘realistic’ ones could have. The predisposition that ritual expression is distant or removed from what it is commemorating stands in the way of interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy. The power of symbolism widely recognized in

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<sup>12</sup> See, in particular, Barbara Raw’s chapter on “Biblical literature: the New Testament,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, eds. Godden and Lapidge (1991), pp. 227-42, in which she discusses reflections of the Holy Week liturgy (including the *Regularis Visitatio*) in Old English poetry.

other artistic forms in Anglo-Saxon England should likewise be recognized in dramatic ritual. If the *Visitatio* is a powerfully dramatic reactualization of the revelation of the risen Christ to the three women, rather than a quasi-realistic, quasi-successful, embryonic attempt at a play, then one would expect its themes and symbols to be picked up by artists, poets, and prose writers, as indeed they were, to a surprising degree. Of particular importance to this discussion, Anglo-Saxon preachers and homilists openly assumed the themes and symbolic images of the dramatic ritual in their attempts to make their congregations understand and take on Christian imperatives. Recursively, vernacular preaching helped solidify the meanings of the symbolic elements of the dramatic ritual and their significance to the lives of Christians.

Clifford Davidson, in his discussion of “Space and Time in Medieval Drama”, discusses the fallacy of expecting what we consider verisimilitude in medieval drama, looking at, in particular, iconographic expression. He points to illustrations of the Abraham and Isaac story, in which the wood that Isaac carries to his own sacrifice is in the shape of a cross. As Davidson argues, the sacrifice finds its meaning in its foreshadowing of Christ’s sacrifice. The Christian community was trained to see history as “stamped or marked through certain events or individuals,”<sup>13</sup> each of which had a very real connection with Christ. A viewer is more meaningfully drawn into the Isaac story via symbolic expression than realistic, for symbolically Isaac can prefigure Christ, making the representation more applicable to contemporary viewers.

It is easy to underestimate the power of symbols in Anglo-Saxon Christianity. The relationship between the symbol and what it symbolizes is real enough to belie the modern predisposition that ritualistic expression, relying as it does on symbols, is somehow unrealistic. Barbara Raw describes how art can imbue a church with divine power, providing

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<sup>13</sup> Clifford Davidson, “Space and Time in Medieval Drama”, in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle*, ed. Davidson (1984), p. 51.

“a way of entering the next world.”<sup>14</sup> Church art, by surrounding the faithful with the presence of Christ and his saints, turns the church into a branch of the heavenly church, making it “a place where man could enter into communion with the citizens of heaven.”<sup>15</sup> Portrayals of events in Christian history are important not as historical instruction, but rather as means to “make men aware of their role as citizens of heaven.”<sup>16</sup> As such, historical accuracy is not particularly important. Raw notes that a drawing of the Maundy in the mid eleventh-century Tiberius Psalter “represents the event according to contemporary monastic practice,”<sup>17</sup> a ritualistic practice that bore little resemblance to the original Maundy. Rather than muting the effectiveness of the portrayal, the drawing translates the original event into the artist’s present. If eleventh-century Maundy participants were trained to understand that their ceremony was a reactualization of the original, then there is no reason to think that they saw the ceremony as unrealistic. They wash each others’ feet, just as Christ demonstrated that they should do.

One of the functions of vernacular preaching is to explain the significance of ceremonies like the Maundy. If the original event is interpreted in terms of the ritual, it is natural for the congregation to conflate the two, giving them a ritualistically distorted view of history. Circularly, it might not even occur to them (or at least it might not matter to them) that the reenacted event is historically inaccurate. A modern example of this usurpation of history by ritual expression is found in modern portrayals of Christ’s triumphal entry. Dominant in every movie, stage, or Sunday School reenactment of the event is the palm-waving crowd. There is no scriptural evidence, however, indicating that palms were held aloft. The first three gospel accounts mention, if anything, only branches laid in the road

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<sup>14</sup> Barbara Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography* (1990), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 14-15, n. 60.

alongside cloaks, and John's account does not specify what was done with the palms. Still, because we have been trained ritualistically to wave palms in the air, we see no discrepancy; indeed, we would have a hard time relating to a Palm Sunday ceremony without waving palms. More powerfully for the Anglo-Saxon Christian, ritualistic, symbolic interpretation can seem more real than what to us is 'realistic'.

In this vein, furthermore, many Old English 'historical' stories tend to take on a very ritualistic feel. The Blickling Assumption of the Virgin Mary demonstrates the blurred distinction between the perception of 'actual' events and the habitual, ritualistic mode of interpreting such events.<sup>18</sup> The characters seem to process rather than walk. Mary is presented a palm-twigg upon hearing the news of her upcoming Assumption. A Jewish leader tries to take the palm-twigg and desecrate it (an action that, except typologically, would have no meaning) and, after being stuck to Mary's bier by angels and being converted (in a rather strong-armed fashion), processes around the city holding aloft the palm-twigg, curing the blindness of the other formerly belligerent Jews, ritualistically reminiscent of Moses' serpent in the wilderness. The addresses of the characters are often ritual prayers, written in Latin. Many of them are explained at the end, with the idea that those speaking them now are in the direct presence of the characters in the story. This sort of 'unrealistic' ritual mode, propagated through preaching and exercised in ritual observance, served to transport the participants of dramatic liturgical ritual into a sort of timeless Christian history, in which they are directly in the presence of that history's characters and events. It is ritual's ability to make the participants a very real part of the events reactualized that makes it dramatic.

O. B. Hardison in *Christian Rite and Christian Drama* explores this dynamic of liturgical reactualization, driven by what he calls the 'principle of coincidence', in great

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Morris, ed. and tr. *The Blickling Homilies* (1874-1889; reprint 1967), pp. 136-59.

detail, drawing on Amalarius' dramatic interpretation of the Mass.<sup>19</sup> Coincidence, for Hardison, stems from the desire for literal identification, spatially and temporally, with commemorated figures and events. Clifford Flanigan described the principle of coincidence when he asserted that "the words and gestures of a ritual are thought to be charged with a power of reactualization so that the event imitated is believed rendered present."<sup>20</sup> The theory of transubstantiation in the Eucharist, along with explicitly-made recollections of Passover and the Last Supper, is perhaps the most obvious example of this reactualization. Throughout the Holy Season, ceremonies were timed to correspond temporally with commemorated events, and liturgical action was intended to recall the commemorated biblical action.

Gregory Dix in *The Shape of the Liturgy* discusses in detail the power of Eucharistic ceremonies, illustrating, in short, their ability to bring the participant into the presence of the Passover, the Last Supper, and the entire community of Christians.<sup>21</sup> Ælfric makes this simultaneous impact explicit in his *Sermo de Sacrificio in Die Pascae*.<sup>22</sup> He connects the Passover and the Last Supper by specifying that the doorposts of the Israelites' houses were marked with 'Tau', the 'cross-sign', and by reiterating God's command, in both instances, to 'Do this in remembrance'. He points out that the manifold sacrifices of the Israelites symbolized Christ's body. The entire community of Christians, past and present, are invoked in the sanctified loaf and wine by the mixing of water, which signifies the folk, with the sacraments, and by the words of Paul, "Be that which you see on the altar, and receive that which you yourself are . . . We many are one loaf and one body." While the bulk of the text

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<sup>19</sup> O. B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama* (1965). Hardison's exploration of the dramatic nature of the Mass and of the church year is fundamental to any subsequent study of dramatic ritual, including this one.

<sup>20</sup> C. Clifford Flanigan, "The Fleury Playbook, the Traditions of Medieval Latin Drama, and Modern Scholarship", in *The Fleury Playbook: Essays and Studies*, eds. Campbell and Davidson (1985), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945).

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Godden, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series* (1979), pp. 150-60; hereafter CH II.

is dedicated to explaining that “Micel is betwux þære ungesewenlican mihte þæs halgan husles. and þam gesewenlican hiwe,” reflecting the tendency to take signification literally, Ælfric emphasizes that the sacraments are spiritually “soplice æfter halgunge cristes lichama and his blod.”<sup>23</sup> He reinforces his point with two stories of Eucharistic manifestations. The first involves an angel carving up an infant in Mass, after which it is converted to the sacraments and communicated. The second relates a mass of Gregory in which a doubting woman is convinced upon seeing a bloody fingertip in place of the sacraments. Concluding his discussion with reminders of the Last Judgment and Christ’s sacrifice, Ælfric trains his audience to see the Eucharist as a simultaneous reenactment, not literal but still quite real, of a series of events throughout Christian history. His purpose is simply to make sure that Christian men have a clear understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist, that they approach the ceremony with the correct mindset. While this purpose necessitates mitigating a too-literal view of the sacraments (a view that perhaps misled men into worshipping the sacraments themselves rather than the Christ dwelling spiritually within them), it also compels Ælfric to invoke the very real, direct presence of the former participants of Passover and of the Mass, as well as Christ himself. As with the figures and events represented in painting and sculpture, Ælfric makes it clear that the invoked presence of Christ is to be understood as, if not literal, just as real as if Christ were literally present.

This sort of reenactment is not hindered by ritualistic expression; rather, it depends upon it, in order to cultically juxtapose Christian present with biblical past. Discussions of the *Visitatio* as an ‘emerging representational mode,’ making baby-steps towards drama in its early recognition of the fundamentals of mimesis, miss the point. It is exactly those elements of the *Visitatio* that drama critics consider weakest, elements of ritual adherence that stunt the emerging mode (most notably the ritual presentation of the gravecloth to the audience), that make the dramatic ritual work. The point of dramatic ritual like the *Visitatio* is not to present for an appreciative audience a representation of biblical history. It is, rather, to make the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 153.



participants, the audience, feel that they are one with the holy women, seeking Christ on Easter morning, finding the proof that he has risen, and proclaiming it to the world. Dramatic ritual is fundamentally ‘audience-based’, not ‘performer-based’. The concern is to establish a connection between all the faithful and their biblical models. The gospel accounts for the major events in Christ’s life set forth as models certain figures, the shepherds at Christmas, the three magi at Epiphany, Simeon at Candlemas, the crowd of Jerusalemites at the triumphal entry, and the three Marys at Easter. Liturgical commemoration picks up on this biblical dynamic. The liturgy of the late Anglo-Saxon church is ‘dramatic’ because it recognizes and develops these associations to the degree that the liturgical participants come to feel that, for the time of the commemoration, they are one with these biblical figures, speaking with their voices and relating to Christ as had they. The late Anglo-Saxon church was certainly innovative. Its most exciting innovation was in recognizing this dynamic of establishing sympathetic associations with scripted figures and in developing the ritual to take greater advantage of this strategy. It is a process that had to some degree begun on the Continent, as Amalarius’ ‘dramatic’ description of his liturgy indicates. But in the Anglo-Saxon church, this dynamic was given a freer reign, and only in Anglo-Saxon England do we have extant a body of preaching texts in the vernacular, part of the function of which was to identify and strengthen these associations, to bring the entire Christian community into the year-round dramatic reenactment of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. My interest here is to explore the ‘dramatic’ context of the *Visitatio* in an attempt to show that what we see in this ‘quasi-play’ is not distinct from the dynamics of year-round dramatic ritual developed and enhanced throughout the later Anglo-Saxon church.

Naturally enough, the cycle of liturgical ritual, following the church year, begins at Christ’s birth and ends with Advent. Homiliaries, customaries, and summaries of the church year like the Old English verse *Menologium* are all based on this structure, and all draw a good deal of significance from it. It is fitting that Christ was born and grew up in a cold dark

world<sup>24</sup> and that he was reborn at spring. All the important saints (determined, to some degree, locally), and all the important events of Christ's life, are commemorated each year, giving them a sort of timelessness. Advent, coming as it does at the end of the year, often takes on a dual meaning, looking forward both to Christ's birth and to the Last Judgment, as relationships between poetic accounts of the Last Judgment and the lyrics for Advent indicate. The church year symbolically encompasses the entirety of Christian history, pointing to the Last Judgment. This ideal is evident in the monastic desire to read the whole of scripture over the course of the year during the Night Office. As Gatch demonstrates, Ælfric assumes this ideal (with alterations) and applies it, at least in spirit, to his cycles of homilies.<sup>25</sup> He provides complete cycles of exegetical and catechetical material for the church year so that Christians will understand the nature and significance of its highlighted days and be able to relate personally to the people and events remembered on those days. Vernacular preaching, explaining and bolstering the rituals, helps participants encompass the Christian universe over the course of the year and understand their places in it, as well as what they must do to have a place in the rapidly approaching heavenly kingdom to which the events of the year are leading them.

My approach is to explore the establishment of dramatic association in the liturgical forms for each major festival (focussing on the Temporale), along with the recursive influence between vernacular preaching and the liturgy. That this period in the history of the liturgy was an innovative one means that liturgical witnesses can be quite disparate. Especially regarding relatively newer parts of the liturgy, like the blessings of the candles, the ashes and the palm-twigs, apparently original prayers war with more established forms in

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<sup>24</sup> The period from Christmas Eve through the Purification of Mary on February 2 symbolically encapsulates Christ's childhood, including his birth, the Slaughter of the Innocents two days later (historically two years later), his Circumcision, and the Purification, at which time Christ was presented to Simeon.

<sup>25</sup> M. McC. Gatch, "The Office in Late Anglo-Saxon Monasticism", in *Learning and Literature*, ed. Lapidge and Gneuss (1985), pp. 341-62.

different ways in different texts. To complicate the problem, there was no clear idea in Anglo-Saxon England of just what each type of liturgical book should contain. Missals, sacramentaries, benedictionals, and pontificals are extremely fluid categories when used in regards to Anglo-Saxon liturgical books. It was assumed that a priest or bishop would use several different books in combination in the performance of the liturgy, perhaps relying for some elements on memory and local traditions. Even when we do have fairly well-provided texts, there are always questions concerning the date and provenance of each book. Even when we have a fairly good idea that a certain text was written at a certain place and a certain time (a rare case being the Canterbury Benedictional), the nature of liturgical books is such that we can not always assume that the presence of a particular form in the book indicates its use in the local liturgy. These are just some of the problems facing those who would attempt to explicate the pre-Sarum liturgy in England.<sup>26</sup> As such, my approach, which is to look for the most interesting and pertinent liturgical forms from a range of texts, lays itself open to the criticism that I end up explicating a liturgy that did not actually exist at any particular place and time. My interest, however, is not to try to delineate exactly how the liturgy was performed in certain places in England (a task that, if possible, requires a good deal more research than has been done to date, and than is possible here). Instead, I hope to explore the state of the liturgy in relation to the establishment of dramatic association and the way new and deviant liturgical forms and practices reveal a general ‘dramatic consciousness’. This consciousness is evident throughout the developing liturgy (though, given the scattered nature of the liturgical witnesses, can only be presented as flashes here and there). Vernacular preaching texts reveal a care for spreading the effects of this ‘dramatic’ strategy beyond the key monastic centres in England.

Even where liturgical ceremonies seem to cater exclusively to a monastic milieu, the general extension of monastic observance to the secular clergy in late Anglo-Saxon England

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<sup>26</sup> See Gatch, “Old English Literature and the Liturgy: Problems and Potential”, *ASE* 6 (1977), pp. 237-47, for an overview of some of these difficulties.

would surely have placed these ceremonies in a broader context. Secular clergy were supposed to observe the monastic Offices, and many bishops were trained in monasteries.<sup>27</sup> As such, although the extant liturgical witnesses are fundamentally on a monastic model, they were intended for a much wider use and would have influenced observance of the liturgy throughout England. The exhortation to observe monastic hours, as with Ælfric's attempts to include a broader demographic in the monastic liturgical and devotional imperatives, provided a mechanism for making monastic innovation accessible to the community. In line with this effort to extend monastic practice to the general Christian community is a care for including the laity in the liturgical establishment of dramatic identification. Ælfric makes this effort clear in his descriptions of liturgical practices, designed to make his audience appreciate the models set up for them in the liturgy. It is difficult, however, to determine the exact role of the laity in a liturgy that is in many ways fundamentally monastic. I examine the evidence for the respective dramatic roles of the laity and the monastic participants in respect to Candlemas, Palm Sunday, *Tenebrae*, the *Adoratio* and *Depositio*, and Rogationtide. Although the evidence is best examined case by case, some general observations can be made. Not unexpectedly, the dramatic experience of monks would surely have been much richer, and in some ceremonies where the participation of both laity and monks can be demonstrated, the monks are given greater responsibilities for creating the juxtaposition of present and biblical worlds by enhancing visual representation (see for example *Tenebrae* and the *Depositio*). Nevertheless, the dramatic identifications set up for each festival are clearly meant to apply equally to all participants. The temptation to describe in a few cases the monk/layman dichotomy as an actor/audience dynamic falls apart because of the fluid nature of the monastic 'role-playing'. The function of this enhanced monastic role is not to present a part, but rather to enhance the atmosphere of the liturgical reenactment so that the 'role' undertaken by all present is intensified. The unified nature of the dramatic

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<sup>27</sup> See Lapidge, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, pp. 84-7, for a discussion of the relationship between Anglo-Saxon cathedral clergy and the monasteries.

experience is most clear at Candlemas, Palm Sunday, and Rogationtide, but is fundamental to the liturgical reenactment throughout the year.

In summarizing the state of the liturgy in post-Reform England for the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England, Richard Pfaff urges caution in our appreciation of turn-of-the-millennium ritual:

Inferences drawn from the few major liturgical books that survive whole, like the Benedictional of Æthelwold or the Missal of Robert of Jumièges, might lead us to the supposition that the liturgical life of England was as rich and complex c.1000 as it was in, say, 1400. This is almost certainly a false impression. The sophisticated and elaborate liturgy practised at Æthelwold's Winchester or Dunstan's Canterbury or (to take a secular example) Leofric's Exeter cannot safely be extrapolated beyond a couple of dozen major establishments. Surprisingly little is known about the liturgical performance even in minster churches, and very little indeed about that in the emerging parish churches.<sup>28</sup>

As the energy behind the late Anglo-Saxon liturgical innovations came from these major, especially monastic, centres, the most full liturgical witnesses tend to assume a fairly large community, often a mixed one, pursuing a liturgy driven by monks but also (to an uncertain degree) including the secular clergy and the laity. Envisioning the effects of these liturgical models on more parochial churches, especially those not in the proximity of a monastic community, is difficult at best, although at least one witness<sup>29</sup> seems to involve a parochial interpretation of a larger model. Again, this process of parochial translation is a far more difficult problem than can be tackled here. What I do hope to demonstrate is that the effort to enliven and extend the appreciation of the liturgy by making the participants liturgically juxtaposed with biblical figures, a process explored by the Carolingians but creatively expanded by the Anglo-Saxons,<sup>30</sup> was evident wherever liturgical innovations took place.

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<sup>28</sup> Lapidge, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, p. 293.

<sup>29</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 422, the 'Red Book of Darley'. This book is a loose collection of liturgical materials and devotional prayers, and is therefore an uncertain, if compelling, witness to this process of translation.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Christopher Jones' discussion of Ælfric's use of Amalarius, which "demonstrates the now-familiar point that reception of Carolingian sources was productive rather than merely passive" (Jones, "The Book of the Liturgy", p. 681).

This care for the dramatic quality of the liturgy extended from the cathedrals, in strictly episcopal rituals such as the blessing of the oils and the Reconciliation of Penitents on Maundy Thursday, to the monasteries, in rituals like the *Visitatio*, to the broader community, for inclusive rituals like the Adoration of the Cross and the Easter Vigil, to the countryside, for public processions like Rogationtide. After using a discussion of late Anglo-Saxon baptism to help define just what it means to call a ritual 'dramatic', I will explore the various ways in which the establishment of dramatic identification was used throughout the church year, focussing on Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday and Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter, and Rogationtide and the Ascension. Exploring the contexts of this liturgical innovation will demonstrate the degree to which Anglo-Saxon appreciation of the dramatic potential of the liturgy was realized both in creative expansion of the liturgy and in the vernacular preaching texts that identified and enhanced this dramatic dynamic.

## Baptism in Anglo-Saxon England

Baptism and communion, according to Wulfstan (and in accordance with canonical decree), are the two ceremonies that are “þurh Godes mihte swa myccle & swa mære þæt æfre ænig man ne mæg ðæron ænig ðing awyrdan ne gewanian.”<sup>1</sup> As the point at which a heathen becomes a Christian, baptism is the standard denouement in Christian narratives and the defining moment in a Christian’s life. Those who describe the dramatic nature of the liturgy put forth the baptismal rite as a mimetic or quasi-mimetic ceremony, as it is rich in the type of coincidence-based associations that spur mimetic interpretations.<sup>2</sup> From the time of St. Paul, Christian redactors have consciously interpreted baptism as a sort of reenactment of, primarily, the death and resurrection of Christ, an association that tied the ceremony to Easter and largely defined the rite. Critics of liturgical drama, in seeking early examples of mimesis, or representation, in ritual, based on criteria of secular drama, such as the fledgling role-designation, dialogue and costuming so tantalizingly hinted at in the tenth-century *Regularis Concordia*’s *Visitatio Sepulchri*, have explored baptism as a possible example of the budding mimetic propensities of turn-of-the-millennium ritual. However, changes in the application of baptism from the time of the early church to the late Anglo-Saxon period, specifically a confused sense of audience caused by the predominance of infant baptism, the decline of a structured catechumenate, and its related disassociation from Easter, make such a conclusion difficult. For eleventh-century England, the relationship between baptism and Christ’s resurrection that tends to dominate dramatic discussions of the liturgy gets lost in favour of a description of baptism more appropriately applied to an infant, as a fulfilment of birth, an exorcism of the devil’s taint, and an initiation through Mary into the church. With the difficulty of applying a mimetic interpretation to baptism, one must either consider the

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Bethurum, ed. *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (1957), p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, pp. 81, 95-6.

ritual 'undramatic' or reconsider the usefulness of using characteristics of secular drama to mark advances in dramatic liturgical ritual.

Baptism's confused sense of audience is intrinsic to post-Augustinian baptismal practice, as a brief historical background to late Anglo-Saxon baptism will illustrate. Whitaker in *The Baptismal Liturgy* gives a general history of the baptismal liturgy, from the time of the early church to the development of the Sarum Missal.<sup>3</sup> Although no actual liturgical evidence exists from the patristic period, Whitaker gleans much from the accounts of Tertullian and Augustine, among others. That infant baptism was performed at this time is evident in the fact that Tertullian, in the third century, opposed it, on the grounds that children could not make promises before they could speak. However, the paradigm was still adult baptism, demonstrating baptismal practice at the time of the persecutions. The Western baptismal liturgy has always consisted of three main stages, the catechumenate (begun with the christening), when the candidates were prepared spiritually and mentally, baptism itself, at which time they were cleansed, and confirmation, bestowing the Holy Spirit. Baptism was also tied to Easter from at least patristic times, as Whitaker asserts:

Tertullian evidently regarded Easter as the most suitable season, 'for then was accomplished our Lord's Passion, and in it we are baptized.' In any case it was not long after this date that baptism came to be normally restricted to the Paschal season, and the development of Lent was related to the preparation of the candidates.<sup>4</sup>

This preparation, at least spanning much of Lent, could last years. Prospective Christians had to prove their fidelity over a period of time, learning the basics of the faith and preparing themselves for cleansing. When deemed ready, they would pass through a series of scrutinies, which were basically exorcisms. Whitaker relays a dramatic account of a scrutiny from this period, during which candidates would sometimes fall away screaming, a sign that

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<sup>3</sup> E. C. Whitaker, *The Baptismal Liturgy* (1981); hereafter *TBL*. See also his translations of documents pertaining to the liturgy of baptism over this period in *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (1970); hereafter *DBL*.

<sup>4</sup> *TBL*, p. 11.



the devil had not been fully expunged and that they should wait until the next year as catechumens.<sup>5</sup> After the scrutinies, and before baptism, came the Delivery of the Creed, the words of which could not be known to non-Christians. Before baptism, candidates had to ‘Return the Creed’, proving that they had it memorized, and they were exhorted not to let anyone else know the words, and not to commit them to writing. The ceremonies described by Whitaker could only have had adult participants, as they commanded actions and responses that infants could not have made, and the idea of death to the world and resurrection in a new body dominated the preparatory catechuminal period, leading up to Easter.

Augustine’s assertion that infants who die unbaptized go to hell, however, had serious repercussions for baptismal practice, and created tensions in the baptismal liturgy that resound even today. In societies that had already been Christianized, infant baptism became the norm. However, the liturgy was still based on the same adult model as that described by Whitaker. The earliest liturgical evidence for baptism comes primarily from two traditions, the first extant in a series of *ordines* collected in the eighth century, printed by Andrieu as the *Ordines Romani*,<sup>6</sup> and the second in the Gelasian Sacramentary (both reflecting, theoretically, sixth-century Roman practice, although extant only in eighth- and ninth-century Frankish texts).<sup>7</sup> Both sources present a baptismal liturgy based firmly around Easter and beginning in mid-Lent. As both demonstrate the same problems mentioned above, I will focus on the Gelasian Sacramentary as represented in Vatican MS Regensis 316.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *TBL*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Andrieu, ed. *Les ordines romani* (1931).

<sup>7</sup> See Cyrille Vogel, translated by William G. Storey and Niels Krogh Rasmussen, *Medieval Liturgy* (1988), pp. 61ff, for a discussion of the definitions of ‘Gregorian’, ‘Gallican’, and ‘Gelasian’, and of the difficulties in ascertaining a ‘pure’ form of each. See also Eric Palazzo, translated by Madeleine Beaumont, *A History of Liturgical Books* (1998), pp. 35ff. In short, any liturgy existing in any extant text is in varying degrees a mix of all three types.

<sup>8</sup> Printed by H. A. Wilson, ed. *The Gelasian Sacramentary* (1894), pp. 45ff, and translated by Whitaker in *DBL*, pp. 166ff. Although the Anglo-Saxon liturgy is generally

The first scrutiny begins on the Third Sunday in Lent, at which time the names of the elect, specified as “infantum”, are called, and supplications are made for their preparation as part of the scrutiny Mass. It is specified in the *Ordines*, and understood here, that the infants are not to take part in the eucharist until they have been baptized (in *OR XI*, the primary witness for baptism in the group, the dismissal of the candidates is formalized). Two other Masses of the same type are to follow (*Ordo XI* has seven scrutinies in all, versus the three in the Gelasian), but before them is the Notice of the Scrutiny, announcing the time of the Making of the Catechumen and setting the tone for the following services by stating their purpose, “so that the heavenly mystery, when the devil with his retinue is destroyed and the door of the heavenly kingdom is opened, may by God’s help be perfectly performed.”<sup>9</sup> From the start, the procedure is defined as an exorcism, in the same militaristic terms later to be used by Anglo-Saxon prose writers.

The names of the infants are written down, and they are called one at a time into the church for the Making of the Catechumen. The service begins in the tone established in the Notice:

Almighty everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look upon these thy servants whom thou hast called to the elements of faith. Drive from them all blindness of heart: loose the bonds of Satan with which they were bound: open to them, O Lord, the door of thy religion: that, bearing the sign of thy wisdom, they may turn from the squalor of fleshly lusts and delight in the sweet savour of thy commandments and joyfully serve thee in thy church: that first taking the medicine they may increase in virtue day by day until by thy favour they come to the grace of baptism . . . protect these thine elect with the power of the Lord’s Cross, with which we sign them, that from this first beginning of the worship of thy majesty, being ever set about thy commandments, they may attain to the glory of the second birth. (169)

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described as ‘Gregorian,’ the Gelasian baptismal *ordo* was part of the body of generally Gelasian material with which the Gregorian Sacramentary was supplemented, and is therefore part of the tradition from which the Anglo-Saxons drew their own baptismal liturgy. All references to ‘Gelasian’, here and elsewhere, are to the ‘Old Gelasian’ as represented in Vat. Reg. 316 and printed by Wilson.

<sup>9</sup> *DBL*, p. 169. Subsequent page references are to this text.

The salt is exorcized, sanctified as “perfect medicine” and “the salt of wisdom”, and placed in the infants’ mouths. The elect are then exorcized, the priest invoking the exodus from Egypt under Moses, beseeching God to send his angel to guard them until baptism, as he did for the Israelites. The devil is told to honour God, and “to never dare to violate” the cross with which the elect are signed. A series of prayers drive out the devil, each one reminding the devil of God’s power as evidenced in Christ’s miracles.

Following are the Exposition of the Gospels, at which the four gospels are processed to the altar and the beginning of each is read, and the Introduction of the Creed and of the *Pater Noster*, each of which is presented and explained (the Creed after the presentation and the *Pater Noster* interlinearly). The Creed, notably, is presented both in Greek and in Latin, and is not broken up with commentary as is the *Pater Noster*. It is in these instructional sections that the survival of an adult form is most evident. The elect are addressed at the beginning of the Exposition with an explanation:

Beloved children, we shall now open to you now the gospels, that is, the story of the divine life. But first we must explain what the gospel is, and whence it comes, and whose words are written therein, and why they be four who wrote of this life, and who are the four who, as the prophet foretold, have been marked by the divine Spirit: lest haply without this explanation we should confuse your minds: and because it is for this that ye are come, that your ears should be opened and not that your senses should be blunted. (172-3)

At the Introduction of the Creed, the infants are exhorted not to write the Creed on “any corruptible material” and are afterwards told that “we transform you from the old man to the new” (176). The picture of a group of infants warned not to write down what they hear and joyfully told that they will be transformed from old men is logically awkward, but the tone of the exhortation is most serious, as the salvation of the catechumens depends on the protective power of the Creed, assumed by them in the approaching renunciation of the devil and the confession of belief (the *Abrenuntio* and the *Credo*, performed on Holy Saturday):

. . . the power of such weapons is always invincible, it is of service to every good soldier of Christ against all the snares of the enemy. The devil, who never ceases to tempt mankind, must always find you protected by this Creed: so that with the enemy whom you renounce cast down, and by the protection of him whom you

confess . . . you may also have the glory of the resurrection. (176)

The extent to which the catechumens are instructed in the fundamental tenets of the faith before baptism, addressed directly in ways that assume a rather mature level of understanding, demonstrates the tension between the fear of hell for one's children and the logical incongruities inherent in the baptismal forms.

The preceding ceremonies took place before Palm Sunday, followed by a Chrismal Mass on Maundy Thursday. The infants return early on Holy Saturday to, as the rubric specifies, "make their return of the Creed." The devil is again told to flee, the elect are anointed with spittle (for the *Effeta*) and with oil, followed by the *Abrenuntio*. They are asked three questions ("Dost thou renounce Satan? And all his works? And all his pomps?"), after each of which they (or, rather, their sponsors) reply "Abrenuntio". Then, as the infants cannot return the Creed, it is said instead by the priest to the infants, and they are commanded to go outside. They return later in the day for the twelve lessons and process to the font chanting a litany. The font is consecrated, and the reading for the day (also that for the blessing of the font in the Missal of Robert of Jumièges, see below, p. 36) describes the various levels of significance of the water. The priest is instructed to change his voice, a final prayer of consecration is made, and each is asked three questions:

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty? (I believe.)  
 And dost thou believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born and  
 suffered? (I believe.)  
 And dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the remission of sins;  
 the resurrection of the flesh? (I believe.) (188)

They are then baptized, dipped three times, once for each part of the Trinity. The infants are signed with chrism, told that God "has made thee to be regenerated of water and the Holy Spirit, and has given thee remission of all thy sins," and (assuming a bishop is present, as does the Gelasian), confirmed. After confirmation, the catechumens may receive their first communion.

Almost all passages in the baptismal liturgy extant in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts stem from the Gelasian (possibly by way of the Supplemented Hadrianum or derived from earlier

Gelasian sacramentaries that might have been used in England before the ninth or tenth century), and they have inherited the same tensions. Sarah Larratt Keefer lists four sources for the baptismal liturgy as practised in Anglo-Saxon England: The Missal of Robert of Jumièges, The Red Book of Darley, The Leofric Missal, and the Corpus 163 copy of the Romano-German Pontifical.<sup>10</sup> All four examples are firmly of the Gregorian/Gelasian type, and I will focus on the first, and to a lesser degree the second. The baptismal services in the Robert Missal do appear in the midst of a series of Masses for Holy Saturday (the services in Darley and the Leofric Missal have been moved out of the main cycle and placed towards the back). Most notable about the service in Robert (as in the others) is its condensed nature. The scrutiny Masses are gone, the services beginning with the *Ordo Ad Caticuminum Faciendum*, which has been moved from mid-Lent to (it seems) the day of baptism. In fact there is no indication, either in the order of sections or in rubrics, that the ceremonies are not to be performed all at once. The infants are exorcized, given the salt, and prayed over in the exact words extant in the Gelasian (indeed, every passage but two, the first and the second to last, is verbatim from the Gelasian). The formal Exposition of the Gospels is replaced with a simple reading from Matthew, and the *Pater Noster* is presented (with only the incipit in the MS). In Darley, the Creed is presented in full following the incipit for the *Pater Noster*, although in Robert the presentation of the Creed has been, remarkably, meshed with the *Credo*, where the three questions are expanded to include the entire Creed (Robert is unique in this respect). Following the *Pater Noster*, in Robert, are the pre-*Abrenuntio* warning to the devil, the *Effeta*, and the *Abrenuntio*, as in the Gelasian (Darley moves the *Effeta* and *Abrenuntio* until just before the *Credo*. Winchcombe moves only the *Abrenuntio*, so that it is removed from the *Effeta*, and instead directly precedes the *Credo* and the actual baptism).

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<sup>10</sup> See Sarah Larratt Keefer, "Manuals", in *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Pfaff, (1995), pp. 101-2. The Winchcombe Sacramentary also contains an *ordo* for baptism, integrated with the Vigil Mass, although Pfaff (*The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 15) cautions against its relevance as a witness to the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, as it did not remain long in the country, and seems to have been written for Fleury.

Following the *Abrenuntio* in Robert (or following the Creed in Darley) is the procession to the font for its consecration. The Gelasian specifies a litany during the procession. Although Robert makes no mention of it, Darley presents one, spanning five pages in the manuscript (pp. 378-382). After the Benediction of the Font, which is the same in the Gelasian, Robert, and Darley, is the mixing of the chrism and the water, in which the chrism is poured into the water in the form of the cross, followed by the *Credo* and the actual baptism, the vesting of the infants with white garments, and, “si episcopus adest statim,” confirmation. The whole ceremony, although in the same basic form, is a good deal shorter than that in the Gelasian. Although it would be dangerous to make too much out of a lack of rubrics specifying that the ceremonies should be performed separately, as different ceremonies are often lumped together without such rubrics, the series of passages from the Making of the Catechumen to the vesting has the feel of a single ceremony, closer to the quick ceremonies for the infirm that follow in each manuscript than to the structured, month-long process presented so carefully in the Gelasian. Such a condensing allowed the ceremony to move away from the kind of firm tie to Easter demonstrated in the Gelasian.

Ælfric’s translation and discussion of the *Abrenuntio* and the *Credo* in his Second Series Epiphany sermon supports such a view.<sup>11</sup> Even if we are uneasy taking his account as a direct reflection of the liturgy, he at least seems to imply that the two sets of responses, originally part of the christening and baptism respectively and over half a day apart, are part of the same ceremony. More important is Wulfstan’s explanation of baptism in his *Sermo de Baptismate*.<sup>12</sup> He presents the ceremony in accordance with the basic Gelasian order: christening, delivery of the Creed, *Effeta*, Benediction of the Font, baptism, and vestment. He does not mention the *Abrenuntio* in his first quick account (ll. 29-99), as he discusses it later in the text, but he does specify that the *Effeta* and the pre-*Abrenuntio* chrism precede the

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<sup>11</sup> See CH.II.iii, pp. 26-8.

<sup>12</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, VIIIc, pp. 175-84.

procession to the font, so we might assume that the *Abrenuntio* does as well.<sup>13</sup> In any case, his explanation of *Abrenuntio* and *Credo*, “þe man æt fulluht-þenung on gewunan hæfð” assumes a single “fulluht-þenung” of which both are a part. Of particular interest is his transition between the *Effeta*/chrism and the benediction of the font:

And ðonne þis gedon bið eal fullice wel swa to ðære cristnunge gebyreð, þonne is æfter eallum þisum mid rihtum geleafan to efstanne wið fontbæðes georne.<sup>14</sup>

Whether we can take “georne” to mean ‘quickly’ or just as a general intensifier (e.g. ‘in earnest’), Wulfstan seems to imply a continuity, that christening and baptism can be thought of as a single ceremony, as with the ceremony for the baptism of the infirm, rather than two distinct phases of the baptismal liturgy.<sup>15</sup> If so, then the candidates are catechumens for too short a period of time to mean much, and the ceremony is more readily portable to any time of the year.

The idea of the catechumenate is not entirely absent from Anglo-Saxon baptismal thought. According to Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, King Edwin was catechized for a period of time by Paulinus before being baptized on (in the Old English translation of Bede) “þy halgestan Eastordæge,” in the year 627 according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.<sup>16</sup> His daughter Eanfled, the first of the Northumbrians to be baptized, born on Easter Sunday, was ‘consecrated to God’ and then baptized at Pentecost. The importance of the two Roman baptismal days in the accounts of Edwin and Eanfled and the suggestion of a period of

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<sup>13</sup> In this respect, and because of the importance Wulfstan places on the delivery of the Creed, which neither Robert nor Leofric has in this position, his account, if it can be taken as chronologically accurate, must follow a version slightly different than that of Darley, Robert, or Leofric (unless, as is possible, the Delivery of the Creed in Leofric is assumed and not stated).

<sup>14</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> See also Susan Irvine’s comments on infant baptisms and on Ælfric’s assumption of the union of christening and baptism in her introduction to Ælfric’s homily on The Healing of the Blind Man (*Old English Homilies from MS Bodley 343*, Item III, (1993), pp. 58-60).

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Miller, ed. and tr. *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, v. I (1890), p. 138. D. P. Kirby, “Bede and Northumbrian Chronology”, *EHR* 78 (1963), pp. 514-27, ascribes the conversion of Edwin to 628.

preparatory time before baptism (although we have no indication of what might have been involved liturgically before or during baptism) seem to be in agreement with early Roman practice. At least, Edwin seems to be christened well before his baptism (“Siðþan he gecristnad wæs, swylce eac his lareowe & biscope Paulini biscopseðl forgeaf”),<sup>17</sup> building a timber church in the interim, while being instructed. The West-Saxon king Cyneigils was catechized before his baptism, and was received from the font by King Oswald of Northumbria. While Bede indicates that this pre-baptismal period was catechetical, the Old English translator more certainly separates his christening from his baptism:

Itaque euangelizante illo in praefata prouincia, cum rex ipse cathecizatus fonte baptismi cum sua gente ablueretur.

[He] lærde þær godcunde lare 7 þone cyning to Cristes geleafan gecerde, 7 hine gecristnade, 7 hine eft æfter fæce mid fulwihtes bæðe aþwoh mid his þeode Westseaxum.<sup>18</sup>

Often in Bede, adult candidates must be catechized before they can undergo baptism, although we have no way of knowing whether this involved a structured liturgical progression from christening to baptism.

The practice of Easter baptism following a preparatory period should not have been unfamiliar to Bede. In a homily for Holy Saturday, Bede may refer to a period of Lenten preparation for baptism:

As to his saying ‘Effeta’ (that is, ‘be opened’), he did this in order to heal the ears which a longstanding deafness had closed up, but which his touch now opened that they might hear. Hence I believe a custom has prevailed in the Church

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<sup>17</sup> Miller, *The Old English Version of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, p. 138. The expression “Siðþan he gecristnod wæs” has been grammatically shifted from its position in the Latin, where it has a closer relationship with the preceding sentence, which tells of Edwin building his church: “Baptizatus est autem Eburaci die sancto paschae pridie iduum Aprilium, in ecclesia sancti Petri apostoli, quam ibidem ipse de ligno, cum cathecizaretur atque ad percipiendum baptismum inbueretur, citato opere construxit” (Colgrave and Myners, eds. *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1969), p. 186). In any case, the Old English translator seems to understand Edwin’s period of catechetical instruction as a post-christening catechumenate.

<sup>18</sup> Colgrave and Myners, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, p. 232; Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 168.



that his priests, first among all the elementary stages of consecration [that they perform] for those whom they are preparing to receive the sacrament of baptism, touch their nostrils and ears with saliva from their mouth, while they say, 'Effeta'. . . Each one of us, dearly beloved brothers, who has received the baptism of Christ according to the sacred rites, has been consecrated in this way. All who are going to receive this healing and saving bath according to the sacred rites, either at the approaching time of Easter, or at some other time, will be consecrated in this way.<sup>19</sup>

This passage does stress the importance of Easter (while possibly leaving room for baptism outside of Easter or Pentecost), although if it does invoke a catechumenical period, it does so vaguely. Sarah Foot, in her thorough survey of baptism in early Anglo-Saxon England,<sup>20</sup> points out that while Bede's story of the conversion of Edwin does indicate a catechumenical period, other conversions, such as that of Æthelbert of Kent, do not. Regarding these early conversions, she conjectures

circumstances in which missionaries might have thought it more politic to proceed relatively swiftly with the rituals of initiation, and reserve the more thorough education of the neophytes to a later point, rather than risk the alienation of potentially hostile converts anxious for the outward forms of the ceremony.<sup>21</sup>

By the time of Bede, a more settled system of baptism might have been codified, but eighth-century evidence, as Foot demonstrates, suggests "considerable diversity in liturgical practice between different English minsters."<sup>22</sup> This evidence does seem to indicate a baptism centered primarily on Easter and involving some sort of preparation. Because of the nature of missionary work, the ideal of Easter baptism might certainly have been compromised, and "it is difficult to see how the preparation of candidates could have involved a prolonged period of fasting, exorcism and instruction, unless the clergy had been able to stay amongst their

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<sup>19</sup> Martin and Hurst, tr. *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, v. 2 (1991), pp. 54-5. See also D. Hurst, ed. *Bedae Venerabilis homeliarum evangelii* (1955), p. 222.

<sup>20</sup> Foot explores the available (all non-liturgical) evidence concerning the form, time of year, setting, ministers, and recipients of baptism through the ninth century.

<sup>21</sup> Foot, "By water in the spirit", p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175.

flock for weeks at a time.”<sup>23</sup> However, the weight of patristic exegetes, for whom baptism and Easter were intertwined, would have encouraged the older system, such that in ninth-century France, Amalarius of Metz wrote about baptismal candidates as integral to the festivities of the Easter Vigil.

By the time of the Benedictine Reform, however, baptismal practice had changed a great deal, and appreciation of this earlier ideal of Easter baptism following a catechumenate seems even less clear. The various versions of the Life of St. Martin (represented in the Blickling and Vercelli collections and in two versions by Ælfric, all based on Sulpicius’ Latin Life) demonstrate an ambiguous understanding of the separation of christening and baptism. St. Martin, in Ælfric’s account of the bishop’s life in his *Lives of Saints*, was christened (“þa wearð he gecristnod”) against his heathen parents’ will when he was ten years old.<sup>24</sup> He was not baptized until age eighteen, and Ælfric expresses amazement (as had Sulpicius) that in the three years between his being sent to war and his baptism, he was unspotted, fulfilling “þæs fulluhtes dæda mid fulfremedum weorcum.”<sup>25</sup> It is during this time that Martin famously divides his cloak and then dreams of Christ with the cloak, who proclaims that “Martinus þe git nis gefullod me mid þysum reafe gescrydde.”<sup>26</sup> Ælfric recognizes what was done to St. Martin at age ten as a pre-baptismal christening, but he is not described as a catechumen, simply as someone who has not yet been baptized. The Blickling homily for the festival of St. Martin shows even more self-consciousness in the separation of Martin’s christening from his baptism, explaining that “ðeah he þa gyt nære fullice æfter oþerre endebyrdnesse gefulwad, ah he wæs gecristnod, swa ic ær sægde, hweðre he þæt geryne þære halgan

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 176.

<sup>24</sup> See W. W. Skeat, ed. and tr. *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, v. II (1890-1900; reprint 1966), p. 220.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 222.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 224.

fulwihte mid godum dædu heold & fullade.”<sup>27</sup> The account of his christening in the Vercelli homily demonstrates more clearly the later Anglo-Saxon need to interpret the Latin “catechumenum fieri postaulauit” in Sulpicius (see Scragg’s parallel Latin text to Homily XVIII, *De Sancto Martino Confessore*).<sup>28</sup> The Vercelli homilist translates this expression as “bæd þæt hine man þær gecristnode” and then adds an explanatory appositive, “þæt bið sio onginnes ⁊ se æresta dæl þære halgan fulwihte.”<sup>29</sup> To come to terms with the idea of a catechumenate, the translator must envision a divided baptismal ceremony, of which the ‘christening’ represented merely the first part. After Martin builds a monastery, “sum gecristnod man” (translating the Latin *catechumenus*) comes to him to be trained, dies unbaptized while Martin is away, and is raised from death and baptized upon Martin’s return. The man is called ‘a christened man’ in the Blickling and Vercelli versions and in Ælfric’s Lives of Saints account. In Ælfric’s Second Series homily on the Deposition of Saint Martin, however, the man is simply a heathen:

Æfter ðisum geðeodde sum hæðen wer him to. and se binnon feawum dagum swa færllice swealt. þæt he on fulluhte underfangen næs. for ðan ðe martinus ða on neawiste næs. ac com ða to huse hearde gedrefed. and hine sylfne astrehte. sona ofer ðone deaðan, drihten biddende. þæt he him lif sealde. and he wearð ða geedcucod æfter lytlum fyrste. and sona gefullod.<sup>30</sup>

The newborn St. Rumwold, in his eleventh-century Anglo-Latin Life, asked to be ‘made a catechumen,’ although it is not clear whether this was distinct from his baptism, both ceremonies being performed by the priest Widerin.<sup>31</sup> St. Machutus, however, according to the anonymous author of his Life, was born during Easter Vigils and baptized at its end, with

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<sup>27</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 213.

<sup>28</sup> D. G. Scragg, ed. *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (1992), pp. 291-309.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 292.

<sup>30</sup> CH.II.xxxiv, pp. 290-1.

<sup>31</sup> See Foot, “By water in the spirit”, pp. 171-3.

no time or need for a catechumenical period.<sup>32</sup> If there is an appreciation in later Anglo-Saxon England of the earlier catechumenical period, it is a vague one, defined almost solely by a separation in time between christening and baptism, and with almost no indication of what happened during that time.

It is a staple of Anglo-Saxon penitential texts (as well as the Irish texts to which they owe a great deal) that adult candidates must learn the Creed and the Pater Noster and be spiritually and mentally ready before being baptized. An Irish canon attributed to St. Patrick prescribes forty days of penance to any brother seeking baptism. The early-eighth-century (and heavily influenced by Irish custom) 'Penitential of Theodore' mentions that "Baptized persons may not eat with catechumens."<sup>33</sup> Nowhere in the Anglo-Saxon codes is there any mention of a period of time, or of anything specific that must be done, with the exception of learning the Creed and the Pater Noster, and generally readying oneself. It is this general sense of a need for instruction in the Creed and the Pater Noster that survived of the adult catechumenate, and Ælfric and Wulfstan both stress the same requirement.

Evidence for an infant catechumenate in Irish and Anglo-Saxon penitential texts is a bit less consistent, and has much more bearing on the regularity of formalized Easter baptism. It existed in Irish practice, as attested in a canon attributed to St. Patrick:

19. Of the proper age for baptism. On the eighth day they are catechumens; thereafter they are baptized in the solemn feast days of the Lord, that is at Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany.<sup>34</sup>

This would imply, in some cases, a fairly long period of time between christening and baptism, as would be necessary to keep Easter (or, as a secondary option, Pentecost or Epiphany) baptism a regular part of the liturgy. Theodore's penitential instructs that "one person may, if it is necessary, be [god]father to a catechumen both in baptism and in

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<sup>32</sup> See David Yerkes, ed. *The Old English Life of St. Machutus* (1984), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Gamer and McNeill, tr. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (1979), p. 202.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 84.

confirmation,” referring to christening and baptism as two separate occasions, with (usually) two different sponsors.<sup>35</sup> By the time of Ælfric and Wulfstan, however, canons referring to baptism are concerned not with the time of year or with the christening of infants, but with the need to baptize quickly. The fifteenth Canon of Edgar, probably by Wulfstan (taken from the version in Junius 121) firmly stresses this need:

And riht is þæt preosta gehwylc fulluhtes and scriftes tyðige sona swa man gyrne,  
and æghwær on his scriftscyre beode þæt ælc cild sy gefullod binnan vii nihtum  
and þæt ænig man to lange unbiscopad ne wyrðe.<sup>36</sup>

The Northumbrian Priests’ Law calls for baptism within 9 days,<sup>37</sup> and various penitential codes prescribe heavy penances for those whose children die unbaptized.

Both Irish and Anglo-Saxon canons dealing with baptism tend to contradict one another, and one often finds contradictions within the same body of text. Most notably, the debate over re-baptism shows some volatile disagreement. On this issue, the Penitential of Theodore says:

12. If through ignorance anyone has been ordained before he is baptized, those who have been baptized by that pagan ought to be rebaptized, and he himself shall not be ordained [again].

This, again, is said to have been differently determined by the Roman Pontiff of the Apostolic See, to the effect that not he who baptizes, even if he is a pagan, but the Spirit of God, ministers the grace of baptism: but also this matter was differently decided in the case of a “pagan” presbyter -- he who thinks himself baptized, holding the Catholic faith in his works -- these cases are differently decided -- that is, that he should be baptized and ordained.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> Roger Fowler, ed. *Wulfstan’s Canons of Edgar* (1972), p. 5. Fowler points out that the version in Corpus 201 reads “xxxvii” instead of “vii,” which he explains as “a scribal error combining an original xxx with a correction to vii based on Ælfric” (26). If so, we have some evidence of a controversy about the correct age for infant baptism (as Fowler discusses briefly in his note for canon 15), perhaps demonstrating the tension between the fear of allowing a child to die unbaptized and the desire to maintain the tradition of baptism at the high festivals.

<sup>37</sup> See Dorothy Whitelock, et al, eds. and tr. *Councils and Synods*, v. I (1981), p. 455: “æghwylc cild sy, we lærað, gefullod binnan nigon nihton, be wite VI or.”

<sup>38</sup> Gamer and McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 193.

In the Confessional of Egbert, this canon has been compressed into one even more confusing and self-contradictory:

7. If any mass-priest knows that he is unbaptized, he and all those whom he previously baptized shall be baptized. A Roman pope declared that though a priest be sinful or a heathen, nevertheless the ministry of the Holy Ghost, not that of the man, is in the grace of baptism.<sup>39</sup>

Whether one attributes this version to carelessness in transmission or to a genuine lack of consensus on the issue, the debate stands until the time of Ælfric and Wulfstan. Wulfstan, concurring with the more orthodox view, interrupts his account of the christening in his *Sermo De Baptismate* to assert definitively:

Twa ðing syndon þurh Godes mihte swa myccle & swa mære þæt æfre ænig man ne mæg ðæron ænig ðing awyrdan ne gewanian, fulluht & huslhalgung. Nis se mæssepreost on worulde swa synful ne swa fracod on his dædan, gyf he ðæra þenunga aþere deð swa swa ðærto gebyreð, þeah he sylf ælc unriht dreoge on his life, ne byð seo þenung þæs na þe wyrse. . . . Do swa hwylc swa hit do, Godes sylfes miht byð on þære dæde þurh halig geryne.<sup>40</sup>

Wulfstan's statement represents the final word (for the Anglo-Saxons) in a debate that had spanned the whole of early Christianity. Both he and Ælfric consistently make this assertion, that never should a correctly-administered (i.e. according to the Triune formula) baptism be repeated regardless of the state of the person performing the baptism.

It is characteristic of Ælfric and Wulfstan to settle theological debates and present a consistent theology, and Wulfstan does so in regards to baptism, concerning the issues discussed above. While Wulfstan too seems, at first glance, to succumb to baptism's confused sense of audience (in Bethurum VIIIb, the priest christens "þone cild" and gives the salt to "þam cilde", but he touches with spittle "þæs mannes nose", and "se man" is worthy of the Eucharist), he presents in his *Sermo De Baptismate* a consistent and unified description of baptism that accounts for both adults and children, and makes logical sense for each, avoiding

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>40</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 177. Subsequent page references are to this text.

the kind of confusion intrinsic to the liturgy.<sup>41</sup> All references to the candidate have been changed to the unspecific “þone man”, rather than switching awkwardly between “cild” and “man”. He makes a clear distinction between those who have “þære ylde & ðæs andgytes” (175) and those who don’t. His description, general as it is, could apply to either group, and he makes it clear how each bit should be understood in each case. The former must be “gewisod þæt he cunne hu he of hæpendome mæge to cristendome ðurh rihtne geleafan & þurh fulluht cuman” (175). These must learn the *Pater Noster* and the Creed, which “geswutelian rihtne geleafan” (176). For infants, the Delivery of the Creed is understood to be more applied than learned; rather than pretending that the child can learn and understand it, the candidate plays a passive, not an active role, as the priest, singing the Creed to him, “trymeð he his geleafan & mid ðam geleafan gefrætewað & gewædað his hus . . . gegearwað his heortan Gode on to wunianne” (178). When it must be pretended that a child can respond, for the *Abrenuntio* and the *Credo*, Wulfstan makes it clear that, while “his freonda forspæc forstent him eal þæt sylfe swylce hit sylf spæce” (182), it is then the prime responsibility of those relatives to make sure that the first things that the child does learn, when it can, are the *Pater Noster* and the Creed. The forms are clearly rationalized and explained, and the theology surrounding them is codified. Baptism in late Anglo-Saxon is discussed generally as a sacrament for infants,<sup>42</sup> but Ælfric and Wulfstan recognize the need for some malleability in the application of the ceremony. Whatever the circumstances, however, the baptism described by Ælfric and Wulfstan is a single ceremony, performed at any time.

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<sup>41</sup> See Ibid. p. 31 on the relationship between VIII a, b, and c.

<sup>42</sup> Bazire and Cross, eds. *Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies* (1982), p. 68 (hereafter BC), discuss an anonymous Rogationtide sermon which compares rebirth at baptism to confession, when one is “gewintrod.” See also the examples put forth by Irvine, *Old English Homilies*, pp. 58-60, concerning statements by Ælfric and Wulfstan reflecting an assumption that baptism is a sacrament for infants.

A rubric in a sixteenth-century version of the Sarum missal demonstrates a later solution to the same tension we see in Anglo-Saxon baptism. After describing the benediction of the font, it states:

At the vigils of Easter and Pentecost this office should not be continued further, unless there were somebody to be baptized . . . Note that at the vigil of Easter and of Pentecost when the fonts have been consecrated neither the oil nor chrism shall be poured into them, unless there be present some who are to be baptized: but let them be covered with a clean cloth, and kept until the end of the Paschal or Pentecostal season, so that, if it happen that during those days someone comes to be baptized, then the fonts may be made fruitful and sanctified by the infusion of oil and chrism, and he may be baptized.<sup>43</sup>

This was the compromise reached by Ælfric in a letter for Wulfsige, discussing Holy Saturday: “Ne do man nænne ele to þam fante, buton mann þær cild on fullige.”<sup>44</sup> While recognizing the traditional propriety of baptism in the Paschal season, this seems to suggest that it was not the norm for those that used this text, but that the urgency of quick baptism was deemed more important. In his Letter for the Monks of Eynsham, Ælfric seems to give baptism more weight than one might expect, given its general disassociation from Easter. After the blessing of the Paschal candle and a set of readings and antiphons on Holy Saturday, the baptismal font is blessed. Into the *Concordia*’s account of Holy Saturday, Ælfric inserts some interesting baptismal instructions:

When infants are baptized they should be anointed on the top of the head by the priest, because the bishop should anoint on the forehead, where the high priest used to wear a plate of gold. The candle that is placed in the hand of the baptized infant is likened to the lamps of the wise virgins.<sup>45</sup>

Both parts of this passage are derived from Amalarius, except for the likening of the candle to the wise virgins. Jones discusses Ælfric’s use of Amalarius here,<sup>46</sup> emphasizing that this

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<sup>43</sup> *DBL*, p. 244.

<sup>44</sup> Bernhard Fehr, ed. *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics* (1914), p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> *LME* (1998), p. 134-5. “Infantes, quando baptizantur, in cerebro unguendi sunt a presbitero, quia episcopus debet in fronte unguere ubi laminam auream pontifex ferebat. Cereus qui infanti baptizato datur in manum coadunatur lapadibus sapientium uirginum.”

<sup>46</sup> See *LME*, p. 201, n. 230, 231.



material, and especially its placement in the discussion of the Easter Vigil, is close to the version of Amalarius' *Retractatio prima* in a post-Conquest manuscript, Salisbury, Cathedral Library MS 154, which Jones argues "confirms the existence of an augmented version of the *Retractatio prima* from which Ælfric's exemplar, like Salisbury 154, clearly derived."<sup>47</sup>

Although the instruction concerning the candle does not appear elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon witnesses, the directions for the application of the chrism<sup>48</sup> are echoed in Ælfric's Second Letter for Wulfstan, where they have no particular relationship to Easter:

Mid þam haligan ele ge scylan þa hæþenan cild mearcian on þam breoste and betwux þæm [ge]sculdru on middeweardan mid rode tacne, ærþanþe ge hit fullian on þam fantwætere. And þonne hit of þæ wætere cynð, ge scylan wyrcean rode tacen upp on þæm heafde mid þam haligan crisman.<sup>49</sup>

Granted Ælfric's reliance on Amalarius here, the inclusion of baptismal forms for the Easter Vigil in his Eynsham letter should probably be seen in the light of the insinuation in his letter for Wulfsige that Easter baptisms were a possibility rather than an integral part of Easter worship. Consistent throughout these instructions, in any event, is the assumption of infant baptism.

What is lost here, in a society that thinks of baptism as, predominately, an event for infants, without a Lenten catechumenical period, is the idea of a dramatic Easter submission to death and resurrection. What survives from the Gelasian scrutinies is the sense of christening as an exorcism of the devil and an initiation by birth into the church, applied to

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<sup>47</sup> *LME*, p. 64.

<sup>48</sup> The inclusion of episcopal baptismal instructions does not mean that a bishop would regularly be participating in the liturgy for Holy Saturday at Eynsham. Ælfric also includes in his Eynsham Letter instructions for the episcopal blessing of the oils on Maundy Thursday, perhaps reflecting "a scholarly interest in the rite itself and in the unusual exposition provided by his exemplar of the *Retractio prima*" (*LME*, p. 192, n. 196). Jones further expresses his suspicion that "LME 39 [the blessing of the oils] reflects its immediate written source more than Ælfric's memory of the actual rite performed at Winchester." Perhaps his interest in episcopal baptismal instructions is equally 'scholarly.' These episcopal instructions, along with other general instructions, probably indicate that Ælfric's Letter was constructed with the possibility of a wider audience than just the Eynsham community (see also *LME*, p. 170, n. 98).

<sup>49</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 148.

the child rather than submitted to in a quasi-mimetic correlation with the events at Easter. That there is some sort of ‘dramatic’ quality to baptism, in some sense of the word, is certain, given the range and power of its associations. The matter of the sacrament, the water, encompasses most of these. A key passage in the liturgy for the Blessing of the Font from the Robert Missal, directly preceding the actual baptism, addresses the water:

Unde benedico te creature aquae. per deum uiuum. per deum sanctum. qui te in principio verbo separauit ab arida. cuius spiritus super te ferebatur. qui te de paradyso manare. et in quattuor fluminibus totam terram rigare praecepit. Qui te in deserto amaram suauitate indita fecit esse potabilem. et sitiendi populo de petra produxit. Benedico te et per iesum christum filium eius. unicum dominum nostrum. qui te in chana galileae signo admirabili sua potentia conuertit in uinum. Qui pedibus super te ambulauit. et a iohanne in iordane in te baptizatus est. Qui te una cum sanguine de latere suo produxit. et discipulis suis iussit ut credentes baptizarentur in te dicens. Ite docete omnes gentes. baptizantes eos in nomine patris. et filii et spiritus sancti.<sup>50</sup>

In directly addressing the water, the priest makes it clear that the water in the font is the same water that God first shaped into the four rivers that flowed from Eden and gave life to the world, that sprang forth from the rock in the desert giving life to the Israelites, that Christ turned to wine at Cana, on which he walked, in which he was baptized, and which flowed from his side at the Crucifixion. In the same way that the consecrated host calls forth, in a very real, spiritual sense, the body of Christ, so the consecrated water calls forth the life-giving power of God, such that the participants are dipped into the actual water that baptized Christ, and that flowed from his side. This blessing is something of a hodge-podge, pulling from events throughout Christian history in order to make them present, not for the sake of mimetic setting, but to make clear the water’s power, its ability to drive out the devil.

Anglo-Saxon prose writers picked up these associations as well, particularly the latter two, to the same effect. Ælfric, in a homily for mid-Lent, specifies that the water from Christ’s side was “to urum fulluhte.”<sup>51</sup> The first Vercelli homily proclaims: “þæt tacnode

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<sup>50</sup> Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> CH.II.xii, p. 116.

hælo middangeardes, þæt ðurh his blod fulwihtwæter gewyrþan sceolde.”<sup>52</sup> In his Second Series sermon for Epiphany, Ælfric asserts that at Christ’s entry into the Jordan at his baptism, “ða wæs þæt wæter and ealle wyll-springas gehalgode þurh Cristes lichaman to urum fulluhte.”<sup>53</sup> One of the most interesting explorations of this theme is in the sixteenth Vercelli homily, where the author, using a prophecy of David, turns the river Jordan into a sort of proto-Font:

[Swylce wearð æt] þa[m dryhten]lican fulwihte se / cwide ⁊ se witedom gefylled ⁊ geworden þe Daid se witiga in þam sealme sang ⁊ toweard sægde, ða he þurh haligne gast þa dryhtenlican fulwihte him toweard geseah . . . ‘Hwæt is þe, sæ, for hwan fluge ðu? Oððe þu, Iordan, for hwan cerdest ðu on bæclincg?’ Iordan is haten seo ea þe se hælend on gefulwad wæs, ⁊ heo is swiðe mycel wæter ⁊ swiðe strang stream hafað ⁊ sæflod on yrneð. ⁊ þa wæs geworden in þa tid þe se /hælend in þæt wæter astag þa ge-cyrde se sæflod ⁊ se stream eall on bæcling, ⁊ swa stille gestod þæt flod swylce he flowan ne meahte, ac he wæs swiðe mid þy godcundan egesan gepreatod þæt he hine styrian ne dorste.<sup>54</sup>

This kind of legend strengthens the coincident relationship between the contemporary font and the Jordan at the time of Christ. The Jordan as a font is a popular hagiographical theme. In Ælfric’s life of St. Basilus, Basil travels to Jerusalem to be baptized in the Jordan, whereupon, at the point of baptism, a dove descends from a fire in the heavens and stirs the water in imitation of a priest’s consecration of the font. The river, after the dove’s descent, is referred to as the “fant-baðe.”<sup>55</sup> Such associations give the consecrated water the same apotropaic power held by the host, to the degree that people would take vials of it to bless their homes and fields, to drive out evil spirits, and to heal the sick.<sup>56</sup> These associations also

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<sup>52</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 261.

<sup>53</sup> CH.II.iii, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 269.

<sup>55</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, v. I, p. 54.

<sup>56</sup> In a spectacular illustration of superstition surrounding the power of the consecrated water, a mother in Ælfric’s Second Series sermon on St. Stephen dips her hair into a baptismal font as part of a curse on her children (CH.II.ii, p. 15).

serve as a conduit for drawing Christ's baptism and his crucifixion into the contemporary baptismal ceremony by infusing the water with the power behind these events.

As the water is understood to be one with that involved in the original events, so the participants are described as, in a spiritual sense, participating in those events. As these events are cataclysmic, demonstrations of God's power and violent desire to purge the world of sin, it is not surprising that baptism is most commonly described as a battle with the devil. In his sermon for the second Sunday after Epiphany, Ælfric, discussing the second water vessel changed to wine at Cana, claims:

On ðære oðre ylde . . . se swymmenda arc getacnode godes gelaðunge. and þæt se rihtwisa noe getacnode crist. and þæt yðigende flod þe ða synfullan adylegode. gebicnode þæt halige wæter ures fulluhtes. þe ure synna adilegað . . .<sup>57</sup>

In his sermon for Mid-Lent Sunday, Ælfric explains that:

Seo reade sæ hæfde getacnunge ures fulluhtes. on ðære adranc pharao and his here samod. swa eac on urum gastlicum fulluhte bið se deofol forsmorod fram us. and ealle ure synna beoð adylegode. and we ðonne sigefæste mid geleafan godes lof singað. . .<sup>58</sup>

The baptismal liturgy describes baptism as an exorcism of the devil and the devil's taint, making the drowning of Pharaoh in the Red Sea a fitting precursor. The poem *Andreas* contains a powerful use of baptism as a conquering force, in that the soldiers who had killed the saint are literally drowned in a flood and requickened by God into a life of faithfulness. Their baptism is literal enough, in the word's original sense of 'drowning', to make the poet's assertion that "þa wæs mid þy folce fulwiht hæfen . . . riht aræred" a wonderful litotes.<sup>59</sup> Ælfric's First Series sermon for Pentecost develops more fully the theme of baptism conquering enemies, explaining Easter as an old Hebrew festival celebrating the drowning of Pharaoh (followed fifty days later, at Pentecost, with God's bestowal of his law at Mt.

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<sup>57</sup> CH.II.iv, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> CH.II.xii, p. 115.

<sup>59</sup> See George Philip Krapp, ed. *The Vercelli Book* (1932), pp. 48-9.

Sinai).<sup>60</sup> The destruction of the devil-Pharaoh is relived in the contemporary baptism, as that same power that rescued the Israelites from captivity will rescue the baptismal candidate from the devil's influence. What rings through here, whenever baptism is invoked, is the power of the water, drawn from these Old Testament events, his baptism and his crucifixion into the present ceremony by way of invocations like that in the Robert Missal.

What is most surprising, in looking at late Anglo-Saxon treatment of baptism, is the paucity of overt association with the Resurrection. That there is a spiritual connection between baptism and Easter is undeniable. It is the heart of Christianity that Christ's death and resurrection paved the way for our redemption, realized in baptism, and the parallel is obvious in the very word 'baptism', signifying a death, followed by a rebirth. Ælfric does find an Old Testament relationship between baptism and Easter by way of the Red Sea in the aforementioned sermon for Pentecost. In the same sermon, he makes the New Testament connection, asserting:

Nu is his þrowung ⁊ his ærist ure eastertid: for þan ðe he us alysde fram deofles  
þeowdome. ⁊ ure ehteras beoð besencte þurh þæt halige fulluht. swa swa wæs  
pharao mid his leode on þære readan sæ;<sup>61</sup>

The relationship here is assumed, but the dominant image is, again, that of conquering water. Even baptismal references to the Crucifixion focus on the water from Christ's side, not on the supposed co-occurrence of 'dramatic' roles. If baptism belonged predominately to Easter, and if the death and resurrection of Christ reenacted by the baptismal participants was a major theme, one might expect to see some reflection of that in sermons for Easter. In Ælfric's First Series sermon for Easter, we find the liturgy for the day reflected in the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, the visitation of the three women to the tomb on Sunday morning. Baptism, however, is conspicuously absent. At one point, Ælfric discusses how Christ 'passed over from passion to resurrection, from death to life, from torment to glory,' a discussion that would be a good

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Clemoes, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series* (1997), p. 355; hereafter CH I.

<sup>61</sup> CH.I.xxii, p. 355.

occasion for referring to Easter Vigil baptisms in which Christ's passing over comes to fruition in men, yet this is not an imperative for him. Ælfric does mention baptism in his *Sermo de Sacrificio in Die Pascae*, explaining how when a child is baptized, "hit ne bret na his hiw wiðutan. ðeah ðe hit beo wiðinnan awend . . . hit bið aðwogen fram eallum synnum wiðinnan. þeah ðe hit wiðutan his hiw ne awende."<sup>62</sup> This discussion, however, focuses on the nature of the consecrated water, and is really an attempt to explain the nature of the consecrated host, which is a central part of the liturgy for the day.

There is a more developed identification between the baptismal participant and Christ at his birth. The author of a homily for Tuesday in Rogationtide tells us that, "Ðurh clæne mæden Crist wearð geboren, and þurh clæne fulluht we syndon ealle cristene gewordenne."<sup>63</sup> In his Second Series Sermon for Christmas, Ælfric describes baptism as a birth:

Ælc man bið mid synnum gestryned and geboren ðurh adames forgægednysse. ac he bið eft criste acenned on ðære halgan gelaðunge. þæt is on godes cyrcan þurh fulluht; þæt wæter aðwehð þone lichaman. and se halga gast aðwehð ða sawle fram eallum synnum. and se gefulloda man bið þonne godes bearn.<sup>64</sup>

This is a more natural association to make for those who, as Ælfric says in his dual interpretation of the parable of the vineyard in a homily for Septuagesima Sunday, "fram cildcradole to godes geleafan comon."<sup>65</sup> While identification with Christ has shifted focus from his resurrection to his birth and his own baptism, discussion of baptism belongs, for Ælfric, to Epiphany rather than Easter, highlighting the idea of baptism as a ceremony of birth and initiation more than death and resurrection. As the commemoration of Christ's own baptism, Epiphany is a natural forum for discussing the theology of baptism. However, in

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<sup>62</sup> CH.II.xv, p. 153.

<sup>63</sup> BC, p. 95. This passage is found in a variety of places, including a composite homily (number 30) printed by Napier and discussed in D. G. Scragg, "The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies and Prose Saints' Lives Before Ælfric", *ASE* 8 (1979), p. 25. See also M. R. Godden, "Old English Composite Homilies from Winchester", *ASE* 4 (1975), pp. 57-65.

<sup>64</sup> CH.II.i, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> CH.II.v, p. 44.

Ælfric's Second Series sermon for Epiphany, he not only discusses some of its repercussions, but he presents in translation the heart of the baptismal liturgy, the *Abrenuntio* and the *Credo*. As interested as Ælfric is in explaining in his preaching the liturgy for the day, this inclusion is compelling. Baptism at Epiphany, according to Whitaker, is an Eastern phenomenon, as Rome repeatedly asserted that Easter and Pentecost were the appropriate times for baptism, although there is evidence that Epiphany baptisms were regular in Ireland (Irish Christianity frequently reflecting an Eastern influence). This is certainly not to say that baptism was part of the liturgy for Epiphany for the Anglo-Saxons, for this passage is couched in a theoretical defence of infant baptism, and there is no evidence for such an idea, except possibly the verse *Menologium*'s inconclusive reference to Epiphany as "fulwihttiid."<sup>66</sup> More likely, discussion of baptism would naturally focus on Epiphany in the wake of a practical diminishment in the importance of Easter baptism. This loss is the result of changes in the baptismal liturgy by the time of Ælfric, the most important of which is the shift from adult to infant baptisms and its corollary loss of the structured catechumenate that had originally been defined by, and helped define, the Holy Season.

The common assertion that medieval baptismal ceremonies involve a mimetic recapitulation of the death and resurrection of Christ, bolstered by the temporal coincidence of Easter, loses force in such a baptism, particularly in a case where the supposed lead actor is an infant. The images called up by the Anglo-Saxon liturgists and reflected in the prose are quite strong, and they include a number of biblical events, including those of the Passion, that invite mimetic representation, but they are not described in terms compatible with mimetic interpretation. Those involved in the ceremonies are interested in the conquering and protecting might of God, the sacrificial potency of Christ's blood, and the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, all present in the water in which are dipped those in desperate need of exorcism. Noah's Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, Christ's birth, baptism, and crucifixion are all present at the time of baptism. The participants are not trying to present what was

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<sup>66</sup> Elliott Dobbie, ed. *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (1942), p. 49, line 11.

accomplished in these events; rather they are trying to call forth the power behind these events for their present need. Baptism for the Anglo-Saxons was a real exorcism of a real devil and an infusion of God's Spirit for which the power of those events was called forth, and it is as removed from mimesis as a real death is from a staged one. This is not to say that baptism cannot be thought of as 'dramatic', but rather that seeking for mimetic criteria in any liturgical event, from baptism to the reconciliation of the penitents on Maundy Thursday to the *Visitatio Sepulchri* on Easter morning, can be misleading. We can call baptism, or any Anglo-Saxon ritual, 'dramatic' because of its power to call forth past events, and to juxtapose them with contemporary events and participants, and to describe any liturgical ritual as a quasi-play masks its actual power to bring the events of Christian history into contemporary commemoration. The purpose of dramatic ritual here is to superimpose the feelings and experiences of past voices onto the contemporary congregation. As I will explore in the next chapter, the Christmas tropes are dramatic because the voices of the prophets, and later of the shepherds, join those of the celebrants. The *Visitatio* is dramatic because the expectations and joy of the Marys are superimposed onto the congregation. Baptism is dramatic because the desire to conquer the devil in the Red Sea, and at Christ's baptism and crucifixion, becomes one with the desire of those baptising the *infantes* bearing 'ghostly children' into the fellowship of Christ.



## Christmas and Epiphany

The juxtaposition of biblical history with contemporary participants dominates the Anglo-Saxons' relationship with the liturgy from the very beginning of the liturgical year, at Christmas. The liturgy for Christmas and for Epiphany, explicated and explored in various ways by vernacular writers, demonstrates the mechanisms for the establishment of identification that drives dramatic liturgical ritual. Today, we tend to think of Christmas as the highlight of the Christian year and a time that more than any would appeal to dramatic sensibilities; it was, however, relatively undervalued in the early Middle Ages. Augustine, for whom the festival was fairly new, considered Christmas a *memoria* and Easter a *sacramentum*. Although the importance of Christmas grew, it was still by the tenth century greatly overshadowed by Easter. While the *Concordia* outlines specific directions for Christmas worship, it is treated no more fully than is the festival for the Purification of St. Mary on February 2, and its directions seem a footnote compared to the extensive instructions for Easter. Still, the manipulation of certain liturgical images and themes in the extant sermons (there are six, four of which are by Ælfric), coupled with the liturgical innovations added to the Christmas celebration in France and England at this time, attest to a strong appeal for the commemoration of the incarnation and birth of Christ in Anglo-Saxon England.

The third-century *De Pascha Computus* claims that Christ was born on March 28, reflecting an early desire to correlate his birth with the creation of the world.<sup>1</sup> The earliest references to a December 25 birth in the West are found in the mid fourth century. In the Orient, Epiphany was the original time for this celebration. The *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* describes a midnight Mass at the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem, followed by a dawn

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<sup>1</sup> See L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship* (1949), pp. 257ff; Jungmann and Brenner, tr. *The Mass of the Roman Rite* (1950), pp. 266-77; John Gunstone, *Christmas and Epiphany* (1967); and Thomas Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (1986), pp. 235ff.

procession back to Jerusalem. This ritual was added to the Roman Christmas by the fifth century, and a 'crib chapel' in a basilica dedicated to Mary was constructed for the purpose (hence the name of the first Christmas Mass, *Ad Sanctam Mariam Maiorem ad Praesepe*). In the morning is the *Mane Prima Ad Sanctam Anastasiam*, originally an independent celebration from Byzantium that was modified into a second Christmas Mass while retaining an understated commemoration of Anastasia. The third Mass is the principal one, the original Roman Christmas Mass, *In Natali Domini Ad Sanctum Petrum*. The gospel for this Mass is the beginning of John and the Mass texts correspondingly focus on the wonder of the incarnation and divine birth. Adding to these three Christmas Masses a Christmas Eve vigil, we can perceive a progression in themes over the course of the Christmas celebration. The Vigil Mass, *Vigilia Natalis Domini*, looking forward to the birth, picks up the prophetic themes of Advent and focuses them on the upcoming fulfilment of God's promise. The midnight Mass, because of its temporal coincidence with the incidents leading up to the birth (as well as, originally, its spatial coincidence, in Jerusalem and Rome), focuses on the story of the birth itself, and on the imagery of Christ as the 'rising Sun.' Light imagery dominates the ritual through sunrise, in the *Mane Prima*. Finally, the principal Mass celebrates the union of the divine and the human in the newborn Christ and its consequences for the celebrants.

Vernacular homilies openly adopted the main themes of Christmas -- the fulfilment of prophecy, the light overcoming darkness, Christ as the rising Sun, and the union of heaven and earth in Christ -- demonstrating the close relationship between the preaching and the liturgy. The celebrants are the hearers of the prophets, promised a Saviour. They are those who, having walked in darkness, have seen a great light. They are the shepherds, sung to by the host of angels, told of the glorious birth, and led to worship and ponder God made man. The Christmas liturgy establishes this kind of identification, while the preaching explains and solidifies it. This invocational juxtaposition of the voices of the Israelites and of the

shepherds with the celebrants makes the commemoration a dramatic liturgical reenactment of the experience of those awaiting and hearing the news of Christ's birth.

From Chapter on Christmas Eve, when the festival of the Lord's Nativity is announced, there is a conscious increase in solemnity, building expectation in the celebrants. The Vigil Mass (quoted here from the Leofric Missal, but quite general) brings the feeling of expectation nurtured in Advent into focus, beginning:

Deus, qui nos redemptionis nostrae annua expectatione laetificas, praesta ut unigenitum tuum quem redemptorem laeti suscepimus, uenientem quoque iudicem securi uideamus . . .<sup>2</sup>

The Preface continues in this vein:

. . . uoce supplici exoramus, ut superuenturae noctis officiis nos ita peruigiles reddat, ut sinceris mentibus eius percipere mereamur natale uenturum. In quo inuisibilis ex substantia tua uisibilis per carnem apparuit in nostra . . .<sup>3</sup>

Here, the feelings of expectation are personalized in the participants as they ask God to make them watchful of the coming birth, to make them worthy to see it, and to be a part of it.

Specifically, the celebrants are to see themselves, loosely, as the people of Israel, expecting a fulfilment of prophecy. For Vespers, the *Concordia* prescribes "Proper antiphons suitable to the fullness of time,"<sup>4</sup> and these antiphons, derived from Old Testament prophecy, strengthen this identification, as do the antiphons for Vespers in the Leofric Collectar:

*Super psalmos [Ant].* Iudea et heirusalem nolite timere cras egrediemini et dominus erit uobiscum.

*Ant.* Orietur sicut sol saluator mundi et descendet in uterum uirginis sicut ymber super gramen alleluia.

*Ant.* Dum ortus fuerit sol de celo uidebitis regem regum procedentem tamquam sponsum de thalamo suo.

*Ant.* Gaude et letare hierusalem quia rex tuus uenit tibi de quo prophete predixerunt quem angeli semper adorant cui cherubin et seraphin sanctus sanctus sanctus proclamant.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> See Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 19.

The promises of God to the people of Israel to provide a Saviour become promises to the celebrants, as the general sense of ‘tomorrow’ as used in Old Testament prophecy is made literal. This direct use of tense is intensified in the *Capitula* and response for Vespers:

*Capitula.* Paratus esto israhel in occursum domini. ecce enim ueniet tibi. salus a domino celeriter . . . cuius gloria mane uidebitur super terram.  
*R.* Iudea et hierusalem nolite timere cras egrediemini et dominus erit uobiscum.  
*V.* Constantes estote uidebitis auxilium domini super uos. cras egrediemini.  
 Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto. cras.  
*Ymnus.* A solis ortu cardine.  
*V.* Hodie scietis quia ueniet dominus.<sup>6</sup>

The dramatic nature of this use of prophecy does not involve the ‘playing of a part.’ There is no clear ‘designation of roles’ in this exchange, no Isaiah or Jeremiah crying out, clearly delineated from the responding populace. None is necessary, however, as each speaker can be simultaneously a prophet of God, inspired by the Spirit, and one of the people of Israel, crying out to each other to prepare themselves for the Lord’s coming. What is important here, as in baptism, is not so much the delineations of role-playing as the effort to make present biblical dynamics for contemporary edification. The expectations of Israel before Christ’s advent and those of the participants are superimposed, such that the celebrants become part of the general mass of the darkness-enwrapped people of God, told to expect the imminent coming of a Saviour and to prepare themselves.

Most notably, they are told to expect to see Christ rising ‘like the sun.’ Light is the dominant image from this point until after sunrise. The *Capitula* for *Completorium*, echoing the correlation between light and his coming, proclaims, “Propter sion non tacebo et propter hierusalem non quiescam. donec egrediatur. ut splendor iustus eius. et saluator eius ut lampas accendatur.”<sup>7</sup> This image is developed in the first Christmas Mass, *In Nocte*. The focus of this Mass is the Christmas story itself, which resonates with light imagery. Most important for the liturgy is the announcement to the shepherds. It is here that the people of God are first

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

told that Christ has been born, and this announcement is concurrent with light, as the ‘Glory of the Lord shone about them.’ The importance of this scene to the liturgy is further attested by the return of the *Gloria*, the announcement of the angels to the shepherds, which had been absent during Advent. It is this announcement that the Christmas celebrants come to expect during the *In Nocte* Mass, as the gospel reading ends with it. The *Capitula* begs, “Deus, qui hanc sacratissimam noctem ueri luminis fecisti illustratione clarescere, da, quesumus, ut cuius lucis mysteria in terra cognouimus . . .”<sup>8</sup> The emphasis here is on the union of heaven and earth, such that, as the *Capitula* for Christmas Matins (from Isaiah 9:2) proclaims, “Populus gentium qui ambulabat in tenebris uidit lucem magnam. habitantibus in regione umbre mortis. lux orta est eis,”<sup>9</sup> allowing them to see heavenly things, and be a part of them.

It is at sunrise that these promises come to fruition. The *Concordia* specifies that the second Christmas Mass, the Morrow Mass (or *In Aurora*) “must itself be said in the early dawn”<sup>10</sup> and it suggests ways to rearrange the offices to make sure. Ælfric’s Letter to the Monks of Eynsham, partially derived from the *Concordia*, delineates the pre-dawn order:

At Vespers of Christmas, antiphons appropriate to the fulness of time shall be sung at the psalms. At Vigils on this night, two shall sing the fourth responsory together, in order that it may be done with greater reverence. And after the gospel they shall wash, then the mass *in nocte* shall take place, followed by Lauds of the day. And if the day has not yet dawned, they shall sing Lauds of All Saint; but if it has dawned, they shall celebrate the matutinal mass (which is to be celebrated at daybreak) and then sing [Lauds] of All Saints.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> *LME*, p. 117. “Vespere Natiuitatis Domini canantur antiphone congrue de ipsa completionem temporis ad psalmos. In cuius noctis uigilia in quarto responsorio, ut honorificentius agatur, duo simul cantent. Et post euangelium lauent se et fiat missa de nocte, deinde matutinales laudes de die. Et, si nondum diei aurora eluxerit, cantent laudes de omnibus sanctis; si autem eluxerit, celebrent missam matutinalem quae in lucis crepusculo celebranda est, et dehinc canant de omnibus sanctis.”

The importance of ritual coincidence with sunrise mimics a similar use of light and darkness at Easter. This relationship between Christmas and Easter is hinted at in the *Concordia*'s directions for Chapter on Christmas Vigils, which states (as does Ælfric's Letter) that for the announcement of the feast, "They shall do in like manner on Holy Saturday when one of the children reads out 'the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"<sup>12</sup> The Christmas festival was always concerned with light; the time of the Roman Christmas is a natural one for celebrating the triumph of light over darkness, for its inception is to some degree a response to the pagan *Natalis Solis Invicti*, celebrated on December 25 in fourth-century Rome, the winter solstice according to the Julian calendar.<sup>13</sup> However, the explicit connection between Christmas and Easter heightens the importance of light at Christmas, marking Christmas sunrise as both the new light given to those who had dwelt in darkness and a precursor of the light of the Risen Christ.

This Mass is the one that was originally composed for the Byzantine Anastasia. After it was translated to the Roman Christmas, however, it was altered to apply more specifically to Christmas. As such, the version in the Leofric Missal has two *Capitulae*, two *Praefatios*, and two *Ad Complenda*, a first specific to Anastasia and a second for Christmas. The second *Capitula* and *Praefatio* state:

C: Da nobis, quesumus, omnipotens deus, ut qui noua incarnati uerbi tui luce  
perfundimur, hoc in nostro resplendeat opere, quod per fidem fulget  
in mente.

P: . . . nostri saluatoris hodie lux uera processit, quae clara nobis omnia et  
intellectu manifestauit et uisu.<sup>14</sup>

The position of the participant is as one over whom the light of the new birth has shone, and to whom the proclamation 'Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men who

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<sup>12</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Noële Denis-Boulet (*The Christian Calendar* (1960), p. 51) speculates that the founding of St. Peter's in the fourth century near a pagan worship site for the solstice may have been part of the introduction of Christmas.

<sup>14</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 64.



symbolically, the events of Christmas are unfolding as the celebrants keep vigil. This shift is evident in the following piece, also extant in the Winchester Troper, titled *Versus Ante Officium [Canendi] in Die Natalis Domini*. It was written by Tuotilo of St. Gall, who may have composed an early version of the *Quem Quaeritis*.<sup>17</sup> It exists in late Anglo-Saxon England as part of a family of recent compositions, probably imported from the continent, which includes the *Quem quaeritis in sepulchro* for Easter and the *Quem quaeritis in praesepe* for Christmas. The latter trope is a direct reworking of the Easter trope for Christmas, including a dramatic *Adest hic* to mimic the Easter trope's *Non est hic*. While the Christmas *Quem Quaeritis* does not exist in any Anglo-Saxon text, it can be found in a closely related French troper for the monastery of St. Magliorii, apparently of the same family of texts as the Winchester Troper. Directly following the Christmas *Q.Q.* in Magliorii is the following piece, which is also extant in (and here printed from) the Winchester Troper. Its question and answer format is compelling:

*Primo Dicant Cantores*

Hodie cantandus est nobis puer, quem gignebat ineffabiliter ante tempora pater,  
et eundem sub tempore generavit inclita mater.

*Item Dicant Alteri*

Quis est iste puer tam magnis preconiiis dignum uociferatis? dicite nobis ut  
conlaudatores esse possimus.

*Item Praetitulati Cantores.*

Hic enim est quem presagus et electus symmista dei ad terras uenturum  
preuidens longe ante praenotauit, sicque predixit.<sup>18</sup>

As with the Christmas *Q.Q.*, and the Vigil prophecies, this dialogue is somewhat removed from any kind of direct, representational identification. The associations are more general, if no less powerful. The speakers are abstracts of those at the time of the birth, hearing the news of the Son and seeking him. Their exchange focuses the imperatives of the people of Israel at the Saviour's advent onto the contemporary celebrants, to come to terms with what they have seen, and been told, to participate in Christ's coming by recognizing and praising

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<sup>17</sup> Frere, *The Winchester Troper*, p. xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.



him as did the shepherds. The dialogue is dramatic in that it heightens the participants' association with those trying to see the promised Saviour, making them active seekers and proclaimers. By seeking out and praising Christ, they can attain the peace and unity with God that was promised them in prophecy the previous night.

The union of God and man has, by Christmas Day, transported the faithful from the cold, dark world to a new fellowship with heaven, symbolized by the new light. As such, the faithful must come to terms with their position in the new light by putting away their relationship with the old world. This is the primary aim of the rest of the Christmas liturgy, and its implementation directly reflects similar liturgical imperatives right after Easter. The *Concordia* prescribes for Chapter on Christmas Day a special form of confession here and at Easter:

After Prime they shall assemble for Chapter at which, when words of spiritual edification have been spoken, the brethren shall all, with lowly devotion, beg pardon of the abbot, who takes the place of Christ, and ask forgiveness of their many failings, saying the *Confiteor*. To this the abbot shall answer *Misereatur* and then, prostrate on the ground, he himself shall ask pardon of the brethren. The same manner of confession shall be observed again on the first day of the Paschal feast.<sup>19</sup>

The ceremony is at its heart an expression of the liturgical imperatives of Christmas Day. This confession reflects the participants' sense of living in a new state of being and their subsequent need to sever ties with the old world in the wake of the previous night's experience. This is also the dominant tone of the principal Mass of the day, *In Natali Domini ad Sanctum Petrum*. The collect prays "ut nos unigeniti tui noua per carnem natiuitas liberet, quos sub peccati iugo uetusta seruitus tenet," and alternate collects beg "ut qui natiuitate filii tui domini nostri gloriantur, et aduersa mundi, te gubernante, non sentiant" and that, "huius

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<sup>19</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 29. "Finita Prima uenientes ad Capitulum, post cetera spiritualis aedificationis colloquia, petant humili deuotione omnes fratres ueniam ab abbate, qui uices Christ agit, postulantes multiplicium indulgentiam excessuum dicentes *Confiteor*; et abbas respondeat *Misereatur*. Demum ipse abbas solotenus se prosternens eadem a fratribus petat. Idem modus confessionis prima Paschalis solemnitatis die ita agatur."

creaturae nouitate suscepta, uetustatis antique contagiis exuamur.”<sup>20</sup> The *Ad Complendum* concludes that, “sicut diuinae nobis generationis est auctor, ita et immortalitatis sit ipse largitor.”<sup>21</sup> These prayers stem from an attempt to certify the celebrants’ newfound unity with God, much as is done at the *Concordia* confession and the parallel confession at Easter Chapter. Those who ‘glory in the birth of your Son’ are removed from contagions and the ‘adverse of the world.’ While they may not literally return to their flocks rejoicing, as did the shepherds, the liturgy for Christmas Day represents an attempt to do the same thing in spiritual terms, to recognize the change in the world that has given them a newfound reconciliation with heaven, the birth of God as man, by putting away the old world and exercising their new ability to perceive heavenly things.

The extant sermons for Christmas (four by Ælfric and two from the Vercelli Book) do not always specify for which Mass they are intended (or indeed if they were intended to be used in a service, as Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* homily surely was not), and as such we cannot follow the overnight time-line as clearly as we can with the liturgy. All six start with some mention of Christ ‘born in true humanity in divine nature,’ reflecting the reading and the main theme of the principal Mass, although Ælfric’s First Series sermon (CH.I.ii) and Vercelli V, discussing Luke’s account of the birth, would be well suited to the midnight Mass. Vercelli V hints at such a use when the narration of the birth is broken to emphasize that Christ was “hire frumbearn, on þas niht þe nu toniht wæs.”<sup>22</sup> Also, Vercelli VI makes clear that it is intended for Christmas Day itself, as it specifies that certain portentous events happened “gyrsandæg,” “þæs ðe dryhten on niht geboren wæs.”<sup>23</sup> Ælfric’s Christmas sermon for his Second Series (CH.II.i) is a bit more esoteric, discussing the theological complexities

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<sup>20</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 112

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 129.

of the incarnation and Mary's maidenhood, although the lengthy recitation of prophecies recalls a good bit of the liturgy for the festival. Ælfric's third piece, beginning the Lives of Saints, is even more theological, and has little dramatic resonance.<sup>24</sup> His fourth piece for the occasion, Pope's I, is an exegesis on the beginning of John, the reading for the principal Mass.<sup>25</sup> I will deal primarily with Vercelli V and Ælfric's CH.I.ii. These two sermons, because they deal with the story of the birth itself rather than some of the theology around it, resonate with the themes and imperatives established in the liturgy. The insertion of "o[n] þas niht þe nu toniht wæs"<sup>26</sup> into the gospel account of Vercelli V puts the reading and its explanation in the context of the temporal coincidence established in the liturgy. In CH.I.ii, Ælfric reveals more subtly recognition of the concurrence of past events and present commemoration in comparing the current congregation with those participating in the census that brought Mary to Bethlehem. The strongest commemorative association, however, is with the shepherds, to whom the *Gloria* was announced. In both of these Christmas sermons, the congregation is made to sympathize with the shepherds, hearing the *Gloria*, seeing the infant Christ, and returning home to proclaim it to the people.

The introduction of the *Gloria in excelsis deo* to the liturgy is the climax of the Christmas celebration<sup>27</sup> and it figures prominently in Ælfric's sermon. Ælfric presents it in Latin, the only Latin passage in the narrative, and then, in the explanatory passage, repeats it twice, specifying between the two recitations that there "færlice wurdon æteowede fela þusend engla ði læs þe wære geþuht anes engles ealdordom to hwonlic to swa micelre

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<sup>24</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, v. I, pp. 10-23. A later version of this piece survives as Belfour's IX (A. O. Belfour, ed. *Twelfth-Century Homilies in MS Bodley 343* (1909), pp. 78-96).

<sup>25</sup> J. C. Pope, ed. *Homilies of Ælfric*, v. I (1967), pp. 191-225.

<sup>26</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup> According to Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 265, n.1, "Before the sixth century it was not the custom of Rome to sing the *Gloria in excelsis* except at the Feast of Christmas, and then only at the nocturnal Mass. It is to Pope Symmachus (498-514) that we owe its use on Sundays and festivals."

bodunge.”<sup>28</sup> The announcement is specifically one of peace announced to the shepherds, as it is announced to the liturgical participants at Christmas. In line with the juxtaposition of biblical shepherds and contemporary celebrants, Ælfric expands the use of the shepherds in his sermon, such that the entire narrative and all of the Christmas themes are set around them. In particular, the shepherds represent “þa halgan lareowas on godes gelaðunge. þe sint gastlice hyrdas geleaffulra saula” (193) who are called upon to make known what has been revealed to them, to ‘proclaim the heavenly vision’ as did the shepherds. More generally, the shepherds come to signify all those to whom the *Gloria* has been announced and over whom the new light has shone (or all those who have heard the *Gloria* announced in the Christmas liturgy). The light that accompanied that announcement is described as representing the union of heaven and earth:

... gelome wurdon englas mannum æteowode on ðære ealdan. .æ. ac hit nis awriten þ hi mid leohte comon ac se wurðmynt wæs þises dæges mærdæ gehælden. þ hi mid heofenlicum leohte hi geswuteledon. þa ða þ soðe leoht asprang on þeostrum. (194)

The ‘true light’ of the announcement is conflated with the light of Christ, “se soða dæg. se ðe todræfde mid his tocyme ealle nytennesses þære ealdan nihte: ⁊ ealne middaneard mid his gife onlihte” (194). This light is accompanied by a reconciliation with the angels. Ælfric, after explaining that, following the Lord’s advent, mankind was no longer allowed to worship angels, concludes:

Nu we sind getealde godes ceastergewaran ⁊ englum gelice: Uton for ðy hogian þ leahtras us ne to twæman fram ðysum miclum wurðmynte; Soðlice menn sindon godas gecigede: heald for ðy. þu mann þinne godes wyrðscipe wið leahtrum: for ðan þe god is geworden man for ðe. (195)

This passage explains the liturgical themes of Christmas Day, under which celebrants cast off the old world and come to terms with living in a new light, with which heavenly things can be seen and related to.

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<sup>28</sup> CH.I.ii, p. 194. Subsequent page references are to this text.

Ælfric then focuses this idea on the shepherds themselves. Exercising their newfound vision, they go to see Christ. Ælfric puts the reading for the primary Mass, the beginning of the gospel of John, dealing with the incarnation, into the mouths of the shepherds, creating a link between the liturgical themes for morning (light and new vision) and afternoon (the incarnation). Following the shepherds' proclamation of the incarnation, Ælfric explains that "Ne mihte ure mennisce gecynd crist on ðære godcundlican acennynnesse geseon: ac þ ilce word wæs geworden flæsc 7 wunode on us. þ we hine geseon mihton" (196). More important here than the union of God and humanity is the ability of the shepherds to see it. After further explaining the incarnation, Ælfric again couches his discussion in the words of the shepherds:

hi cwædon: uton geseon þ word þe geworden is. for ðan ðe hi ne mihton hit geseon ær ðan þe hit geflæschamod wæs. 7 to menn geworden; (196)

He sums up his discussion of Christ's incarnation, Joseph's role, and Mary's maidenhood by asserting firmly that "Ða hyrdas gesawon 7 oncneowan. be ðam cilde. swa swa him gesæd wæs" (196). As in the liturgy for the day, it is through sight, specifically the shepherds' sight, that these mysteries have significance for contemporary celebrants.

Having seen and recognized the child, it is left to the shepherds, and to the celebrants, to live in that new state. For the shepherds, that meant returning "wuldriende 7 herigende god: on eallum ðan ðingum þe hi gehyrdon 7 gesawon. swa swa him gesæd wæs" (197), with which Ælfric concludes his exegesis. He mentions that the shepherds are commemorated a mile east of Bethlehem, "on godes cyrcan geswutelod þam ðe ða stowe geneosiað," and exhorts that "we sceolon geefenlæcan þysum hyrdum: 7 wuldrian 7 herian urne drihten . . . us to alysednysse. 7 to ecere blisse" (197). It is this imperative that drives the celebrants to renew themselves in the Christmas confession and in the primary Mass, becoming as one who has seen Christ, recognized him, and attained redemptive unity with heaven.

The Vercelli Christmas homilies reveal the same awareness of liturgical dynamics, but more heavily emphasize the announcement of the *Gloria* as a harbinger of peace,

accompanied by heavenly light. The homilist of Vercelli V begins with a recounting of the Christmas narrative according to Luke (following the reading for midnight Mass),<sup>29</sup> breaking in at the mention of Christ's birth with the assertion that this happened "o[n] þas niht þe nu toniht wæs."<sup>30</sup> This addition to the gospel narrative connects the biblical story with the contemporary commemoration. The homilist then continues the gospel account as it discusses the shepherds watching over their sheep. As the angel appears and announces the *Gloria*, the narrative breaks off, and the homilist goes into a lengthy discussion of the state of the Roman empire under the emperor Augustus Octavianus, who ruled at the time of Christ's birth. The world under Augustus, claims the homilist, was at peace. Men did not carry weapons, and the emperor forgave all people in his kingdom of their crimes. The peaceful state of the world and the amnesty granted by Augustus signified the coming of Christ, who would do the same thing in spiritual terms. The peace of Christ is established in the *Gloria*, and the homilist subjugates his long discussion of Augustus' reign to the biblical/liturgical announcement of peace.

The importance of light imagery in the liturgy is likewise reflected here. The liturgy proclaims repeatedly, "solis orto," and the relationship between Christ and the sun is developed in the Vercelli sermons. One of the tokens of Christ's upcoming birth in Vercelli V is a wonder viewed by Augustus at the third hour on Christmas Eve, involving "gyldnes hringas onlicnes ymbutan þa sunnan . . . þæt is þonne ure hælend Crist, þæt he mid his fægernesse gewlitgode þa sunnan þe u[s] nu dæghwamlice lyhteð" (114).<sup>31</sup> Vercelli VI has a

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<sup>29</sup> The modern appellation 'Midnight Mass' is a bit misleading, here, referring more generally to 'some time in the night.' At an early stage, before the institution of the Mass for Anastasia (the current *In Aurora*), this mass took place closer to dawn, and was then pushed back to cock-crow, *in gallicantu*, a more fitting time for the birth and the annunciation to the shepherds than is midnight (Vercelli VI specifies that Christ was born "ær morgensteorra upeode" (Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 130)).

<sup>30</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 112. Subsequent page references are to this text.

<sup>31</sup> Such images of Christ bettering the sun are often described in the context of the Christian takeover of the *Natalis Solis Invicti*. Gunstone, *Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 20, notes a third-century burial chamber under St. Peter's in Rome, the ceiling of which has a mosaic of

sun with “þryfealde gyldene hringe” and mentions that “sio sunne beorhtor scan þonne hio æfre ær scine” (129).<sup>32</sup> In addition, for seven nights before the birth, “sio sunne æt midre nihte ongan scinan swa swa on sumera þonne hio hattost ⁊ beorhtost scinð. Þæt tacnode þæt he þas eorðlican sunnan nihtes scinende him to gisle beforan sende” (129). This prophetic use of light strengthens the climactic importance of Christmas sunrise for the faithful, for while the actual birth took place ‘before the morning-star came up,’ and while, for the original shepherds, it was still dark when the angels presented themselves,<sup>33</sup> the appearance of Christ in the world is conflated with the announcement to the shepherds. These events are tied together liturgically with the period between cock-crow and sunrise, as evident in the above hymn and antiphon for Prime from the Leofric Collectar.

The significance of this light, as explored in the liturgy and described in preaching, is that it allows believers newfound perception and unity with heaven. Its use in Vercelli V is couched within an association with the shepherds. As in Ælfric’s sermon, the shepherds are defined as “lareowas,” and the announcement of the angel is described as engendering a “leohtlicor” ability to perceive spiritual things:

⁊ we hyrdon ær on þam godspelle þæt hyrdas wæron on þam ilcan lande wæccende, ⁊ bi him stod dryhtnes engel ⁊ hie ymbscan heofonlices leohtes byrhto. Þa hyrdas getacnodan þa godan lareowas ⁊ gedefe aldoras ða þe geornlice healdað þæt Cristes yrfe þæt wæron þa leaffullan menn. ⁊ gif hie arfæstlice healdað ⁊ wel læraþ þæt geleaffulle Godes folc, þonne bioð hie rumlice onlyhte mid godcundre gife, ⁊ þa gastlican gerynu him bioð leohtlicor ontyned þonne oðrum mannum, for þan ðe hie mid Godes lufan healdað ða getreowan gesomnunge Godes folces. (119)

The common definition of the shepherds as “lareowas” is widened by the Vercelli homilist to include more generally “þa leaffullan menn,” allowing the wider audience to see themselves

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what seems to have been Helios, in his fiery chariot, turned into Christ.

<sup>32</sup> See J. E. Cross, “Portents and Events at Christ’s Birth”, *ASE* 2 (1973), pp. 209-20, for a discussion of the sources of these apocryphal signs.

<sup>33</sup> Outside of the reading of the gospel at the nocturnal Mass, the *Gloria* first appears in the Leofric Collectar as an antiphon for Matins (Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 20).

as having a responsibility to guard the flock and, ultimately, to pass on the announcement of the angels. It is important that all present at Christmas hear the *Gloria* and see this light, as that is the ultimate point of the liturgical commemoration. The light not only inspires new vision; it also allows a reconciliation with the angels, as the homilist explains:

Ær þæt wære, þæt ure hælend wære on menniscum lichoman acenned, ær we hæfdon æfre wonisse ⁊ unsybbe wið englum, ⁊ we wæron aworpene ⁊ ascadene fram hiora beorhte & fram hiora clænnisse þurh earnunge þære ærestan [s]cylde ⁊ þurh oðre synna dæghwamlice, ⁊ æfter ðam þe heofones cyning underhnað ures lichoman tyddernesse, ne forsawan þa englas usse untrumnesse ne usse tiedernesse, ac hie sona cyrdon to ure sibbe ⁊ ure lufan, for þan þe hie gesawon þæt ðurh Cristes acennednesse heofona rices eðel scolde gefylled bion. For þan hie mannum budon sybbe . . . (119-20)

The descending of Christ's divinity into the human form is the first step in reversing the debasement of humanity following the expulsion from Paradise. As the homilist goes on to explain, this reversal makes humanity equal with the angels, able to attain to the purity necessary for humanity to enter heaven. The homilist ends with a description of the joys of heaven made available by the new state of being. The heart of the Vercelli sermon, as with Ælfric's, is a treatment of the progression of the Christmas liturgy from darkness to light, from despair to hope, from blindness to new vision and the ability to move towards heaven. These two sermons make clear to their respective congregations just what is happening in the liturgy from Christmas Eve to the principal Mass on Christmas Day and how they should relate to it. What they make most clear is that the position of the congregation at Christmas is that of the shepherds.

The celebration of Christmas here is not so much a presentational re-creation as it is an invocation of the images and emotions surrounding the original, commemorated events, interpreted to apply to contemporary participants. There is no sign of the Christmas celebrants mimetically portraying the three shepherds, wandering up the aisles with crooks in their hands towards a papier-mâché star and a wooden trough with a plastic doll in swaddling clothing. It is this sort of representation that one tends to expect in discussing dramatic ritual; one finds a hint of this sort of thing in the *Quem Quaeritis*, and calls it a 'quasi-play.' One



lacks it here, and thinks of the ritual as undramatic. However, when discussing liturgical ritual, this is backwards thinking. The medieval church has never been concerned with representation for the purposes of entertainment, or with conforming to any modern criterium of 'drama' or 'dramatic' exercise. If Adam, or Christ, or the women at the sepulchre, or the shepherds, are brought into the liturgy, either by representation or by invocation, it is to establish an identification with the contemporary Christians, with the 'audience', so that they may experience what those invoked experienced, and learn what they learned. In the medieval liturgical setting, this invocation is imbued with a power not afforded to representation, actually to bring the presence of Adam, or Christ, or the women, or the shepherds into the midst of the participants, and to unify them in the moment of commemoration. As such, the kind of characteristics familiar in modern drama seen in the *Q.Q.*, and often asserted as necessary determinants for calling a ritual 'dramatic', are inventive trappings added to a pre-existing core of dramatic ritual, a core established by invocation and identification. Baptism in Anglo-Saxon England is dramatic in this way, even though the lead 'actor' is an infant; the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, Christ's birth from Mary, his baptism, and his blood at the Crucifixion are present in the ritual, and would hardly be more so if the baptismal recipient wore a crown of thorns as he entered the water. So, at Christmas, are present the people of Israel who dwelt in darkness and the shepherds. The celebrants of the liturgy assume their words and share their hopes and fears. In the moment of crying out to God to show his chosen one, and in the moment of hearing the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, and seeing and recognizing the newborn Christ, their voices and identities are joined, in a cultic way that surpasses representation. This identification is strong enough for tropers to compose liberally in this vein, and for Ælfric to hinge his discussion of Christmas around it, which, in return, strengthens it for those hearing his sermon. It is in this way that ritual is dramatic, as much so for the Christmas liturgy as for the *Q.Q.* In this vein we can understand the degree to which the Anglo-Saxon church understood and encouraged the dramatic propensities of the liturgy for the high festivals, including Christmas.

## The Christmas Octave

The octave of Christmas, following that of Easter, stems out of a desire to maintain the sense of victory and heavenly unity attained on Christmas Day. Jungmann outlines the history of the Christmas octave.<sup>34</sup> Its development parallels that of Easter, as does the feast day itself, although its unity is much looser than Easter's octave. By the seventh century, Christmas' octave consisted only of an eighth day, which was really a commemoration of Mary (*Natale s. Mariae*), and the liturgy still reflects this history. The name *festum Circumcisionis*, also attributed to this day, is of Gallican origin, and entered the Roman liturgy with the tenth century *RGP*. Since in the Orient, and in the Gallican liturgy, Epiphany was as great a feast, with an older tradition, the day could be seen as much as a pre-festival of Epiphany as an Octave of Christmas. Still, the liturgy of the Octave, by this period, is tied wholly to that of Christmas. The relationships of the intervening days are, however, a bit more dubious. Jungmann postulates that "the feast of St. Stephen had been already fixed in the Orient before Christmas was introduced, and that it was then also transferred to Rome."<sup>35</sup> Likewise, the festival for St. John the Apostle on December 27 is not particularly relevant. The feast of Holy Innocents is pertinent, of course, as it continues the story of Christ's flight into Egypt, although its liturgical and homiletic emphasis is on the relationship of the innocents to Christ's Passion, more than his birth.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, as the importance of

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<sup>34</sup> Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 266-77.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 270.

<sup>36</sup> Gunstone, *Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 59, notes that the most primitive gospel for Christmas Day in Rome, before the introduction of Epiphany to the West, may have been Matthew 2, rather than Luke 2. This may explain the position of Holy Innocents' Day, as their story directly follows that of the adoration of the Magi and the escape to Egypt in Matthew 2.

The liturgy for Holy Innocents' Day in the Leofric Collectar (Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, pp. 31-4) is dominated by the form "Hi sunt qui . . ." or "Isti sunt qui . . ." which Ælfric seems to mimic in his conclusion to his homily for the day; "Hi sind ða ðe Criste folgiað on hwitum gyrlum . ." (CH.I.v, p. 223).

Christmas grew and its octave solidified, these festivals, in particular that of St. Stephen, were consciously emended to fit the season more directly, much as was the case with the second Christmas Mass for Anastasia.

Generally, this period is characterised by a sense of maintaining or furthering the solemnity of Christmas, in particular its final tone of reconciliation with heaven. The *Concordia* (as well as Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham<sup>37</sup>) specifies that certain antiphons for Christmas are to be repeated until the Octave day, and two sets of antiphons in the Leofric Collectar are labeled *Antiphone de Natale Domini usque Oct. Domini* and *De Sancta Maria usque Oct. Domini*, demonstrating a sense of octave unity. The *Concordia* also prescribes for this time (specifically "between the feasts of the Innocents and the Octave of Christmas") two customs that stem not from the continent but from "the goodly religious customs of this land, which we have learned from our fathers before us," as follows:

. . . since the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is said at Mass on account of the solemnity of such a feast, all the bells shall ring at Nocturns and Vespers as at Mass, as is the custom among the people of this country . . . For the same reason candles shall be lit at Matins and all the bells shall peal and the thurible shall be carried round although the *Te Deum laudamus* is not sung nor the gospel read in the manner of a feast day.<sup>38</sup>

Ælfric's Eynsham Letter also stresses the use of bells and candles to signify the importance of the period. These customs attempt to extend the solemnity of Christmas through the week, turning ferial days into pseudo-feast days.

The earlier festival days were similarly adapted. While the liturgy for St. Stephen's feast is almost entirely absent of Christmas themes, the *Praefatio* attempts obliquely to link the two:

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<sup>37</sup> See *LME*, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 30. ". . . quia Gloria in excelsis Deo ob tantae festiuitatis honorificentiam ad Missam celebratur, ad Nocturnam et ad Vesperam uti ad Missam, sicut in usum huius patriae indigenae tenent, omnia signa pulsantur . . . Ad Matutinas uero ob rem praedictam, licet Te Deum laudamus non canatur et euangelium minime festiuo more legatur, cerei tamen accendantur et signa pulsantur omnia et turibulum turificando deportetur."

Beati stephani leuitae simul et martyris natalitia recolentes, Qui fidei, qui (et) sacrae militae, qui dispensationis et castitatis egregiae, qui predicationis mirabilisque constantiae, qui confessionis ac patientiae nobis exempla ueneranda proposuit. Et ideo natiuitatem filii tui merito pre ceteris passionis sue festiuitate prosequitur, cuius gloriae sempiternae primus martyr occurrit.<sup>39</sup>

Ælfric's Second Series sermon for the Nativity of St. Stephen develops this liturgical assertion. Following a long list of 'wonders and cures' is a short passage attempting to explain the day's relevance to Christmas:

Stephanus . . . is se forma cyðere þe ærest æfter cristes upstige. to heofenan rice wuldorful becom; He filigde cristes fotswaðum swiðe nean. and his gebysnunge arfæstlice geefenlæhte; . . . He is fyrmest on martyrdome. and fyrmest on lareowdome. for ðan þe he eallum cyðerum cristes bysne æteowode. betwux ðam he hylt ealdordom. a buton ende;<sup>40</sup>

While the passage illustrates Stephen's importance, it in no way explains why his festival should be concurrent with Christmas rather than Easter or the Ascension. Ælfric makes the connection more explicit in his First Series homily for the day, concluding:

mine gebroðra: gyrstandæg gemedmode ure drihten hine sylfne þ ðysne middaneard þurh soðre menniscnysse geneosode: Nu todæg se æpela cempa stephanus fram lichamlicre wununge gewitende sigefæst to heofenum ferde: Crist nyðer astah mid flæsce bewæfed: Stephanus up astah þurh his blod gewuldorbeagod; gyrstandæg sungon englas gode wuldor on heannyssum; Nu todæg hi underfengon stephanum blissigende on heora geferrædene. mid ðam he wuldrað ⁊ blissað. a on ecnysse.<sup>41</sup>

Here, Ælfric subsumes the celebrants' appreciation of Stephen in an extension of the triumphs of Christmas. On Christmas, the door to heaven was opened. The next day, the protomartyr went through. The *Gloria* has not ended; rather, it continues on this day, with Stephen adding his voice. This is the kind of continuity that the liturgical addendum is intended to provide. Ælfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies pays tribute to the importance and unity of this period by devoting five homilies to it, CH I. ii-vi, representing each festival day, in a collection that otherwise has to be somewhat selective.

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<sup>39</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> CH.II.ii, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> CH.I.iii, p. 205.

While the ties to Christmas of the two feast days following St. Stephen’s are a bit less specific, the Mass for the first Sunday after Christmas revives them, exulting in the fact that “quoniam humana conditio, ueteri terrenaque lege cessante, noua celestique substantia mirabiliter restaurata profertur”<sup>42</sup> and repeating the *Ad Complendum* from the Christmas midnight Mass. Finally, the liturgy for the Octave Mass sums up the week:

Deus . . . Cuius hodie circumcisionis diem, et natiuitatis octauum celebrantes, tua, domine, mirabilia ueneramur. Quia quae peperit et mater et uirgo est. Qui natus est et infans et deus est. Merito caeli locuti sunt, angeli gratulati, pastores laetati, magi mutati, reges turbati, paruuli gloriosa passione coronati . . . Praesta, quesumus, domine, ut quod saluatoris nostri iterata sollemnitate percepimus, perpetuae nobis redemptionis conferat medicinam . . . da, quesumus, plebi tuae ut gustae mortiferae profanitatis abiecto, puris mentibus ad aepulas aeternae salutis accedat.<sup>43</sup>

While Ælfric’s sermon for the day is devoted to a discussion of circumcision and its relationship to baptism, looking more forwards to Epiphany than backwards to Christmas, the liturgy for the day demonstrates the celebrants’ continuation of the victory of Christmas.

In the Gallican liturgy, as part of the build up to Epiphany, themes of the Circumcision dominate. The *Missale Gothicum*<sup>44</sup> contains pages of collects praising the circumcision as a precursor to the upcoming baptism and as an illustration of the ‘spiritual circumcision’ that Christians should undergo, excising the carnal. The Gregorian ignores the Circumcision, calling the day instead *In Octabas Domini* and focussing on Mary.<sup>45</sup> The commemoration in the Gelasian, representing a mix of the Gallican and the more austere Roman liturgies, calls the Mass *In Octavas Domini*, but has a long Preface, consisting of the passage above until “passione cornonati,” reading instead of “hodie circumcisionis diem, et

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<sup>42</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> See Bannister, *Missale Gothicum*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>45</sup> See Deshusses, *Le sacramentaire grégorien*, p. 112.

natiuitatis octauum celebrantes” simply “hodie octauas nati celebrantes tua.”<sup>46</sup> This bit is followed by a second passage, telling of the oxen and asses recognizing Christ in the manger and of him circumcised and then raised up by Simeon in the temple. The Gelasian version serves as a nodal point for the celebration of Christ’s childhood, looking back to Christmas week and forward to the presentation to Simeon. The versions in the Robert and Leofric Missals owe much more in form to the Gelasian than to the Gregorian. The Gelasian summation passage above, while not in the pre-supplemented Gregorian, is in the Supplement, but much of the Supplement was itself taken from the Gelasian, and the remaining mass texts for the day are almost verbatim from the Gelasian (the Gregorian has completely different passages). Still, the Preface for the day in Robert and Leofric is that of the Supplement, the reworking of which tightens the Mass into a simple recapitulation of Christmas week. The Benediction from Leofric does beg, “corporalem suscepit circumcisionem, spiritali circumcissione mentes uestras ab omnibus uiciorum incentiuus expurget,”<sup>47</sup> but such a blessing is far from the sort of invocation or commemoration seen at Christmas, particularly as it is largely unsupported in the rest of the late Anglo-Saxon liturgy. There is little sense of ‘reliving the circumcision’ (thankfully) because of the Gregorian emphasis on New Year’s Day as the Octave of Christmas, not as a circumcision day. As such, Ælfric’s focus on the circumcision does not indicate its liturgical importance; rather, as the day is dominated by a simple recapitulation of Christmas, his concern is more in exegesis of the gospel and in warning against pagan New Year practices, following Augustine’s treatment of the day. His explication of the significance of the circumcision also allows him to prepare his audience for a discussion of baptism at Epiphany.

## Epiphany

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<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 66.

Christmas and Epiphany were originally feasts of the same event. In the fourth-century East, Epiphany was the celebration of the birth of Christ. Its origin is related to that of Christmas in the West. The Eastern calendar of Amenemhet I of Thebes (c.1996 BC) placed the winter solstice on the sixth of January. As such, this day drew the same kind of religious fervour as did December 25 in the west. Gunstone relates a description of a fourth-century ritual in Alexandria on this day. The ritual involved hymns and a vigil in an underground sanctuary. At cock-crow, an icon was processed outside, then back again, “And if anyone asks them what manner of mysteries these might be, they reply, saying: ‘Today at this hour Kore, that is the Virgin, has given birth to Aion.’”<sup>48</sup> Epiphany is primarily a festival of Christ’s ‘appearing’; as such, it is not surprising to find images of light and sunrise similar to those expressed in the Christmas liturgy.<sup>49</sup> The first hymn for Epiphany in the Leofric Collectar, at Nocturns, is *Ihesus refulsit*, and the hymn *Iam lucis orto*, so prominent at Christmas, is repeated several times here, most notably at Prime.<sup>50</sup> The use of light is as pronounced here as it was at Christmas, and it serves the same function, to allow the celebrants to see and recognize the newly revealed Christ.

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Christmas spread to the East and Epiphany to the West,<sup>51</sup> and Christian exegetes such as Augustine struggled to iron out the redundancies:

Only a few days ago we celebrated the Lord’s birthday. Today we are celebrating with equal solemnity, as is proper, his Epiphany, in which he began to manifest himself to the Gentiles. On the one day the Jewish shepherds saw him when he was born; on this day the magi coming from the east adored him. Now, he had been born that Cornerstone, the peace

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<sup>48</sup> See Gunstone, *Christmas and Epiphany*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>49</sup> Early service books use the title *Apparitio Domini* to refer alternately to Christmas and Epiphany.

<sup>50</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, pp. 39ff.

<sup>51</sup> Epiphany was first observed in Rome in the early-mid fifth century, possibly under Leo the Great. Christmas was introduced to the East in the fourth century, but was not kept in Jerusalem until the second half of the sixth century.

of the two walls coming from very different directions, from circumcision and uncircumcision. Thus they could be united in him who had been made our peace, and “who has made both one.” This was foretold in the Jewish shepherds and the Gentile magi. From this began what was to grow and to bear fruit throughout the world. Let us, therefore, with joy of the spirit hold dear these two days, the Nativity and the Manifestation of our Lord. The Jewish shepherds were led to him by an angel bringing the news; the Gentile magi by a star showing the way . . . [The magi] were the first-fruits of the Gentiles; we are the people of the Gentiles.<sup>52</sup>

Here, Epiphany is described as a widening and clarification of the Christmas experience, in much the same way as Paul widened evangelism by extending it to the Gentiles. At Christmas, as the people of Israel in darkness, they heard and saw the birth of Christ. At Epiphany, as the Gentiles, they celebrate his manifestation to the rest of the world. This identification with the Magi, orchestrated in much the same way as were the Christmas identifications, permeates the liturgy for the day and encompasses Ælfric’s discussion of it.

As with Christmas, the liturgy for Epiphany is dominated by light imagery, both in the specific use of the star, leading the Magi to the birthplace, and in the general sense of illumination. The Collect for the Vigil Mass in the Leofric Missal begs, “Corda nostra . . . uenturae festiuitatis splendor inlustret, quo mundi huius tenebris carere ualeamus, et perueniamus ad patriam claritatis aeternae.”<sup>53</sup> The Preface describes more specifically the star, an “index perpetua uirginalis . . . quae natum in terra dominum caeli magis stupentibus nuntiaret; ut manifestandus mundo deus et caelesti denuntiaretur iudicio.” The *Ad Complendum* sums up the anticipatory state of the participants:

Inlumina . . . populum tuum, et splendore gratiae tuae cor eius semper accende, ut saluatoris mundi, stella famulante, manifestata natiuitatis mentibus eorum et reueletur semper et crescat.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Qtd. in Gunstone, *Christmas and Epiphany*, pp. 50-51. See also T. C. Lawler, tr. *St. Augustine: Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany* (1952), p. 164.

<sup>53</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 66.



Speaking of ‘your people’ as the Magi, making their way to see the nativity, sets up the permutations on that identification in the liturgy of the day itself.

Epiphany commemorates three New Testament events:<sup>55</sup> the adoration of the Magi, the baptism of Christ, and the wedding at Cana. The third of these is more thematic than commemorative: the idea of the union of Christ and the church, in which terms the wedding at Cana is discussed here, is an extension of the imperatives of baptism. The Benedictional of St. Æthelwold has two illustrations introducing the day, depicting the approach of the three kings to the cradle and the baptism. In the Gallican liturgy, the baptism takes a prominent place, as Epiphany, celebrating the birth of Christ from Mary, was a primary day for baptism. For the Anglo-Saxons, it is presented primarily as a vehicle for asserting the Trinitarian doctrine. The Masses largely ignore it, except for a benediction from the Leofric Missal (also extant in Æthelwold) describing the dove as intended ‘to demonstrate the holy spirit.’<sup>56</sup> A verse from the Leofric Collectar proclaims, “In columbe specie spiritus sanctus uisus est paterna vox audita est hic est filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacuit ipsum audite,”<sup>57</sup> focussing on the presence of all three members of the Trinity. It is the Magi, however, who dominate the day; they are the focus of the gospel reading, Ælfric and the Benedictional of Æthelwold treat them first, and their voices, taken over by the participants, carry the liturgy.

In his Letter to the Monks of Eynsham, Ælfric (quoting Amalarius by name) makes clear that, in the Night Office, the participants are to think of themselves as the Magi coming to see Christ:

At Nocturns we sing the psalm ‘Our God is our refuge’ out of sequence, because the Magi came to worship the Lord before he had been baptized; and

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<sup>55</sup> As an Old Testament parallel of these, the revelation of God to Moses through the burning bush is also invoked. An antiphon from the Leofric Collectar repeats, “Rubum quem uiderat moyses incombustum . . .” (Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 38).

<sup>56</sup> See Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 67.

<sup>57</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 39.

we therefore sing the antiphon ‘Come let us praise {the Lord with joy}’ first, and afterwards ‘The stream of the river maketh {the city of God} joyful’.<sup>58</sup>

The attention given the order of antiphons here shows some care for the temporal order of things and for the primacy of the Magi in Epiphany commemoration. The Collect for the Epiphany Mass begins with them, making them analogous to the celebrants: “Deus, qui hodierna die unigenitum tuum gentibus, stella duce, reuelasti; concede propitius ut qui iam te ex fide cognouimus, usque ad contemplandam speciem tuae celsitudinis perducemur.”<sup>59</sup> They are called in another oration for the day “gentium primitiis” (‘the first-fruits of the Gentiles’) and the *Ad populum* at the end of the Mass extends their experience to the rest of the Gentiles: “Deus, inluminator omnium gentium, da populis tuis perpetua pace gaudere, et illud lumen splendidum infunde cordibus nostris, quod trium magorum mentibus aspirasti.”<sup>60</sup> Strengthening this connection, the celebrants repeatedly take over the voices of the Magi. An antiphon just preceding the Vigil Mass (from the Leofric Collectar) says, “Magi uiderunt stellam et dixerunt adinuicem hoc signum magni regis est eamus et inquiramus eum et offeramus ei munera aurum thus et mirram.”<sup>61</sup> At the Offertory, the celebrants sing, “Rex ubi iudea est natus quem nouimus ecce / *Uidimus [stellam eius in oriente et uenimus cum muneribus adorare dominum]*.”<sup>62</sup> An earlier trope sums up the themes for the day, focussing them on the voices of the Magi:

Aecclesiae sponsus, illuminator gentium, baptismatis sacrator, orbis redemptor  
*Ecce aduenit*  
 Quem reges gentium cum muneribus mysticis hierosolimam requirunt,  
 dicentes, ubi est qui natus est: / *domin[ator dominus]*

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<sup>58</sup> *LME*, p. 119. “Ad nocturnas canius psalmum ‘Deus noster refugium’ prepostero ordine, quia magi uenerunt adorare Dominum antequam baptizatus esset; et ideo cantamus antiphonam ‘Venite adoremus eum’ prius et postea ‘Fluminis impetus laetificat’.”

<sup>59</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Frere, *The Winchester Troper*, p. 13.

Udidimus stellam eius in oriente et agnouimus regem regum natum esse:  
Cui soli debetur honor gloria laus et iubilatio.<sup>63</sup>

In particular, the Magi are offering gifts. The liturgy for the day echoes over and over that the Magi offered him “aurum thus et mirram.” The gifts have traditionally been understood as representing the triune nature of the infant Christ as King, God, and man, as they do in an antiphon from the Leofric Collectar:

Ab oriente venerunt magi in bethleem adorare dominum et apertis thesauris  
suis pretiosa munera optulerunt aurum sicut regi magno thus sicut deo uero  
mirram sepulture eius.<sup>64</sup>

At Christmas, the faithful were to imitate the shepherds by rejoicing in and proclaiming the new state of being. Here, they are to imitate the Magi by offering with the Magi that which the gifts signify:

*Secreta:* Aecclesiae tuae, quesumus, domine, dona propitius intueri, quibus  
non iam aurum, thus, et myrra profertur, sed quod de eisdem  
muneribus declaratur, immolatur, et sumitur.  
*Benedictio:* Quo exemplo magorum mystica domino ihesu christo munera  
offerentes, spreto antiquo hoste, spretisque contagiis uitiorum, ad  
aeternam patriam redire ualeatis per uiam uirtutum.<sup>65</sup>

As with Christmas, the offering of the gifts by the Magi, and by identification that of the celebrants, represents a voluntary offering of oneself to God, and a subsequent union (with a focus on the recognition of his triune nature). The marriage at Cana is brought into the scope of the festival as a symbol of that marriage, a fulfilment of offering to Christ, and of baptism. An antiphon for Epiphany Matins unites these themes in an interesting way:

Hodie caelesti sponso. iuncta est ecclesia quoniam in iordane lauit christus eius  
crimina currunt cum muneribus magi ad regales nuptias et ex aqua facto uino  
laetantur conuiuiae.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 67.

<sup>66</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 40.

The baptism and the wedding at Cana are here described as catalysts by which the church has been united with Christ; the Magi, and with them the celebrants, join the party by the offering of their gifts and by partaking of the wine at the banquet, as do the celebrants during the Mass. Having the Magi at Cana serves no narrative purpose except to subsume the commemorated events for the day in the priority of contemporary edification. All three events are invoked here, and the identification with the Magi is enhanced by putting their words into the mouths of the celebrants, but all this is done so that they will have a harmonious place in Christ's newlywed Church.

Ælfric discusses these themes in his First Series sermon for Epiphany, focussing on the example of the Magi. He begins his explication of the gospel by explaining why the day is referred to as "godes geswutelungdæg." He mentions the manifestation to the three kings, "þe fram eastdæle middaneardes hine mid þrimfealdum lacum gesohton."<sup>67</sup> For the baptism (which he discusses more thoroughly in his Second Series sermon), he repeats the same passage that the liturgy used to represent it, "se halga gast on culfran hiwe uppon him gereste. ⁊ þæs fæder stemn of heofenum hlude swegde. þus cweðende; Ðes is min leofa sunu þe me wel licað gehyrað him" (233). For the wedding at Cana, he mentions only that 'he turned water into noble wine' ('manifesting that he is the true Creator'), for, as with the offering of the gifts, it is this part of the story that the contemporary celebrants mimic in the Mass itself. The rest of the sermon deals with the story of the Magi and their relationship with Ælfric's audience. Ælfric presents a reworked version of the Augustinian passage quoted above, explaining the difference between the revelations of Christmas and Epiphany:

On þam forman dæge his gebyrtdide he wearð æteowod þrim hyrdum. on iudeiscum earde þurh ðæs engles bodunge; On þam ylcum dæge he wearð gecyð þam þrim tungelwitegum on eastdæle: þurh ðone beorhtan steorran: ac on þysum dæge hi comon mid heora lacum; Hit wæs gedafenlic þæt se gesceadwisa engel hine cydde. þam gesceadwisum iudeiscum þe godes æ cuðon ⁊ þam hæpenum. þe ðæs godcundan gesceades nyston: na þurh stemne ac þurh tacn wære geswutelod; (233)

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<sup>67</sup> CH.I.vii, p. 233. Subsequent page references are to this text.

Ælfric uses Augustine's cornerstone model to bring the two 'walls' together, explaining that "he geþeodde his gecorenan of iudeiscum folce. ⁊ þa geleaffullan of hæpenum: swilce twegen wagas to anre gelaðunge; . . . he us gegaderode mid anum geleafan to þam healicum hymnstane. þæt is to annysse his gelaðunge" (234). It is through the Magi's gifts and baptism that this unity is realized, and through the water turned to wine that it is celebrated.

In particular, the Magi recognize Christ's triune status. They do so first through their own statements, each of which is repeated in the liturgy. They ask "hwær is se ðe acenned is" knowing him to be "soðne man," "iudea cyning" knowing him to be "soþne cyning," and "We comon to þy þæt we us to him gebiddan" because he is "soðne god" (234). Explications such as this must have influenced how the liturgy was understood, for when these lines are repeated as antiphons and responses, those repeating them are reminded that, in taking on the voices of the Magi, they are recognizing and worshipping him along with them, in the same way.

In describing the star as an acknowledgment by creation of Christ, Ælfric kicks off a lengthy discussion of "gewyrd," intended to refute those who saw the star as something greater than Christ, such that "se steorra his gewyrd wære" (235). This is a dangerous heretical position, and one that Ælfric feels compelled to treat with here, as such a view would destroy the imperatives of the season. Those who believe in destiny also tend to believe, as Ælfric explains, that those who sin do so by destiny, while to offer with the Magi and partake of the changed wine, one must recognize choice and personal responsibility. Having established this, Ælfric goes on to explain the meaning of the gifts: gold for a king, frankincense for the True God, and myrrh for his humanity. He describes heretics as those who do not give all three gifts, such that those who believed that he was a King, but would not grant him divinity, "him offrodon gold. ⁊ noldon offrian recels" (239), and so on. He then forces this imperative onto his hearers, exhorting:

uton we geoffrian urum drihtne. gold þæt we andetton. þæt he soð cyning sy:  
⁊ æighwær rixie; Uton him offrian stor: þæt we gelyfan. þæt he æfre god wæs  
se þe on þære tide man æteowode; Uton him bringan mirran þæt we gelyfan

þæt he wæs deadlic on urum flæsce. se þe is unprowiendlic on his godcund-  
nysse; (239)

Finally, he makes clear how, practically, each who has undertaken to offer him these gifts can interpret the act in terms of their personal spiritual lives, or 'how they, in a moral sense, apply to us.' To offer gold, he explains, is to engender wisdom. Frankincense is prayer. Myrrh is the mortality of the flesh, such that we can offer him myrrh by denying our carnal nature.

This discussion is based on a recognition of the superimposition of the Magi and the celebrants in the act of the liturgy, and by asserting again and again the importance of this identification, the association made during the liturgy is strengthened. When the celebrants cry out "We saw his star in the east and came with gifts to adore the Lord," they are doing so, with the Magi, acknowledging his triune nature and presenting themselves for membership in God's church. This identification is more important than maintaining the narrative, for the strength of it brings the Magi out of their context and into the marriage at Cana, just as are the celebrants. The Magi and the celebrants together, the people of the Gentiles, offer themselves to the unity of the church.

The terms of this move towards union are the same here as at Christmas -- darkness to light, ignorance to revelation, carnal nature to unity with heavenly things. The end result of the season, for those who have participated in it, is membership in the earthly church. This status, the consummation of this season, is the launching point for the next, whereby the faithful must move from salvation to heaven, by way of some earthly pitfalls, in Lent and Easter. Recognition of what remains in the Christian pilgrimage to heaven is the point of Ælfric's final exhortation, based on the fact that the Magi had to return to their country by another way. The faithful have left Paradise, but they are now able to begin the move back:

Ac us is micel neod þæt we þurh oðerne weg þone swicolan deofol forbugon:  
þæt we moton gesælilice to urum eðle becuman: þe we to gesceapene wæron;  
we sceolon. þurh gehyrsumnysse 7 forhæfednysse 7 eadmodnysse. anmodlice  
to urum epele stæppan: 7 mid halgum mægnum þone eard ofgan. þe we þurh  
leahtrum forluron; (240)

The Vercelli homily for Epiphany (Vercelli XVI) ends in the same vein, using many of the same expressions. This is particularly interesting, since the Vercelli homily has been discussing baptism (in particular discussing how the water acknowledged Christ and enforcing a Trinitarian understanding of the baptism, based on the same declaration of the Father mentioned by Ælfric and used as an antiphon in the Leofric Collectar). Having accepted the Trinitarian truth illustrated in the baptismal story, the homilist asserts that “þæt fægere rice 7 þa eadignesse 7 ða myclan wyrðmendo we sculon nu heononforð ofer eorðan geearnian þurh micel gewinn 7 þurh mic[e]l ellen 7 þurh manigfealde sorge.”<sup>68</sup> Pointing out the sins of our forefathers that drove them out of paradise, he continues; “7 nu se man se ðe þæt þenceð, þæt he of þysse gehrorenlican worulde þone heofonlican rice begite, he ðonne sceall eallunga oðerne weg gefaran 7 oðrum dædum don” (273). Describing what must be done (humility, obedience, forsaking the world, prayer, etc.), he concludes, “Þurh þas lare . . . 7 þurh ðas dæda, þa þe ure mæssepreostas us tæcaþ 7 lærað, þonne sceolon we þone weg eft gefaran to heofona rice 7 to þam heofonlican ham” (274). While the Magi are themselves never mentioned, the reference to them is clear. Despite focussing on a different topic, he concludes his sermon with the same exhortation as would Ælfric, ensuring that his audience understand their newfound unity with the church and what they must do between now and Easter. It is through the identification with those in darkness and with the shepherds at Christmas, and with the Magi at Epiphany, dramatically assumed in the liturgical commemoration, that they have entered the church, and it is in this dramatic mode of appreciating Christian history that they will proceed towards the Resurrection.

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<sup>68</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 273. Subsequent page references are to this text.

## Candlemas

Candlemas is one of the most intriguing feast-days in late Anglo-Saxon England, and it attracts some of the liturgical year's most interesting innovations in establishing dramatic identification. As the commemoration of the purification of Mary required by the law of Moses forty days after the birth of a first-born male child, and highlighted by the presentation of the infant Christ to Simeon and his dramatic response, it constitutes a thematic denouement to the commemorated events of Christmas and Epiphany. However, the liturgical plan for Candlemas has been explicitly made to reflect that of Palm Sunday, as both the *Regularis Concordia* and Ælfric's Second Letter for Wulfstan indicate. As such, Candlemas, and, in particular, the candle, resonates with the images and imperatives of the entire Tempore. Candlemas is not strictly part of the Tempore, and is a relatively late addition to the medieval liturgy, but due to the general fervency of Marian devotion and the day's medial position in the Tempore, Candlemas becomes for late Anglo-Saxon England a sort of nodal point between the events of Christ's birth and those of his Passion. In particular, for the participants, Candlemas is a time when the promises of God to Simeon, and by proxy to them, that they would see Christ, are consummated in the reply of Simeon, the *Nunc Dimittis*, and in the presentation of the candle/Christ. It is by the dramatic assumption of the voice of Simeon and of his position in relation to the candle that the imperatives of the festival are realized.

The purification of Mary and the presentation to Simeon originally belonged to January 1, adjunct with the reading for the circumcision. A separate feast-day for these events existed by the fourth century, on February 14 in the Eastern calendar, forty days after January 6, and later on February 2 in some areas that used the Julian calendar. The Purification was introduced to Rome in the seventh century from Byzantium as a February 2 feast of Christ and Simeon, called either *Natale Sancti Symeonis* or, in Greek, *Hypapante*,



‘the meeting,’ and “the celebration of the Purification was solemnized by a procession.”<sup>1</sup> The origin of this procession is uncertain. It might not be unexpected for a procession to develop by analogy with one on Palm Sunday, or any other major feast day, as processions were often added to festivals, often for no explicit or obvious reason. However, medieval liturgists widely connect the procession for this day with a pagan procession for the expiation of the earthly empire. Bede makes this connection in what, according to Mary Clayton, is the “earliest evidence for the knowledge in England of the procession of 2 February”:

But the Christian religion rightly changed this practice of expiating when in the same month on the feast day of St. Mary all the people together with their priests and ministers with devout hymns went into procession through the churches and suitable places in the city, and all carried in their hands burning wax candles given by the pope. With the growth of that good custom, he instructed that they do it also on the other feasts of the same Blessed Mother and Perpetual Virgin, not by any means for the five-year expiation of the earthly empire, but in perennial memory of the heavenly kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

According to Baumstark, the ancient pagan procession of the *Amburbale* had taken place at the beginning of February and had “set out from the ancient *curia* which was transformed into the Church of St. Adrian.”<sup>3</sup> Baumstark postulates that the use of candles for the Purification procession, already known in Palestine before the introduction of the feast-day to Rome, may have been introduced by a Roman pilgrim in the fifth century, and then brought back to Rome with the introduction of the feast as a fitting replacement for the pagan procession in the seventh century. In any event, the Anglo-Saxon Church understood the procession as a usurpation of a pagan one.

Clayton, in *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, describes the introduction into England and the spread of the Marian feasts, including the Purification. The evidence relating to the Purification, however, is less sure than that for the other feasts

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (1990), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Tr. Ibid. p. 37. See also C. W. Jones, ed. *Bedae Venerabilis opera didascalica: De temporum ratione liber* (1997), p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> Baumstark, Anton, et al. *Comparative Liturgy* (1958), p. 150.

discussed by Clayton, as the Purification was not universally, in early Anglo-Saxon England, regarded as Marian. An early ninth-century poem by Æthelwulf seems to describe the Marian feasts, but apparently ignores the Purification, “since it could have been viewed as a feast of Simeon or of Christ, as it often was.”<sup>4</sup> A ninth-century calendar in Bodleian Digby 63 refers to the feast of February 2 as *Ypapanti domini*, and some other early sources call it by its early Roman title, *Natale Sancti Symeonis*, or *Sancti symeonis patriarchie*.<sup>5</sup> The mass texts in the Gregorian Sacramentary for this day reflect its original function in celebrating the meeting of Christ and Simeon, and these texts are retained as the core of the mass in the late Anglo-Saxon witnesses despite the fact that, at least by the time of the *Concordia*, the festival is unilaterally referred to as *Purificatio Sanctae Mariae*. The Old English verse *Menologium*, written in the second half of the tenth century, illustrates the festival’s duality:

And þæs embe ane niht / þæt we Marian mæssan healdað / cyninges modor,  
forþan heo Crist on þam dæge, / bearn wealdendes, brohte to temple.<sup>6</sup>

Although the mass for the day is referred to as Mary’s, what stands out in the mind of the composer of the *Menologium* is the fact that Christ was brought to the temple. As the most vivid aspect of Candlemas celebration is the procession of the lit candles through town to the ‘temple’, this association makes sense, and dominates the participants’ relationship to the festival. The focal point of the festival is, naturally enough, Christ, the candle, and those participating in the ritual will relate to the candle in accordance with the way the original figures in the gospel reading for the day related to Christ.

The procedure for the day is outlined in the *Concordia*, as follows:

On the Purification of St. Mary candles shall be set out ready in the church to which the brethren are to go to get their lights. On the way thither they shall walk in silence, occupied with the psalms; and all shall be vested in albs if this

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<sup>4</sup> Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Of the manuscripts consulted by Wilson for his edition of the Gelasian Sacramentary, only his base text, Vat. Reg. 316, uses the more modern title. All others call the festival either *Sancti Sym(e)onis* or *Yppapanti*. See Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, pp. 165-6.

<sup>6</sup> See Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 49, lines 19-22.

is possible and if the weather permits.<sup>7</sup> On entering the church, having prayed awhile, they shall say the antiphon and collect in honour of the saint to whom this same church is dedicated. Then the abbot, vested in stole and cope, shall bless the candles, sprinkling them with holy water and incensing them. When the abbot has received his candle from the doorkeeper, the chanting shall begin and the brethren shall receive and light their candles. During the return procession they shall sing the appointed antiphons until they reach the church doors; then, having sung the antiphon *Responsum accepit Simeon*, with the collect *Erudi quaesumus Domine*, they shall enter the church singing the respond *Cum inducerunt Puerum*. Next they shall say the Lord's prayer, and Tierce shall follow; after which, if the brethren were not vested for the procession, they shall vest for the Mass during which they shall hold their lighted candles in their hands until after the Offertory, when they shall offer them to the priest.<sup>8</sup>

The *Concordia*'s instructions outline four stages. The first, the approach to the church, is a preparatory procession, and is unremarkable, except for the detail that those processing should sing the antiphon and collect for that church's saint, a detail that, according to Symons, is "peculiar to the *Concordia*."<sup>9</sup> The second, the blessing of the candles, is quite elaborate, and is one of the most fully treated ceremonies in liturgical books like the Canterbury Benedictional and the Missal of the New Minster. The third, the procession with the lit candles to the home church, featuring antiphons and readings at the door of the home church, just before entry, is the climax of the day and is treated along with the blessing of the

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<sup>7</sup> In his Letter to the Monks of Eynsham, Ælfric seems to misunderstand or change this instruction, apparently implying that the procession itself might be cancelled on account of bad weather, rather than just the wearing of albs. See *LME*, p. 170, n. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 30-31. "In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae sint cerei ordinati in ecclesia ad quam fratres ire debent ut inde petant luminaria. Euntes autem silenter incedant, psalmodiae dediti, et omnes albis induti si fieri potest uel aeris permiserit temperies; et intrantes ecclesiam agant orationem cum antiphona et collecta ad uenerationem ipsius sancti cui ecclesia ipsa ad quam itur dedicata est. Deinde abbas stola et cappa indutus benedicat candelas et conspergat aqua benedicta et turificet et sic, accepto cereo ab aedituo, psallentibus cunctis, accipiant singuli singulas acceptasque accendant. Inde reuertentes canant antiphonas quae adsunt usquequo ueniat ante portam ubi, decantata antiphona *Responsum accepit Symeon*, dicatur oratio *Erudi quaesumus Domine*, post quam ingradientur ecclesiam canentes responsorium *Cum inducerent Puerum*. Hoc decantato dicant orationem dominicam; dehinc sequatur Tertia qua finita, si processionem induti non egerunt, induant se et Missam celebrantes teneant luminaria in manibus donec post oblationem ea sacerdoti offerant."

<sup>9</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 31, n. 1. Ælfric includes this detail in his instructions for the monks of Eynsham (*LME*, p. 119).

candles in liturgical books. The fourth, the Mass of the Purification itself, is important mostly because of the offering of the candles after the Offertory of the Mass, heightening the relationship between Christ and the candles by conflating them with the Eucharistic offering.

Ælfric, in his Second Letter for Wulfstan, by way of asserting that the festival should be kept, breaks it down into its key elements:

Ge sculon on þam mæsse-dæge, þe is gehaton purificatio sanctae Mariae, bletsian candela and beran mid lofsange, ge hadode ge læwede, to processionem and ofrian hig swa byrnende æfter þam godspelle þam mæsse-preoste mid ðam offrum-sange.<sup>10</sup>

This passage is part of a set of three, flanked by otherwise non-liturgical material, giving skeletal descriptions of three ceremonies, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and Palm Sunday, followed by an assertion that “gyf hwa nyte hwæt þis getacnige, he leornige æt oðrum menn on leden oððe on englisc.”<sup>11</sup> There are two points of particular interest in this set of passages. The first is the deliberate parallelism between the passage for Candlemas and that for Palm Sunday, as follows:

Ge sculon on palm-sunnandæge palm-twigu bletsian and beran mid lofsange to processionem and habban on handa, ge gehadade ge læwede, and offrian hig æfter þam godspelle þam mæsse-preoste mid þam offrung-sange.<sup>12</sup>

That the ceremonies have come to reflect each other, at least in basic form, is again made clear in the *Concordia*, which explicitly instructs its readers that the Palm Sunday procession should be held ‘as we have said above’ in the directions for Candlemas.<sup>13</sup> This reflection is especially important in regards to the Christ totems, the candle and the palm-twig.

The phrase “ge hadode ge læwede” is particularly noteworthy, and reflects the more implicit recognition of a mixed audience presented in Ælfric’s First Series sermon for Candlemas:

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<sup>10</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 34-5.

Wite gehwa eac. þ̅ gesett is on cyriclicum ðeawum þ̅ we sceolon on ðisum dæge beran ure leoht to cyrican 7 lætan hi ðær bletsian: 7 we scolon gan syððan mid þam leohte betwux godes husum 7 singan þone lofsang. þe ðær to geset is þeah ðe sume men singan ne cunnon hi beron þeahhwæðere þ̅ leoht on hyra handum: for ðy on ðysum dæge. wæs þ̅ soðe leoht crist. geboren to ðam temple: Se ðe us alysde fram þeostrum 7 us gebrincð to ðam ecan leohte;<sup>14</sup>

Ælfric's assumption that some of the participants might not be able to sing but could still hold candles certainly seems to be targeted at the laity, as is his assertion that on Palm Sunday the palms are distributed to "þam folce."<sup>15</sup> The description used by Ælfric in his Second Letter for Wulfstan urges us to think of Anglo-Saxon liturgical participants as a juxtaposition of at least two more or less separate groups, interacting with and understanding the same rituals in potentially distinct ways. Particularly when using evidence from the monastic liturgy, one wonders how fully the laity might have related to the themes and images of the festivals (and, of particular concern for this discussion, to liturgical attempts at establishing identification with biblical figures) and to what extent they were intended to, throughout the church year. First, how much of the Latin liturgical formulae could the laity have been expected to understand? Even some secular priests clearly had difficulty with Latin, as the vernacular Easter tables and liturgical rubrics of Corpus 422, the Red Book of Darley, seem to assume. Second, how much were the laity expected to participate in a liturgy developed most fully for a monastic context? Secular priests were exhorted to observe the hours, and so even the most 'monastic' of observances would surely have involved more than just monks, but to what extent would this fundamentally 'monastic' liturgy, with its rich development of sympathetic identification, have included the laity?

Attempts at lay identification are quite clear, naturally, in the non-monastic ceremonies for baptism and penance, but the passages quoted above raise the question of their significance in other ceremonies of the liturgical year as well. Within Holy Week, the most important witness for Anglo-Saxon ritual, the *Concordia*, is a monastic document, and it

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<sup>14</sup> CH.I.ix, pp. 256-7.

<sup>15</sup> CH.I.xiv, p. 297.

outlines the rituals such that one tends to envision monastic participants. Against this predisposition, however, discussion of the Deposition of the Cross on Good Friday stands out starkly. After describing the *Adoratio* ritual and its accompanying prayers, the *Concordia* outlines a practice “imitabilem ad fidem indocti uulgi ac neophytorum corroborandum.”<sup>16</sup> This ceremony is particularly visual, and as described in the *Concordia*, its “getacnung” would come across quite well without the accompanying antiphons. One wonders at what point in the description of the Holy Week rituals the ‘unlearned common person’ has entered and at which points he might not be present. Much of this question depends, of course, on venue, for the differences between Holy Week commemoration in Winchester or in Canterbury and that in a more parochial context would depend somewhat on the presence of a large monastic community and its relationship to the surrounding people, and evidence for the Anglo-Saxon liturgy is generally too scattered and uncertain to say much about liturgical practice at a particular place and a particular time. Perhaps the authors of the *Concordia*, recognizing the inconsistent possibility of lay participation in certain places, and perhaps not others, have left it an open question in constructing a document usable throughout the country. As such, even this clear reference does not necessarily indicate lay participation at the ritual in Winchester or Canterbury (although these are two of the more likely sites for mixed participation), or anywhere in particular. More generally, the *Concordia*’s instructions indicate an understanding that the appreciation of the laity in regards to one of the most dramatic ceremonies in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy might be somewhat limited, that the visualization of what the liturgy is vocally proclaiming in the *Depositio* ceremony is often necessary, and is a conscious dynamic, an intended development of the images and associations expressed otherwise in the liturgical texts. It is this gap between the ideal of sympathetic identification with biblical figures established in the liturgy and the limited ability of the laity to appreciate what is being said that is addressed both by this sort of

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<sup>16</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 44.

dramatic visualization and by the attempts of Ælfric and others to highlight and explain the dramatic role of the liturgical participants.

This dramatic visualization is given for the purpose not just of amazing and awing the common folk, but specifically for the ‘strengthening of the faith,’ which implies some kind of meaningful relationship to what is happening in the ceremony, but does not tell us what that relationship might be, and how it might correlate with that of the monastic community. In any case, for Candlemas, it would seem that the laity and the monastic community were meant to participate in and relate to the day’s liturgy in fundamentally the same way. Of course, from this sole reference, one cannot be entirely certain when the laity would have joined the festivities. Ælfric’s mention of it only specifies that the two would be together to ‘bear with praising-songs,’ and one wonders whether the laity would have participated in the first procession and in the ceremony in the visited church. Still, the passage seems to say that the laity would have been holding candles “swa byrnende,” meaning that they must have received them during the blessing *Ordo*, as the candles had been lit at this time, and that they would have been present for the offering at Mass.

Outside of Holy Week, there is little overt indication of the involvement of the laity, making their specific mention here all the more important.<sup>17</sup> Ælfric’s Second Letter for Wulfstan establishes a set of three festivals, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and Palm Sunday, the three highlights of the liturgical calendar between Epiphany and Holy Week, between which the events of his life, as commemorated liturgically, are specifically public.<sup>18</sup> In particular, these three ceremonies, as specified in Ælfric’s letter, are marked by processions. As the directions for the *Concordia* tell us, Lent was a time of frequent processions, initiated by the procession of Ash Wednesday and finding its climax at Palm Sunday and, for the

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<sup>17</sup> See however Ælfric’s discussion of the occasions during which the laity should partake of the Eucharist in his sermon *De Doctrina Apostolica*. He mentions specifically the Sundays in Lent, the three ‘Swigdagum’ (the three days before Easter), Easter day, Ascension Thursday, Pentecost, and the Sundays after the Ember days. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, p. 628.

<sup>18</sup> See Fehr, *Die hirtensbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 214-17.

public penitents, on Maundy Thursday. By the time of Palm Sunday and Holy Week, we have several strata of liturgical participants relating to the liturgy in different ways and accepting different associations based on their particular relationships with the church. At Candlemas, however, between the blessing of the candles and the offering at Mass, they are all together. Some may have participated more than others in the observances of Christ's birth and revelation at Christmas and Epiphany, and many will have different experiences over Lent as they prepare themselves, as each needs, for commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection. Yet at Candlemas, they all, having received the promise of God, see and hold aloft Christ, a light to drive away ignorance and an offering to God. In this way, for the entire Anglo-Saxon Christian community, Candlemas becomes a focal point of the liturgical year, a communal celebration before the stratification necessary during Lent. As Ælfric makes clear both overtly and more subtly in his sermon composition, it is important that all those participating, consecrated or lay, whenever they might be present, be trained to understand fully the significance of their liturgical action.

For such an elaborate set of ceremonies, the forms are largely uniform throughout the Anglo-Saxon witnesses. There is a general difficulty in comparing forms for festivals like Candlemas from Anglo-Saxon sources in that service books often, and inconsistently, leave out whole classifications of texts, assuming that they will be supplied by accompanying books, such that one cannot generally place two full *ordines* side by side. Still, granted that differences between sources are often due to omissions that reflect only the nature of the particular liturgical books, and not necessarily omissions in practice, the differences are few and, for the purposes of this discussion, largely unimportant, with two interesting exceptions, discussed below. Witnesses differ most in terms of placement of the forms for the day. Not strictly part of the Temporale, the forms for Candlemas were sometimes placed within the Sanctorale, along with the other saints' days. Often, however, Candlemas has been placed within the Temporale, after Epiphany. Perhaps this inconsistency reflects the day's duality as



both a Mass for Mary and a Mass commemorating a pivotal moment in the life of Christ.<sup>19</sup> The Mass forms for the day are more distinct than the forms for the blessing of the candles and the procession (probably because we have more evidence for these, covering a much larger period of time). Generally, the forms are those of the Gregorian Sacramentary, and, when used, are virtually identical in the Robert Missal, in the Leofric Missal, where they form part of a stage of additions to the manuscript made in England, probably in the eleventh-century, and in the Missal of the New Minster,<sup>20</sup> written around the time of the Conquest. For the elaborate *Benedictio Ignis*, including the procession through town<sup>21</sup> and the entry into the

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<sup>19</sup> Among the witnesses that place Candlemas within the Temporale is the Leofric Missal, which puts it between the sixth Sunday after Epiphany and Septuagesima Sunday. The Leofric Collectar, which has it between the Octave of Epiphany and the first Sunday after Epiphany (the latter as part of a general set of texts for use between Epiphany and Septuagesima), generally mixes Temporale festivals and saints' days. In each case, interestingly, the Annunciation of Mary, celebrated on March 25, directly follows the Purification, giving the sense that the two were inserted together. The Missal of the New Minster, the Robert Missal, the Canterbury Benedictional, and the Winchcombe Sacramentary keep both festivals in their proper places in the Sanctorale.

The Durham Collectar has the Purification in the Temporale, between Epiphany and Lent (without the Annunciation). Hohler believes the transferral of this festival to the Temporale to be a 'highlighting' of an important feast, and Corrêa, besides calling this tendency (here and in Leofric) a sign of Continental influence, seems to concur (See Corrêa, *The Durham Collectar*, pp.83ff, 103ff). As important as this festival is, its practical focus on an event in Christ's life rather than, primarily, a commemoration of a saint probably helped facilitate this shift.

<sup>20</sup> As Turner notes in the introduction to his edition, the Missal of the New Minster generally shows some innovation compared to the standard Gregorian family of Missals represented by Robert and Leofric (this innovation is usually a matter of replacing Gregorian forms with Gelasian and, occasionally, composing apparently new forms. See Turner, *The Missal of the New Minster*, pp. v-xxviii). These three Missals differ only, for Candlemas, in the Preface. Of these, against the generally correct classification made by Turner, only the Missal of the New Minster follows the original Gregorian form. The Leofric Missal, for some reason, has repeated here the Preface for Epiphany (which, as it deals with light and revelation, cannot necessarily be considered a mistake), and Robert has a much longer Preface, not found in any of these (which is, as I will show below, the only extant liturgical text for the day, of those I have consulted, to mention the prophetess Anna). Otherwise, all three use the Gregorian forms.

<sup>21</sup> That the Canterbury Benedictional describes a procession through town is likely, and while we have no mention of specific destinations in the Candlemas *ordo*, we do for Palm Sunday, which leaves after the blessing of the Palms from the church of St. Martin (presumably back to Christ Church) (see Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 26, and see below, "Palm Sunday", pp. 174ff). At key centres like Canterbury and Winchester, where a range of Christians

home church, I will discuss three main witnesses, the Missal of the New Minster, the Robert Missal (incomplete), and the Canterbury Benedictional. That all three agree (mostly) is important, given Turner's conclusion that the Missal of the New Minster represents a more or less independent strand of Missals from that represented in the Leofric and Robert Missals. The most interesting presentation of the ceremonies for the day is in the Canterbury Benedictional. As opposed to the Benedictional of Robert (not the Robert Missal discussed above), which, for the Purification, has only the benediction for the blessing of the candles and those for the mass itself, the Canterbury Benedictional presents the full *ordo*, with rubrics, antiphons, collects, psalms, and readings, even the beginning of the canon of the Mass (for the blessing of the candles, not for the main Mass of the day, for which it reverts to its usual form of simply providing the benedictions). Outside of Holy Week, the Canterbury Benedictional is so complete only for Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and Palm Sunday.

The Canterbury Benedictional, the most complete Anglo-Saxon witness for the Candlemas liturgy, does not include any forms for the Vigil ceremony,<sup>22</sup> but several other texts do, including the Leofric Collectar, and the forms are largely the same wherever they occur. The purpose of the Vigil is to present the images and associations that will be developed the following day. The Vigil Preface and the *Secreta* both refer to the upcoming festival as a festival of the Virgin, and two responses in the Leofric Collectar refer to Mary's

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would be expected to participate, a procession through town is probable. Beyond this, however, little can be said. In his Letter for the Monks of Eynsham, Ælfric uses the same general language as did the *Concordia*, not mentioning anything that would help us define the procession within Eynsham, or tell us whether or not the procession left the monastery at all. Jones suggests that Ælfric's lack of particulars here "suggests either a very mechanical method of using a source or, perhaps, his foreknowledge that the text would be read and used beyond the walls of Eynsham" (*LME*, p. 170, n. 98). Of course, in a given place, a procession might simply proceed from a side chapel, or from another sanctuary in the same compound (see Mark Spurrell, "The Architectural Interest of the *Regularis Concordia*", *ASE* 21 (1992), p. 167, and below, "Palm Sunday", pp. 174ff), but we have no specific reason to apply this sort of arrangement to Candlemas or Palm Sunday. In any event, even in documents written purportedly for a monastic audience, as are the *Concordia* and Ælfric's Eynsham Letter, a more public procession is allowed for, if not expected.

<sup>22</sup> See Clayton's discussion of the gradual introduction of vigil and octave services for the Marian feasts during the Anglo-Saxon period, Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 25ff.

ever-virgin status. The chapter reading for the day establishes the link between Christ and the candle that will be repeated and developed throughout the festival:

Claritas dei illuminauit templum. lucerna eius est agnus. quem simeon ille diu senex ulnis gestauerat. et in toto mundo regem glorie predicabat.<sup>23</sup>

Dominating the Vigil, however, is Simeon, specifically the raising up of Christ by Simeon. Vigils in the Collectar begin with the antiphon *O ammirabile commercium*, and the chapter reading above features Simeon carrying about the lit Christ. Chapter ends with the antiphon that on the next day will be read as the candle-bearing participants enter the home church:

Cum inducerent puerum ihesum parentes eius accepit eum symeon in ulnas suas et benedixit deum dicens nunc dimittis domine seruum tuum in pace.<sup>24</sup>

With the *Nunc dimittis*, the celebrants take over the voice of Simeon, and this conjunction will be of particular importance in the ceremonies for the next day. In the mass for Vigils (here from the Leofric Missal), the *Ad complendum* further hints at this relationship, as Simeon's action of 'raising up' is applied to the beseechers:

Da nobis, quaesumus, misericors deus, ipsius superueniente festiuitate uegetari, cuius integra uirginitate salutis nostrae auctorem suscepimus.<sup>25</sup>

and its significance is explained in a key collect for Vespers in the Leofric Collectar (taken from an alternate collect for the day itself from the Gregorian Sacramentary, and from the *Ad populum* in the Leofric Missal):

Perfice in nobis domine gratiam tuam, qui iusti symeonis expectationem implesti. ut sicut ille mortem non uidet. priusquam christum dominum uidere mereretur. ita et nos uitam optineamus aeternam.<sup>26</sup>

If the purpose of the vigil is to get the participants into the proper frame of mind for the commemoration of the festival day, that frame of mind involves a sympathetic relationship

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<sup>23</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 46.

with Simeon, holding up Christ with him, and reaping the benefits of seeing Christ in a way specifically compared to Simeon's reward.

Particularly strange, in a supposedly Marian feast, called in every substantive Anglo-Saxon witness *In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae*, is the lack of discussion or development of Mary's purification. This is due not so much to the fact that the day was originally a festival of Christ and Simeon as to the fervency of the Marian cult. The mythos of Mary, fully developed in Anglo-Saxon England (the history of which Mary Clayton summarizes), no longer allows for the idea that Mary might need purification. The author of the Vercelli sermon for this occasion is greatly concerned that his audience understand this, reminding us that "nalles þæt heo þæs ænige þearfe hæfde þæt heo swylc wære on clænnesse hire lichaman . . . for ðan þe heo wæs unmælu ⁊ clæne butan eallum synnum,"<sup>27</sup> but that she brought the child to the temple to fulfill the law, much as Christ did not need baptism, but submitted to it so as to fulfill the law. As a consequence, the only overt treatment of Mary in the festival consists of assertions of her ever-virgin status and her role as the mother of Christ. In that context, the title for the festival can be understood less as a signal that Mary is being commemorated than as a statement of the occasion that gave rise to the meeting of Christ and Simeon.

The anticipation of Simeon's acceptance of Christ comes to fruition in the blessing of the candles in the away church. The candles are asperged, incensed and handed out *singuli singulas*, (and, according to the apparent order in the *Concordia*, lit after dispersal), while the participants sing three antiphons (from the Canterbury Benedictional):

Puer ihesus prof[ic]iebat etate et sapientia coram deo et hominibus.  
Nunc dimittis domine seruum tuum in pace quia uiderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.  
Lumen ad reuelationem gentium et gloriam plebis tuae israhel.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 282.

<sup>28</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 83. The Missal of the New Minster has only the latter two of these here (Turner, *The Missal of the New Minster*, p. 70). Subsequent page references are to Woolley.

The latter two of these are in the voice of Simeon, from the dramatic declaration of Simeon upon seeing and raising up the Christ child. In the gospel speech, the last antiphon above is fairly under-emphasized, a more or less tacked-on, appositive metaphor. Its use here and in other places as an independent antiphon reflects how the dominance of the liturgical form, in which the idea of Christ as a light is much more important than it would have been to Simeon, has moulded use of the scriptural story. What is important here is not that the participants see in the ceremony a direct parallel to the events recounted in Luke 2:22-32, but rather that they see Christ in the lit candles and that they, like Simeon, accept him, raise him up, and praise God that they have been allowed to see him. The benediction directly following the dispersal of the candles, the first moment at which all participants would be holding a lit candle, makes this connection overt:

Omnipotens sempiterne deus. qui hodierna die unigenitum tuum in ulnis sancti symeonis suscipiendum in templo sancto tuo presentasti. te supplices deprecamur. ut hos cereos quos nos famuli tui in tui nominis magnificentia suscipientes gestamus luce accensos. benedicere et sanctificare. atque lumine superne benedictionis accendere digneris. quatinus eos tibi domino deo nostro offerendo. digni et sancto igne tuae dulcissimae caritatis accensi. in templo sancto gloriae tuae representari mereamur. (83)

The conflation of Christ with the candle is explicit here in the idea that the offered candles make present the light of Christ at the presentation to Simeon. Similarly, the conflation of the candle-raising celebrants with the infant-raising Simeon makes clear how the participants should relate to the Christ-candle, and makes their usurpation of Simeon's voice all the more real.

The procession begins, still in the away church, with an antiphon addressed first to Mary, and then to Simeon:

Aue gratia plena dei genetrix uirgo ex te enim ortus est sol iustitiae illuminans qui in tenebris sunt. letare tuum senior iuste suscipiens in ulnas liberatorem animarum nostrarum donantem nobis et resurrectionem. (83)

Mary, here, is lauded as the mother of Christ, she who brought forth this light that the participants now carry, and that Simeon is receiving. Another antiphon, sung as the procession exits the church, praises Mary as both the door of heaven (*porta*) and she who

carries the new light (*portat*) and this, along with the antiphon *Cum inducerent puerum*, makes one want to look for a more established association between the participants and Mary, parallel to the scriptural account in which Mary (with Joseph) carries the Christ child into the temple. This is not to be found, however, as both antiphons end with, and are dominated by, Simeon taking the child in his arms. The primary oration for the procession resolidifies this emphasis:

Domine ihesu christe qui hodierna die in nostrae carnis substantia inter homines apparens. a parentibus in templo es presentatus. quem simeon uenerabilis senex lumine spiritus sancti irradiatus agnouit. suscepit. et benedixit. presta propitius. ut eiusdem spiritus sancti gratia illuminati atque edocti. te ueraciter agnoscamus. (84)

The propitiation for which the participants beg, described in terms of illumination, is paralleled to the irradiation of Simeon upon holding Christ aloft. The visual correlation here, as the processors are irradiated by their candles, solidifies the sympathetic relationship between them and Simeon.

Notably, in an oration between the *Aue gratia* antiphon and the exit from the church where the candles were blessed, the ‘propitious intercession of blessed Mary’ herself is called for as the celebrants ask God to ‘grant purity for our minds and bodies’:

Omnipotens deus. tua nos protectione custodi. et castimoniam mentibus nostris atque corporibus. intercedente beata maria propitius indulge. ut uenienti sponso filio tuo unigenito. accensis lampadibus nostris dignum prestemus occursum. (83)

Due to the mythos of Mary’s holiness that so dominated Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Christ’s mother, she who was, in the commemorated event, being purified is now called upon to purify, and any hint that the purpose of the original event was actually to mark the end of a period of uncleanness on the part of Mary has been strictly avoided. The liturgical participants can no more relate to her in this sense than they can to Christ himself. As sympathetic associations are established in the liturgy, the participants are to think of themselves, within the context of the particular ritual, as one with the original figures scripted for them. These figures can only be ones that they could meaningfully relate to and, by speaking with their voices and perceiving events through their eyes, receive whatever lesson

and/or edification was received by them. This cannot meaningfully be done with Christ, any more than it could be with God, which is why for Easter, for example, liturgical participants are made to relate to the three women seeing the evidence of the risen Christ, not the risen Christ himself. Similarly, in a system in which Mary has the same sort of untouchable holiness as does Christ, she is an impossible association. Simeon, however, is not, and is specifically set up in the gospel text as a model, and the liturgy for Candlemas is dominated by descriptions of him as ‘just and timorous,’ repeated assertions that he, expecting Christ, received the promise of God, and his own words, recognizing and proclaiming Christ as a light to drive away the darkness. The monastic liturgy, in particular, is awash with repeated Simeon antiphons. Of particular interest in this vein is the first trope in the Winchester Troper for the day, placing in opposition, by response, Simeon raising Christ with the singers. This text is representative of most of the other tropes for this occasion in using the standard Gradual as responses to the cantor’s text:

Adest alma uirgo parens,	
adest uerbum caro factum	
proclamemus omnes laudes,	
in excelsis deo patri:	<i>Suscepimus [deus misericordiam tuam]</i>
Lumen aeternum christum dominum:	<i>In medio [templi tui:]</i>
In brachiis sancti symeonis regem regum adesse,	
de quo propheta cecinit ouans	<i>Secundum [nomen tuum deus]</i>
Gloria salus et honor,	<i>In fines [terrae:]</i>
In saeculum saeculi	<i>Iustitia [plena est dextera tua]<sup>29</sup></i>

Here again, as in the Vigil Mass, the action of ‘raising up’ is attributed, antiphonally, to Simeon and to the singers. This association dominates both the monastic liturgy and the mixed procession, which ends before the home church with an oration explaining its intended result, the *Perfice in nobis* quoted above.<sup>30</sup> They then sing the *Cum inducerent* and the *Nunc*

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<sup>29</sup> Frere, *The Winchester Troper*, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned above, this text appears as a collect in the Leofric Collectar for Vespers on the Vigil and as the *Ad Populum*, the final reading for the main Mass, in the Leofric Missal and in the Missal of Robert (in the Gregorian Sacramentary, it rests in the same position, after the *Ad complendum*, but is simply labelled *Alia*, which does not necessarily mean that it would have followed liturgically, but simply that it could be considered as an alternate collect). In the

*dimittis*, in Simeon’s voice, as they enter the church for the offering of the candles at the Offertory of the Mass.

Powerful as the liturgy’s attempts to make present the light of Christ and the experience of Simeon are, for Candlemas, it is particularly difficult to see, in the general form of the rituals, a realistic commemoration of the events presented in the gospel for the day, Luke 2:22-32 (NRSV):

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses,

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Missal of the New Minster, which, unlike the other Missals, has the *Ordo* for the Blessing of the Candles and the procession, it appears only in the same position as that discussed here from the Canterbury Benedictional, having been moved from the end of the Mass to the end of the procession. The placement of this text in our two main witnesses reveals a discrepancy between them and the summary account in the *Concordia*. For the set of forms proclaimed just before and during the entrance into the home church, the *Concordia* prescribes the antiphon *Responsum accepit Simeon*, the collect *Erudi quaesumus Domine* (the Gregorian collect for the main Mass, also in the Leofric Missal), and, concurrent with the entrance, the *Cum inducerent puerum*, followed by Tierce (focussed thematically, in the Leofric Collectar, on the expectation of ‘just and timorous’ Simeon), and then the Mass (see Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 31). The Missal of the New Minster and the Canterbury Benedictional have replaced the collect *Erudi quaesumus* (which now follows the *Cum inducerent*, inside the church) with the passage that had ended the Mass, the *Perfice in nobis* (see Turner, *The Missal of the New Minster*, p. 71; Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 84). (There is no indication of a break for Tierce in either text, and Symons tells us that this detail is peculiar to the *Concordia*.) One wonders whether this placement of the *Perfice in nobis*, directly before the entrance into the church, is a later development, a deliberate shift of this passage to this position rather than just an anticipatory echo of the *Ad populum* of the Mass, as the only witness to provide both the processional forms and the forms for the Mass, the Missal of the New Minster, has no *Ad populum*, ending with the old Gregorian *Ad complendum* as its *Postcommunio*, such that the *Perfice* is not repeated. The Robert Missal has the *Perfice* as the final Mass text, called *Ad vesperum*, but the leaf of the manuscript that had dealt with the entrance to the church is lost (see Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, p. 160). The Winchcombe Sacramentary gives only a few forms for the day, but it does have *Erudi quaesumus* as a *Collect Ad Processionem* and *Perfice* as its *Ad Vesperas* (see Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, pp. 146-7). This seems to be more in agreement with the account in the *Concordia* (as the account in Robert might be), and the early date of this book (late tenth-century) may be important in this regard. However, the Dunstan Pontifical, dated probably between 960 and 973, has the same order as the Canterbury Benedictional (as far as the *Perfice in nobis* before the entrance into the church, at which point the text breaks off), as does the early eleventh-century Samson Pontifical, which also has ties to Canterbury (see Conn, *The Dunstan and Brodie (Anderson) Pontificals*, p. 171; Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, pp. 158-9). The mid to late eleventh-century Corpus 422 (the Red Book of Darley), pp. 285-8, follows CB’s arrangement as far as it goes, including the placement of the *Perfice* (at which the *ordo* in Darley cuts off). Ælfric, in his Eynsham Letter, repeats the *Concordia*’s arrangement (*LME*, pp. 119, 170 n. 101).



they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

The gospel narrative discusses only Simeon’s entrance into the temple, that of the parents with the child, the acceptance and ‘raising up’ of Christ by Simeon, and his response, the *Nunc dimittis*. The liturgy for Candlemas, instead, has a procession away, a blessing of the candles in another church, a procession home, an entry into the church, and the offering at Mass. If one were looking for mimetic correlation, one would point to the *Cum inducerunt* at the entry to the church, describing the parents bringing in the child, and expect a Simeon-based climax in the main Mass, in particular at the Offertory. However, presentation of this Mass in the liturgical witnesses is relatively understated, and the texts are, for the most part, either general or simply repeating passages and chants from earlier stages. In every way, the highlight of the festival is the blessing of the candles and, in particular, the procession through town, up to the entry into the church, as both the care given this part of the liturgy for the day in liturgical books and the force given this part of the festival in the descriptions in the *Concordia* and Ælfric’s letters seem to indicate. This is probably due, in large part if not entirely, to the influence of the Palm Sunday services, which follow the same format. For Palm Sunday, the format makes particular sense, as the focus of the day is the procession to Jerusalem and the entry. Candlemas, because of the importance and visual dominance of the candle-lit procession, shifts commemorative focus from the main Mass and the Offering to a procession that has no meaningful antecedent. As such, one cannot look for associative antecedents based on correlation with the gospel narrative. Simeon holds up and proclaims

Christ at several points, most notably as the candles are received and lit, during the procession, and before entry into the home church. This failure of the liturgy to correlate mimetically with the commemorated event, however, should not be used as an argument that the ceremonies are ‘undramatic’. Liturgical ritual has never been concerned with realistic presentation of a historical event, even in rituals that most everyone would consider ‘dramatic’, as we will see in the liturgy for Palm Sunday and Holy Week. The primary concern of liturgical ritual, in the Anglo-Saxon period as in later times when liturgical plays had developed, is, as we see in the *Concordia*’s directions for the *Depositio*, the ‘strengthening of faith’, and its dramatic propensities come from its deliberate attempts to make the participants feel that, for the purposes of the ritual, they are at one with, for Candlemas, Simeon. The participants relate to the candle as Simeon did to Christ, seeing and recognizing in it the light of the Holy Spirit, holding it aloft, and proclaiming, ‘now you are dismissing your servant in peace.’ That the redactors of this ritual had no care for mimetic conventions that did not yet exist in no way diminishes the repeatedly nurtured dramatic association that completely dominates Candlemas observance.

If this is the case, then one would expect to find identifications with Simeon not so much at points at which Simeon, in the biblical story, would have related to Christ, but at highlights of the liturgical services, the dispersal of the candles, the procession, and in particular the entry into the church, at which time the events of the bible story might be usurped in favour of establishing an edifying relationship between the participants/Simeon and the candle/Christ. Perhaps the transposition of the *Perfice in nobis* collect to its position in the Canterbury Benedictional and the Missal of the New Minster is a reflection of this dynamic. After the antiphon *Responsum accepit symeon*, at the point at which the procession has drawn together before the home church, pausing before entering, the participants pray the collect (in translation):

Perfect in us, we pray Lord, your grace, you who fulfilled the expectation of just Simeon, that just as this one did not see death before meriting to see Christ the Lord, so also we may obtain eternal life.

At the point of entry, the candle-bearers think of their potential reward, meriting eternal life, as analogous to Simeon meriting to see Christ. Flanked by the *Nunc dimittis* (the second part of both the preceding and the entrance antiphons), the participants might well see themselves as Simeon carrying the Christ child into the temple.

Ælfric, in his attempt to explain “hwæt þis getacnige,” presents a narrative order that seems to reflect the liturgical construction. Ælfric’s rendering of the biblical narrative is rather free, and his elaborated presentation of Simeon is remarkably expressive. Rather than simply “looking forward to the consolation of Israel,” Simeon is “swiðe oflyst þæs hælendes tocymes: ⁊ bæd æt godes dæighwamlice on his gebedum þ he moste crist geseon ær he deaðes onbyrigde.”<sup>31</sup> Rather than simply relating that Christ’s coming had been revealed to Simeon, Ælfric makes it causal, explicitly the result of devout worship, of ‘meriting,’ and adds that “he wæs þa bliðe þæs behates.” In contrast to the terse biblical account, Ælfric sets up Simeon as a protagonist, as someone for his audience to see into, and sympathize with, and relate to. His description of Simeon’s acceptance of Christ is particularly telling, both as a model of how the Candlemas participants should accept Christ and as a reflection of the liturgical order:

And seo halige maria com þa to ðam temple mid þam cylde: ⁊ se ealda man symeon. eode togenes þam cylde ⁊ geseah þone hælend ⁊ hine georne gecneow. þ he wæs godes sunu: alysend ealles middaneardes; He hine genam ða on his earmum mid micelre onbryrdnesse: ⁊ hine geber into ðam temple ⁊ þancode georne gode. þ he hine geseon moste; He cwæð þa min drihten þu forlætst me nu mid sybbe of þysum life æfter þinum worde: for ðon þe mine eagan gesawon þinne halwendan: þone þu gearcodeð ætforan anyne ealles folces: leoht to onwrigenyse þeoda. ⁊ wuldor þinum folce israhele; (250)

The extra-biblical insight that Simeon took the child in his arms ‘with great feeling’ and ‘fervently thanked God’ is sympathetically reflective, and therefore instructive, of how the participants should take the candle and relate to it during the procession.

More striking here, however, is the order of Ælfric’s presentation, particularly in that it seems to contradict the account in Luke. In Ælfric, Simeon enters the temple by the

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<sup>31</sup> CH.I.ix, p. 250. Subsequent page references are to this text.

direction of the Holy Spirit (after having prayed, been diligent, etc), sees and recognizes the Christ child, exits the temple to get to the child, takes it fervently in his arms, and bears it into the temple, all the while giving thanks fervently and praying the *Nunc dimittis*.<sup>32</sup> Again, in Ælfric's explication, after a somewhat rhapsodic expansion of the anticipatory prayers of Simeon (which is reflective of the dynamic laid out in the *Perfice in nobis*, 'that he should not see death before he had seen Christ'), Ælfric repeats this order:

Maria cristes moder bær þ cild: 7 se ealda symeon eode hyre togeanes: 7 gecneow þ cyld þurh godes onwrigennesse: 7 hit beclypte: 7 bær into ðam temple; (250)

From the biblical account, as expressed in the *Cum inducerent* entrance antiphon, it would seem that Mary and Joseph were the ones to carry the child into the temple, inside of which Simeon accepted him, and the illumination of the scene in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold seems to show Mary handing the child to Simeon over the altar. What it actually shows, however, is both Mary and Simeon holding the child aloft, with Joseph and Anna on either side, over an altar that, according to Deshman, has been drawn to resemble the waiting arms of Simeon.<sup>33</sup> The importance of illumination like this one is in its symbolic expression, and this illustration can represent both Mary and Simeon holding the child aloft, and the presentation to the altar of Simeon's arms, without trying to make a statement about the details of the historical account. In any case, the point of the illustration is Christ held aloft, the focal point of a circle of figures including Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna, and it need not contradict the liturgically resonant idea of Simeon leaving from the temple, accepting the child outside, and bearing him, recognized, lit and praised, into the temple.

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<sup>32</sup> Actually, this is a slightly converted version of the *Nunc dimittis*. "Now you are dismissing your servant in peace" has become 'My Lord, now you are letting me go in peace from this life,' "my eyes have seen your salvation" is now 'my eyes have seen your Healing-One/Saviour,' and "a light for the revelation of the Gentiles" has been recast with the unspecific "þeoda" (although this word is not uncommonly used to translate 'Gentiles'). Particularly in the shift from 'salvation' to the actual figure that is represented in the seen candle, and in the addition of 'from this life,' perhaps an echo of the end of the *Perfice in nobis*, this version of Simeon's words seems to be influenced by the weight of the liturgical forms.

<sup>33</sup> See Robert Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (1995), p. 39.

After a rhetorical discussion on the theme “He bær þ cild ⁊ þ cild bær hine” (an expression of patristic origin but similar in tone to an antiphon for Matins for the day in the Leofric Collectar, *Senex puerum potrabat puer autem senem regebat*),<sup>34</sup> Ælfric mentions Mary’s offering of two turtle-doves and explains the offerings of the lamb and of the doves with the idea that we too should make offering. Again, however, the potential identification is avoided, as Ælfric’s audience is told, not be like Mary, but be like the birds. He then returns to Simeon. The remainder of his discussion of Simeon pertains to the idea of seeing, explaining that he “ne gyrnde na þ he moste crist gehyran spreca” (253), (although Christ certainly could have spoken had he wanted to),<sup>35</sup> because Christ was prepared ‘before the sight of all people.’ In his explication of this phrase, he explains what had been beseeched in the *Perfice in nobis*, what it means to ‘see’ him in contemporary terms:

Hine ne gesawon na ealle men lichomlice: ac he is gebodod eallum mannum: gelyfe se ðe wylle; Se ðe on hine gelyfð he gesyhð hine nu mid his geleafan: ⁊ on ðan ecan life mid his eagum. (253)

The rest of Ælfric’s explication of the gospel for the day deals with Christ as ‘a light’, and to build on this he pulls in Christ’s own assertion that ‘I am the light of the world . . .’ The reward of being allowed to see this light is the fruit of diligent participation in the Candlemas liturgy, and it is through sympathetic association with Simeon that it is achieved for the participant.

Interestingly, Ælfric doesn’t stop here, but gives exposition for the rest of the biblical story, not part of the reading for the day, and thus largely absent in the liturgical forms. The passage includes Simeon’s prophecies concerning Christ, and then his address to Mary, “His sword shall pierce thy soul.” Ælfric explains what this means, but relatively briefly, and it seems to have no real bearing on the themes and images of the day. It does, however, allow

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<sup>34</sup> See Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> Ælfric mentions that Christ was as capable of speech, etc., as a child as he was at age thirty, and illustrations of the Christ child at the Presentation to Simeon like that in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold bear this out, with a dressed Christ child, held aloft, blessing the old man.

for his discussion of Anna. Anna has no place in the reading for the day, for according to the gospel narrative (and to Ælfric), she did not appear until after Simeon's speech. In the illustration in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold, however, she is there, behind Simeon, as he holds the child. This detail is clearly out of sequence with the gospel narrative (if we are to take this illustration as depicting the transfer of Christ from Mary to Simeon), and one wonders what her symbolic function might be or whether, as may be the case with the maidservant standing behind Mary and next to Joseph, she might be there simply to fill out the picture. Possible insight into her function here may come from the one liturgical form for the day to include her, a Preface for the Mass in the Missal of Robert, as follows:

In exultatione praecipue sollempnitatis hodiernae. in qua coaeternus tibi filius tuus unigenitus in nostra natus substantia. a parentibus legali traditione deportetur in templum. Idem legis lator et custos. praecipiens et obediens. Diues in suo. pauper in nostro. Par turturum uel duos pullos columbarum. uix sufficit sacrificio caeli terreque possessor. Grandeui symeonis inualidis gestatur in manibus a quo mundi rector et dominus pradicatur. Accedit etiam oraculum uiduae testificantis. quoniam decebat ab utroque sexu adnuntiaretur utriusque saluator. quem laudant angeli . . .<sup>36</sup>

If Simeon provides a male model for the recognition and proclamation of Christ, Anna provides the female model. Mary is unattainable, as is Christ, and so discussion of her, in the liturgy or in preaching like that of Ælfric, discusses her only by way of explanation, not identification. But in his sermon, as in the above Preface, Ælfric explicitly sets up Anna as a model for women, the representative of the sex at this occasion, someone for women in his audience to sympathize and identify with. As with Simeon, Anna has merited to see and proclaim Christ because of her chastity in widowhood, which example Ælfric exhorts his female listeners to emulate, "Behealde ge wif 7 understandað hu be hyre awriten is . . . nime heo bisne be þisre wudewan" (255). Her function in Candlemas is understated, largely because the role of women in Candlemas is not specified, but Anna is presented as, symbolically, a female counterpart to Simeon, making sense of the Benedictional of Æthelwold's bunching of her with Simeon at the time of the Presentation.

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<sup>36</sup> See Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, p. 160.

Ælfric's establishment of Simeon's bearing of the lit Christ into the temple informs his final passage, describing the plan for the day.<sup>37</sup> It is not certain from this text whether Ælfric is saying that the candles were brought in the initial preparatory procession to the visited church (the *Concordia* seems to suggest that they were already set out there), such that "betwux godes husum" means back to the home church, or whether the initial bearing mentioned here is to the home church, and the blessing means the blessing of the main Mass (which would then seem to indicate that the lights were carried again 'among God's houses'). A comparison of the language of this passage and that of his description of the day in his Second Letter for Wulfstan seems to suggest the former,<sup>38</sup> and the initial bearing of the lights to the visited church, where they are then blessed, need not mean that they had already been dispersed, but simply that they were transported there before the blessing. In any event, dominant here is the idea of bearing 'Christ, the true light' to the temple, demonstrating both the centrality of the procession in the liturgy for the day and the importance of Simeon's role as bearer of the child to the temple.

The liturgical forms for Candlemas also explain, somewhat, the seventeenth Vercelli homily. This homily is, according to Scragg, "superficially exegesis,"<sup>39</sup> but mostly just general exhortation. His impression of the homily is rather poor, concluding that "[the author's] concentration on a very basic message, and his use of only very obvious and familiar Gospel quotations to support it . . . suggest that this homily was composed in an intellectually impoverished climate."<sup>40</sup> While the author here does seem to have some problems with the Latin, not all of the discrepancies that Scragg points to are necessarily mistakes (as he reluctantly points out in a couple of instances), and his choice of explication

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<sup>37</sup> See above, CH.I.ix, pp. 256-7: "Wite gehwa eac . . ."

<sup>38</sup> See Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 215.

<sup>39</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 279. Subsequent page references are to this text.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 280.

is perhaps not so haphazard. While this text would have been written a good deal earlier than the services in the Canterbury Benedictional and the Missal of the New Minster, such that one must be careful about using one to explain the other, some form of these services would have been practised at the time and place at which this sermon might have been preached, and whatever the peculiarities of that form, it surely would have featured the *Nunc dimittis* and the *Perfice in nobis* (either at the end of the procession or at the end of the main Mass), as does every Gregorian-based form of the services extant. The imperatives set forth in these forms, and generally in the liturgical identification between Simeon and the candle-bearers, lie at the heart of this homily.

The rendering of the gospel, as in Ælfric's sermon, is somewhat free, and likewise expands the actions and emotions of Simeon, in this case in the acceptance of the Christ child:

þa genam se halga Simeon þone hælend on his earmas, ⁊ he hine mid bam handum beclypte, ⁊ he [hine] mid eallre modlufan sette to his breostum, ⁊ he bledsode ⁊ wuldrade Godfæder ælmihtigne . . . (282)

The author's first version of the *Nunc dimittis*, as part of the 'translation' of the gospel, is much closer to the gospel text than that in Ælfric.<sup>41</sup> After an explanation of why Christ's parents were there (and, most importantly, that Mary did not need purification), he seems to break away from straightforward exegesis. He goes into an explanation of the name "Jerusalem," interpreting it as "sibbe gesyhðe." The point of the passage is 'peace,' Simeon's self-proclaimed state of mind after having seen Christ, and his explanation links this peace with eternal rest, calling Christ the "soðan sybbe gesyhðe." Rather than simply a "commonplace,"<sup>42</sup> this is really a focussed exploration of the importance of the *Nunc dimittis* passage and its meaning for his audience.

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<sup>41</sup> Still, his version here is distinct, and shorter. The indicative "forlætst" has been changed to the imperative "forlæt," and instead of seeing "þinne halwendan: þone þu gearcodeð ætforan ansyne ealles folces" (CH.I.ix, p. 250), Simeon here sees "þa hælo þe ðu gearwadeð to onsyne eallra folce" (Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 282).

<sup>42</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 278.



The next section, discussing the birds offered to God, symbolizing “lifes clænnesse ⁊ unsceðfulnesse,” (283) is overtly funnelled into a description of Simeon’s cleanness:

Ea[c] we sculon habban mid us Godes soðfæstnesse ⁊ his rihtwisnesse ⁊ eaðmonesse, swa we ær gehyrdon secgan þæt se eadiga Simeon wæs soðfæst ⁊ clæne ⁊ godfyrht on his life. Soðlice he hæfde lifes clænnesse gehealden, ge in wordum ge in dædum ge in geðohtum ⁊ eac in gesiehðe, for ðan him sægde se halga gast þæt he ne moste deaðes byrian ær þan þe he meahte mid his eagan dryhten geseon. (284)

There is no particular reason to interpret discussion of the birds in terms of Simeon except to explain the relationship between the crowd and Simeon in terms of meriting to see Christ, and this relationship is solidified in his assertion that, in praying for “ealles folces hælo,” Simeon “getacnode þæt we sceoldon beon swylces modes ⁊ swylces gewittes ⁊ on swylcre willan” (284).

The result of this similarity with Simeon is ‘eternal salvation and eternal life,’ and this echo of the *Perfice in nobis* is developed in his treatment of the *Nunc dimittis*. He quotes the Latin as extant in the liturgy, but his free rendering both expands and changes the passage, either by inept translation (as Scragg believes) or on purpose (or, possibly, a bit of both):

He swa cwæð: ‘Læt nu, dryhten, faran in sybbe þine þegnas æfter þinum wordum swa ðu him ær gehehtest’. Efne swa he cwæde: ‘Læt me faran of þære tyddernesse þysses meniscan lichaman þe ic nu git on eom; læt me geendian þis deaðlic lif, ⁊ læt me becuman to þam ecan life ⁊ to þære ecan reste þe ðu þinum þam gecorenum ⁊ þam halgum gegearuwad hafast. For ðan þe ic þære andsware onfenc þæt ic ne moste deaðes byrian ær þan ic ðe, dryhten, [mid] min[um] eagum gesege. ⁊ nu gesegon mine eagan þine hælo ða ðe ðu gearuwadest to leohte ⁊ to frofre manigum þeodum ⁊ to wuldre þines folces.’ Soðlice ure hælend is ðæt soðe leoht . . . (285)

It is tempting to take the plural “þine þegnas” as a reflection, conscious or unconscious, of the symbolic transposition of Simeon’s words onto the candle-bearers, although Scragg considers this a confusion of gender, or an error in copying (*þine* for *þinne*, and *þegn* made plural to agree). More important here is the conflation of the *Nunc dimittis*, the words of Simeon, with the idea expressed in the *Perfice in nobis*, in which Simeon’s seeing translates into eternal life. In taking over Simeon’s voice, the author here seems to recognize the mixing of his original words with ones more applicable to the candle-bearers, as explained in the *Perfice in*

*nobis*. The author ends his sermon by drawing together his opening and closing Simeon themes, 'true peace' and 'eternal glory.' His sermon is short, compared to Ælfric's his choice of exegesis more selective, but it is selective in such a way as to develop the primary focus of the Candlemas liturgy, the assumption of Simeon's voice and Simeon's role in the events of the day by the participants, and to explain "hwæt hit getacnige." Whatever the logistics of the procession, whatever the respective roles of monastic and lay folk, the audiences of the Vercelli homilist and of Ælfric would have been trained to treat the Candlemas liturgy as a reenactment of Simeon's acceptance of Christ, embraced concurrently by Simeon and the celebrants to light the way to salvation.

## Lenten Piety and Public Penance

The Holy Season (from Septuagesima to Easter) is the climax of the year, ending with the Resurrection, the event that makes possible the faithful's place in the heavenly kingdom. The verse *Menologium* pays homage to the importance of this period by taking the time to announce it with prophetic direct speech.<sup>1</sup> Lent and Easter week likewise are the focal point of the *Concordia*. After a chapter on year-round rituals like the Eucharist<sup>2</sup> and the weekly Maundy, the *Concordia*'s instructions for ritual begin with Christmas Vigils, move on to Candlemas, and then devote a remarkable amount of space to Lent and Easter. The ritual importance of this period is evident in the fact that ceremonies for other times of year come to reflect those of Easter; the *Concordia* makes explicit links between Christmas Vigils and Easter Vigils, and between Candlemas and Palm Sunday. As the Easter rituals, along with vernacular preaching texts for this time of year, indicate, Holy Season is treated as something of a mini-model of the year. Moving from the Fall of Adam to the Resurrection (often, like Advent, conflated with the Last Judgement), Holy Season encompasses Christian history, but in a specific way. The rituals and preaching of the church together allow the faithful to relive the progress of Adam from sin-based ejection from God's presence to the reconciliation made possible by Christ's sacrifice and Christian penance, providing them a way into God's heavenly kingdom (symbolized by the church), making them again citizens of heaven. These themes dominate both the ritual and the preaching for the period.

Of particular interest to critics of dramatic ritual is the practice of public penance, whereby certain particularly culpable sinners were formally cast out of the church on Ash Wednesday and were forbidden from reentering until the Reconciliation *ordo* on Maundy Thursday. The liturgical forms for these ceremonies and the explanations given them in

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<sup>1</sup> See Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 50, lines 60-2.

<sup>2</sup> The *Concordia* is peculiar in its time in prescribing daily Eucharist. See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. xxxix.

preaching texts indicate that the sinners were to think of themselves as Adam cast out of Paradise for his sins and toiling on earth in hopes of being reconciled. Most discussions of public penance in studies anticipating liturgical drama, however, have been general, describing the ritual as a 'medieval' one. This is a problem, for the use and characteristics of public penance at any stage in history are hard to pin down. Public penance is an ancient form of expiation that has been called upon from time to time in the history of the church, often at times in which the church has felt threatened, and one cannot assume much consistency in the practice. Discussion of it in Anglo-Saxon England, in particular, is tricky, for England was dominated by the system of private penance propagated by the Irish, and many historians believe, some quite strongly, that public penance had no place in pre-Conquest England. Part of the problem, however, is an oversimplified distinction between 'public' and 'private' penance.<sup>3</sup> When the two first came into conflict, they were most certainly distinct, and many calls for public penance from the sixth century through the Carolingian era were attempts either to save or to recall a form of expiation that had a fundamentally different set of rules from the private system represented in the penitentials. As public penance came into the liturgical landscape in Anglo-Saxon England, however, either through a post-Reform importation or through revival of a practice that had always been in the background, this tension between private and public penance was not such a problem. The themes and identifications, and even the liturgical forms, of public penance had, by the time of Ælfric and Wulfstan, blended quite heavily with the system of private penance, partly because of the newly emerging separation of the application of the ashes from

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<sup>3</sup> The labels 'private' and 'public' have been called into question by a number of recent critics, including Rob Meens ("The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance", in *Handling Sin*, eds. Biller and Minnis (1998)), Mayke de Jong ("What was public about public penance", *SSSpoleto* 44 (1997)) and Michael Driscoll ("Penance in Transition", in *Medieval Liturgy*, ed. Larson-Miller (1997)). In particular, 'private' penance quite frequently had public manifestations, and the label is an anachronism. As there is no consensus in terminology (recent critics refer inconsistently to 'private', 'secret', 'occult', or 'tariffed' penance versus 'public', 'canonical' or 'episcopal' penance), I will favour the traditional labels, with the caveat that they must be heavily qualified, as I will attempt to do below.

the Dismissal *ordo*, and partly because public penance, as it was understood at the time, was seen more as an option in a broader penitential spectrum than as an entirely different system. Through this diffusion of public penance, its central theme, the identification with Adam that makes Lent interesting to critics of dramatic ritual, is applied more generally to all the faithful participating in the Anglo-Saxon Lenten liturgy.

## Lent

By the time of the tenth-century English liturgy, the forty-day Lent as it is known today, stretching from Ash Wednesday to just before Easter, was not ancient. In the earliest centuries of the Christian Church there was often a pre-paschal fast lasting from only one or two days to the six days of Great Week, or (unusually) longer. Although Leo and Jerome in the fifth century asserted that the forty-day fast before Easter was of apostolic origin, the first certain reference to it is in the Canons of Nicaea in AD 325 (canon 5). Baumstark notes an ante-Nicene Egyptian fast of forty days beginning after Epiphany,<sup>4</sup> and Talley tries to connect scattered early fourth-century references in other Eastern churches to a forty-day fast separated at times by a week or two from a six-day Paschal fast.<sup>5</sup> This fast seems to have been a commemoration of Christ's forty days in the wilderness, and Christian tradition in the West held that the origin of the pre-paschal Lent was similarly connected with Christ's fast. The weight of modern criticism, however, holds that this association between Christ's fast and the pre-paschal *quadragesima* was made later, and that the period had its origins in the preparations of the catechumens for baptism,<sup>6</sup> although Christ's period in the wilderness, as

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<sup>4</sup> Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> See Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 193ff.

<sup>6</sup> Even the Coptic forty-day fast beginning January 7 had baptismal associations. Talley notes that the sixth day of the sixth week after Epiphany was, in Coptic tradition, a baptismal day.

well as the examples of Moses and Elias, was surely a conscious part of the background in deciding that a forty-day fast was appropriate. In any event, there was for centuries a tremendous variety in how the *quadragesima* was constituted. Much of this variety stemmed from uncertainty as to whether the fast called for irregular fasting during a forty-day period or forty actual days of fasting. It seems likely that much of the impetus for fasting during this period was related to the encouragement to fast along with catechumens in the weeks before Easter, which, with the exclusion of Saturdays and Sundays, could amount to less than forty days of actually fasting. On the other hand, Egeria reports a Jerusalem Lent of eight five-day weeks, and Talley discusses other Lenten arrangements through the sixth century. By the time of Gregory the Great (end of the sixth century), Lent in Rome consisted of six weeks of six fasting days, or thirty-six days, not forty. Gregory discusses Lent as the ‘tithe of the year,’ and does not seem concerned with making up the extra four days, although in other contexts he speaks of Lent as a forty-day period. Probably by the seventh century, and possibly a good deal earlier, the four days preceding the accepted *initium quadragesima* on the First Sunday accrued something of a preparatory nature, until the establishment of Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent. Ash Wednesday is first attested in the Gelasian Sacramentary as *caput ieiunii*, although the First Sunday is still referred to here as *initium quadragesima*. Anglo-Saxon liturgical books still tend to retain this distinction, and Ælfric in many instances still seems to regard the First Sunday as properly the beginning of Lent.<sup>7</sup>

The word Lent originally referred more generally to springtime, as seen in the Anglo-Saxon ‘lencten’ or ‘lenctentid,’ but the imperatives of Lent extended well back into the winter months. The mood for the Lenten season was established on Septuagesima Sunday with the removal of the Hallelujah and the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* from the liturgy. In his Second Series sermon for the day Ælfric explains, with reference to Amalarius, the significance of the omission. The seventy day period, “gefylð ða getacnunge þæra hundseofontig geara þe

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Ælfric’s explanation of the relationship between Ash Wednesday and Lent in Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, v. I, pp. 260ff.

israhela folc on hæftneðe. Babiloniscum cyninge þeowde.”<sup>8</sup> The removal of the hymns was in imitation of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the people of Israel “sceoldon . . . geswican. blisse stemne and fægnunge. brydguman stemne. and bryde” (50). A direct contrast is established between the present world and the expected divine one in Ælfric’s explanation that the Hallelujah, a “heofonlic sang,” in the ‘sublime tongue’ of Hebrew, is replaced by *Laus tibi, Domine* in the humbler Latin. Similarly, the *Gloria* is replaced by the song *Circumdederunt me gemitus mortis*. Like the captive Israelites, the congregation are told to bemoan their sins during the “bereowsungtid” and pray “þæt we moton geseon his heofenlican eastertide. æfter þam gemænelicum æriste. on ðam we him singað ecelice alleluian. butan geswince” (51). Ælfric’s audience is taught to see the period before Easter as a time of alienation from God, a dismissal from God’s divine presence, and a time of mourning and penance. Similarly, Easter is to be seen as the time of reconciliation with God and reinstitution into God’s holy presence, signified by the renewal of the ‘heavenly songs’ that the participants will be able to sing ‘eternally’ and ‘without weariness’, as if in heaven. This context prepares the participants for association with Adam cast out of Paradise and prefigures the conflated expectations of both the Resurrection and the Second Coming at Easter.

This dichotomy between present exile and future reconciliation at Easter/Doomsday was exploited by the tenth-century homilist represented in the Blickling collection. The Blickling homilist casts his Shrove Sunday (the Sunday before Ash Wednesday) exposition of the blind man restored by Christ in terms of the present human condition represented in Lent. He exhorts,

Eal þis mennisc cyn wæs on blindnesse, seoððan þa ærestan men asceofene wæron of gefean neorxna wanges, & þa beorhtnessa forleton þæs heofonlican leohtes, & þisse worlde þeostro & ermða þrowodan.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CH.II.v, p. 49. Subsequent page references are to this text.

<sup>9</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 17. Subsequent page references are to this text.

Christ came to restore this light to his people, and this light, equated with “þæs ecan lifes,” is regained by perceiving the ‘darkness of our sins’ and making amends. It is specifically this light, in the model set up by the Blickling homilist, that separates the present world from the heavenly:

þis [earthly] leoht we habbaþ wið nytenu gemæne, ac þæt leoht we sceolan secan  
þæt we motan habban mid englum gemæne, in þæm gastlicum þrymmum. (21)

Developing the association with Adam and his separation from the ‘light’, the homilist sets forth the Lenten imperatives for his audience:

Forþon we habbaþ nedþearfe þæt we ongyton þa blindnesse ure ælpeodignesse;  
we send on þisse worlde ælpeodignesse; we synd on þisse worlde ælpeodige, &  
swa wæron siþþon se æresta ealdor þisses menniscan cynnes Godes bebodu abræc;  
& forþon gylte we wæron on þysne wræc-siþ sende, & nu eft sceolon operne eþel  
secan, swa wite, swa wuldor, swe we nu geearnian willaþ. (23)

Lenten observance begins with a recognition of the fallen state, that the audience are in the mould of Adam, having fallen from paradise and seeking readmittance from exile.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Paradise of Genesis and the heavenly kingdom described in Revelations are conflated for the Blickling homilist, who explains that Christ suffered so that we might “þæt heofenlice rice onfengon, þæt þa ærestan men forworhtan þurh gifernesse & oferhygde” (23-25).

Through true penitence, demonstrated by weeping, we may be brought into the kingdom.

The homilist ends with a description of the joys of this kingdom, a rather rhapsodic string of clauses establishing the correct Lenten destination firmly in the minds of his audience:

þær is ece blis & þæt ungeendode rice; nis þær ænig sar gemeted, ne adl, ne ece,  
ne nænig unrotnes; nis þær ege, ne geflit, ne yrr, ne nænig wiþerweardnes; ac þær  
is gefea, & blis, & fægernes, & se ham is gefylled mid heofonlicum gastum, mid  
englum & heahenglum, mid heahfæderum & apostolum, & mid þy unarimedan  
weorode haligra martyra þa ealle motan wunian mid Drihtne in eallra worlda world.  
(25)

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<sup>10</sup> The elaborated account in Genesis B of the penitential state of Adam and Eve at the recognition of their sin, before being cast out, might serve as a model to the penitent on Ash Wednesday: “hwilum to gebede feollon / sinhiwan somed and sigedrihten / godne gretton and god nemdon, / heofones waldend and hine bædon / þæt hie his hearmsceare habban mosten, / georne fulgangan þa hie godes hæfdon / bodscipe abrocen” (A. N. Doane, ed. *The Saxon Genesis* (1991), p. 228, lines 777-83).



This description may be compared to a list of the tortures of hell and another description of heaven that ends the Lenten collection.<sup>11</sup> Together they make vividly clear what is at stake. As the Blickling homilist warns again and again, proper Lenten observance will lead to heaven, and negligence or apathy to hell.

One of the most dominant characteristics of Anglo-Saxon treatment of Lenten themes is its constant eschatological focus. Whatever moral is being put forth in Anglo-Saxon Lenten sermons, the concern is not so much for this life, or even for a heavenly life that will be reached eventually, but rather for a Doomsday that is frighteningly imminent. In repeatedly describing Lent as a life of laborious exile caused by our sin-inspired expulsion from Paradise and targeting reinstitution in the heavenly kingdom, it is not surprising to see the events of the Passion and Resurrection, for which Lent is a preparation, conflated with the coming of the heavenly kingdom on Doomsday. The homilist of the Blickling sermon for the First Sunday in Lent has taken this conflation much further than a more conservative man like Ælfric would have been willing, claiming that:

þa gesetton halige fæderas & godes folces lareowas þa tid þæs fæstenes foran to Cristes þrowunga, & hie sweotollice cypdon þæt se egeslica domes dæg cymeþ on þa tid þe Godes sunu on rode galgan þrowode. . . . Hwæt we gehyrdon þæt þæt fasten þyses feowertiges daga ongunnen wæs instepes þæs þe he of þæm fulwihte astag, & þa eode sona on þæt westen; & þa gesetton cyricena aldoras þæt fæsten foran to his þrowunga, & eac foran to þon tocyme þæs egeslican domes dæges.  
(27, 35)

Connecting the origin of Lent with Christ's fast, the homilist describes Lent as the interim between Christ's baptism and his Passion (directly conflated with the Last Judgement) during which he fasted and was tempted. The temptation of Christ is a direct parallel to that of Adam, and therefore that faced during Lent by the faithful:

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<sup>11</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 61. Also, p. 65: "þær is þæt ece leoht buton þeostrum. þær is geogop buton ylde, þær is þæt æpele lif buton geendunge, þær is gefea buton unrotnesse, ne biþ þær hungor, ne þurst, ne wind, ne gewenn, ne wætres sweg, ne þær ne bið leofra gedal, ne laþra gesamnung; ac þær biþ seo ece ræste & haligra symbelnes þær þurhwunap." See below, pp. 160ff, for discussion of this topos of the 'Joys of Heaven' in relation to Rogationtide and the Ascension.

Rihtlic þæt wæs þæt he eode on westen þær ær Adam forwearþ. For þrim þingum Hælend eode on westen; forþon þe he wolde deofol gelapian to campe wiþ hine, & Adam gefreolsian of þam langan wræce, & mannum gecypan þæt se awyrgda gast æfestgaþ on þa þe he gesyhþ to Gode higian. (29)

There is at work here a juxtaposition of Adam with the audience in the homilist's development of the nature of Lent. The need for forgiveness was caused by Adam's first sin, described in terms of "gifernesse" and "oferhygde" (25), both from the list of eight capital sins that would have been used by Anglo-Saxon confessors to categorize the sins committed by their congregations. It was Christ's ability to overcome the temptations that overcame Adam which allowed the contemporary faithful to conquer these sins by Lenten confession and penance. This is the task of the faithful in life, to regain Paradise by conquering sins, and this is in a more focussed and urgent way the purpose of Lent, as the homilist makes explicit:

þas dagas þyses feowertiges nihta tacnaþ þas ondweardan weorld, & þa Easterlican dagas tacniap þa ecean eadignesse; & swa we nu on maran forhæfdnesse lifiaþ þas dagas, & on andrysnum þingum beoþ on þysse worlde, swa magon we þe maran blisse habban þa Easterdagas, & swa we sceolan þa hwile þe we lifgaþ her on worlde. Don we urum Drihtne soþe hreowe & bote, þæt we þurh þæt gegearnian ura synna forlætnesse, & ece lif æfter þisse worlde on þære ecan eadignesse. (35-7)

The Lenten themes developed by the Anglo-Saxon homilists are all founded on this comparison of Lent/the present world versus Eastertide/the future world, and all of Lent is dominated by this eschatological thrust.

Although Ælfric's tone is a bit more restrained<sup>12</sup> and his theology a bit more orthodox than that of the Blickling homilist, the same themes and imperatives set forth above reappear in a more developed form in Ælfric's many sermons for Lent. As did the Blickling homilist,

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<sup>12</sup> An instance in which Ælfric's tone is not so restrained is his Mid-Lent homily on the Prayer of Moses in the Lives of Saints. In exhorting his audience to constancy, he compares England 'when the monastic orders were held in honour' to England at the time, asking, "Hu wæs hit ða siððan ða þa man towearp munuc-lif. and godes biggengas to bysmore hæfde. buton þæt us com to cwealm and hunger. and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmre" and concluding that "þes tima is ende-next and ende þyssere worulde" (Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, v. I, pp. 294, 304). Perhaps recent troubles have lent Ælfric the same sense of urgency seen in Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*.

Ælfric describes in his First Series sermon for Shrove Sunday the correct mindset for the faithful in the approaching time:

Nis þeos woruld na ure eþel: ac is ure wræcsið; for ði ne sceole we na besettan urne hiht on ðisum swicelum life: Ac sceolon eþstan mid godum geeurnungum to urum eðele. þær we to gesceapene wæron. þæt is to heofonanrice.<sup>13</sup>

As before, it is an approaching heaven for which the penitents are aiming, and during these forty days they will follow either the ‘narrow and steep’ road to heaven, “þæt we sceolon mid earfoðnysses geeurnian urne eðel,” or the ‘wide and smooth’ way, described as slackness in Lenten piety, to hell. Ælfric illustrates this imminent tension in his long recounting of the judgement given out by Christ on the sheep and the goats, with which he ends his Second Series sermon for the First Sunday in Lent.<sup>14</sup> Although Ælfric is too orthodox to repeat the sorts of superstitions held by the Blickling homilist that the End will come at Passiontide (as such a prognostication would work against the injunction in Matthew 24 to expect the End at any time), he thoroughly establishes the counterpoint between the present world and the eternal in Lent, illustrating this counterpoint with a number of themes on this model, exhorting that “we her sume hwile swincon: to ðy þ we ecelice beon buton geswince,” and “Se ðe nan þincg nele on ðisum life þrowian: he sceal þrowian unðances wersan þrowunge on ðam toweardan life.”<sup>15</sup> Ælfric takes delight in these sorts of doublets, and in his *Lives of Saints* homily for Ash Wednesday tells the story of a man who spurned the ashes and “wearð ða bebyrged . and him læg on-uppan fela byrþena eorðan binnon seofon nihton. þæs ðe he forsoc þa feawa axan.”<sup>16</sup> A motif on this model that Godden considers “peculiarly Anglo-Saxon”<sup>17</sup> in the same sermon preaches confession by reminding that “seðe ne mæg for sceame

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<sup>13</sup> CH.I.x, p. 264.

<sup>14</sup> CH.II.vii. This is properly the reading for Monday after the First Sunday, which in Gregory the Great’s time was the occasion for the dismissal of the public penitents.

<sup>15</sup> CH.I.x, p. 265.

<sup>16</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, v. I, p. 264.

<sup>17</sup> M. R. Godden, “An Old English Penitential Motif”, *ASE* 2 (1973), p. 238.

his gyltas anum menn ge-andettan . him sceal þonne sceamian . ætforan heofon-warum . and eorð-warum . and hel-warum . and seo sceamu him bið endeleas.”<sup>18</sup> Each of these themes works because the penitents are trained to equate the present life with Lenten piety.

As before, their place in this life is that of Adam. Ælfric, in a First Series sermon, explains the three sins with which Adam was tempted and which Christ conquered, allowing us to defeat them as well. As before, the sins are from the list of capital sins used by the confessionals, specifically “gifernesse,” “ydelum wuldre” (often called ‘idelgylp’), and “gitsunge.”<sup>19</sup> The conflation of Adam with the contemporary penitents is implicit in Ælfric’s summation of this idea:

Ac se deoful wæs ða oferswiðed þurh crist on ðam ylcum gemetum þe he ær adam oferswiðde: þæt he gewite fram urum heortum: Mid ðam infære gehæft. mid ðam ðe he in afaren wæs. ⁊ us gehæfte;<sup>20</sup>

This association with Adam is the key for the contemporary penitents in understanding what Christ did for them in the wilderness, and what it means for their place at Doomsday.

It is interesting to note what seems to be an ambiguity on the part of both the Blickling homilist and Ælfric concerning the length of Lent. In their related homilies for the First Sunday, both homilists move from a discussion of the origin of Lent as a forty-day period (based on the fasts of Moses, Elijah, and, especially, Christ) to Gregory’s description of his thirty-six days of fasting (six weeks of six days) as “teoðing-dagas.”<sup>21</sup> The Blickling homilist seems to smooth out the problem by describing Gregory’s tithing-days as “þara fæstendaga . . . syx & þritig,” such that we might imagine forty fast days, thirty-six of which we consider the tithe. Ælfric, however, seems to create a problem by prefacing Gregory’s

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<sup>18</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, v. I, p. 274.

<sup>19</sup> CH.I.xi, p. 272.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 35.

calculations with the question, “Hwi is þis fæsten þus geteald: þurh feowertig daga”<sup>22</sup> and then explaining only the thirty-six. Perhaps this passage reflects a lingering tendency to ascribe the *initium quadragesima* to the First Sunday and the *caput ieiunii* to Ash-Wednesday, as illustrated in the Gelasian Sacramentary, and occasionally in service books known to Anglo-Saxon England (the Leofric Missal, Lanalet, and the Robert Benedictional, among others). In his later homily for Ash Wednesday in the Lives of Saints, he begins with a rubric specifying that “þis spel gebyrað seofon niht ær lenctene,”<sup>23</sup> which must refer to Shrove Sunday, one week before the First Sunday in Lent (although only the rubric in the Corpus 303 copy specifies *Dominica in Quinquagesima*), and certainly not to the preceding Wednesday. Further, despite defining ‘caput ieiunii’ as “heafod lenctenes fæstenes” (260), Ælfric explains:

Nu ne beoð na feowertig daga on urum lenctenlicum fæstene gefyllede. buton we fæsten þær-foran to þas feower dagas. wodnes dæg. and þunres dæg. and frige dæg. and sæternes dæg. swa swa hit gefyrn geset wæs þeah ðe we hit eow nu secgan.  
(262)

Whether or not Ash Wednesday as the beginning of Lent was “gefyrn geset,” there is a recognition here of a need to make a distinction between Ash Wednesday and the First Sunday, and the four days preceding the First Sunday are put forth as more recent additions, as something that goes “þær-foran to” the Lenten fast (an explanation given by Amalarius in the ninth century).

Ælfric then describes the liturgy for the application of the ashes and explains its significance:

On þone wodnes dæg wide geond eorðan.  
sacerdas bletsiað swa swa hit geset is.  
clæne axan on cyrcan . and þa siððan lecgað  
uppa (sic) manna heafda . þæt hi habban on gemynde  
þæt hi of eorðan comon . and eft to duste gewendað.  
swa swa se ælmihtiga god to adame cwæð.

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<sup>22</sup> CH.I.xi, p. 273.

<sup>23</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, v. I, p. 260. Subsequent page references are to this text.

siððan he agylt hæfde ongear godes bebod.  
 On geswincum þu leofast and on swate þu etst  
 þinne hlaf on eorðan . oðþæt þu eft gewende  
 to þære ylcan eorðan þe þu of come.  
 forðan þe þu eart dust . and to duste gewendst. (262)

Those receiving the ashes receive the same words given Adam at the time of the fall, that they were created from ashes, and to ashes would return. The curse is coupled with a promise, however, that looks forward to Easter. After having returned to the earth, he tells his audience, they will all arise at doomsday “swa swa ealle treowa cuciað æfre on lenctenes timan.” Ælfric discusses the application as quite ancient, and references to the *dies cinerum* go back to the earliest copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary.<sup>24</sup>

The liturgy for the ceremony, as something distinct from the dismissal of public penitents, however, seems to be relatively new, and while several Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts provide the blessings for the ashes, there is no clearly datable liturgy for the application of ashes until the tenth-century Romano-German Pontifical, a later copy of which was known in England in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 163. The practice of applying ashes to the penitents (along with the sympathetic association between the penitents and Adam) is derived from the orders for admitting sinners into the class of public penitents. It is this liturgy, rather than the general application of the ashes discussed by Ælfric, that is reflected in an Ash Wednesday sermon by Wulfstan. After general exhortations to prayer, churchgoing, and almsgiving during Lent, addressed to all, Wulfstan discusses what is to be done with those guilty of ‘high’ sins:

And sume men syndon eac þe nyde sculan of cyricgemanan þas halgan tid  
 ascadene mid rihte weorðan for healian synnan, ealswa adam wearð of engla  
 gemanan þa ða he forworðe þa myclan myrhðe þe he on wunode ær ðam þe he  
 syngode. . . . Leofan men, on Wodnesdæg, þe byð *caput ieiunii*, bisceopas ascadað  
 on manegum stowan ut of cyrican for heora agenan þearfe þa ðe healice on  
 openlican synnan hy sylfe forgyltan. And eft on Ðunresdæg ær Eastran hy geinniað  
 into cyrican þa ðe geornlice þæt Lencten heora synna betað, swa swa hym man

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<sup>24</sup> See Cross and Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1997), p. 966; Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, p. 222; K. W. Stevenson, *Worship* (1992), pp. 159-87.

wissað; þonne absolutionem bisceopas ofer hy rædað ⁊ for hi þingiað ⁊ mid þam heora synna þurh Godes mildheortnesse myclum gelyhtað.<sup>25</sup>

The central element of this penitential practice is the formal expulsion from the church on Ash Wednesday and the episcopal absolution on Maundy Thursday. That the practice described by Wulfstan stems from the Roman system of canonical penance is clear, and *ordines* for public penance are extant in more than a few Anglo-Saxon liturgical texts (see below, pp. 140ff). Indeed, Anglo-Saxon liturgical books (such as have survived) seem much more concerned with the forms for this formal dismissal of the penitents on Ash Wednesday and the reconciliation on Maundy Thursday than with the application of the ashes, a ceremony that, most unlike public penance, apparently was intended for every Christian, as Ælfric's terrifying warnings concerning those who have spurned the ashes indicates. Of the liturgy for Lent, it is to public penance that critics of medieval drama look for the dramatic sensibilities demonstrated in the liturgy, and some of the most powerful sermons written for this time of year were those composed for this occasion by Wulfstan. However, discussion of public penance in Anglo-Saxon England is problematic, in no small part due to the conclusions set forth by many historians downplaying its role in England. Most famously, Watkins, in *A History of Penance*, asserted repeatedly and with vigour that "nowhere in the church of the English did the continental system of public penance and of public reconciliation by the bishop find actual observance at any time."<sup>26</sup> This overly broad dismissal of public penance in England has been qualified by later historians, but (for good reasons) the predisposition that public penance represents an archaic and largely unpractised custom even in post-Reform England, brought in by a few reformers as part of a general importation of Carolingian practices but drowned out by the Irish system of private penance, remains. Exacerbating this predisposition, despite the ample evidence for public penance in the liturgical manuscripts, references to public penance in vernacular preaching texts (apart

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<sup>25</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, pp. 234, 235.

<sup>26</sup> Oscar Watkins, *A History of Penance* (1920), p. 643.

from those of Wulfstan) are extremely rare. So what was the role of public penance in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, and how did its use correlate with the more general Lenten liturgy described by Ælfric? A brief history of public penance, and of the state of penance in Carolingian times, might to some degree clarify its place in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy and the ways in which Ælfric's more general liturgy was related to this ancient canonical practice.<sup>27</sup>

### Public Penance on the Continent

From the beginnings of the Christian Church, it has struggled with the question of what to do with those who sin after baptism. New Testament examples of Christians who commit serious sins show some harsh consequences (the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-10, struck dead for avarice, is perhaps the most dramatic), and some early factions, such as that inspired by Novatian and the Montanists, rejected the idea of post-baptismal reconciliation, at least for certain sins. The church was in constant danger of, in particular, apostasy, during the persecutions, and many in the church feared that allowing reconciliation might encourage those threatened with death or torture to forsake the faith. Early in the third century, Tertullian, after having turned to Montanism, argued in *De Pudicitia* that three sins,

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<sup>27</sup> The classic history of penance is Watkins'. For a brief description of public penance in the early church see Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1250, and Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy* (1997), pp. 55-8, 103-7. A more complete description with passages from early descriptions of public penance can be found in Watkins and in Robert Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance* (1939). For the interrelationship between private and public penance under the Irish system, see T.P. Oakley, *English Penitential Discipline* (1923) and Allen Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (1983). For a more sophisticated treatment of the state of Carolingian and Frankish penance, see De Jong, "What was public" and De Jong, "Pollution, Penance and Sanctity: Ekkehard's Life of Iso of St. Gall" in *The Community, the Family, and the Saint*, eds. Hill and Swan (1998), pp. 145-58, and Meens, "The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance". For further reading and sources, see also the bibliography provided by Meens. The following section is largely a summary drawn from these works. As most of the quotes in this section are taken from arguments made by these critics (especially Watkins, Mortimer, and Metzgar), I present them here in their translations, with references back to their works.



apostasy, murder, and adultery, were irremissible.<sup>28</sup> The mainstream church, however, had made provision for post-baptismal sinners, testified in the East in the mid-third century *Didascalia*, a Syrian text. From the beginning, the model for penance was the catechumenate, and penance was described as a second Baptism:

“As a heathen,” thus, “and as a publican” let [that one] be accounted by you who has been convicted of evil deed and of falsehood. And afterwards, if [the person] repent as in the case when the heathen desire and promise to repent, and say “we believe,” we receive them into the congregation that they may hear the word. But we do not communicate with them until they receive the seal and become perfected. Thus also do we not communicate with these until they show the fruits of repentance . . . And so as you baptize a heathen and receive [that one], so also lay the hand upon [this one] while everyone is praying . . . and then bring [the person] in and let [the person] communicate with the church.<sup>29</sup>

The Council of Nicaea in 325 formally established public penance, with reference to the Eastern system of penitential classes described a bit later by Basil the Great. Basil, discussing the penance for voluntary murder, sets forth a twenty-year penance:

For four years he ought to weep as a penitent of the first degree, standing outside the door of the house of prayer and asking the faithful to enter to pray for him, confessing his transgression. And after four years he will be received among the hearers (*auditores*) and for five years will go out with them. Then for seven years he will go out, praying with those in the rank of prostrates. For four years he will stand with the faithful, but will not receive Holy Communion. However after these have been completed he will partake of the sacraments.<sup>30</sup>

This graded system was called for in the Western church by Pope Felix III in 488, although it is doubtful whether the Western church ever regularly used such a system.

In 416, Pope Innocent I discussed more generally public penance in Rome (writing specifically about the necessity of granting reconciliation and Communion to dying penitents):

As for those who, either for grave sins or for lesser ones, are doing penance, one must, in the case of the persons in good health, reconcile them on the Thursday before Easter, according to the custom of the Roman church. As regards the

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<sup>28</sup> See Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Qtd. in Metzger, *History of the Liturgy*, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> Letter 217, qtd. in *Ibid.* p. 105.

appraisal of the gravity of their sins, it is up to the bishop or presbyter, who should also take into account the sinners' weeping and tears of repentance. It belongs to them to grant reconciliation when they are assured that the expiation is satisfactory.<sup>31</sup>

This penance was begun by a formal dismissal from the church, lasted anywhere from the duration of Lent to a lifetime, and ended, when the church had received satisfaction of true repentance (demonstrated by weeping), on Maundy Thursday. Generally, it was asserted that only a bishop could reconcile such penitents. The penance called for expulsion primarily from Communion, and by extension from the Church, either in stages or for the complete period. The penitents would be given a hairshirt (*cilicium*) and were to perform various acts signifying their sincerity in maintaining their reformed lives. Most importantly, public penance could only be performed once in a lifetime. To keep penitents from relapsing into sin, lifelong disabilities were applied. Former penitents could not marry, could not join the military, were generally barred from social occasions, and could not serve the church in any official capacity.

Public penance was not necessary for all sins. Of concern is what is referred to in 1 John 5:16 as "sin that is mortal," and Cyprian in the third century, followed by Augustine in the fourth, taught that 'everyday sins' could be forgiven by recitation of the Lord's Prayer and almsgiving. The passage in 1 John doesn't specify exactly what sin or sins it is discussing, and part of what concerned Tertullian in *De Pudicitia* was asserting that adultery was such a sin, and that as such those guilty of it should not be reconciled. Later, Augustine tried to define which sins required expiation by the Church using the list in Galatians 5:19-21 (NRSV):

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This list is problematic, for it includes sins that, as Augustine laments in the case of drunkenness, were so common that many did not even consider them sins, certainly not sins

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<sup>31</sup> Qtd. in Ibid. p. 103.

serious enough to warrant the rigours of public penance. More generally, Augustine says in *De Symbolo ad Catechumenos* 8. 16, discussing the Creed, that ‘light’ sins (as opposed to ‘scelera, aut adulteria, aut aliqua facta immania’) could be expiated by prayer,

Baptism is for all sins. For light sins, without which we cannot be, there is prayer. What prayer? “Forgive us our trespasses. . . .” Once only are we washed in Baptism: but daily are we washed by prayer. But those sins for which it is necessary that you be separated from the body of Christ, do not commit them. No. For those whom you see doing penance, have committed crimes, adultery or some dreadful deed. Therefore are they doing penance. For if their sins had been light, then would the daily prayer have been enough. Therefore in three ways are sins remitted in the Church -- by baptism, by prayer, and by the greater humility of penance.<sup>32</sup>

This lack of specificity concerning which sins are not ‘light’ sins is telling. In Sermon 56, on the line in the Lord’s Prayer “forgive us our debts, as we too forgive our debtors,” Augustine discusses these two types of sin, and the two types of expiation:

Almsgiving and prayer clean out sins -- provided such ones are not committed as require us to be excluded from the daily bread, provided we avoid the sort of debts that deserve sure and severe condemnation . . . Keep yourselves, of course, from idolatry, from consulting astrologers, from relying on spells for cures; avoid heretical errors and schismatical divisions; refrain, naturally, from murder, from adultery and fornication, from theft and robbery, from bearing false witness, and any other sins I don’t actually mention, which have fatal results, so that you have to be cut off from the altar . . .<sup>33</sup>

While asserting in Chapter 70 of the *Encheiridion* that none of the crimes mentioned in Galatians can be dismissed as venial,<sup>34</sup> Augustine provides a way out, revealing the weakness in the system that caused its eventual lapse. In *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 83.26,<sup>35</sup> he tells us that sins can be inspired “by ignorance, by weakness, or by wickedness,” and that only those with an element of wickedness require public penance. By submitting the list of sins in

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<sup>32</sup> Tr. Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, Sermon 56,12. Edmund Hill, tr. *The Works of Saint Augustine*, v. 3 (1990), p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> “Let no one suppose that those dreadful crimes for which their perpetrators shall not inherit the kingdom of God, may be committed every day, and every day be expiated by almsgiving.” Tr. Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, p. 78.

<sup>35</sup> See Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, p. 63.

Galatians to such a subjective standard, Augustine allowed certain sins, even ‘mortal’ sins, to be expiated without resorting to a practice that would impose lifelong disabilities.

Augustine’s mercy here is entirely practical, for the strictness of the system kept many from confessing. In the sixth century in the West, Caesarius (while lamenting that public penance was not practised as regularly as it should be) said that public penance was not to be expected of young married men or of those in the military, for the disabilities would have ruined them, and Christian missionaries realized that imposing such a strict system of penance on new converts would not unlikely scare many away. These concerns led to the downfall of the system of public penance and left the door open for the newly emerging system of private penance developed in Ireland and spread through the influence of Columbanus and other prominent Irish missionaries.

Watkins summarizes the reduced state of public penance in Gaul by the time of Caesarius, discussing the extreme disabilities called for in Western canons of the time, inspiring sinners to ignore calls to penance.<sup>36</sup> In Sermon 262, Caesarius is trying to encourage people to undergo public penance for their own spiritual health. After assuring that minor sins can be expiated by good deeds and almsgiving, he explains when public penance is necessary:

But if any on questioning his conscience find that he has committed some capital offence, as if he have broken down and betrayed his faith by false witness, or violated the sacred name of truth by the temerity of perjury; if he have stained by the filth of polluted modesty the true tunic of baptism and the lovely silken robe of virginity; if by homicide he have slain the new man in himself; if by augurs, and soothsayers, and enchanterers, he have delivered himself captive to the devil; such acts and the like cannot be entirely expiated by common and ordinary or by secret satisfaction, but grave cases call for remedies which are grave and drastic and at the same time public; so that he who has ruined himself to the destruction of many is in like manner to redeem himself to the edification of many.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 553.

<sup>37</sup> Tr. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 554.

It is noteworthy that Augustine, while qualifying the list of sins that require penance, made no distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ sins. He did say, in sermon 82 (10), that “those sins . . . are to be rebuked in front of everybody which are committed in front of everybody [and] those which are committed less publicly are to be rebuked less publicly,”<sup>38</sup> but he did not indicate that the private sinner would be for that any more exempt from public penance than the open sinner, only from public rebuke.<sup>39</sup> Although the above exhortation to public penance by Caesarius does not say that private sins would be exempt, its focus is on those sins that led to “the destruction of many.” This focus eventually became a common compromise between the public and private systems of penance.

The ‘private’ system propagated by the Irish and represented in the penitentials covered all sins, allowed for more discrete penances, could be repeated, and could be administered by any priest. Certain penances imposed by priests could have a public nature, such as the relinquishment of arms or the imposition of a pilgrimage, and such penances could encompass the forty days of Lent, but they were by no means as strict as the ancient system, and they allowed for a full and complete reconciliation. The benefits of such a system are obvious, as are the drawbacks. Many high-ranking churchmen, especially bishops, were wary of the newer system, criticizing the inconsistencies of the penitentials, the ignorance of priests, and the dangers of relapse in easily repeatable penance. The centuries up to and including the Carolingian era were characterised by fierce penitential debates. In 589, the Third Council of Toledo, dealing with the return of Arian heretics in Spain, issued a series of strongly conservative canons condemning private expiation of priests and exhorting adherence to the canonical penitential system:

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<sup>38</sup> Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, p. 375.

<sup>39</sup> By public rebuke he does not seem to imply public confession, for he explains how rebuking adulterers from the pulpit constitutes public rebuke without singling out sinners in front of everyone. Such sinners might undergo public penance without anyone knowing what they have done. Most critics doubt that public confession was ever an accepted practice in early public penance, and in 461 Pope Leo the Great forbade reading the list of sins in public.

Can.11 -- Whereas we understand that in certain churches of the Spains men do penance for their sins not according to canon, but in most offensive wise [fædisime], in such sort that so often as it pleases them to sin, so often they demand of the priest to be reconciled: and accordingly for the suppression of so execrable a presumption, it is commanded by the holy council that penances be given in accordance with the plan of the ancient canons, that is, that first (the priest) shall require him who repents of his deed, having been suspended from communion, to make among the other penitents frequent recurrence to the imposition of hands; and that when the period of satisfaction is fulfilled to the approval of the priest's judgment, he restores him to communion. But as regards those who relapse into their former sins whether within the time of penance or after reconciliation, let then be condemned according to the severity of the earlier canons . . . [Can. 12] for oftentimes by the careless according of Penance to the lay-people they fall back again into their deplorable offences after the reception of Penance.<sup>40</sup>

Such condemnations are repeated throughout Western Christendom, and testify more to the newfound prevalence of the private system of penance that inspired them than to any consistency in public penance. The penance set forth by this council is a fairly stripped-down version of that described by the Councils of Nicaea and by Basil the Great, specifying only its key elements, the suspension of communion, the shaving of heads,<sup>41</sup> the imposition of hands (a Lenten practice for public penitents parallel to, and perhaps concurrent with, the pre-baptismal scrutinies for catechumens), and the reconciliation. Most deplorable to the authors of this canon is repeatable penance for these serious sins, and this point marks the key distinction between the two systems in this period.

In the mid-seventh century, the Merovingian bishop Eligius described public penance as something still regular. In his Sermon 6, however, in speaking to all Christians, not just those being reconciled, he reveals one of the effects of the spread of private penance:

And inasmuch as this sacred festival of the Cœna Domini has in itself many mysteries, so in particular is this so for penitents, for whom it is seen to be their only refuge (confugium unicum) to the Lord. And not only for those doing public

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<sup>40</sup> Tr. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 567.

<sup>41</sup> Other exhortations to public penance (including that of Isidore of Seville), especially later, demanded that penitents refrain from shaving. Canon 12 of the Third Council of Toledo demands that men be shaved and women change their attire. What is important is that the penitent look distinct.

penance, but also for all Christians, because although the Church has not openly cast us forth from herself as she has cast those forth, yet the whole life of a Christian ought to consist ever in penitence and compunction.<sup>42</sup>

The conflation of all Christians under the term ‘penitents’ is important here. In sermon 15, while distinctly speaking first to the broad congregation and then distinctly to public penitents, he exhorts all, even those in the first category who find themselves contaminated with serious sins, to confess to and seek peace with God. It is as private penance came to dominate the church that the ideas of ‘penitents’ and ‘congregation’ came to be synonymous.

In the ninth century the Carolingian church took steps to codify its liturgical practices according to the Roman model. It is during this period, early critics asserted, that the private and public systems were synthesized, giving the Anglo-Saxons a workable model. It is doubtful, however, that these two system of penance ever found a full and consistent synthesis in practice, although there were attempts. By the time of the reform councils of 813, private penance had taken firm hold, apparently to the detriment of public penance, and to the frustration of bishops and church councils. As Frantzen reminds us, the bishops were in favour of private penance in theory, for they set forth commands that every priest be prepared to hear confessions.<sup>43</sup> Penitentials provided the normal means of penance, a fact that, because of their inconsistencies, spurred a good deal of condemnation on the part of bishops, along with numerous efforts (notably that of Halitgar) to provide an authoritative, workable, and consistent penitential to satisfy these critics. It is unclear exactly to what extent these penitentials suppressed the practice of public penance. In making its recommendations to the upcoming assembly at Aachen in 813, the Council of Châlon-sur-Saone in Burgundy (under the influence of Theodulf of Orléans) called for public penance:

The performance of penance according to the ancient institution of the canons has gone out of use in very many places, nor is the order of reconciliation of the ancient custom preserved. Accordingly, let assistance be sought from the Lord Emporer, so that whosoever shall publicly sin shall be punished by public penance, and shall

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<sup>42</sup> Tr. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 577.

<sup>43</sup> Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, pp. 94ff.

according to the order of the canons be excommunicated and reconciled, as his deserts require.<sup>44</sup>

The 813 Councils of Tours and Rhiems, however, seem to be concerned only with the problems of the inconsistent penitentials, and that of Mainz is equally silent concerning public penance. Therefore, while the central assembly at Aachen did adopt a suggestion from Arles that public sinners do public penance, (avoiding making any definite statement concerning private penance and the penitentials), there is no sense of a ‘grand unified theory’ of penance. Throughout the ninth century, councils called for public penance for public crimes, and condemned the penitentials, while at the same time some bishops, recognizing the dominance of private penance, attempted to revise the penitentials.

In 852, a synod of Mainz set forth this solution for incest:

If any have secretly committed incest, and have made confession secretly to the priest, he is to be informed of the canonical remedy, which he would have had to undergo, if his deed had been public: but because what he has done is unknown, let counsel be given to him by the priest, and let him provide for the salvation of his soul by secret penance: that is to say, let him repent truly from his heart that he has gravely sinned, and let him hasten to purge himself by fastings and vigils and by holy prayers with tears, and so let him trust that he will attain to the hope of pardon by the mercy of God.<sup>45</sup>

Public penance here is more a threat than a reality. It was certainly practised in some way, as the forms and instructions in the Gelasian Sacramentary (and to a much lesser extent the Gregorian) indicate, but it is less clear than it might seem how and when it would have been administered. As Meens cautions, “we do not know . . . how these late antique canons were interpreted and used in Carolingian times. At any rate it does not seem plausible to view such texts as a self-evident reflection of ninth-century practice.”<sup>46</sup> While the above canon seems to hold to the now-established code of public penance for public crimes and private penance for private sins, the so-called ‘Carolingian dichotomy,’ the following canon provided for one

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<sup>44</sup> Canon 25. Tr. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 674.

<sup>45</sup> Canon 10, qtd. in Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 711.

<sup>46</sup> Meens, “The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance”, p. 20.



guilty of murder in a public brawl a seven-year penance on the models established in the penitentials. Halitgar's penitential, written c. 830, represents an ambitious attempt to reconcile the two systems based on conservative authority.<sup>47</sup> He calls for public penance, "apparently recommending the former for serious offenses but also allowing these to be confessed privately."<sup>48</sup> He also provides an *ordo confessionis* for private penance, with forms based on orders for public reconciliation in the Bobbio Missal and the Gelasian Sacramentary. While giving public penance an honorary position, the fact that even offenses that should have required public penance could be handled privately may indicate the preferences of priests and sinners to rely on the private system instead of the public humiliation.

Mayke de Jong warns us that appreciation of formal public penance is "better known from the liturgical *ordines* and idealised precepts than descriptions of actual practice. The latter are surprisingly rare."<sup>49</sup> The best description of public penance, which seems to conform to its traditional elements, is that of Louis the Pious in 833, which as de Jong demonstrates was driven by intense political concerns, so that "the bishops had very good reasons to conduct proceedings entirely by the book." Their account is, therefore, exceptional rather than illustrative of common penitential practice. The 'Carolingian dichotomy' was "a theoretical model with rather elusive practical implications,"<sup>50</sup> defined in councils and episcopal ordinances in an attempt to "classify a disorderly reality." A late witness to this 'disorderly reality' is perhaps the penitential account of Iso's parents in Ekkehard's eleventh-

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<sup>47</sup> See Halitgarius Cameracensis, *De vitiis et virtutibus* (Migne, PL 105, 651 ff) and *Liber poenitentialis*, PL 105, 693ff.

<sup>48</sup> Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, p. 105.

<sup>49</sup> De Jong, "What was public", p. 865.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 866.

century Life of the saint.<sup>51</sup> The couple, guilty of intercourse on Easter Saturday (because of which the saint is conceived), lament their sin to their entire household, making it a public scandal. They confess straightaway to their priest, who instructs them to wear sackcloth and ashes, to wait outside the threshold of the church for a night and a day, and to abstain from Easter communion (they are eventually given communion by an angel in the guise of a neighbouring priest). The penance described in Ekkehard's Life seems to delineate an adaptation of public penance. There is no bishop present, and the penance lasts only a short time, but the central elements of public penance have been usurped and the ritual watered down into something else. Meens asserts that "we could see the ritual portrayed so well by Ekkehard as an illustration of the evolution from the Carolingian dichotomy to a later tripartite stage, where a 'less solemn form of penance', the *paenitentia minus sollemnis*, was formally introduced."<sup>52</sup> The 'tripartite' penance to which Meens refers was not expressed formally until the twelfth century, but surely the sort of compromise seen in Ekkehard is part of its origins. De Jong summarizes the state of penitential practice for the Carolingians:

... the notion of "scandal" demanding some kind of public *satisfactio* was a fundamental one in Carolingian society, but for this very reason the divide between public and occult penance was not so tidy as ecclesiastical legislation made it out to be. In theory, priests had to ferret out candidates for public penance, presenting them to the bishop who would then perform the proper ritual; in practice, however, sins which caused public offense could lead to more informal and improvised rituals of atonement. Ekkehard's story about Iso's parents is an interesting case in point.<sup>53</sup>

Through the history of public penance, from Augustine to the Carolingians, we see those to whom the keys were entrusted fighting to hold onto an untenable and popularly undesirable system. It was important to put before the faithful a disincentive against serious crimes, and especially in times of hardship, or challenges to the church, public penance has been called

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<sup>51</sup> See de Jong, "Pollution, Penance, and Sanctity" for translation and discussion of the penitential account.

<sup>52</sup> Meens, "The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance", p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> De Jong, "Pollution, Penance, and Sanctity", p. 150.

for. Such was the case during the persecutions, and in Toledo in 589 with the danger of Arian heresy and the threat of easy, repeatable penance. Such was also the case for the Carolingians, with the threat of irresponsible penance based on weak penitentials. The burden of public penance, however, has from the beginning been too frightening to be applied for long without compromises. Augustine compromised by allowing for a subjective standard of guilt to lessen the call for public penance, while the Carolingians, in allowing private sins of any nature to be exempt, asserted the necessity, for the spiritual health of the church, to require public penance for at least certain heinous crimes against the more attractive means of expiation via the penitentials in the hands of priests. The Carolingian solutions, rather than setting forth a workable synthesis of two competing systems, managed to maintain public penance as at least a threat, and a potential remedy for the most serious public crimes (a designation that was losing definition). Permutations like that in Ekkehard perhaps demonstrate a practical compromise between the need for serious disincentives and the realities of pastoral care.

### **Anglo-Saxon Penance**

This brings us to the question of public penance in Anglo-Saxon England. Classically, histories of penance have polarized the ideas of 'public' and 'private' penance into the struggle between the Roman and the Irish churches for dominance in Western Europe. England, for Watkins, was the champion of the Irish cause, strengthening through the Anglo-Saxon missionaries the acceptance of private penance on the continent after its establishment by Columbanus and others. The idea of public penance in England is for Watkins untenable. Watkins realizes that the church in England at the time was fundamentally of Roman persuasion, hearkening back more to its first Roman Archbishop Augustine than to the Irish in the North and West, and its liturgy has generally been described as far more 'Roman' than 'Celtic' or 'Gallican' (although with the dearth of liturgical

materials before the Reform it is uncertain to what extent the Reform ‘romanized’ the English liturgy). However, for Watkins, the Irish-Roman tension that overshadowed the rest of the English church, and that was at the heart of the continental debates over penance, was never an issue in England regarding penance. He insists that “The missionaries in England, for reasons which doubtless seemed to them sufficient, in introducing the ordinances of the Christian Church into England, at no time established the continental system of public penance, and of public reconciliation by the bishop, which were in England from the first utterly unknown.”<sup>54</sup> Even if we can accept that Augustine and his followers would have ignored public penance, one might imagine that Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury from 668 and raised in the Eastern Church, would have brought his knowledge of it with him. But it is from the Penitential that bears Theodore’s name (put together in the early eighth century by a “Discipulus Umbrensius” supposedly in response to questions posed before the archbishop by a subordinate, Eoda) that Watkins finds support for his dismissal of public penance in England:

### XIII. Of Reconciliation

1. The Romans reconcile a man within the apse; but the Greeks will not do this.
2. The reconciliation of penitents in the Lord’s Supper is by the bishops only -- and the penance is ended.
3. If it is difficult for the bishop, he can, for the sake of necessity, confer authority on a presbyter, to perform this.
4. Reconciliation is not publicly established in this province [in hac provincia], for the reason that there is no public penance either.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever the meaning of “in hac provincia,” clear evidence of public penance in the English church before the time of Theodore, and for some time thereafter, is not to be found. Other passages in Theodore lead Oakley to speculate as to whether Theodore was trying to introduce public penance. In several places, the penitential seems to refer to exclusion from the church-building as a penance. In canon v, the penitential prescribes for heretics “four

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<sup>54</sup> Watkins, *A History of Penance*, p. 537.

<sup>55</sup> Gamer and McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 195. See also Haddan and Stubbs, eds. *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, v. 3 (1878), p. 187.

years outside the church, six years among the ‘auditores’ and two more without communion; or, in another place, three years outside the church, seven years in the church among the penitents and two years more without communion.”<sup>56</sup> If this can be taken as a reference to public penance, it is a surprising one, as the use of penitential classes was never in regular use in the West, and may stem from Theodore’s Eastern influence, either in instituting some elements of public penance or in using his familiarity with it as a model for constructing penances for use in the private system.

There is no clear reference to public penance before the time of the Dialogue of Egbert, c. 750-760.<sup>57</sup> In Response 15, the Dialogue forbids those who have undergone public penance from taking Holy Orders, and requires it for certain sins:

The ordination of a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon is said to be valid when the following conditions obtain: if he is shown to be stained by no serious offense; if he has not a second wife nor one left by a [former] husband; if he has not undergone public penance, and if he does not seem defective in any part of his body . . . such a man we elect to be elevated to the priesthood. For the following crimes, indeed, we say that no one may be ordained, but that some who have been elevated are to be deposed: namely, those who worship idols; those who through soothsayers and diviners and enchanterers give themselves over as captives to the devil; those who destroy their faith with false witness; those defiled with murders or acts of fornication; perpetrators of thefts; violators of the sacred name of truth by the insolence of perjury. These, moreover, except through public penance must not be admitted to obtain the grace of communion nor to recover the honor of their former dignity; for it is alien to the Church that penitents should minister the sacred things, who were lately vessels of wickedness.<sup>58</sup>

Gamer and McNeill, while applying caution to this evidence, believe that the passage “probably should be taken as recording the compiler’s vote for public penance in the cases indicated.”<sup>59</sup> In any case, the presence of it here may indicate some knowledge of public penance as at least a threat against certain heinous sins. Speculations concerning the presence

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<sup>56</sup> See Oakley, *English Penitential Discipline*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>57</sup> See Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> Gamer and McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 239-40. See also Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, v. 3, p. 410.

<sup>59</sup> Gamer and McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 240, n. 8.

of public penance before the tenth century are severely hampered by the lack of liturgical witnesses for this period. This is not an argument against it, for we have no substantive liturgical witnesses to much before the tenth century. Further, the fact that it does not come up in many early discussions of or references to penance is not entirely surprising, for we see the same silence in many eleventh-century texts (most notably Ælfric's Lenten discussions of penance), when public penance was certainly part of the liturgical landscape. Much more so than was the case for the Carolingians, the penitential system of England was always fundamentally a private one, modelled after the Irish monastic system. Still, as Frantzen points out, public penance, in some form, seems to have been known even in the early Irish church. Pointing to apparent references to it in the Bobbio Missal (from a continental monastery founded by Irish missionaries) and the Stowe Missal (from Ireland itself), as well as a reference in the penitential of Columbanus calling penitents the "lowest rank of Christians" and demanding reconciliation by a bishop, Frantzen concludes that "Evidently public penance served the same purpose in early Ireland as it had elsewhere: it maintained the purity of the community and deterred the faithful from committing serious sins . . . The Irish monks not only invented the penitential for private confession and penance, but constructed a system in which both public and private forms of reconciliation were applied."<sup>60</sup> It is not unfathomable that Augustine and Theodore would have abandoned public penance on their respective arrivals in England, for the mandate given Augustine, and maintained throughout the Anglo-Saxon reforms, was to take what seemed best of local customs and combine them as seen fit, and perhaps when given the choice between the ancient, canonical system and the more attractive Irish system, Theodore and others familiar with continental practice regularly chose the latter. However, with the awareness of a public penance evident both in Ireland and in Egbert, it seems not unreasonable to imagine that its role in pre-tenth-century England was similar to that seen by Frantzen amongst the Irish, whereby public penance was known, at least as a threat, as an ancient disincentive against serious crimes.

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<sup>60</sup> Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, p. 52.

At least from the tenth century, we have evidence of an awareness of and interest in Carolingian public penance in adaptations of Halitgar's penitential. The Old English Penitential commonly called 'pseudo-Egbert' (referred to simply as the "Penitential" by Frantzen),<sup>61</sup> extant in three eleventh-century manuscripts and consisting in part of loosely-translated material from Halitgar, describes a ritual for public penance known 'across the sea.' Raith supplies the relevant bits from Halitgar along with the Old English text, and a comparison perhaps reveals a distinction between Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon appreciation of public penance. I will present the Old English text with Raith's Latin excerpts below. After instructing that both bishops and priests should judge penitents mercifully, the Pseudo-Egbert Penitential delineates the role of each, and then describes the procedure for dealing with those who have sinned gravely:

11. Be þam þe se mæssepreost þæne dædbetan underfon ne mot butan bisceopes leafan, butan he þone bisceop geræcean ne mæge. -- a) Þam sacerde gedafenað soðlice, þæt he geornlice asmeage ymbe þæra manna sawle þearfe þe him æt bote seceað, hu he hy rihtlocost getrymman mæge to godes willan 7 to heora sawle þearfe, 7 him bote tæce a be þæs gyltes mæðe. b) 7 gif þa gyltas to þam hefelice beon þæt he <to> bisceopes dome tæcan þurfe, tæce him þider; forþam sanctus Agustinus cwæð on oðre stowe, þæt gif hwa mid heafodlicum synnum gebunden wære, þæt man him to bisceopes dome tæcean sceolde; 7 gif he bisceop geræcean ne mæge, þæt se mæssepreost æt þam þingum þæne bisceop aspelian mote.

. . . [12] a) þas þeawas man healt begeondan sæ mid cristenum folce: þæt is þæt ælc bisceop bið æt his biscopstole on þæne wodnesdæg þe we cweðað caput ieiunium ær lenctene; þonne ælc þære manna þe mid heafodleahtra besmiten bið on þære scire sceal on þæne dæg him to cuman 7 his synna him andettan, 7 he þonne him tæcð heora synna bote ælcum be þæs gyltes mæðe; þa ðe þæs wyrðe beoð he asyndreð of cyriclican gemanan, 7 hi ðeah to heora agenre þearfe hyrteð 7 tihteð; 7 <hi> swa þonne be his leafe ham hwyrfað; 7 eft on þæne þunres dæg ær easton to þære ylcan stowe ealle gesamniað, 7 heom se bisceop ofer singð 7 forgifenesse deð, 7 hy swa ham hwyrfað mid þæs bisceopes bletsunge. b) Þis is þus healdenne eallum cristenum folce; 7 þeh hwæðere sceal se sacerd geornlice smeagean, mid hwylcere anbryrdnesse 7 mid hwylcere fulfremednesse se dædbeta gebet hæbbe þæt him getæht wæs, 7 swa him be þam forgifenesse do.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, pp. 133-4 for a discussion of the pseudo-Egbertian "Confessional" and "Penitential" and the problem of "what exactly is being claimed for Egbert here" in the preceding MS *incipit*.

<sup>62</sup> Josef Raith, ed. *Die altenglische version des Halitgar'schen bussbuches* (1933), pp. 9-11 (Latin taken by Raith from Halitgarius, *De vitiis et virtutibus*, Book III): "[11] a) De

A slightly shorter version of this passage appears in the late tenth-century “Handbook for the Use of a Confessor”, edited by Fowler.<sup>63</sup> The Handbook, believes Frantzen, constitutes “new and decidedly English ground . . . apparent in almost every aspect of the work.”<sup>64</sup> Already in the Pseudo-Egbert Penitential, however, we can see creative use of continental sources. In the above selection from Halitgar’s Penitential (11a), he instructs that those who have sinned publicly, in such a way that the whole church is troubled (*commoverit*), be referred to the bishop, and that the priest may not reconcile such sinners unless the bishop cannot by necessity be present. Halitgar’s interest here is in the reconciliation, and he goes on to give directions for a priest to determine whether a penitent has shown satisfaction and can be reconciled. Presumably, this passage is addressed to priests who must stand in for the bishop because the bishop cannot be there. Most interestingly, the sins involved could be ‘more grave’ or ‘lighter’ sins, the determining factor being whether or not they were public. This is in line with the much attested ‘Carolingian dichotomy’, and was the general theoretical rule. The Old English instructions, however, have a different focus, and take much greater care to codify the penitential principals. According to statute 11, it is first of all the priest’s job to examine all under his care and to apply fit penance. If, however, the crime seems to be ‘too

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pœnitentibus ut a presbyteris non reconcilientur nisi precipiente episcopo. . . . Ut pœnitentibus secundum differentiam peccatorum episcopi arbitrio pœnitentie tempora decernantur et ut presbyter inconsulto episcopo non reconciliet pœnitentem nisi absentia episcopi necessitate cogente. Cujuscumque autem pœnitentis publicum et vulgatissimum crimen est. quod universam ecclesiam commoverit, ante absidam manus ei imponatur. b) . . . Aurelius episcopus dixit: Si quisquam in periculo fuerit constitutus et se reconciliari divinis altaribus petierit, si episcopus absens fuerit debet utique presbyter consulere episcopum et sic periclitantem ejus precepto reconciliare.

[12] . . . De pœnitentibus autem, qui sive ex gravioribus commissis sive ex levioribus pœnitentium gerunt, [si nulla interveniat egritudo] quinta feria ante pascha eis remittendum romane ecclesie consuetudo demonstrat. Ceterum de pondere estimando delictorum sacerdotis est judicare, ut attendat ad confessionem pœnitentis et ad fletus atque lacrimas corrigentis ac tum jubere dimitti, cum viderit congruam satisfactionem . . .”

<sup>63</sup> Fowler, Roger, ed. “A Late Old English Handbook for the Use of a Confessor”, *Anglia* 83 (1965), pp. 1-34.

<sup>64</sup> Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, p. 139.



high,' he may refer the penitent to the bishop. The following quote from Augustine further defines such sins as "heafodlicum synnum," capital sins, and there is no question of its public nature. If the bishop is unreachable, the priest may himself stand for the bishop in the rite. Statute 12 gives more detail about the timing and about the roles of the bishop and the priest over Lent in respect to the penitent. Each bishop is to be at his cathedral on Ash Wednesday, where those guilty of "heafodleahre" will come to him, referred by their local priests, and confess. The bishop then determines who is in need of public penance, and these are cast out of the churchly community, and go home. On Maundy Thursday, they return to the cathedral, where the bishop 'sings over them' and absolves them. Pseudo-Egbert concludes its account of public penance by asserting that the priest must make certain that the penitent is following his penance. The shift in focus from Halitgar to the Old English text is striking. A set of instructions for priests who must stand in for bishops in the reconciliation has been expanded to codify the relative roles of bishop and priest in determining and enforcing penance for 'capital sins'. What is most remarkable is the way that the role of the priest here so smoothly seems to fit within his normal method of prescribing tariffed penance. Rather than representing a distinct penitential system, separated by the Carolingian principal of public penance for public sins and secret penance for secret sins, public penance is here presented as a penitential option, applied by discretion in accordance with the seriousness of the sin. Although the translator asserts that this practice is one observed by Christians 'beyond the sea,' what we really get here is quite distinct, and represents either a reinterpretation of continental practice in accord with local traditions (such that the reference to 'beyond the sea' is a means of demonstrating that the ritual has authority) or the integration of an ancient practice into the English system. While Carolingian penance was fundamentally canonical, and was attempting to reconcile the new and distrusted books of penitential tariffs, the English system was fundamentally private, and whether or not public penance, in the form recognized in Halitgar, was imported in the tenth century, it was re-translated as an option in a broader penitential spectrum, with no sense of discontinuity here between 'public' and

‘private’ forms. In fact, there is in the Old English no indication that this practice represents a distinct system. There is no explicit mention of anything ‘public,’ and the presentation of the material here makes it simply a possible spiritual remedy for high sins, one which involves being ‘asundered from the churchly community.’

However, the relationship between this type of penance and the tariffed system is not as smooth as the passage in Pseudo-Egbert implies. In principle, as described above, this type of penance is called for in the case of those “mid heafodleahltre besmiten bið.” This is in accordance with the ancient formula, and the reference to St. Augustine preceding this passage, specifying that those “mid healicum synnum” be referred to the bishop, connects it with the ancient standard of public penance for any capital sin. Augustine himself, however, had difficulty defining exactly what that meant in terms of public penance, and the usage here is even more suspect. Immediately following this passage, both in Pseudo-Egbert and in the “Handbook,” are prescriptions for private penance for such crimes as murder, fornication, perjury, and so forth. The prescriptions do distinguish between types of guilt (accidental, by ignorance, by necessity, etc), and many crimes of the worst kind call for excommunication, either as a threat against refusal to do penance or an absolute rule, but nowhere in the rest of these texts is public penance referred to as a prescription or an alternative for any of the “heafodleahtras” treated. Of course, it must be said that the nature and intended use of penitentials in general did not demand any sort of clean synthesis, which is why penitentials with inconsistent or contradictory prescriptions could be lumped together. The Penitential was a guide to be taken with a tremendous grain of salt, and all that their compilers could realistically hope for was to present alternatives and principles for the imposition of penance, to be resolved by the discretion of the individual priest. As such, a priest using the Pseudo-Egbert or the “Handbook”, confronted with a repentant murderer, could ascertain the circumstances of the crime and prescribe a private penance of some sort, or, if he deemed that the crime was of a certain nature, or that it would be especially salutary to the sinner, could refer the case to the bishop. The inclusion of instructions for public penance here may

represent an alternative, an attempt to spread awareness of an ancient remedy that might be useful.

Certainly, the ‘Carolingian dichotomy’ was known to the Anglo-Saxons. Wulfstan’s ‘commonplace book’ has several passages describing public penance in Carolingian terminology.<sup>65</sup> The description in the Pseudo-Egbert, on the other hand (partly because its focus is on making priests aware of their role in the system), gives no indication of a ‘public humiliation.’ There is, however, a description of an ‘open penance’ for canons in the translated Rule of Chrodegang that seems to reflect the basic elements of public penance.

After a guilty canon has confessed,

þonne he ut of þam cwearterne gange, gif þam bisceope ⁊ þam ealdre þince, do he þonne gyt opene dædbote, þæt is þæt he beo ascyred fram cyrcan ⁊ fram broðra gereorde ⁊ fram eallum tidsangum, ⁊ cume to cyrcan dura, þær se ealdor bebeode, ⁊ licge þær astreht eallum lichaman ætforan þære dura oð ealle ofer hine inn beon agangen, ⁊ syððan arise ⁊ stande up butan cyrcan dura, ⁊ gefylle þar his þeowdom be þam þe he mage. . . . Endebyrdnys þæs þe deð opene dædbo(te) þæt is: þu underfoh hine on Wodnesdæg onforan Lencgten, þæt is on *caput ieiunii*, ⁊ oferþece hine mid hæran, ⁊ gebide for hine, ⁊ beclys hine oð an þunresdæg ær Easton, þæt is *Cena Domini*.<sup>66</sup>

This practice involves the consultation with the bishop (although it is not clear who is doing the expelling and the reconciling), the expulsion from the church, the expression of that at services by standing outside of the church threshold (after, interestingly, being stepped over by the others), the hairshirt, and the time-frame of Ash Wednesday to Lent. The direction that the penitent be enclosed (“beclys”) during this time is striking, although Mayke de Jong has discussed the close Carolingian relationship between public penance and monastic exile.<sup>67</sup> Even more so than for the Carolingians, it is unclear to what degree Anglo-Saxons

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, the passages printed by Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics* from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 190.

<sup>66</sup> A. S. Napier, ed. *The Old English Version of the Rule of Chrodegang* (1916), pp. 36, 37. The phrase “open e dædbote” is found only once outside the translated Rule of Chrodegang, in HomS 9 (Cameron number B3.2.9), an unpublished homily for Ash Wednesday in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 190, discussed below, pp. 163ff.

<sup>67</sup> See De Jong, “What was public”, pp. 871ff.

understood or held to the elements of public penance, ancient or Carolingian. While Pseudo-Egbert attempts to delineate the roles of bishop and priest, these instructions show a permutation of the ritual, adapted to the specific needs of canons, who mimic monastic life and would as a consequence value a form of public penance, or of “opene dædbote,” that rests somewhere between the principles of lay exclusion and monastic enclosure for serious sins. As it might likely be quite common that a bishop might prove unreachable, or that the priest might decide, given the discretion offered him in the “Penitential,” to resolve matters himself, we might imagine in the Anglo-Saxon penitential spectrum a wide range of practices resting somewhere between ‘public’ and ‘private’ penance, akin to the middle ground described by Meens and evident in Ekkehard’s *Life*.

This style of compromise is, however, hard to see in vernacular discussions of penance for capital crimes, as public penance, as a threat or a reality, is almost universally ignored. The word ‘heafodleahtras’ is often explained in terms of one of the lists of eight capital sins, most commonly that of Cassian.<sup>68</sup> Most often, ‘heafodleahtras’ is used in reference to the ‘eahta heafodleahtras,’ and corresponds to the eight capital sins (with some variation in the lists), although at times it gets mixed with the more general ‘unpeawas.’ Besides the lists of the eight deadly sins can be found longer lists in the model set forth in Galatians 5:20 (perhaps mixed with the sins mentioned in Exodus 20:13 and other such lists), whereby general concepts such as ‘anger’ and ‘pride’ are intermixed with sins that indicate specific permutations of those concepts.<sup>69</sup> Ælfric discusses many of these permutations as ‘children’ of the capital sins. In his Second Series sermon for Midlent Sunday, he describes the eight “heafodleahtras” as the eight (seven plus one) nations overcome by the Israelites:

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<sup>68</sup> See Morton Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1952).

<sup>69</sup> See for example the list in a homily printed by Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 159, as a variant of Vercelli IX. This passage, despite the fact that it says that it will present the “eahta heafodleahtra”, gives us a more general list, including “oformodnes 7 manslæhtas 7 mæne aðas, unrihthæmed, morðor 7 gitsunga, lease gewitnessa, nið 7 yrre, stala 7 tælnessa 7 drycræftas.”

þas eahta heafodleahtras fordoð and geniðeriað þa unwæran. into helle wite; Hit is gecweden þæt se ealda israhel oferwann seofon ðeoda. eahteoðe wæs pharao. ac hi oferwunnon micele ma þonne ðær genamode wæron. swa eac ælc ðyssera heafodleahtra hæfð micelne team. ac gif we ða modru acwellað. þonne beoð heora bearn ealle adydde.<sup>70</sup>

The assertion that these sins cause the unwary to be cast into the punishment of hell aligns them with the list of sins described in Galatians, sins because of which people could not enter the kingdom of Heaven. As such, these are the sins that traditionally, in Augustine's model, required public penance. It is interesting to see often in the exhortations of Ælfric and Wulfstan an evident frustration in certain sins that were not taken very seriously, in particular drunkenness, the same sin that frustrated Augustine in the fourth century. It is not surprising to see no specific calls for public penance for such sins. What is surprising is the near-complete lack of reference in non-Wulfstanian homilies to public penance for any sin. The Blickling and Vercelli homilists and Ælfric all outline these capital sins, and frequently discuss the most serious ones, and never openly suggest public penance as a remedy. In Vercelli III, after outlining seven "heafodleahtras," the homilist describes the accepted mode of confession (translating from a Latin penitential homily that had quite a strong distribution in England, based in part on the *Capitula* of Theodulf):

Broðor mine, þonne ge rihtre andetnesse to eowrum scriftum becumen, þonne sceal he eow geornlice ahsian mid hwylcum gemete oððe mid hwylcum intingum syo syn þurhtogen wære þe he geandette þæt he ær gefremede, ⁊ æfter þam gemete þære dæde, he sceal him þa hreowsunge gedeman. He sceall hine eac swa læran þæt he of þam þweorlicum geþohtum andetnesse do, ⁊ he sceal hine manian þæt he of þam eahta [h]eafodleahtrum andetnesse do, ⁊ se sacerd him sceal synderlice ælcne leahtor genæmnan ⁊ swa of þam his andetnesse anfon.<sup>71</sup>

This naming of each sin covers all capital sins and seems to be sufficient. There is no mention of public penance in the Vercelli homilies. It was certainly known in some of the sources -- the *Capitula* of Theodulf (of which there is an Old English translation) describes public penance. Both Vercelli and Blickling avoid it, interested more generally in confession

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<sup>70</sup> CH.II.xii, p. 124.

<sup>71</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 74-5.

and in explaining the theoretical elements of penance. It must be noted, however, that neither of these manuscripts provides a homily proper to either Ash Wednesday or Maundy Thursday. As such, one cannot make too much out of their silence concerning public penance.

Ælfric's apparent silence is more disturbing, but possibly of a kind. In his Second Series sermon for the First Sunday, he explains confession in Lent:

Men þa leofostan eow eallum is cuð. þæt ðes gearlica ymryne us gebrincð efne nu þa clænan tid lenctenlices fæstenes. on ðam we sceolon ure gymeleaste and forgægednysse urum gastlicum scifte geandettan. and us mid fæstene. and wæccum. and gebedum. and ælmesdædum fram synnum aðwean. þæt we bealdlice mid gastlicere blisse ða easterlican mærsunge Cristes æristes wurðian moton. and þæs halgan husles þigene mid geleafan underfon. us to synne forgifennysse. and to gescyldnysse deofellicra costnunga.<sup>72</sup>

Whenever Ælfric discusses penance, it is a private mode of expiation that concerns him, and his silence on the issue of public penance is one of the reasons why its significance in post-reform England has been clouded. In his Second Series sermon for Epiphany, discussing baptism, he says about those who commit capital sins:

þeah ðe hwa wiðsace crist æfter his fulluhte. oððe heafodleahtras gewyrce. ne ðearf he beon eft gefullod. ac he sceal his synna bewepan. and mid soðre behreowsunge gebetan æfter wisra lareowa tæcunge. and he hæfð þonne godes rice;<sup>73</sup>

Although the 'instruction of wise counsellors' could certainly include exhortations to public penance, Ælfric makes no definite mention, here or anywhere, about the need for penance outside this private, priest-based system. There is, however, an interesting passage in Ælfric's First Series sermon for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost that may indicate some familiarity with the idea of public penance. Explaining the three dead raised by Christ as the three deaths of the soul (evil assent, evil work, and evil habit), he describes the youth at Naim, carried and raised before the people, as betokening "gehwylcne synfulne mannan þe

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<sup>72</sup> CH.II.vii, p. 60.

<sup>73</sup> CH.II.iii, p. 25.

bið mid healicum leahtrum on þam inran menn adyd. ⁊ bið his yfelnyss mannum cuð.”<sup>74</sup>

Representing a more damaged soul than sinners of the first kind, he is in need of “maran læcedomes”:

Swa bið eac se digla deað þære sawle eaðelicor to arærenne þe on geðafunge digelice syngað. þonne syn þa openan leahtras to gehælenne; ðone cniht he arærde on ealles folces gesihðe. ⁊ mid þysum wordum getrumed þu cniht ic secge þe aris; ða digelan gyltas man sceal digelice betan. ⁊ þa openan openlice. þæt ða beon getimbrode þurh his behreowsunge þe ær wæron þurh his mandædum. geæswicode . . . Swilce synfulle arærþ crist gif hi heora synna behreowsiað. ⁊ betæhð hi heora meder: þæt is þæt he hi geferlæcð annysse his gelaðunge;<sup>75</sup>

Besides the idea that such sinners be raised publicly and reunited to the unity of the church, the assertion that ‘secret sins must be expiated secretly, and open openly, that those may be built up through his repentance [behreowsunge] who before were seduced by his evil deeds’ is the same sentiment put forth by Caesarius in asserting the need for public penance for these sorts of grave, especially known, sins. Ælfric’s direct source here is Bede, although it is Augustine who developed this explication of the three deaths of the soul from the three raised by Christ. Ælfric apparently knew Augustine directly here, as Pope demonstrates regarding Ælfric’s treatment of the same theme in a Friday sermon for the Fourth Week in Lent.<sup>76</sup> This latter passage, following Augustine, refers to open sin and to restoration with the church/mother, but does not include the bit that parallels Caesarius, about open penance for the remedy of those injured, which comes from Bede. As is almost certainly the case with Bede, it would be too much to conflate this explanation with an exhortation to sacramental public penance. There were other ‘public’ forms of penance known in Anglo-Saxon England within the context of private penance, with various acts of humiliation. The assertion that known sin should be expiated publicly for the edification of those injured by the sin is certainly consonant with traditional calls for public penance. Ælfric’s exhortation sounds like

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<sup>74</sup> CH.I.xxxiii, p. 459.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 462.

<sup>76</sup> See Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, v. I, pp. 303ff., for a discussion of Ælfric’s sources for these passages and their manuscript distribution. The passage in question is from pp. 320-21.

a recapitulation of the ‘Carolingian dichotomy’, but the lack of specific reference to public penance makes this assertion a general penitential principal, one that might be applied to any sort of penance, episcopal or sacerdotal. It is true that Ælfric never gives any overt indication that he supports, or even knows about, sacramental public penance. Ælfric is writing more generally than Wulfstan, for a mixed audience of monastic and lay, setting forth principles and moral exhortation that apply to all, and specific calls to public penance were out of his purview, and the same might be said (with less certainty) about the writers of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies. Even in the Carolingian period, when public penance was certainly in view, overt calls and descriptions of public penance are made generally by councils of bishops, or by individual bishops in sermons written for the Dismissal or the Reconciliation, or by historians with particular agendas. In Anglo-Saxon England, we do not have many bishops writing sermons, except for Wulfstan, who most certainly calls for it. In the weight of other evidence, it is too much to argue that the silence or ambiguity of Anglo-Saxon sermon collections reflects a lack of this episcopal practice.

The post-Reform councils and law codes are equally silent, a fact that is particularly disturbing considering the fact that the true advocate for public penance, Wulfstan, wrote many of them. I Cnut 23 states quite generally:

And we lærað þæt man wið healice synna ⁊ wið deoflice dæda scylde swyþe georne on æghwylcne timan; ⁊ bete swyþe georne be his scriftes geþeahte, se ðe þurh deofles scyfe on synna befealle.<sup>77</sup>

Taken together, even the Wulfstanian codes avoid working public penance into their fairly thorough prescriptions for even the most serious crimes, although the warning that those who marry someone too closely related may not have God’s mercy “buton he geswince ⁊ bete swa biscop getæce”<sup>78</sup> may refer to a sin that should be recommended to the bishop, after which

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<sup>77</sup> Whitelock, *Councils and Synods*, v. I, p. 484.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. pp. 465-6.



public penance might be appropriate. Still, on the whole, Anglo-Saxon penitentials and lawcodes seem uninterested in public penance.

This is not entirely unexpected, for even Carolingian penitentials tended to ignore public penance, or discussed it in separated sections. Carolingian synods and councils frequently mentioned public penance, but almost always as a call for it to counterbalance the somewhat mistrusted private system. The tension between the two that was always at the forefront of Carolingian penitential treatment was never so much an issue in England, which had always been quite comfortable with the Irish system. There was of course a concern to provide good penitentials, and the creation of the “Handbook” represents an agenda similar to that of Halitgar, to provide an authoritative and comprehensive guide for priests in giving penance. As priests were the intended users of the penitentials, all they would need to know about public penance was that they might refer certain heinous crimes to the bishop, and so the absence of calls to public penance in specific instances is not so surprising. The lawcodes and statutes set forth by Wulfstan and others might also ignore public penance because the discretionary nature of its implementation would belie that sort of codification. The silence of non-Wulfstanian preaching on the subject would also be disturbing if not for the fact that the above descriptions in Vercelli and in Ælfric refer to a confession that would be the gateway for those going on to either private or public penance, and are consonant with the description of priestly examination of sinners in the passage above from the Pseudo-Egbert Penitential. When describing the following repentance, they use images and themes that have from the early church been used to describe penitents during public penance. Whatever sort of penance the sinner might be directed to by the priest, the principals and the use of penitential themes are the same. Both Wulfstan’s dramatic expulsion of the sinners in public penance and Ælfric’s general application of the ashes, a relatively new extension of the liturgy for public penance to include all the faithful, involve a reenactment of Adam’s expulsion. A description of the liturgy for public penance in Anglo-Saxon England will reveal the spread of its influence, especially in relation to this key central theme, and

demonstrate the close thematic and liturgical relationship between the application of the ashes and the dismissal of public penitents.

### **The Anglo-Saxon Liturgy for Public Penance**

The one area where there is a wealth of evidence for public penance is in the liturgical books of post-Reform England. The distribution of these *ordines*, and of the forms pertinent to them, belies the idea that public penance was of interest to only a few. The Anglo-Saxon witnesses for public penance do not show simply the retention of a continental liturgy in books that to a large degree derived from the continent. Rather, the diversity amongst the extant witnesses demonstrates a continued and widespread interest in developing the ceremonies both to enhance their dramatic potential and to make sense of the Ash Wednesday dichotomy of expulsion of public penitents and ashes for all, both stemming from the same liturgical tradition and involving the same dramatic theme. In particular, the *ordines* for Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday in the Canterbury Benedictional, drawing from different strains of the liturgy available to its compilers, intensify the interaction between the public penitent and the bishop while at the same time perhaps allowing for a distinct application of the ashes to the rest of the faithful.

The Gregorian and Gelasian Sacramentaries each provide forms for the Dismissal and the Reconciliation, although the Gelasian gives a good bit more for the Reconciliation, and only the Gelasian gives instructions.<sup>79</sup> Many of these forms, especially the Gregorian, find

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<sup>79</sup> The directions in the Gelasian Sacramentary for the Dismissal have been oft quoted, as follows: “Ordo Agentibus Publicam Poenitentiam. Suscipis eum iv feria mane in capite Quadragesimae, et cooperis eum cilicio, oras pro eo, et inclaudis usque ad Coenam Domini. Qui eodem die in gremio praesentatur ecclesiae, et prostrato eo omni corpore in terra, dat orationem pontifex super eum ad reconciliandum in quinta feria Coenae Domini sicut ibi continetur” (Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 15). The hairshirt is specified, and the penitents are to be ‘confined,’ a practice of uncertain use in Anglo-Saxon public penance, although the translated Rule of Chrodegang (see Napier, *The Old English Version of the Rule of Chrodegang*, pp. 36, 37) requires that the penitent canons be confined, and the instruction does appear in Leofric A (Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 73). See also de Jong, “What was public”, on the Carolingian

their way into the Anglo-Saxon books, although there are also forms derived from the *Ordines Romani*, as well as quite a few unique forms, for both occasions. I will discuss first forms extant in Missals, a distribution that illuminates a few of the problems faced in tracing the development of the Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday liturgies.

Perhaps the earliest known liturgy for public penance known in England is that in the Leofric Missal. These forms make up part of Leofric A, and are therefore Frankish witnesses of the ninth century, brought into England in the early part of the tenth. Additions were made to it in the tenth century, possibly at Canterbury, and it may have been given to Exeter by Æthelstan.<sup>80</sup> The *ordo* for the Dismissal in the Leofric Missal is a good deal more complete than that in either the Gregorian or the Gelasian, including psalm and chant incipits and instructions throughout the *ordo*. The *ordo agentibus publicam paenitentiam* begins with a rubric very similar to that in the Gelasian, and almost certainly related, “Suscipis eum .iiii. feria mane et cooperis eum cilicio, oresque pro eo, et inclaudis eum usque in coena domini.”<sup>81</sup> Following are four more or less universal orations, common to the Gregorian and the Gelasian,<sup>82</sup> and diffused in Anglo-Saxon books even where the rest of the *ordo* has not reached. These forms are general invocations of God’s mercy. The third explains the relationship of the penitent to God in terms of separation.<sup>83</sup> The following rubric instructs,

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relationship between public penance and monastic exile.

<sup>80</sup> For a summary of theories concerning the dates of the various parts of the Leofric Missal see Richard Pfaff, “Massbooks”, in *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Pfaff (1995), pp. 11-14. See also D. Dumville, *English Caroline Script* (1993), pp. 94-6 and P. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter* (1993), p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 73. Subsequent page references are to this text.

<sup>82</sup> These four forms share with the Gelasian the title “Orationes et preces super penitentem” (Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 73). Their incipits are as follows: 1.) *Exaudi domine preces nostras*, 2.) *Praeueniat hunc famulum tuum*, 3.) *Adesto domine supplicationibus nostris*, 4.) *Domine deus noster qui offensione*.

<sup>83</sup> “Adesto, domine, supplicationibus nostris, nec sit ab hoc famulo tuo .ill. clementiae tuae longinqua miseratio. Sana uulnera, eiusque remitte peccata, ut nullis a te iniquitatibus separatus, tibi semper domino ualeat adherere” (73).

“Tunc iubeat sacerdos penitentem surgere secum, et, fixis genibus, decantent istos psalmos.”

The fact that only the *sacerdos* is mentioned is striking, although it is the reconciliation that must be performed by a bishop according to tradition, not so much the dismissal (though the bishop is the standard redactor). The final rubric is even more striking, however:

Et si homo intellectuosus sit, da ei consilium ut ueniat ad te statuto tempore, aut ad alium sacerdotem in coena domini, ut reconcilietur ab eo; quia quod manens in corpore consecutus non fuerit, hoc est, reconciliationem, exutus carne consequi non poterit. (74)

That there seems to be no call for a bishop here and that the penitent might be called back “statuto tempore” other than Cena Domini are strange, and may represent some inventive stage of the liturgy, similar to that seen by de Jong in Ekkehard’s *Life*. The fifth text in the Gelasian forms is found (in a slightly altered form) near the end of Leofric, as an *Oratio super infirmum pœnitentem*,<sup>84</sup> referring to the penitent as a lost sheep and begging, “sacris altaribus (et) misteriis restitutus æternæ uitæ premia consequatur.” These forms are general enough to be used in various ways, and perhaps spread beyond the Ash Wednesday Dismissal the themes of separation by sin and restitution to the altar as synonymous with entrance into eternal glory. For the Reconciliation on Maundy Thursday, Leofric, with an instruction similar to that in the Gelasian,<sup>85</sup> again refers only to priests: “Praesentatur pœnitens in gremio ecclesiae, et prostrato omni corpore in terra, dat orationem sacerdos ad reconciliandum ita” (92). It is from the start unusual to find the order for public penance in a missal, (unless a missal designed for use by a bishop) for it is traditionally the prerogative of bishops only, with priests allowed to reconcile only in emergency. Still, the forms given (which I will discuss in relation to the changes made to them for the Canterbury Benedictional) are those

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<sup>84</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 232.

<sup>85</sup> Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 63, 64. “Egreditur poenitens de loco ubi poenitentiam gessit, et in gremio praesentatur ecclesiae prostrato omni corpore in terra. Et postulat in his verbis diaconus.” After a long admonition (not found in Anglo-Saxon witnesses), the instructions continue, “Post hoc admonetur ab episcopo sive ab alio sacerdote, ut quod poenitendo diluit, iterando non revocet. Inde vero has dicit orationes sacerdos super eum,” followed by three forms also in Leofric (and in the Gregorian).

from the Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries (a bit closer to the Gregorian this time), and present the imperatives of reconciliation from the beginning of the rite.<sup>86</sup> Concerning these *ordines*, Warren says only,

An 'ordo agentibus publicam poenitentiam' on Ash Wednesday page 73, and an 'ordo ad reconciliandum,' page 92, on Maundy Thursday, exhibit the ritual which accompanied the public exclusion from church of penitents on the first day of Lent, and their formal reconciliation on Thursday of Holy Week.<sup>87</sup>

The specific use of the *sacerdos* is unusual, however. Possibly this represents something more, some sort of attempted compromise between the imperatives of public penance and the reality of a priest-based system, perhaps as reflected in Halitgar's allowance that the priest might need to perform the reconciliation in certain circumstances.

As mentioned above, the earliest liturgy for the application of ashes on Ash Wednesday is in the Romano-German Pontifical. Apparently, however, this text (in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 163 and, in part, London, BL, MS Cotton Tiberius C.i) did not reach England until quite late. Early, as seen in continental descriptions of public penance, the imposition of the ashes was a part of the Dismissal, and was described as an expression of the penitents' similarity to Adam's fallen state. As Ælfric makes clear in his homily for Ash Wednesday, however, the imposition of ashes was thought of as something for every Christian to undergo, and it is not certain exactly to what degree it was still proper to public penance.<sup>88</sup> Possibly the earliest English liturgical form for the imposition of the

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<sup>86</sup> There are three standard forms for the Reconciliation. Their incipits are as follows: 1.) *Adesto domine supplicationibus nostris*, 2.) *Praesta quasumus domine huic famulo*, 3.) *Deus humani generis*.

<sup>87</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. lxiii.

<sup>88</sup> Independent forms for the imposition of the ashes are given in the Robert Missal, the Portiforium of St. Wulstan (the same two forms given in each, with a different ending for the second in the latter), and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 146 (Samson Pontifical), among others. Leofric has the above quoted passage for the blessing of the ashes as part of Leofric C, and it appears as the second reading for the blessing of the ashes in the Robert Benedictional and in Corpus 422, the Red Book of Darley. It also appears in numerous places as part of the *ordo* for the consecration of a church (see Wilson, *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, p. 79, *Benedictio cinerum*).

ashes is in the Winchcombe Sacramentary.<sup>89</sup> The text gives five forms for the day. The first is what in the eleventh-century texts is the first of two standard forms given for the ashes, as follows:

<Feria Quarta Cinerum>

Deus qui non mortem sed paenitentiam desideras peccatorum fragilitatem conditionis humanae benignissimae respice, et hos cyneres quos causa proferendae humilitatis, atque promerendae veniae capitibus nostris inponi decernimus, benedicere pro tua piaetate digneris, ut qui nos cyneres esse uoluisti, et ob prauitatis nostrae meritum in puluerem reuersuros creasti: peccatorum ueniam, et praemia nobis repromissa petentibus missericorditer concedas.<sup>90</sup>

Although there can be little doubt about the occasion for this passage, it is puzzling to find it followed by the four ancient mass forms for public penance that begin the *ordo* for the Dismissal in Leofric (from the Gelasian and Gregorian). Winchcombe does provide a remarkably full service for the *Reconciliatio Penitentis ad Mortem*,<sup>91</sup> and in the directions for Holy Week it gives (with the reconstructed title *Orationes Ad Reconciliandum Penitentem Feria V in Cena Domini*), the three central forms for Reconciliation from the Gelasian and the Gregorian.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps, for Ash Wednesday, the book provides the single text for the ashes and, without rubrical indication, moves onto a set of texts for the Dismissal. However, the juxtaposition of texts here makes one wonder whether the two ceremonies may still have retained their interconnection. Also curious is the presentation of forms for public penance (if that is indeed their function here) in a missal that otherwise does not seem to usurp episcopal *ordines*.

I will discuss more complete *ordines* related to public penance found in six sources, the “Egbert” Pontifical, the Benedictional of Robert, the Anderson Pontifical, the Lanalet

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<sup>89</sup> Lapidge argues that it may have been written at Ramsey abbey, rather than at Winchcombe (see Lapidge, “Abbot Germanus, Winchcombe, Ramsey, and the Cambridge Psalter” in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. M. Korhammer (1992), pp. 99-129, esp. 128-9).

<sup>90</sup> Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, p. 48.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. pp. 260ff.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. pp. 75ff.

Pontifical, the Claudius Pontifical (I), and, most fully, the Canterbury Benedictional, focussing on their orders and peculiarities, before discussing the use of the Lenten themes discussed above in the liturgy as represented in CB. The mistakenly-titled “Pontifical of Egbert” seems to be a West Country text of c. 1000. For the Dismissal,<sup>93</sup> only the four standard forms are provided. The orations for the Reconciliation are more interesting, however. After the standard (e.g. Gregorian/Gelasian) three forms for the occasion is the following *Oratio super penitentem*:

Da nobis domine ut sicut puplicani precibus et confessione placatus es. ita et huic famulo tuo ill. placare domine et precibus eius benignus aspira. ut in confessione flebili permanenti et petitione. perpetuam clementiam tuam celeriter exoret sanctisque altaribus et sacramentis restitutus rursus celisti gloriae mancipetur.<sup>94</sup>

This form is found in several places, more generally with a different opening (*Exaudi nos domine ut sicut*, as in CB).<sup>95</sup> It is followed here by an instruction that the penitent be raised “de pauimento his uerbis dicendo. cananturque antifona.” The antiphon specified is of a text that is woven throughout the liturgical forms, and throughout all Latin and vernacular treatments of Lent, “Viue ego dicat dominus nolo mortem peccatorum sed ut magis conuertatur et uiuat,” and the absolution is one that is common to the other full *ordines*, the *Absolvimus (te) vicem beati petri*, invoking the power to bind and to loosen given Peter, and by tradition to bishops. Attached by sign to the *ordo* between the *Da nobis domine* and the instruction to raise the penitent is an Old English prayer, a translation of the *Absolvimus*:

Broðor ða leofestan we onlisað eow of synna bendum on gewrixle ðæs eadegan petres ðara apostola ealdres ðam ðe ure dryhten ðone anweald sealde synna to gebindænne ⁊ eft to onlissenne ac swa miclum swa eow to belimð eowra synna

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<sup>93</sup> Entitled *Orationes et preces Super Penitentem Confitentem Peccata Sua More Solito. Feria. .IIII. Infra Quinquagesimam* (130-1). The heading is given a Roman numeral, XVCI, “as in the Gregorian Sacramentary” (Banting, *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, p. 130, n. 28).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. pp. 131-2.

<sup>95</sup> It is also the second part of a form from the Gregorian and the Gelasian (the fifth Gelasian form), *Precor domine clementiae*, that is used, in different manuscripts, for the Dismissal, both before (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 15) and after (Turner, *The Claudius Pontificals*, p. 85) the blessing of the ashes.

gewregednes 7 us to gebyreð sio forgifnes sie god ælmihtig lif 7 hælo eallum  
eowrum synnum forgifen ðurh ðone ðe mid him leofað 7 ricsað geond world a  
world. Amen.<sup>96</sup>

This translation seems to be either a supplement to or a replacement of the *Absolvimus*, and if, as it seems, it is intended for use in the liturgical service, especially for such a key moment as the absolution itself, it raises questions both about uses of Old English in the liturgy and about the appreciation of those performing the liturgy that many, if not the bulk, of the penitents would need some sort of vernacular explanation of what is happening in the liturgical forms.

The Egbert Pontifical gives no forms for the blessing of the ashes. The Benedictional of Robert does (see above), its first form being repeated in the *ordo* for the consecration of a church. The Robert Benedictional seems to be a New Minster text of the 980's, although Dumville dates it on paleographical grounds to c.1020.<sup>97</sup> The book “looks to have been commissioned by a bishop.”<sup>98</sup> It does provide quite a few forms for the absolution of penitents. After a rubric<sup>99</sup> that bears a striking similarity to one common to the Anderson Pontifical and the Canterbury Benedictional (see below), the text gives the *Absolvimus*, followed by ten further forms, all found in other manuscripts. Included are forms that in other *ordines* precede the absolution, and indeed forms proper to the Dismissal, including the

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<sup>96</sup> Banting, *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, p. 132, n. 30. “Absoluimus uos uicem beati petri apostolorum principis. cui dominus potestem ligandi atque soluendi dedit. sed quantum ad uos pertinet accusatio et ad nos pertinet remissio. sit deus omnipotens uita et salus omnibus peccatis uestris indultor per eum. qui cum eo uiuit. Amen.”

<sup>97</sup> See D. N. Dumville, “On the Dating of Some Late Anglo-Saxon Liturgical Manuscripts”, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 10.1 (1991), pp. 40-57, esp. p. 53.

<sup>98</sup> J. Nelson and R. Pfaff, “Pontificals and Benedictionals”, in *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Pfaff (1995), p. 94.

<sup>99</sup> “Incipit absolutio dicenda ab episcopo. super conuersum et poenitentem. Qui conuersus prosternatur. coram altare et decantet psalmum quinquagesimum. si autem est idiota. ex intimo corde crebro dicat. deus miserere mihi peccatori. seruo tuo. Et faciat episcopus letanias super eom. et hae sequantur orationes” (Wilson, *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, p. 57).



fifth Gelasian form used by Claudius after the application of the ashes (as well as the four standard texts for the Dismissal), are mixed in, all introduced as simply *Item* or *Alia*. In comparison to the texts examined so far, this would seem to be a rather aimless collection of forms, perhaps a repository of forms not intended to be a sequential *ordo*, if not for two facts. First, the final prayer is preceded by an instruction, “Hic erigatur de solo adprehensus manu episcopi per dextram. et inclinetur coram episcopo,” that is very similar to one towards the end of the *ordo* in the Anderson Pontifical and in CB<sup>100</sup> and is followed by the same form, the *Deus innocentiae restitutor et amator*. Second, the order of forms here is also found in two other witnesses, the Anderson Pontifical, written c. 1000 at (likely) Christ Church, Canterbury, and the Lanalet Pontifical, an early eleventh-century book possibly from Wells.<sup>101</sup> Both Anderson and Lanalet give more information. Lanalet has two extra forms before the *Absolvimus*, one before the raising, and one more at the end (*Item absolutio episcopi*). It lacks all rubrics except for, before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*, the instruction “Tunc leuas eum de pavimento et dicas antiphonam.” The antiphon is the same as that given after the raising in Egbert. Anderson is almost identical to Robert, including the opening rubrics and that for the raising, except that Anderson has an extra final prayer (different from that in Lanalet, but similarly a prayer for absolution) and includes directions for admonition. What we seem to have represented in these three witnesses is a separate strain of reconciliation *ordo* from that in Egbert (which shares the order of forms with the

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<sup>100</sup> “Hic erigatur a solo adprehensus manu episcopi per dextram manum et inclinetur coram episcopo hanc orationem ipso dicente.” (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 34).

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, pp. 175-6, gives a detailed analysis of the interrelationship between the forms in the Robert Benedictional, the Lanalet Pontifical, and the Dunstan Pontifical. Conn, *The Dunstan and Brodie (Anderson) Pontificals* does not print absolution forms from Dunstan, but the *ordo* in Anderson seems to correspond exactly with Wilson’s analysis of that in Dunstan. As such, Anderson, Dunstan, and the Robert Benedictional seem to be of a type, and have correspondence in the order of some forms with Lanalet. There is in addition a second (and incomplete) reconciliation *ordo* in Lanalet (not that discussed elsewhere here), which corresponds much more closely to the Anderson type, including the rubrication. For this second Lanalet *ordo* see Doble, *Pontificale lanaletense*, pp. 140-143.

Gregorian and Gelasian), distinguished primarily by the fact that, in Egbert, the raising of the penitent comes after the standard forms, and is followed by the *Absolvimus* and the *Domine sancte pater* (the final form given here), whereas in the others we have this action happening well after the *Absolvimus*, and before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*. In Lanalet, the action is a simple raising up from the pavement. In Robert, the action is a bit more detailed, as we have the bishop taking him by the hand and ‘inclining’ the penitent towards him.

The compilers of the Canterbury Benedictional, apparently with several of these deviant witnesses at hand, came up with an inventive compromise, in which the action expressed in “erigor” occurs twice, once before each ‘raising’ form (before the *Absolvimus* as in Egbert and before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor* as in the Anderson type). CB’s Reconciliation *ordo* begins with an instruction that the penitent should come to the absolution by the bishop singing an antiphon.<sup>102</sup> When this is finished, he lies prostrate before the altar, singing the seven penitential psalms and other chants. There follow three prayers, two praying to the Bishop of Heaven (*summo pontifice uel pontifice celesti*) that the bishop may prove an effective substitute, thereby establishing the bishop’s place as God in relation to the about-to-be-reconciled Adam. The second form here calls on the intercession of “sanctorum archipresulum tuorum. agustini. dunstani. atque ælfegi,” connecting the speaker with some of the most prominent archbishops of the English church. This second form ends with a reference to “annue benignus . . . nostrae auctoritatis absolutio,” asserting this practice as a regular one. After the third form is the first “erigor” instruction, “His peractis erigatur episcopus de solo. uertensque ad penitentem in pauimento prostratum faciat absolutionem” (31), followed by the *Absolvimus*. The action is reversed; the bishop is here rising up by himself and only turning to the penitent, not taking him up or leaning him forwards, such that the penitent is still on the ground for the absolution. There follow two long prayers (found in

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<sup>102</sup> “*Feria .V. in cena domini omnes paenitentes uenient ad absolutionem episcopo ingrediente. et antiphonam incipiente*” (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 29). Subsequent page references are to this text.

other texts, if often in shorter form) which powerfully describe both the state of the penitent and the danger facing him. The point of these prayers as used here seems to be to remind the penitent of his danger, and thereby drive in the fact that he must not fall back into these sins.

The first prayer asks God to

Renoua in eo piissime. quicquid terrena fragilitate corrupit. et quicquid diabolica fraude uiolauit redintegra. et quod in eo aut negligentia pulluit. aut ira commisit. aut ebrietas stimulauit. aut libido subuertit . . . Miserere igitur domine illius gemituum. miserere lacrimarum;

The second, asking that God accept the penitent “deuium assume correctum,” sets forth the dangers of Hell, explains the public penance as a way to keep the rest of the flock from sustaining damage, and establishes the penitent’s Adam-like situation:

Moueatur piaetatem tuam fletus . . . ne aecclesia tua sui corporis portione priuata temeretur. ne grex tuus detrimentum sustineat . . . tibi fletum cordis offerimus. tu domine parce confitenti ut imminentes penas futurique iudicii tremendam sententiam. te miserante non incidat; Nesciat quod terret in tenebris. quod stridet in flammis. et haberrorum uia ad iter iustitiae iam reuersus. nequaquam nouis uulneribus saucietur; Propitiare ergo domine trementi sub sententiae tuae expectatione supplici. et ad humilitatem iacentis subleuandam dexteram tuae salutis extende . . . Agnosce piissime pater ouem tuae redemptionis. et constrictam uinculis peccatorum. aecclesiae tuae precibus exoratus absolue redeat ad unitatem familiae tuae et post illam diram inopis exilii famem reddito splendide uestis ornatu. (32-3)

The idea that the ‘exile’ just endured was for the good of the whole church may hint at the idea of public penance for known crimes, in that the ‘flock’ was in danger because the sin was known. More important is the idea that the penitent, like Adam, is moving from an exile, weak with hunger, to an adopted son of God’s Kingdom, ‘splendidly clothed.’ Following are instructions that the bishop perform another absolution over the penitents. The penitent is still prostrate before the altar (*Qui conversus prosternatur coram altare*), singing a psalm. The instruction provides that “Si autem idiota est ex intimo corde crebro dicat” (the instruction is also in Anderson and in the Robert Benedictional, and marks the beginning of the *ordo* in these texts). The bishop chants litanies and says five more orations. The fourth, taken from the *Orationes in Reconciliatione Paenitentis ad Mortem* in the Gregorian and the

Gelasian, mentions the ejection of the penitent.<sup>103</sup> The first and the fifth are unique to CB, and the other three are taken from the Anderson type, and are in the same order as here. From this point, the compiler follows that model.

Following these forms, accordingly, is the second “erigor” action: “Hic erigatur a solo adprehensus man episcopi per dexteram manum et inclinetur coram episcopo hanc orationem ipso dicente.” This time, it is the penitent who is raised up by the bishop and turned towards the altar. There follows, as in the Anderson type, the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*, the end of which begs that the penitent,

ex hoc ab omni grauedine peccatorum absolutus. in aecclesiae tuae seruitio  
mancipatus. ab antiqui insidiatoris laqueis euulsus. angelorum custodiis deputatus.  
persuerentia conuersionis decoratus. tandemque ad celestia regna euectus. te  
protegente gratanter incedat. (35)

Absolved from all grave sins, the penitent’s reconciliation with the church is described as a processing into heaven, where he will be ‘given over to the custody of angels.’ Again on the Anderson model there is at the end a short benediction *ab episcopo*, and instructions for admonition, as follows:

His peractis. det ei episcopus monita salutis unde incedat uiam ueritatis. et cautus  
existat ne ad pristinum redeat uomitum. et simul amittat remissionem presentis  
uitae et futurae. sed oret assidue elemosynam det in quantum ualet. ieiunium amet.  
uigiliis cum sanctis orationibus insistat. castitatis tam corporis quam animae. et  
super omnia caritatem habeat. Finit.

This is expressly described as an occasion for a sermon, an occasion which the late eleventh-century scribe Coleman used to support his argument contradicting Ælfric’s assertions that no

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<sup>103</sup> “Maiestatem tuam domine supplices deprecamur. ut (huic) famulo tuo longo squalore paenitentiae macerato moserationis tuae ueniam largiri digneris. ut nuptiali ueste recepta. ad regalem mensam unde eiectus fuerat mereatur introire.” (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 34).

sermons should be preached on the three days before Easter.<sup>104</sup> The prescribed topics amount to general exhortation, and any of a host of extant sermons could be appropriate here.

In summary, we seem to have at the opening of the eleventh century at least two strains of absolution/reconciliation *ordines*, one showing its influence most prominently at Canterbury but also at Winchester (and presumably more widely, as its inclusion at the end of the Lanalet Pontifical as Lanalet's second reconciliation *ordo* may indicate) and the other demonstrated in manuscripts coming from further West. The assertion must be made quite generally, as the dates and provenance of the relevant manuscripts are too uncertain at the moment to be more definitive, but it can be said that a variety of arrangements were available to the compilers of CB. If the owner of the Lanalet Pontifical was indeed Lyfing, bishop of Wells c. 999-1013 and archbishop of Canterbury from 1013-20,<sup>105</sup> he may have brought more Western forms to Canterbury, and an assimilation might have been desirable. In any case, the originality shown by the compiler of the CB *ordo* and the variance in structure of the extant reconciliation *ordines* indicates a liturgically dynamic environment, and a somewhat more widespread interest in public penance than has been allowed.

The various *ordines* for the Dismissal and the ashes show as much diversity, and a more complete study of the spread and interrelationship of these forms than is possible here might help illuminate how the Anglo-Saxon church related to the ancient idea of public penance, and how these various liturgical books relate to each other. I will focus here only on

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<sup>104</sup> Hill reports a rubric apparently by Coleman, biographer to St. Wulfstan of Worcester, in reply to Ælfric's assertion: "Eac biscepas æt heora bisceopstole sæcgað larspel þonne hi lædað in penitentes. ⁊ hi doð absolutionem. ⁊ sume sæcgað spell of þære crismhalgunge. ⁊ of þam balsome." Joyce Hill, "Ælfric's 'Silent Days,'" *LSE* 16 (1985), pp. 118-25. If there is one place that we can be sure of the practice of public penance, it is at Worcester, where the earlier Wulfstan expressed his interest in it. As Bethurum reports, regarding St. Wulfstan's use of Bethurum XV, "The ceremony at which this sermon was preached was one of the most impressive at which a bishop officiated. Wm of Malmesbury tells, on the authority of Coleman, how moving was Saint Wulfstan's performance on this occasion" (Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, pp. 346-7).

<sup>105</sup> See Nelson and Pfaff, "Pontificals and Benedictionals", p. 93.

the issue of the interrelationship between the Dismissal and the Blessing of the Ashes. It is not uncommon in the liturgical witnesses consulted so far to see the forms for public penance (where they exist) separate from those for the Blessing of the Ashes. In many cases this may be because the ceremony of the ashes is newer than the Dismissal. The Leofric Missal gives only forms for the Dismissal, and the standard form for the ashes (*Deus qui non mortem*) has been added to the book as part of Leofric C. In many liturgical books (such as the Missal of Robert, the Robert Benedictional, and Corpus 422), the forms stand alone, with no hint of a ceremony for public penitents. This seems to be what Ælfric described in his opening to his sermon for Ash Wednesday (above). Ash Wednesday is also described, between Candlemas and Palm Sunday, in Ælfric's Second Letter for Wulfstan:

Ge sculon bletsian axan on *caput ieiunium* and mid halig wætere besprencgan. Do þonne se mæssepreost on ufe-weardum his heafde myd ðære haligan rode tacne and on ealra þara manna, þe æt þære mæssan beoð, ær-ðam-þe he mæssige and gan to processionem.<sup>106</sup>

This is a common enough liturgy today, and, along with some private confessional forms, is what has survived of the ancient liturgies for public penance. Its separation from public penance was in the Anglo-Saxon church, however, at a fledgling stage. The blessing and application of the ashes is something to be done by every priest, and therefore a separation of the *ordo* for them would be appropriate. It is hard to find, however, a separate *ordo* that prescribes the application of ashes and the procession. When it appears with any kind of completeness, it is at least juxtaposed with the forms for the Dismissal (as one might expect in a Pontifical). Lanalet begins its *ordo* for the day with a series of long, sermon-like prayers, not found in the other witnesses consulted. Following these passages are five forms for the Dismissal, after each of which a psalm is sung. After the fifth is the following rubric:

Et si in grauis delectis preoccupatus fuerit expelli debet ab ecclesia cantando  
R. *In sudore uultus tuae*. Et prosternat se ante ianuam ecclesiae tunc orent pro  
eo *Pater noster*.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 216.

<sup>107</sup> Doble, *Pontificale lanaletense*, p. 71.

There follows a string of penitential chants (many of which appear in witnesses from the Leofric Missal through CB). After these are a few more common forms for the Dismissal, followed by two standard forms for the ashes, introduced only by the title *Benedictio cinerum*. It is hard to say, as the *ordo* is not at all complete, whether the two are meant to be part of the same ceremony. In the early Gelasian and Gregorian forms, the text ends quite happily without the forms for the ashes, and we cannot assume that the two sections are combined. The unity of the *ordo* seems a bit more certain in CB, although the fact that CB never specifies when the penitents are thrown out makes it uncertain whether the texts provided after the title *Benedictio cinerum* are there specifically for them. The best *ordo* for the Dismissal, in this respect, is in the Claudius Pontifical I, a manuscript of c. 1000, probably from Worcester or York and quite likely the Pontifical used by Wulfstan himself. Between the forms for Palm Sunday and for Easter are some missing pages, so we cannot know the actual liturgy of Wulfstan's Reconciliation (if the book indeed belonged to him). It does, however, provide the forms for the Dismissal and the ashes, and is the only witness to make their interrelationship (at least in this episcopal context) clear. The title for the ceremony is *Incipit Ordo Ad Dandam Penitentiam*. Claudius, CB, and Lanalet all begin with five forms, the first, third, fourth, and fifth of which are the four standard forms from the Gregorian/Gelasian, while the second is a common addition. After these initial forms, CB prescribes a series of chants with no other instruction. Lanalet here has the above conditional instruction, and prescribes a *Pater noster* and series of chants. Claudius has the call for the *Pater noster* and the same chants (minus one in Claudius), and the two texts seem to be related in some way here. It is at this point that the three texts diverge. Lanalet gives four short forms, and then the two for the ashes, with no further rubrication. Claudius gives two of these forms, and then, under the title *Benedictio cinerum*, it gives the *Deus qui mortem sed peniteantiam*, which explains the point of the ritual:

Deus qui non mortem sed peniteantiam desideras peccatorum. fragilitatem conditionis humanae. benignissime respice. et hos cineres quos causa [praeferende] humilitatis atque promerendae ueniae capitibus nostris imponi decernimus.

benedicere pro tua pietate digneris. ut qui nos in cinerum et ob prauitatis nostre: meritum in puluerem reuersuros cognoscimus. peccatorum ueniam et premia penitentibus repromissa. misericorditer cosequi mereamur.<sup>108</sup>

After this form is an instruction parallel to that given before the blessing of the ashes in Lanalet:

Hic mittuntur cineres super capita eorum cum aqua benedicta et expellantur extra ecclesiam incipitur. *In sudore uultus tui.* et prosternens se ante hostium canit episcopus. *Inclina domine.*

followed by the *Precor domine clementiae*. The expulsion from the church, with the words of God to Adam that he must earn his bread from the sweat of his brow, shows that the liturgy for the ashes as represented here is specifically set up for the penitent who is being cast out of the church.

CB, however, differs a bit at the end, enough so to leave some ambiguity concerning the relationship between the two parts of the *ordo*. After the chants (here the same as in Lanalet) are the same two forms given in Claudius (of the four in Lanalet), followed by a rubric saying simply that, in commendation of the penitent, “hac ultima super ipsum dicta oratione.”<sup>109</sup> This final oration is the *Precor domine clementiae* that ended the *ordo*, after the ashes, in Claudius. Here, it precedes the forms for the ashes, and the only remaining rubrication is likewise ambiguous. CB gives for the ashes two standard forms, including the *Deus qui non mortem*, and two further forms, not found elsewhere. The first looks forward to the Resurrection, with an allusion to the “conspectum resurgentis filii tui.” The second develops the link established between Adam and the penitents, proclaiming that

cum de florigera paradisi amaenitate in hac conuallē plorationis nos exiliasti. terram nos esse et in terram reuersuros intimasti: Supplices capitibus nostris cineres aspergimus. misericordie tuae gratiam implantes: ut per lamentorum supiria ad felicitatis patriam unde miserabiliter cecidimus misericord[iter] peruenire ualeamus.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Turner, *The Claudius Pontificals*, p. 85.

<sup>109</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 15.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.



Those praying here acknowledge that they, like Adam, have been cast out of paradise into the earthly valley, and are undertaking the ashes in hopes of attaining mercy. The actual application of the ashes comes directly after:

*Ammonitio humilis cuiuscumque quando cinere respergitur.*  
Memento homo quia cinis et pulvis es. et quia in puluerem reuerteris.

It could be that the singular here refers to the penitent discussed in the singular in previous rubrics. It could also be that this is a form for applying the ashes one at a time, accounting for the singular. While in Claudius the liturgy of the ashes is pretty clearly laid out as the climax of a Dismissal ceremony, the Canterbury forms allow for a bit more flexibility. There will not always be candidates for public penance, and the book may be used as a model for non-episcopal ceremonies. What this variance of forms indicates is that the liturgy of the ashes, whether or not part of public penance, helped spread the forms and themes of public penance to the rest of the faithful, so that the identification with Adam established so dramatically in the public penance casts its shadow over the identification of Adam as developed in the connection with the ashes.

### **Anglo-Saxon Penance and Adam**

This identification is strong in the Ash Wednesday sermons written by Ælfric and Wulfstan. In most respects, the two could hardly be more different, but they both reflect the same Lenten imperatives, using the same strategy of explaining the liturgy in terms of Adam. Ælfric describes a ceremony without public penance, but with the same basic character, by which the penitent, receiving ashes, is told, as was Adam by God, that he must live in toil for his sins. Ælfric does not call for public penance, simply that “do we þis lytle on ures lenctenes anginne. þæt we streowiað axan uppān ure heafda,”<sup>111</sup> but many of the themes that are repeated through the liturgy for public penance find expression here. For Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>111</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, p. 264.

England, the distinction between private and public penance is somewhat fluid. Anglo-Saxon preaching texts teach that all the faithful are penitents during Lent and describe what this means with themes and images used from the beginning of the penitential liturgy to explain public penance. More so than was ever the case for the Carolingians, the Anglo-Saxons seem to have brought the two systems into at least a thematic accommodation, whereby public penance is held out as something salutary for certain sins in certain circumstances, but not as something so distinct as to warrant a fight over which is to be preferred. It is a penitential option, among many others, in a single liturgical landscape, and the liturgical *ordines* for it might be used in that capacity, or in another, more private one.

In that spirit, Wulfstan's lament that the practice is not held as well as it should be is perhaps more a call to make use of a well-provided means of penance than an attempt to institute a little-known, foreign custom. The first half of Wulfstan's sermon for Ash Wednesday is addressed to all the folk, and is a general exhortation to observe Lent. All the faithful are penitents here, granting God a tithe of the year by making up for those bad deeds done the rest of the year. He exhorts his audience to search themselves zealously and confess their misdeeds. He then explains the role and means of public penance:

And se ðe openlice befeallen sy þurh deofles scyfe on healice misdæde, he eac þæt georne openlice bete. And sume men syndon eac þe nyde sculan of cyricgemanan þas halgan tid ascadene mid rihte weorðan for healican synnan, ealswa adam wearð of engla gemanan þa ða he forworðe þa myclan myrhðe þe he on wunode ær ðam þe he syngode.<sup>112</sup>

For those who do need to be expelled, he goes on to temper this harsh picture with an assurance that God is very mild, and will certainly forgive those with the right mindset. That mindset centers on an appreciation that the works of penance, while hard, are as necessary for obtaining mercy as it was that Adam work, "bescofen to hefigum geswincum." After establishing this model of understanding, he outlines the practice:

Leofan men, on Wodnesdæg, þe byð caput ieiunii, bisceopas ascadað on manegum stowan ut of cyrican for heora agenar þearfe þa ðe healice on openlican synnan hy

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<sup>112</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 234.

sylfe forgyltan. And eft on Ðunresdæg ær Eastran hy geinniað into cyrican þa ðe geornlice þæt Lencten heora synna betað, swa swa hym man wissað; þonne absolutionem bisceopas ofer hy rædað ⁊ for hi þingiað ⁊ mid þam heora synna þurh Godes mildheortnesse myclum gelyhtað. And þæt is þearflic gewuna, ac we his ne gymað swa wel swa we scoldan on ðisse þeode, ⁊ hit wære mycel þearf þæt hit man georne on gewunan hæfde.<sup>113</sup>

It would be nice to know just what Wulfstan means by “on manegum stowan,” whether he means in many places in England or many places ‘across the sea.’ Whichever is the case, there were at least a few places in England by the end of the tenth century that should have had forms available for the occasion. The forms in Lanalet specify ‘if someone’ has sinned gravely, and perhaps Wulfstan, in saying that the practice is not followed as it should be, is exhorting that the option should be exercised more often, for the health of the flock. Specially mentioned are ‘open sins’ of a high nature. He makes no attempt to define what that means, but that is not his purpose here.<sup>114</sup> In going into the Lenten season, Wulfstan wants all the faithful to know that public penance is there, for the reconciliation of those who have sinned in such a way as to endanger their salvation.

Wulfstan collected quite a bit of material regarding public penance in his ‘commonplace book,’ and much of this material is extant in Corpus 190, an eleventh-century manuscript with connections to Worcester and Exeter.<sup>115</sup> It is from many of these excerpts

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 235.

<sup>114</sup> While the idea of ‘open’ sins as being more in need of public penance survives, as Wulfstan’s description indicates, it is in no way as clearly or as consistently expressed as it was for the Carolingians, allowing for more priestly and episcopal discretion. Wulfstan had in his commonplace book (discussed below) several continental descriptions of penance based solidly on the Carolingian principal, but his echo of this principal is far more tenuous than the firm assertions of it in the descriptions of public penance available to him. The emphasis, for Wulfstan as elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon discussion of public penance, is on the ‘high’ nature of the sin, not its ‘openness’. It is the emphasis on the public nature of the sin in Carolingian appreciation of public penance that inspired Halitgar to discuss as relevant any sin, whether greater or lesser, that affected the whole church.

<sup>115</sup> See Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 345, and also D. Bethurum, “Archbishop Wulfstan’s Commonplace Book”, *PMLA* 57 (1942), pp. 916-29, for a discussion of this manuscript and its relationship to the other versions of the ‘commonplace book.’ See also C. A. Jones, “Two composite texts from Archbishop Wulfstan’s ‘commonplace book’: the *De*

that he drew his ideas on public penance. Some of these forms are outlining usages more ancient than others (one of them, Fehr's item 45 in Corpus 190, says that public penance is "Secundum morem orientalium"<sup>116</sup>), and it is clear that Wulfstan derives (or strengthens) much of his understanding of the practice from them, including the ideas of open penance for open crimes<sup>117</sup> and of variable culpability based on the relationship of the mind to the crime.

Of particular interest is a set of instructions for Ash Wednesday, *circa Paenitentes agatur*:

Quibus pro diuersis criminibus paenitentia est subeunda, die praefata, id est quarta feria in capite ieiunii ad sedem aepiscopalem discalciati laneisque induti conueniant et domno pontifici causam actus sui prodant ac sic sibi subueniri per paenitentiae satisfactionem petant. Pontifex autem secundum statuta canonum, prout sibi uisum fuerit, pro qualitate delictorum paenitentiae eis constituat modum atque iuxta morem ipsius diei propriis manibus cyneres imponat capitibus eorum. Quibus peractis prosternat se aepiscopus cum ipsis paenitentibus coram altari in pauimento aecclesiae, circumstanti clero simili cum eo . . .

Seven penitential songs are chanted, along with the proper preces and orations. Then the penitents, in the place of Adam, are led to the church entrance:

Deinde pontifex incipiat: Antiphonam: In sudore uultus tui uesceris pane tuo, plangens peccata tua cum patientia magna . . . Et sic uniuersis psallentibus procedat cum eisdem paenitentibus usque ad hostium ecclesiae, dataque manu educat eos extra limen domus dei . . . Hisque peractis prosternant se ante fores aecclesiae . . .<sup>118</sup>

The heart of the Dismissal here is the application of ashes, the words given Adam, and the expulsion, accomplished by a procession to the doors of the church. Although the Claudius Pontifical's *ordo* does not have enough rubrication to compare closely, it does seem to agree

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*ecclesiastica consuetudine* and the *Institutio beati Amalarii de ecclesiasticis officiis*", ASE 27 (1998), pp. 233-71, on the relationship between the various parts of Corpus 190.

<sup>116</sup> See Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 248.

<sup>117</sup> "Qui publice pecauerit publice arguatur et publica paenitentia purgabitur. Et si hoc occulte fecerit et occulte ad confessionem uenerit, occulte ei penitentia imponatur." (Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 243).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. pp. 246-7.

in outline with that described here. In fact, what is provided here is just what is missing in Claudius, and we might imagine that Wulfstan's practice was based to some degree on it.

Just as it is public penance that critics of dramatic ritual discuss for its powerful reenactment of Adam's expulsion, so it is in sermons for public penance that these themes are at their most dynamic. Wulfstan's sermon for the Reconciliation is a reworking of a sermon by Abbo of St. Germain. The changes made by Wulfstan reveal an interest in intensifying the established relationship between Adam and the Lenten penitent. Abbo's sermon appears in four Anglo-Saxon witnesses. Two of these manuscripts have the longer version printed by Migne, and two, including Corpus 190, have a condensed version. Corpus 190 also provides a hyperliteral translation, and Bethurum prints both the shorter Abbo sermon and the translation as her Appendix I. The translation was not Wulfstan's, and was probably commissioned by him as an exercise, but the shortening of Abbo's sermon in preparation of his creation of his own may have been his, an idea that Bethurum believes to be "quite likely."<sup>119</sup> Bethurum outlines the nature of this translation and a few of its peculiarities. Abbo's sermon<sup>120</sup> originally began with a passage describing the significance of the day and outlining the day's liturgy, including the Maundy, the blessing of the chrism in preparation for baptism, the washing of the church, and the reconciliation of those who had been expelled for their crimes. The shorter version picks up here, with the explanation of public penance. Wulfstan begins his sermon with "Leofan men," replacing *fratres karissimi* in Abbo (and "Mine gebroðru ða leofestan" in the Corpus translation) and a short introduction which lasts only a few lines and reminds the participants of the reason that they are present, to "æfter geornfulre dædbote into cyrican lædað," just as previous participants had been. Wulfstan then gives his rendition of the spiritual journey of Adam. This rendition begins with a generic

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<sup>119</sup> Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, p. 346.

<sup>120</sup> The longer version of Abbo's sermon can be found in Migne, PL 132, 765ff. The shorter Abbo, along with the literal translation, are edited in Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, pp. 366-73. All intertextual page designations are from Bethurum.

description of the creation of Adam and his initial sinless state. After a repeated “Leofan men,” he describes Adam's placement in Eden, his ejection from paradise, his life away from paradise, and his eventual salvation and reinstitution into the heavenly company. Adam's life in Eden is particularly significant:

... for Adames godnesse 7 for his halignesse God hine gelogode on fruman in paradyso on ealre myrhðe 7 on ealre mærdæ, ðær he geseah Godes englas 7 wið spæc, 7 wið God sylfne he spæc; 7 næfre he ne swulte ne deað ne þolode ne sar ne sorge næfre ne gebide, nære þæt he ne syngode. Ac sona swa he syngode . . . (236)

This passage has a different character than that in Abbo. Wulfstan is here replacing (both in the long and the short Abbo):

In ipso autem paradiso dedit ei Dominus omnem gloriam. Ibi uidebat angelos et loquebatur cum illis, et nunquam moreretur si non peccasset. Ibi audiebat Dominum secum loquentem, et talem obedientiam sibi commendantem, ut nunquam comederet de ligno scientie boni et mali. In ipsa uero hora qua peccauit Adam, eiecit eum Dominus . . . (367-9)

God is then described as *Episcopus episcoporum* (“bisceopa bisceop” in Wulfstan), driving him out from paradise and saying *In sudore vultus tui*. Abbo explains that Adam then did a long penance of 6000 years and more, *in carcerem infernalem*, until Christ, *qui est pontifex pontificum*, absolved him and brought him back to paradise. Abbo here sets forth clearly the model established in Adam, but Wulfstan more powerfully connects that model with the listening penitents. His expansion of the joys of heaven is a bit more emotional, and is similar to descriptions of Heaven in the Blickling homilies,<sup>121</sup> and to the descriptions of Eden/Heaven in *The Phoenix*, more descriptive of the joys of heaven than of the Paradise of Genesis. Of particular interest is his translation of Abbo's *paradyso*.<sup>122</sup> Where Abbo has “[Christ] liberauit eum de penis tenebrarum et reddidit ei paradisum” (369), Wulfstan gives us “þurh his mildheortnysse of yrmðum brohte, 7 hine into þære heofonlican cyrican syððan

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<sup>121</sup> See Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, pp. 25, 65.

<sup>122</sup> The Corpus translation uses “neorxnawange” throughout, the same word used in the Blickling homilies. Wulfstan instead uses “paradyso” in describing Adam in the Garden of Eden.

gelædde, þe he a syðþan inne on wunode mid Godes englum 7 mid his halgum on ecan wuldre” (236). Wulfstan here conflates Adam, entering ‘the heavenly church,’ with the penitents about to enter the earthly church, and reminds them that they will be in the company of angels, and in the midst of God’s glory. The account is more circular than linear; rather than moving from paradise to the world to heaven, he is cast out from the heavenly company into the world and then, after a period of penance, reestablished in that heavenly company (actually the ‘heavenly church’). Adam’s story is important insofar as it provides for all Christians the archetype of punishment for sin and forgiveness attained through penance by Christ’s power. As such, the story is subjugated to the experience of the penitents. The altered structure of the ‘historical’ account, and Wulfstan’s adaptation of that structure taken from Abbo, allows the participants to see more clearly Adam’s fall and salvation as theirs.

This relationship between Adam and the Lenten penitents is made explicit in the remaining paragraph. Wulfstan recreates the progression established in the biblical rendition, specifically replacing Adam with the penitents. The following passage contains the most explicit thrust towards this identification:

And gif hwylc man þonne Godes lage swa swyðe abrece þæt he hine sylfne openlice wið God forwyrce mid healice misdæde, þonne be þære bysene þe God on Adame astealde þa þa he hine nydde ut of paradiso, be ðære bysne we eac nyðað ut þa forsyngodan of Godes cyrican oð þæt hi mid eadmodre dædbote hi sylfe geinnian to þam þæt we hy þyder in eft lædan durræn, ealswa we todæg þa don willað þe þas halgan tid geornlice bettan þæt hy ær bræcon. (237)

In this paragraph, Wulfstan specifically identifies the participants with Adam in respect to their initial placement in the church, their sinful state and expulsion, and their necessary period of repentance. The hearers are coincident with Adam so that his desire, to find reunification with God and the heavenly church, becomes the desire of the participants. That the ceremony was taken as coincident (or, at least, was intended to be) is implied in Wulfstan’s description of the participants’ mindset during the ordeal,

... swa he geornor 7 gelomor Godes hus sece dæges 7 nihte 7 cneowige þær ute oft 7 gelome 7 clypige to Criste geomerendum mode 7 talige hine sylfne wið God

swa forworhtne þæt he wyrðe ne sy þæt he gan mote into Godes huse. (237-8)

Wulfstan concludes by asserting that only after such alienation “mæg se biscop eac þæs mannes syngrina þurh Godes þafunge þe swyðor geliðian þe þus wile georne mid eadmodre heortan helpan him sylfan.” The second half of this sermon is greatly condensed and altered from Abbo. Abbo explains that, as Adam was given the law not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so was mankind given a law, that from Exodus 20:13.<sup>123</sup> It is for these sins, “quae nos supra nominavimus”<sup>124</sup> that the penitents have been ejected from the church. At the beginning of the part of Abbo that corresponds with Wulfstan, Abbo mentions simply “peccatores homines” as those cast out of the church. Wulfstan has changed this to “þe men þe mid openan heafodgytan hy sylfe forgyldað,” and in his explication, instead of the description from Exodus, he refers only to the sinner who “hine sylfne openlice wið God forwyrce mid healice misdæde.” The description of the participants’ mindset above is not in Abbo, who instead asserts more generally that “uos similiter fecistis poenitentiam in ista quadragesima, quo uos sitis digni intrare in ecclesiam.” Abbo, in the long version, concludes with a long description of the capital sins. The shorter Abbo has compressed all this into “ullum criminale vitium” (373) in a warning not to remain in or fall back into these sins, which Wulfstan leaves alone, instead expanding the description of those trying to get back into God’s house by doing penance “swa biscop him tæce” (238).

It must be remembered here that we know very little about just how the Anglo-Saxons understood what was required in the models for public penance available to them. The ancient church, and to an uncertain degree the Carolingians, used a different set of rules from that used in private penance. Certain things were called for during the time of the penance, and most importantly, undergoing public penance had lifelong consequences. While

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<sup>123</sup> “Non occides. Non mecharis. Non adulterabis. Non furtum facies. Non falsum testimonium dices. Non periurabis. Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.” (371).

<sup>124</sup> The phrase is in Migne, but not in the shorter Abbo.



reconciliation was prescribed, it was never quite a complete reconciliation, whereby the sinner was considered in the same state as before he had committed the sin. There is no reason to believe that this is the case in Anglo-Saxon public penance. Wulfstan and others may have been aware of how public penance was performed in the ancient church, or on the continent, but in their own descriptions of the practice (which are admittedly few) what we get is quite general. Wulfstan and possibly Ælfric call for public penance only for high sins, and Wulfstan specifies those of an ‘open’ nature. Nowhere, however, do they attempt to define just what this means. This is up to the bishop, and all the priest needs to know is that a serious crime may be referred to the bishop. There is no specific indication of what the penitent must do during this period, other than weep profusely, beyond the same exhortations to fasting, almsgiving, and good deeds seen throughout exhortations to Lenten piety, and the specifics of the penance, even the public penance, are determined case by case, as with private penance, “swa biscop him tæce.” Where public penance is discussed in Anglo-Saxon texts, it is mixed together in an address applicable to all Christians.

An anonymous homily for Ash Wednesday reveals this same duality.<sup>125</sup> The first two-thirds of the sermon (addressed to “broðru þa leofestan”) amounts to a string of general exhortation to “Bugað fram yfele and doð god” and to do penance faithfully. About halfway through is a warning specifically against the “heafodsinne” of “druncennisse,” and the danger of breaking the fast, followed by a warning against gluttony based on Adam:

Forbugað æfre þa oferfille soðlice for ðære oferfille and for ðære gifernisse wæs Adam ascofen of neorxnawange and gif we willað ure yrfe and urne eðel þæt is neorxnawang underfon, þonne is us þearf þæt we ðyder faron þurh oðerne weg þæt is ðurh fæsten and forhæfednisse.

The same parallel used by Abbo and by Wulfstan is used here, in the same way, but with a more general focus. Abbo and Wulfstan say that just as Adam was thrown out of heaven, so must be those who have sinned openly. This homilist says that just as Adam was thrown out

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<sup>125</sup> The piece, a translation of a Latin piece extant in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 190, is unedited (OEC designation HomS 9, Cameron number B3.2.9).

of heaven (for capital sins), so must we find another way back through fasting. This applies to all in Lent, and the sermon would seem to be simply a nice adaptation of a Dismissal sermon for general penitential use, except that the rest of the sermon deals directly with public penance:

Witodlice Adam forgægde his drihtnes æ þa ða he æt of ðam forbodenan treowe and forðon drihten hine sceaf ut of neorxnawange on wræcsið þisses lifes þær he ðolode mænigfealde geswinc and sibþan æfter ðisses lifes geswincum on helle susle lange heofode oðþæt Crist þe ðisne middaneard alisde hine þanon generede and hine eft ongean lædde to nerxnawanges blisse. Æfter ðære bisne we sind gelærede þæt we ut drifað þæge þe forgægdon godes æ and þurh heafodgilt beoþ scildige wiðutan [þis] þerxwolde godes huses. And heom biþ forwirnd cyrclic ingang oþ þæt hig geendodre openlicre dædbote eft beon onfangene mid bisceoplicre lefe on bosm þære modorcircan swa swa Adam wæs onfangen æfter langre behreowsunge and langre tyde heofunge into neorxnawange to halgra geferræddene. To ðære geferræddene us eac gebringe Christ se ðe leofað and rixað mid his efenecan fæder and þam halgangaste on ealra worulda woruld.

In many respects, this sermon seems closer to the middle section of Bethurum XV than does the corresponding section of Abbo, or of its translation, and perhaps it had some influence on Wulfstan's sermon. In any event, the dual address, to the general penitential public who must find another way home and to the public penitents who must do "openlicre dædbote," makes the final prayer, to enter heaven and the holy fellowship, as did Adam after a long penance, a prayer for all Christians in Lent. As such, the dividing line between public and private penance begins to fade. Through this close relationship between the two, the identification with Adam that runs through the liturgy for Lent is extended powerfully to the entire Christian community. Both those formally subjected to public penance and those participating in the application of the ashes, a permutation of public penance made consonant with the imperatives of private penance, adopt the role of Adam, thereby adopting his objective, to find reconciliation with God. Again citizens of the heavenly kingdom, allowed again into the full privileges of the church, they are prepared to mourn Christ's death and exult in his resurrection in the following days.

## Palm Sunday

One of the most overtly dramatic rituals in the Anglo-Saxon calendar is the Palm Sunday procession. Its inclusive nature goes back to its inception. Of the Jerusalem rituals described by Egeria in the fourth century, those for Palm Sunday are perhaps the most dramatic, involving a procession from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. The faithful, many of them pilgrims, would act as the crowd at the triumphal entry, accompanying the bishop, who took Christ's position, into the city. As strong an impression as this procession evidently made on Egeria, and surely on other pilgrims like her, however, we can find no evidence of a Palm Sunday procession in the West before the eighth century, and possibly the ninth. As with most of the liturgy, due to the spotty nature of the evidence, its origins and history are uncertain. Standard liturgical history, on the weight of Egeria's account, attributes the origin of the procession to Jerusalem. Duchesne believes that the Palm Sunday procession was

at first peculiar to Jerusalem. It was introduced into the West at a relatively late date, that is, about the eighth or ninth century. The ancient Latin liturgical books make no mention of it whatever. Amalarius speaks of it, but in terms showing that the custom of observing it was not universal.<sup>1</sup>

Talley, however, following a rather elaborate string of conjecture, argues for an origin at Constantinople, which in turn, he believes, borrowed much of its Palm Sunday commemoration from ante-Nicene Alexandria.<sup>2</sup> For Talley, many of the Jerusalem processions involving visitation to commemorated sites constituted a second tier of the Jerusalem liturgy, not native but developed in response to the expectations of pilgrims, in particular those from Constantinople. Whatever its origins, from the beginning the procession strove to establish an identification between the processors and the original palm-carrying, singing crowd.

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<sup>1</sup> Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 181ff.

Its practice in the West before the ninth century, however, is untestified. As Duchesne points out, the earliest liturgical books have no forms for the blessing of the palms and no hint of a procession. The Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries each have forms for Palm Sunday, and they refer to the day as Palm Sunday, a title that has particular resonance in conjunction with a palm-carrying procession. However, the forms make no mention of palms, and indeed seem to have no particular relation to the story of the triumphal entry as presented in the gospels. Rather, these forms pertain to this Sunday's other, and perhaps more central, function. Over the course of Holy Week, the Passions of each of the four gospels are read. The gospel of Matthew is read on Palm Sunday, and much of the day's liturgical emphasis looks forward to the events of the following weekend. Ælfric's First and Second Series sermons for Palm Sunday reflect this focus. His second is a composite account of the Passion, and the triumphal entry is glossed over in less than a sentence.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of his First Series sermon, he mentions that the Passion (presumably from

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<sup>3</sup> By tradition, for the Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Easter were read the Passions of Matthew, Mark, and Luke respectively. The Passion of John was reserved for the Fore-Mass on Good Friday. Some later rubrics for Ælfric's Second Series compilation, however, refer to the account in John, which would not strictly befit Palm Sunday. Ælfric's account owes no more to John than to the synoptic gospels, but these rubrics might reflect confusion concerning how consonant this composite Passion might have been with the liturgical scheme. Two manuscripts collated by Godden, N and O (Clemoes' sigla), include both of Ælfric's Palm Sunday sermons, reserving his Second Series compilation for Monday of Holy Week, which had no liturgically prescribed Passion reading. The rubrics applied to this compilation in two closely related manuscripts, C, *De passione domini nostri iesu christi Secundum Iohannem*, and F, *Dominica in Ramis Palmarum. Passio Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi Secundum Iohannem*, are intriguing. The *Concordia* clearly prescribes the *Passio Domini nostri Ihesu Christi secundum Iohannem* for reading on Good Friday, including a dramatization, during which, at the point in the reading at which the crucified Christ's garments are taken from him, two deacons are instructed to strip away the altar cloth (Ælfric's version, as do the synoptic gospels, leaves out the actual stripping of the clothes). Both manuscripts (as Ælfric adamantly would not) already supply a homily for Good Friday, Vercelli I, and clearly intend this one for Palm Sunday. Manuscripts C and M supply for Palm Sunday Ælfric's First and Second Series sermons in reverse order (CH.II.xiv, CH.I.xiv), such that Ælfric's version of the Passion might be read before his discussion of the triumphal entry. This may at least indicate that someone thought Ælfric's collated and rather interpretive Passion narrative a suitable companion to the liturgically prescribed Passion from Matthew.

Matthew) has been read, and seems to present his upcoming exegesis of the triumphal entry as something of a tangent to the day's central purpose:

Cristes þrowung wæs gerædd nu beforan us. ac we wyllað eow secgan nu ærest hu he com to ðære byrig hierusalem: ⁊ genealæhte his agenum deaðe: ⁊ nolde þa þrowunge: mid fleame forbugan;<sup>4</sup>

The theological highlight of the triumphal entry, that Christ went willingly to his own Passion, looks forward to Good Friday. Throughout Anglo-Saxon treatment of Palm Sunday, both in preaching and in the liturgy, the point of the day is its relationship to Easter weekend, and this focus imbues the commemoration of the entry itself with a range of anticipatory and eschatological overtones.

That the early continental sacramentaries have no forms indicating a procession with palms does not of course necessarily mean that there was none. By its nature, a sacramentary tends to give only the core readings of the mass, and there are sacramentaries from Anglo-Saxon England that give no more. Still, the first indication we have in the West of any forms for the blessing of palms is from the eighth-century Bobbio Missal. This heavily Gallican massbook gives, without context, a *Benedictio Palme et Oliuae super Altario*:

Ecce dies domine festa recolitur in qua infantum prescie turbe frondes· arboreos· adsummentis in tue laudis· tropheo osanna· in excelsis· fili dauid· benedictus qui uenit· in nomine domini· hoc clamantes occurrunt· pro quibus omnes gentes cognusserint te et uicturia leuasse de mundo et de diabolo optinuisse triumphum· presta· ut plebs· tua· ad sancta resurrectione tua· excubanda perueniat· hac quoque creaturam arboris oliuarum· una cum palmis que populus pro tuis laudibus benedicatur· benediccione perenni· ut quicumque pie deuocione pro expellendis· languoribus siue etiam pro expugnandas omnes insidias inimici in cunctus habitationibus suis· eas adportauerit· aut biberit· ab omne sint inpugnacione inimici securi ut cognuscent omnes gentes· quia nomen tuum gloriosum est· super omnia . . .<sup>5</sup>

With its recollection of the original crowd at the entry, its emphasis on the conquering power of the palm, and its eschatological thrust, this blessing has many of the elements that characterise the later Anglo-Saxon forms, and it is easy to envision a full commemoration,

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<sup>4</sup> CH.I.xiv, p. 290.

<sup>5</sup> Lowe, *The Bobbio Missal*, p. 170.

with a procession, surrounding it. However, although the wording of the Bobbio Missal's benediction seems to imply one, we have no certain indication that these palms were taken in procession until the Frankish witnesses of the ninth century. In the early ninth century, Amalarius writes of it in his description of the liturgy:

Quarta varietas est quae dicitur diei palmarum. Eadem die Dominus de Bethania descendit Hierusalem, quando obviam venit ei turba, Ioannes narrat: *In crastinum autem turba multa, quae venerat ad diem festum, cum audisset quia venit Iesus Hierusolimam, acceperunt ramos palmarum, et praecesserunt obviam ei, et clamaverunt: Osanna, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, rex Israhel.* In memoriam illius rei nos per ecclesias nostras solemus portare ramos et clamare: Osanna.<sup>6</sup>

Although Duchesne believes that the procession may not yet be “universal” by this time, Amalarius treats it as at least customary, with its core elements of carrying palms and singing *Hosanna* presented as parallel to the biblical account. We get no indication from Amalarius as to how ancient the procession might be, but from the extant liturgical evidence it might seem more reasonable to attribute the elaborate blessings and dramatic procession to the earlier Gallican liturgy as reflected in the Bobbio Missal than to the Romanizing Carolingians.<sup>7</sup> By the time of the Anglo-Saxon witnesses, in any event, the early mass forms represented in the Gregorian and Gelasian books, focussed entirely on the upcoming Passion and set in their forms from the earliest recorded stages, have been supplemented by a body of benedictions and blessings showing a tremendous degree of variety and originality, surrounding a procession of the palms into ‘Jerusalem.’ Talley speculates that the commemoration of the entry may have come from the East through the Celtic church. The establishment of this procession and its surrounding blessings seems to be, for the West, of

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<sup>6</sup> See Jean Michel Hanssens, ed. *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgical omnia*, v. 2 (1948), p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Although, as Rosamond McKitterick (*The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895* (1977), pp. 134-7) demonstrates, both the Gallican and the Roman liturgical forms had residing value for the Carolingians in the resistance of some to the expressed need for a new, Roman Sacramentary.

Frankish origin, and probably gained general currency as the Romano-German Pontifical became established in Rome in the tenth century.

From an early stage, the blessings of the palms seem to reflect practice in an area in which palms were not profligate, most commonly specifying ‘branches of palms and other various trees.’<sup>8</sup> For the Anglo-Saxon liturgy, standing in stark contrast to the core mass texts, which seem to be universal and unchanged from those in the earliest Gregorian books, are these divergent, and often originally composed, blessings, reflecting respectively an established liturgy anticipating the approaching Passion and a newer, freer symbolic reenactment of the entry. As such, the Palm Sunday procession, with its elaborate and seemingly less codified blessings, seems still to be at a relatively early, experimental stage when we see it in Anglo-Saxon witnesses of the tenth and eleventh centuries, although Ælfric, as did Amalarius, indicates in his sermon for the day that it was general, “purh

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<sup>8</sup> The Winchcombe Sacramentary asks God to bless “hanc creaturam oliuae, uel palmae, siue arborum quam ex ligni materiae producere iussisti” (Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, p. 72). Generally speaking, all forms of these blessings seem to assume that, while palms would be ideal, other sorts of branches would have to be used, as available. Flowers were probably used in some places in England, as they are specified on occasion. John is the only evangelist to specify that palms were involved, Matthew and Mark telling of only “leafy branches,” and Luke mentioning no foliage whatsoever. An Old Latin reading of John 12:13, however, apparently read ‘flowers and the branches of palm trees’ (see Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, p. 79), and the influence of this tradition is at times evident in the Anglo-Saxon liturgical forms. An antiphon in the Canterbury Benedictional asserts that “Occurrunt turbe cum floribus et palmis” (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 26). References to flowers can also be found in Palm Sunday forms from Corpus 422 (pp. 291-2) and London, BL, MS Additional 28188 (f. 89v-98v), among others. In his detailed directions for Palm Sunday, Lanfranc (c. 1078) instructed that the processors receive “flores, et frondes caeteris” (see Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 148). The Blickling homilist, in his account of the entry, recasts the palms as “blowende palmtwigu” (Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 69), which may be a reflection of the role of blooms in Anglo-Saxon liturgical practice. The Anderson Pontifical has in its blessings perhaps the most complete range of branches. Besides general blessings for ‘branches of various types,’ Anderson has specific prayers for olive branches and for flowers, and refers to branches of willow-trees: “quesumus ut has arbores palmarum siue salicum. siue aliarum arborum. sanctifices atque benedicas. et sicut populus ille israheliticus. cum clamoribus excipientibus predicabant gaudium. et dicebant benedictus qui uenit in nomine domini. ita et nos precamur indigni famuli tui . . .” (Conn, *The Dunstan and Brodie (Anderson) Pontificals*, p. 329).

lareowum geset . . . gehwær on godes gelapunge.”<sup>9</sup> Bede gives no clear indication that he knows of it. The reading for the main Palm Sunday mass had, of course, always been Matthew’s account of the entry, and Bede, in his explication, urges his readers to cry *Hosanna*, to lay down cloaks, and to cut branches, but explains these actions only in terms of fulfilling their Lenten obligations in preparation for participation in Christ’s resurrection.<sup>10</sup> This traditional paschal focus remained as the commemoration of the triumphal entry developed, picking up patristically-established connections between the faithful and the crowd at the entry reflected in Bede and basing around them a procession that became one of the highlights of the liturgical year, as the participants took on the actions and imperatives of the Jerusalemites welcoming Christ as he approached his Passion.

The mimetic propensity of this procession is much clearer than that for Candlemas. The participants go out to get branches, come together to meet Christ on the way, and escort him into the city. Any sense of clear impersonation, however, is complicated by the fact that the starring role of the entry, Christ himself, is missing from the reenactment. In the later Middle Ages, Christ was represented in a number of ways, ranging from the consecrated host that Lanfranc ordered for the procession (c. 1078)<sup>11</sup> to carved representations of Christ on a donkey. For the Anglo-Saxon ritual, however, we get no clear indication of anything taking the place of Christ, certainly not with such a dramatic arrangement as that ordered by Lanfranc. We might expect the procession to involve a cross, or a gospel book, or some other

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<sup>9</sup> CH.I.xiv, p. 297.

<sup>10</sup> See Martin and Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, v. 2, pp. 27ff. See also D. Hurst, *Bedae Venerabilis homeliarum evangelii*, pp. 226-7.

<sup>11</sup> At an early station in the procession from the away church, concurrent with an antiphon announcing that the crowds descended to meet Christ, Lanfranc instructs, “Cantore autem incipiente Antiphonam, *Occurrunt turbae*, exeant duo Sacerdotes albis induti, qui portent feretrum, quod parum ante diem ab eisdem sacerdotibus illuc debet esse delatum, in quo et corpus Christi esse debet reconditum” (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 148). *Pueri* flanking the bier, followed by others, are then instructed to sing the *Osanna filio David*, the song of the crowd, to the host, genuflecting, and all accompany the bier into the home church. The mimetic resonance of the ritual established by Lanfranc is striking.



item that might serve as a Christ token, but if they are present, they draw no emphasis. Rather, possibly in part due to the close relationship between the rituals for Candlemas and for Palm Sunday, the palms themselves seem to gather the aura of salvation and victory over death surrounding Christ at the entry, having absorbed much of the divinity warranted the Christ-representing candles in the Candlemas procession. While this emphasis might detract from the ritual's verisimilitude with the original event, it brings in a range of associations that help the participants directly and powerfully enter Christian history. These associations are emphasized in the vernacular homilies and sermons that deal with the Palm Sunday ritual, as well as other works that deal with the symbol of the palm-twigs, and serve to make Christ present in the moment of commemoration. The presence of the divine Christ is particularly important as the participants reenact his entrance into Jerusalem, and, as we shall see, the dramatic dialogue prescribed for the entry, the *Gloria laus et honor tibi*, testifies to the ritual's success in establishing the idea of the liturgical participants, made one body with those at the entry by carrying the palms and singing the same song, accompanying Christ into the city/church as a prelude to his Passion and resurrection.

The forms for the Palm Sunday (eve) Vespers betray the day's original function, looking forward to Christ's upcoming sacrifice, and only with Matins, right before the procession, do we get forms pertinent to the entry itself, with an antiphon following the gospel that seems to recognize the conjunction of past and present, "Turba multa quae conuenerat ad diem festum clamabat dominum benedictus qui uenit in nomine domini osanna in excelsis."<sup>12</sup> The collect for the morrow mass is the old Gregorian one, which begs that God, who had his son submit to the cross, allow the petitioners to participate in the approaching Resurrection. An antiphon for Prime, beginning with Christ's announcement that the time is nearing for him to approach his Passion, solidifies the pre-processional expectation:

*Ant.* Magister dicit tempus meum prope est apud te facio pascha cum discipulis meis.  
*V.* Ingrediente domino in sanctam ciuitatem hebreorum pueri resurrectionem uitae

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<sup>12</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 122.

pronuntiantes cum ramis palmarum osanna clamabat in excelsis.  
 V. Cumque audissent quia uenit ihesus hierosolimam exierunt obuiam ei.  
 Cum ramis.<sup>13</sup>

The first versicle, the *Ingrediente domino*, will also be sung at the climax of the procession, as the crowd enters the home church. Its use here, and that of the following versicle, establishes in the minds of those participating in the monastic hours their role as the crowd in the upcoming procession in terms of palms and singing.

The *Concordia*'s instructions for the procession are intentionally similar to those for Candlemas, and the *Concordia* invokes the Candlemas procession as it begins its instructions for Palm Sunday. It directs:

. . . the brethren, vested in albs, if this can be done and the weather permits, shall go to the church where the palms are, silently, in the order of procession and occupied with psalmody. On reaching the church they shall say the prayer of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, imploring the help of his intercession. When the prayer is finished, the gospel *Turba multa* shall be read by the deacon as far as the words *Ecce mundus totus post ipsum abiit*: the blessing of the palms shall follow. After the blessing the palms shall be sprinkled with holy water and incensed. While the children begin the antiphons *Pueri Hebraeorum* the palms shall be distributed. Then the greater antiphons shall be intoned and the procession shall go forth. As soon as the Mother church is reached the procession shall wait while the children, who shall have gone on before, sing *Gloria laus* with its verses, to which all shall answer *Gloria laus*, as the custom is. When this is finished the cantor shall intone the respond *Ingrediente Domino* and the doors shall be opened. When all have entered and the respond is finished they shall do as has been said before, holding their palms in their hands until the Offertory has been sung, and then offering them to the priest.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

<sup>14</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 35-6. “. . . ut ad illam ecclesiam ubi palmae sunt, sub silentio ordinatim eant dediti psalmodiae, omnes, si fieri potest et aura permiserit, albis induti; quo cum peruenerint agant orationem ipsius sancti, implorantes auxilii intercessionem, cui ecclesia dedicata est. Finita oratione, a diacono legatur euangelium *Turba multa* usque *Ecce mundus totus post ipsum abiit*, quod sequatur benedictio palmarum; post benedictionem aspergantur benedicta aqua et tus cremetur; dehinc, pueris incohantibus antiphonas *Pueri Hebraeorum*, distribuuntur ipsae palmae et sic, maioribus antiphonis initiatis, egrediantur. Venientes ante ecclesiam subsistant donec pueri qui praecessicut mos est *Gloria laus* cum uersibus, omnibus sicut mos est *Gloria laus* respondentibus; quibus finitis, incipiente cantore *Ingrediente Domino* responsorium, aperiantur portae; ingressi, finito responsorio, agant sicut supradictum est, et teneant palmas in manibus usque dum Offertorium cantetur et eas post oblationem offerant sacerdoti.”

As with Candlemas, the highlight of the day is from the blessing of the palms to the entrance into the church. Ælfric's skeletal instructions for Palm Sunday in his Second Letter for Wulfstan (Fehr, Brief III) focus on this part:

Ge sculon on palm-sunnandæge palm-twigu bletsian and beran mid lofsange to processionem and habban on handa, ge gehadade ge læwede, and offrian hig æfter þam godspelle þam mæsse-preoste mid þam offrung-sange.<sup>15</sup>

His assertion, mimicking his instructions for Candlemas, that those involved included "ge gehadade ge læwede" again raises the question of demographics. One wants to assume that "ge læwede" refers to more or less everyone, and with Ælfric's use of it envision as wide a demographic sampling as possible acting as one group from the blessing of the palms to the offering at the home church. Liturgical witnesses, however, largely ignore "ge læwede," making it difficult to know exactly to what degree, and in what way, they might have been involved. Lanfranc lists the order of the return procession (following the blessing of the palms) during his time. The Secretary distributes "palmas Abbati, et prioribus, et personis honestioribus."<sup>16</sup> The procession is then arranged, lining up behind pairs of priors carrying pairs of crosses, candelabras, and thuribles:

Hos sequantur duo Subdiaconi portantes duos textus Euangeliorum. Post quos laici monachi, deinde infantes cum magistris. Post quos caeteri fratres praecedentes Abbatem, qui ultimus procedit, duo, et duo, sicut sunt priores.<sup>17</sup>

While specifically making a place for the "laici monachi," nothing else here indicates the presence of anyone outside the monastic community, at least at the blessing of the palms.

Lanfranc's instructions are, of course, post-Conquest, as is a decree by Osbern, bishop of Exeter to the monks of St. Nicholas which reads, "And for þyse leaua, twygys elce gere þat is an Palmsunnendeg, & Cristes upstigan deg, to processiun mid þam canunche hy gan

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<sup>15</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 148.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

sceule.”<sup>18</sup> One wonders if it is significant that, if the procession was to have included the general populace, only the canons are mentioned here. Of course, we would not want to assume consistency in this sort of thing throughout Anglo-Saxon England, and various communities and monastic centres will surely have arranged the ritual distinctly, by necessity or by choice. Still, the paucity of specific evidence including the common people in the blessings and the procession has led some critics to see them as more insular and exclusionary. Some doubt whether the processions would even have been visible to the general public. Mark Spurrell, discussing the *Concordia*’s processional directions, points out that

Nothing is stated as to whether the church so visited was within or outside the monastic enclosure; and since we know from archaeological evidence that there was often more than one church within the walls, these passages cannot be used as evidence for processions through the streets.<sup>19</sup>

Again, due to the spotty nature of liturgical evidence in Anglo-Saxon England, one cannot generally describe with any confidence how a particular liturgical feast would have been arranged at any particular time or place. The directions for Palm Sunday in the Canterbury Benedictional, however, are a welcome exception, supplying an *Oratio ad processionem in ecclesia sancti martini episcopi*. St. Martin’s still stands outside Canterbury, and any procession from Christ Church Cathedral to St. Martin’s and back would to some degree have involved the whole city, whether or not all were carrying palms distributed during the blessings. The monastery of St. Augustine stood between the two, and its denizens surely would have joined the procession of Christ Church. The Canterbury instructions are consistent with those in the *Concordia*, and seem to be purposely so, as the Canterbury Benedictional cites “the greater part of the rubrical directions of the *Concordia*” for this

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<sup>18</sup> John Earle, ed. *A Hand-book to the Land-charters, and Other Saxon Documents* (1888), p. 260.

<sup>19</sup> Spurrell, “Architectural Interest”, p. 167.

occasion.<sup>20</sup> With a monastic-based ceremony processing through the streets of Canterbury, from Christ Church through the heart of the city and out the gates to St. Martin's, it seems natural to imagine a wide demographic. That the *indocti uulgi* were included in at least some of the monastic ritual of Easter weekend is specified in the *Concordia*'s directions for the Deposition of the Cross. It is surely even more natural to envision their participation here.

Such a view is further justified by rubrics for Palm Sunday in the Benedictional represented in MS Additional 28188. Generally speaking, the processional *ordo* in Additional 28188 (f. 89v-98v) is structurally the same as that in CB, albeit with much internal variation (especially reworking or replacing of liturgical forms). Both begin with a rubric outlining basically the instructions from the *Concordia*, that the participants, following the morning Mass, are to travel to the church where the palms or branches await consecration, singing antiphons in veneration of that church's saint. The one primary difference between these two rubrics refers to their participants. Where CB instructs, "Dominica die palmarum post matutinalem missam fratres ad illam aecclesiam ubi palmae fuerint ordinate pergant,"<sup>21</sup> Additional 28188 refers to a wider group of processers: "Dominica die palmarum expleto. matutinalis missae sacramento. clerus et populus ad illam pergant ecclesiam. ubi palmarum et arborum rami ad consecrandum sunt collocati." This broader demographic is in line with Ælfric's reference to "ge gehadade ge læwede" and with his First Series assertion that the blessed palms are distributed to "þam folce."<sup>22</sup> Although Additional 28188 (from Leofric's Exeter) does not specify a visited church (referring only to the wildcard "sancti .i.ġ."), the evidence from these witnesses encourages us to see throughout the stages of the Palm Sunday liturgy outlined in the *Concordia*, explicated by Ælfric, and developed in Canterbury and Exeter the entire demographic spectrum of late Anglo-Saxon society processing together,

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<sup>20</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 35, n. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> CH.I.xiv, p. 297.

carrying palms and singing the *Hosanna*, thereby joining themselves with the original palm-waving, singing crowd.

This association is liturgically established in the blessings of the palms. While the core elements of the Palm Sunday liturgy seem to be set, and in harmony with the *Concordia*, the benedictions for the blessing of the palms show tremendous ingenuity, and there is little consistency between liturgical witnesses, though a few forms appear regularly (if at times in altered ways). With the large number of deviant forms, in the Canterbury Benedictional as well as between witnesses, one cannot help but think of this part of the liturgy as newer, such that the composers of these witnesses took advantage of the lack of firmly established benedictions to compose original ones. They tend, nevertheless, to follow more or less the same form, with many of the same elements. The fourth blessing for the palms given in the Canterbury Benedictional is nicely representative:

Omnipotens deus rex mundi creator et redemptor. qui nostrae liberationis et saluationis gratia ex summa celi arce descendere. carnem sumere. et passionem subire dignatus es. quique sponte propria loco eiusdem propinquans passionis. a turbis cum ramis palmarum obuiantibus benedici. laudari. et rex benedictus in nomine domini ueniens clara uoce ap[p]ellari uoluisti. tu nunc nostrae confessionis laudationem acceptare. et hos palmarum ac florum ramos benedicere et sanctificare digneris. ut quicumque in tuae seruitutis obsequio exinde aliquid tulerit. celesti benedictione sanctificatus. peccatorum remissionem et uitae aeternae premia percipere mereatur.<sup>23</sup>

The blessings, addressed to God, often invoke Christ's incarnation, his willing procession to his own Passion, and the response of the crowd, specifically their song, and then beseech God to bless the palms so that, like the original crowd, the petitioners may participate in these events. For the contemporary celebrants, as this blessing makes clear, being part of the crowd is a means to remission of sin and entry into heaven (the Resurrection is occasionally invoked here), grounding the Palm Sunday rituals both in Lent and in the events of Easter weekend. Some blessings extend the significance of the palm-branches, and several invoke the olive twig carried to Noah in the ark by a dove as an announcement of the restoration of peace to

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<sup>23</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p, 24.

humanity.<sup>24</sup> The first benediction for the palms in the Lanalet Pontifical cleverly works Matthew's gospel account of the entry into a prayer, attributing the song of the Jews in Matthew to the original crowd and the song in John to the contemporary petitioners while making the connection between the two groups.<sup>25</sup> An alternate blessing in the Canterbury Benedictional gives particular recognition to the temporal juxtaposition of the original crowd and the reenacting processors. The benediction invokes Christ,

cui etiam uenienti hierosolimam. deuotam ei cum ramis palmarum. ac mysticis laudibus hodierna die obuiam fecisti turbam procedere. respice propitius ad debitam tui populi seruitutem et huius creature nouitatem tua uirtute sanctifica. ut sicut tunc prioris populi gratus tibi extitit deuotionis affectus. ita nos quoque in ueritate confessionis sanctissimi nominis eius. haec eadem per reuoluta tempora frequentantes. purificatis sensibus dignum tibi referamus obsequium. ut uelut florum uarietate piis uernantes studiis. sarcina carnis deposita. cum odore bonorum in caelesti hierusalem eidem filio tuo domino nostro ihesu christo ualeamus occurrere.<sup>26</sup>

The song of the crowd is, for the reenactors, a song of confession, and participation in the festival will allow them to run to meet Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem. This eschatological overtone is repeated throughout these forms.

The final blessing given by the Canterbury Benedictional, the *Prephatio in consecratione palmarum*, explains the cutting of branches and the strewing of cloaks as a declaration of triumph over death, which segues well into the following antiphons prescribed universally for the distribution of the palms:

*Ant.* Pueri ebreorum tollentes ramos oliuarum obuiauuerunt domino clamantes et dicentes osanna in excelsis.

*Ant.* Pueri ebreorum uestimenta prosternebant in uia et clamabant dicentes osanna

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<sup>24</sup> The olive twig figures to a surprising degree in the Palm Sunday forms, and some blessings, including that quoted above from the Winchcombe Sacramentary, list olive branches among those potentially being blessed. In addition, a key antiphon for the distribution of the palm, the first of the *Pueri ebreorum* antiphons below, has the sons of the Hebrews at the original entry carrying "ramos oliuarum." Perhaps the frequent references to olive branches points to the influence of liturgical forms, such as that represented in the Bobbio Missal, from an area in which olive trees are a bit more common than they are in England.

<sup>25</sup> See Doble, *Pontificale lanaletense*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>26</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 24.

filio dauid benedictus qui uenit in nomine domini.<sup>27</sup>

Liturgical antiphons tend to be loosely based on the biblical texts, and often feature composite or interpretive readings. A set of antiphons for the beginning of the procession from the away church, the ‘greater antiphons’ mentioned by the *Concordia*, demonstrates the interpretive freedom of these antiphons:

- Ant.* Ante sex dies sollempnis pasce quando uenit dominus in ciuitatem hierusalem occurrerunt ei pueri et in manibus [portantes] ramos palmarum et clamabant uoce magna dicentes osanna in excelsis benedictus qui uenisti in multitudine misericordie osanna in excelsis.
- Alia. Ant.* Cum audisset populus quia hiesus uenit hierosolimam acceperunt ramos palmarum et exierunt ei obuiam et clamabant pueri dicentes hic est salus nostra et redemptio israhel quantus est iste cui throni et dominationes occurrunt noli timere filia sion ecce rex tuus uenit tibi sedens supra pullum asine sicut scriptum est salue rex fabricator mundi qui uenisti redimere nos.
- Alia. Ant.* Occurrunt turbe cum floribus et palmis redemptori obuiam et uictori triumphanti digna dant obsequia filium dei ore gentes predicant et in laudem christi uoces sonant per nubila osanna.<sup>28</sup>

The third of these includes the flowers, not found in any of the gospel accounts, except for the Old Latin reading for John. Of particular interest here, however, is the role given the *pueri*. They are inserted into the loose gospel accounts in the first two antiphons (both based on John), and are the focal point of the distribution antiphons. Regularly throughout the forms for the day, there are *pueri* at the original entry carrying palm twigs and singing *Hosanna* to Christ. None of the gospel accounts, however, make any mention of children here. Matthew mentions children singing praises in the temple, but only after the entry and the scourging of the money-changers by Christ, and there is no biblical reason for connecting these children with the entrance through the gates into the city. Liturgically, the *pueri* are used to represent those in the city who sing to those approaching with Christ, and their prominence in the liturgical forms allows them to be retrofitted into accounts of the original entry.<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp. 25-6.

<sup>29</sup> The role of the *pueri* in regards to the entrance into the city/church is specified in the *Concordia*, in CB, and in MS Additional 28188.



Blickling homilist does so, in a reinvented gospel account that greatly reflects this liturgical emphasis and illustrates the interrelationship between liturgical forms and vernacular preaching. In Matthew, after the entry and the scourging of the temple, Christ reminds the pharisees of the prophecy that he would be praised by children. The entry itself has no children, but rather features a dialogue between those in the city and those in the crowd (Matthew 21: 10-11):

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?"  
The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

In the Blickling homilist's rendering of the entry, the mention of the children is shifted to the entry itself, proclaimed in this rather ritualistic dialogue:

Mid þy þe Hælend þa eode on þa ceastre, eal seo burh wæs onstýred, & þa  
ceasterware cegdon & cwædon, 'Hwæt is þes mihtiga þe her þus mærlíce fereþ?'  
þæt folc him ondsvarode & cwæþ, 'Hit is se Nadzarenisca witga of Galileum, se  
sceal beon gehered ofor ealle þeoda, & geweorþod ge of cilda muþe meolcsucendra.'<sup>30</sup>

More important than a realistic account of the actual entry are the symbolic functions of the meeting between the crowd and the citizens of the city, through which the city becomes infected with the crowd's enthusiasm, and of the praising children. Praising children, at times carrying palms, are common elements in descriptions of heaven, and their symbolic use in this sort of ritual has overtones of divine victory, making the home church at the point of entry both the historical Jerusalem and the Heavenly Jerusalem that the church prefigures. Those who developed the liturgical forms, at the expense of accuracy, have transformed a later, almost off-hand reference by Christ to the praising children into a powerful symbol of Christ's victory upon entering Jerusalem, made present in the liturgical entry into the home church.

The ritual importance of the dialogue between those in the city and those following Christ is established in the liturgical instruction that *pueri* be sent ahead of the procession to the gates of the home church, representing Jerusalem. The children were to wait within the closed gates until the procession had come together on the other side and sing an exchange

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<sup>30</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 71.

with those outside, reflecting Matthew's account of the splitting of the crowd into those who went before and those who went behind (Matthew 21: 8-9a):

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of them and that followed were shouting, "Hosannah . . ."

In his First Series sermon, Ælfric makes much of this split crowd, explaining those who went before as the patriarchs and prophets who lived before Christ, and the crowd following as those who have inclined, and continue to, after his incarnation, all singing the same song. He seems to draw a bit more focus to it in his rather free version of the gospel narrative, changing a subordinate clause ("The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed") into a coordinate ("⁊ eodon þa sume beforan. sume bæftan,"<sup>31</sup>). Perhaps the liturgical importance of the splitting of the crowd, all singing together, has coloured his description of their actions, giving extra weight to what, for his audience, might be taken as liturgical instruction.

Robert Deshman notes that, for the Palm Sunday illustration in the Benedictional of Æthelwold, the following crowd are not, as was traditional in Palm Sunday illustration, the apostles, but are rather a body of palm-bearing townspeople (one of which is a woman). He argues that "these figures must be citizens, who seem to have displaced the apostles from their customary place . . . the apostles were simply omitted, the adult citizens before Christ were shifted into their place, and the youths spreading garments were moved back into the vacated space in the gate."<sup>32</sup> As such, this illustration too is focussed on the split crowd, those who went before and those who follow behind, surrounding Christ at the gates of Jerusalem. In particular, it sets up an opposition between the adult crowd of townspeople behind and the youths before, with two youths in the city gates spreading garments, three in trees harvesting branches, and two in the city above the gates holding flowers out directly to Christ. This splitting of the crowd, symbolized by the sending forth of the *pueri* and dramatized in their

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<sup>31</sup> CH.I.xiv, pp. 290-1.

<sup>32</sup> Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 77, 78.

exchange with the following crowd, the *Gloria laus et honor tibi*, is the climax of the Palm Sunday procession.

The *Gloria laus* was written by Theodulph of Orléans, but original verses have been composed for the Canterbury Benedictional. The *pueri* sing the refrain, at the beginning and again after each verse:

Gloria laus et honor tibi sit rex christe redemptor  
 cui puerile decus prom[p]sit osanna pium.  
*Cant.* Quis rex hic equitat cui gloria redditur ista  
 cui pueri cantant cui sola cuncta boant. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Hic rex descendens celorum culmine uenit  
 atque suum proprium dixit ab arce decus. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Uidemus ante alios reges non talis honoris  
 cui plebs posternit tegmina cuncta sua. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Debuerant ipsi mortis iam damna subire  
 hic calcans mortem. sponte sua moritur. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Cur igitur uenit querens per uulnera palmam.  
 cum sibi semper sit gloria laus et honor. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Mercari uenit proprio de sanguine mundum  
 patris oues secum ducere in astra uolens. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Hicne est cui quondam nostri cecinere prophete  
 laudem lactantes ore proferre pio. *Gloria.*  
*Ver.* Hic rex est regnum nunc portas tollite uestras  
 cumque introueniat dicite osanna sibi. *Gloria.*<sup>33</sup>

The song portrays Christ, descended from the heavens and about to trample death by submitting to it. The focus is on his worth to enter the city, and through the song we see something of a double Christ standing before the gates, the king worthy of more honour than any who has come before and the suffering Christ approaching his sacrifice. After the song has finished, the doors are asperged and opened and all go in singing in a high voice the entrance antiphon, *Ingrediente domino in sanctam ciuitatem hebreorum pueri resurrectionem uite pronuntiates cum ramis palmarum osanna clamabant in excelsis*. Although the reenactment of the Palm Sunday entry has nothing explicitly prescribed to represent Christ, the Canterbury version of the *Gloria laus* allows the participants to see him entering the city before them, praised by palm-waving children. The dramatic mixing of past and present here

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<sup>33</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, pp. 27-8. MS Additional 28188 gives the first, second, third, and last of these.

in the welcoming praise of the crowd and the expectation of the upcoming Passion casts the participants into the midst of the triumphal entry, or rather brings the triumphal entry to the contemporary celebrants, to such a degree that the liturgical forms actually reshape the narrative and homiletic portrayals of the biblical event. The very ritualistic elements that ruin its verisimilitude with the gospel account, such as the elaborated significance of the palm and the children's substitution for the citizens of the city, serve to juxtapose the processors with Christian history, so that the objective of those on the original Palm Sunday, to praise the victorious Christ, becomes theirs.

The final reading for the procession, after all have entered, brings these themes together, and reminds the processors of their spiritual reward:

*Deus qui dispersa congregas. et congregata conseruas. qui populis obuiam ihesu ramos portantibus benedixisti. benedic etiam hanc fidelium tuorum turbam. in honore tui nominis congregatam ut omni infirmitatis ualetudine effugata. tua ab omni incursu inimici protegatur dextera. et cum caelestium donorum palma glorietur uictorifera.*<sup>34</sup>

The request that God bless the contemporary participants just as he did the palm-carrying people who met Jesus on the way highlights the union of biblical history and liturgical reenactment established in the procession. Their reward, thanks to the victorious palm, is the ability to glory in heavenly gifts. With the Passion reading from Matthew and the constant liturgical reminders of the upcoming Passion and Resurrection, the Palm Sunday celebrants are always looking beyond the fact of Christ entering the city to exactly where he is going six days later, and what it means for them. More than just participation in the events of Easter week, the celebrants look forward to the ultimate significance of those events, the opening of heaven to them, and many of the forms for the day end with this sort of eschatological focus. Participation in the events of Christ's life allows participation in his ultimate victory, and meriting the right to enter the Heavenly Jerusalem at the end of the world is the ultimate goal of the liturgy for Palm Sunday through Easter.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

Granted the central place explicitly given the laity in the liturgy for Palm Sunday, the role of the vernacular preaching in explaining the meaning of the ritual for its participants is particularly important. The Latin antiphons and benedictions prescribed by Anglo-Saxon liturgical books imbue the elements of the ritual with a range of nuance, as when the blessed branches are connected to the olive twig given Noah, and surely the laity would have been at something of a disadvantage in taking in all their liturgical richness. All the laity truly need to understand, however, to harvest spiritual edification from the day's liturgy is its core element, the same for Ælfric as for Amalarius, that they 'carry branches and cry *Hosanna*.' Its purpose is to unite the processors with the original crowd at the entry, and the rest of the liturgy is in one way or another a development of this association. The power of the palm-twig to make present the divine power of Christ, the splitting of the crowd and their dialogue at the city gates, and the expectation of entry into the Heavenly Jerusalem are all explained and developed in the vernacular preaching specifically in terms of the intended juxtaposition of the processors and the biblical crowd.

Whether or not the Palm Sunday procession was firmly established in Anglo-Saxon England, the divine mystique of the palm itself surely was, and figures largely in discussions of the liturgy and in hagiography. The Blickling Palm Sunday sermon demonstrates the ritualistic importance of the palm-twig. The palm is, of course, primarily a symbol of victory. The Blickling homilist explains:

þa bæron hie him togeanes blowende palmtwigu; forþon þe hit wæs Iudisc þeaw,  
þonne heora ciningas hæfdon sige geworht on heora feondum, & hie wæron eft  
ham hweorfende, þonne eodan hie him togeanes mid blowendum palmtwigum,  
heora siges to wyorþmyndum.<sup>35</sup>

The victory, in this case, is Christ's victory over death in the raising of Lazarus which, as the Gospel of John indicates, drew the people to the event. The Blickling homilist then extends the significance forward to Christ's victory over death by means of his own death and his Harrowing of Hell, paving the way for the use of the palm-twig in the *Concordia's Visitatio*

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<sup>35</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 67.

ceremony (held by the ‘angel’ at the tomb). It is the raising of Lazarus that begins the miracles of Holy Week, culminating in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The palm-twig symbolizes both of these events.

Other uses of the palm-twig in vernacular homilies extend its significance. Ælfric’s homily on the Innocents, the infants slaughtered by Herod, describes them as “þa ða criste folgiað on hwitum gyrlum swa hwider swa he gæð. ⁊ hi standað ætforan his þrymsetle buton ælcere gewemmednyse. hæbbende heora palmtwigu on handa. ⁊ singað ðone niwan lofsang þam ælmihtigum to wurðmynte.”<sup>36</sup> The palm-twig is a commonplace in descriptions of the victorious faithful in heaven, and it is hard to find an assumption narrative that does not feature them. Their common appearance in heaven imbues their appearances on earth with divinity, and at times they glow “swa se scinenda mergensteorra,” or otherwise serve as a conduit for God’s power. This mystique is connected to traditions that the Cross was made from a palm-tree, as reflected in the Life of St. Machutus:

Nis nan mon þæt wite þæs treowes cynren · managa þeah wenap · þæt hit of palmtrywa sy · ⁊ þæt treow for his mycelnesse mycle wafunge gegearwap · eallum þam þe hym to cumap.<sup>37</sup>

This mystical power accrued by the palm makes it something more than just a symbol of victory, and at times it takes a far more active role. One of the most compelling uses of the palm-twig is featured in the Blickling Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The story begins with the angel’s presentation to Mary of the glowing palm-twig, which “wæs soþlice swiþe scinende palm-twig & hit wæs þa swa leoht swa se mergenlica steorra, þe heo þær onfeng of þæs engles handa.”<sup>38</sup> The palm-twig symbolizes Mary’s victory in such a direct way that the belligerent Jew feels compelled to steal and desecrate it as a way to defeat Mary. Protected by God, it is then held aloft as the Jew processes around town, healing the blindness of the other Jews. The conflation of the palm-twig with Moses’ healing serpent in the wilderness, which

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<sup>36</sup> CH.I.v, p. 223.

<sup>37</sup> Yerkes, *The Old English Life of St. Machutus*, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 137.

is itself a prefigure of the Cross, certainly colours the Palm Sunday ceremony and increases the power of the ceremony's ritualistic use of the palm. The divinity bestowed upon the palm (as upon the candle, the staff, and the Cross) serves as a ritualistic substitution for the presence of the divine Christ.

The power of the palm-twigg is central to its ability to juxtapose the liturgical participants with the crowd at the entry. Both the Blickling homilist and Ælfric centre their sermons on this juxtaposition. As had Bede, the Blickling homilist describes those who went before Jesus as betokening “þæt Iudisce folc on þæm wæs se halga heap hehfædera & witgena, þa þe Cristes tocyme wiston & forsægdon, & þa wundro þe he worhte, & his þrowunga . . .” and the crowd that followed as “ealle þaþe seopþan æfter Cristes cyme wæron to gode gecyrrede.”<sup>39</sup> He emphasizes that “Ealle hie cleopodan & cwædon anre stefne, Hælend, Dawides sunu, þu eart gebletsod, þu þe come on Drihtnes naman, hæl us on þæm hehstan.” Then, in a mixing of past and present voices, the Blickling homilist explains the meaning of the songs for Palm Sunday, relating them to what was originally said, and relating singers now to the singers at the triumphal entry. Noting that those who went before had sung “Hæl us on þæm hehstan” and had been saved through his Passion and resurrection, he makes clear how his audience should relate to the Palm Sunday narrative, highlighting the importance of this mindset with an invocation of the Last Judgement:

We þonne synt þe þær æfter fylgeað; & we witon eall þis þus geworden, forðon we sceolan on hine gelyfan, & hine gelufian, & we eac witon þæt he is toward to demenne, & þas world to geendene. Nu we habbaþ mycele nedþearfe þæt he us gearwe finde. We witon ful geare þæt we sceolan on þisse sceortan tide geearnian ece ræste, þonne motan we in þære engellican blisse gefeon mid urum Drihtne . . .<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 81. Liturgically, the ultimate purpose of the split crowd is that it allows for the dialogue between those in the city and those following Christ. The Blickling homilist, while recasting the account of this dialogue from Matthew to include the *pueri*, has changed the question of the city-dwellers from a simple “Who is this?” to “Hwæt is þes mihtiga þe her þus mærllice fereþ?” a question that seems more consonant with the sorts of replies given in the versicles of the *Gloria laus et honor tibi* than with the biblical response.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 81, 83.

The power of Christ's entry into Jerusalem for 'those who went ahead' was that those who welcomed Christ into the city, crying out for salvation, were indeed saved that next weekend through Christ's Passion and resurrection. The Blickling homilist makes clear that his audience should on Palm Sunday partake of that original power by considering themselves part of that crowd, singing the same song and expecting imminent salvation in the events of the upcoming week. He portrays this association as something more than a vaguely mimetic commemoration. The time is short, and joining this Palm Sunday crowd has direct bearing on one's place in heaven. The participants in the festival's events really are to cry for salvation to the entering Christ, and expect to see the fruits of it soon. This is the heart of the liturgical forms, and it is made accessible to the audience of the Blickling homilist by his development of the link between the biblical figures who went ahead and the contemporary faithful who follow behind.

Ælfric, in his First Series sermon for the day, discusses the ceremony more directly and describes this association explicitly as liturgical instruction:

se gewuna stent on godes cyrican þurh lareowum geset. þ̅ gehwær on godes  
 gelapunge se sacerd bletsian scule palmtwigu on ðisum dæge: ⁊ hi swa gebletsode  
 þam folce dælan: ⁊ sceolon þa godes þeowas singan þone lofsang þe ðæt Iudeisce  
 folc sang togeanes criste þa ða he genealæhte his þrowungæ; We geefenlæcað þam  
 geleaffullum of ðam folce: mid þysre dæde. for ðan þe hi bæron palmtwigu mid  
 lofsange togeanes þam hælende; Nu sceole we healdan urne palm. oð þ̅ se sangere  
 onginne þone offringsang. ⁊ geoffrian þonne gode þone palm: for ðære getacnunge;  
 Palm getacnað sige; Sigefæst wæs crist þa ða he ðone miclan deoful oferwan: ⁊ us  
 generode; And we sceolon beon eac sigefæste þurh godes mihte: Swa þ̅ we ure  
 unþeawas. ⁊ ealle leahtras. ⁊ þone deoful oferwinnan ⁊ us mid godum weorcum  
 geglengan: ⁊ on ende ures lifes betæcan gode þone palm þ̅ is ure sige.<sup>41</sup>

Again, the liturgical participants are to think of themselves as one with those following behind Christ, carrying palms as totems of victory over the devil and singing *Hosanna*. Ælfric's exegetical description of the split crowd, however, is a bit more complex, as was Bede's, whom he is following. As do the biblical texts and illustrations of the event like that in the Benedictional of Æthelwold, Ælfric presents four groups of people surrounding Christ at the

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<sup>41</sup> CH.I.xiv, p. 297. Subsequent page references are to this text.



entry. Those who cast garments under the feet of the ass represent the martyrs trampled for the faith. Those who hewed branches to prepare Christ's way "sind þa lareowas on godes cyrcan. þe plucciað. þa cwydas þæra apostola: ⁊ heora æftergengena" (294). Those who went before, "þa sind þa heahfæderas. ⁊ þa witegan" (295) before Christ's incarnation, and those behind "sind þa ðe æfter cristes acennednysser to him gebugon. ⁊ dæghwomlice bugað," all singing one song. This partition might be problematic if one were to consider those who hewed branches as the same people who carried them at the entry, as seems to be the case in the gospel accounts. It could be confusing to Ælfric's audience, presumably not made up predominantly of teachers, to be told that they are to go out and hew branches as teachers. Indeed, this partition points to a more interesting problem in unifying the liturgy with the biblical accounts, and the gospel accounts with each other. Nowhere in the gospels do we get any indication that the people waved palm branches over their heads as they accompanied Christ into the city. Matthew and Mark say that branches were spread on the road, not held aloft. John is the only evangelist to mention palms at all, and he makes no mention of what was done with them. One could easily imagine, given the syntax of John's account, that the branches were taken up and carried aloft to meet Christ, but it seems more natural, when taking the gospel accounts together, to assume that they would have been spread on the road, unless we are to assume that the branches in Matthew and Mark are distinct from the palms carried in John, and that each gospel simply leaves the other type of foliage out of the account. For whatever reason, possibly because the divinity bestowed upon the palm encourages processors to hold it as an honoured totem, as they would the Cross, the candle, and the gospel books, the liturgical forms, described and enforced by vernacular treatments, demand that the palms be held aloft. As such, treatment of the branches in witnesses surrounding the liturgy has settled into something of a fractured account of these branches. In Ælfric's account, both in his gospel rendering and in his exegesis, he discusses the branches hewn and thrown on the way as "treowa bogas," not as palms, such that the palms carried by those following Christ are distinct. The illustration of the entry in the Benedictional of Æthelwold depicts the four

groups described by Ælfric surrounding Christ. Behind Christ are the only adults in the picture, holding aloft palms and following him into the city. Before him is one group of youths (signified by their shorter tunics), casting down a cloak under the feet of the ass.<sup>42</sup> In the city, above the gate, are two youths holding out flowers towards Christ. Above are three youths harvesting branches that are quite distinct from the palms held by the following adults. The importance of this sort of illustration is typological. As such, the youths may be harvesting one type of branches, signifying the harvesting of Christian teaching, while another group (the adults) holds palms of victory behind Christ. There is no relationship between the two groups, and this is only a problem if one is overly concerned with a highly accurate accounting of the gospel story, in illumination or in the liturgy. In his rendering of the gospel account and in his exegesis, Ælfric has separated them, as the liturgy demands. Just as the only adults in the entry illumination are those carrying palms behind Christ, so the only liturgical role prescribed by Ælfric for his audience is that of the following crowd. It is not unusual, both in illumination and in the liturgy, to have *pueri* stand for roles supporting those established for the bulk of the liturgical participants, as they do for those who have gone ahead of Christ and for the harvesters. In the liturgical forms, the harvesters have no specified role. Those processing to the away church are going to collect branches that are clearly meant to represent the palms, but there is no sense that they are going to ‘harvest’ them. Nowhere in the liturgical witnesses do we get any indication of just how the palms get to the altar of the away church.<sup>43</sup> As with the candles on Candlemas, it doesn’t seem to be important. They have no real significance until the blessing of the palms, with which the liturgical forms for

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<sup>42</sup> As Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 77ff, points out, the donkey, while walking on the cloak, seems to be higher than those before or after him, as if it were stepping onto a bridge between him and the city gate. Ælfric, in his rendering of Matthew’s account of the entry, has added the fact that those casting cloaks “under þæs assan fet . . . bricgodon þam hælende” (CH.I.xiv, p. 290).

<sup>43</sup> The opening rubric for the *ordo* in Additional 28188 indicates that the branches had been gathered together at the away church beforehand, referring to the church “ubi palmarum et arborum rami ad consecrandum sunt collocati” (f.89v).

the procession begin. As such, one can imagine them previously harvested by the teachers of the church and prepared on the altar, although the harvesting of the branches has no place in the liturgy any more than the casting of the cloaks. What is pertinent in all these witnesses, and what is emphasized in all of them, is the following crowd, and Ælfric makes abundantly clear that this is what his audience must join to reap the rewards of the Resurrection.

Participating in the events of Christ's life allows participation in his victory, and Ælfric in his instructions for Palm Sunday, illustrating the liturgical resonance between the original entry, the commemoration, and entry into the Heavenly Jerusalem, urges his flock to 'at the end of our life deliver the palm to God, that is, our victory.' He ends his sermon describing how, at the End, the faithful will arise, and "scinað þa rihtwisan. Swa swa sunne. on heora fæder rice" (298). This eschatological focus is even more elaborate in the Blickling homily for Palm Sunday. One of the most striking characteristics of the Blickling Lenten homilies is their emphasis on the Last Judgement. If, as was claimed in the Blickling sermon for the first Sunday of Lent, the forty days of Lent are to be seen as representative of the world, it is natural to see Good Friday or Easter as its end. Consequently, as we have seen in homiletic treatments of Palm Sunday, the events of Easter weekend tend to become conflated with those of the Last Judgement. The author of the Blickling homily for the First Sunday in Lent claims that "þa gesetton halige fæderas & godes folces lareowas þa tid þæs fæstenes foran to Cristes þrowunga, & hie sweotollice cyþdon þæt se egeslice domes dæg cymeþ on þa tid þe Godes sunu on rode galgan þrowode."<sup>44</sup> A Vercelli homily (Scragg II) reflects this idea; "⁊ on þam dæge bið dryhtnes rod blode flowende betweox wolcnum, ⁊ in þam dæge bið dryhtnes onsyn swiðe egeslicu ⁊ ondryslicu ⁊ on þam hiwe þe he wæs þa hine Iudeas swungon ⁊ ahengon ⁊ hiora spatlum him on spiwon."<sup>45</sup> Others apparently felt that the End would come at Easter Vigils, symbolically the time of the Resurrection. While Ælfric and others would surely have objected to such a prognostication, the compelling connection between the Second

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<sup>44</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 54.

Coming and the Crucifixion and Resurrection intensifies the rituals of the season. If the participants expect that their relationship to these ceremonies could determine their place in a Judgement that is waiting at the dramatic pinnacle towards which these ceremonies are pointing, they will certainly be more predisposed to experience them fully. In this vein, the author of the Blickling Palm Sunday sermon includes a discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem, forty years after Christ's death. Marcia Dalbey discusses his use of this image:

. . . with many doublets and parallel structures, the homilist develops his description in an almost epic style that heightens the sense of awe inspired by the physical appearance of the city and that underlines by contrast the terrible destruction to come. . . . The appeal is to the emotion rather than to the intellect.<sup>46</sup>

The congregation are reminded of the consequences of failing to repent during their forty-day period. They are then given the contrasting positive example of those who followed Christ at the triumphal entry. Dalbey calls this contrast "the typical pattern of Anglo-Saxon exhortation in which a description of hell precedes a final view of the joys of heaven." The dual tone established in this homily prepares the participants for the contrasting moods of sorrow and exultation that the ceremonies of Holy Week will engender and ensures that they are in the correct frame of mind to relate personally to the upcoming commemorated events, looking forward in particular to their place in heaven, the road to which is at the heart of the Holy Season liturgy. This road is embarked upon by joining Christ's entry into Jerusalem, reenacting the exultation of the following crowd as Christ approaches his Passion.

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<sup>46</sup> Marcia Dalbey, "Themes and Techniques in the Blickling Lenten Homilies", in *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, eds. Szarmach and Huppé (1978), p. 230.

## Holy Week and Easter

Throughout the Temporale liturgy has developed a growing expectation of the events of the Passion. After the first Passion reading on Palm Sunday, this anticipation has captured the full attention of the church. Passiontide begins a week earlier, actually, on Passion Sunday, which Ælfric introduces in his Second Series homily for the day:

þeos tid fram ðisum andwerdan dæge oð ða halgan eastertide is gecweden cristes ðrowungtid. and ealle godes ðeowas on ðære halgan gelaðunge mid heora circlicum ðenungum wurðiað. and on gemynde healdað his ðrowunge. þurh ða we ealle alysede wurden.<sup>1</sup>

The remembrance of Christ's Passion and resurrection is the centre of liturgical commemoration, celebrated in apostolic times with a single all-night vigil and eventually extended by weeks before and after, and the rest of the Temporale festivals focus on it, and on its eschatological expectations. As such, it is not surprising to find that the liturgy for Easter weekend both retains some of the oldest practices of the church (as described by Baumstark's Law of Organic Development<sup>2</sup>) and attracts some of its most exciting accretions. The point of the commemoration has always been to unite the celebrants with the saving events of Christ's Passion and resurrection, and the method used by the church throughout the year for effecting this unity abounds here. At the beginning of Holy Week, the faithful have been thoroughly integrated with the crowd at the Entry. From Christmas through Lent, the associations established in the liturgy have been quite specific, generally chosen to correspond with particular characters in the gospel narratives. For Holy Week, we see, alongside specific associations with the prisoners in Hell and the women at the tomb, a return to the general association, developed in expectation of Christmas in much the same way, whereby the faithful are the people of God, at one with those actually before the Cross and explicitly extended, in the *orationes sollemnes*, to all of Christendom, waiting in the terror of sin-

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<sup>1</sup> CH.II.xiii, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, p. 23.

inspired darkness for the light of Christ on Easter morning. The liturgical exercises, concerned primarily with light and darkness, cultivate mood as well as narrative, reaching a climax on Good Friday with the *Adoratio* and another on Saturday evening with Easter Vigils before the joyful denouement of Eastertide, following the witnessing of the proof of the Resurrection.

The late Anglo-Saxon church was quite interested in the dramatic reenactment of the events of this holiest of times. Although there was certainly something new at work in the ninth and tenth centuries in England and France, where many of these dramatic elaborations of the liturgy developed, they do not represent the growth of drama, but rather ‘dramatic’ expressions of already present liturgical and narrative dynamics, using liturgical language and modes of expression to unify the faithful with Christian history. In this chapter, I will discuss the more dramatic liturgical or extra-liturgical rituals, placing them not in the context of the history of Western drama but in the liturgical and devotional setting from which they were never divorced. In the process I will try both to explain what it means to discuss this sort of ritual as ‘dramatic’ and to provide a sense of the dramatic experience as explained by the redactors of the rituals, and by the vernacular writers whose homilies reflect them. Together the light-based reflection of Christ’s Passion (given currency most prominently in *Tenebrae*, the *Adoratio*, and Easter Vigils and reflected powerfully in accounts of Christ’s Harrowing of Hell) and the *Visitatio*, connecting the participants with the women at the tomb, allow the faithful to appreciate firsthand the fact and the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection.

### **Maundy Thursday**

Formal preparation for the Passion begins with the Passion reading from Matthew on Palm Sunday, followed during the week (on Tuesday<sup>3</sup> and Wednesday) by Passions from

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<sup>3</sup> In the time of Leo the Great, the Mark Passion was read on Easter Sunday, but was later moved to the preceding Tuesday. (See Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 261).

Mark and Luke. The liturgical forms for the days preceding the *triduum* of Maundy Thursday, 'Long' Friday, and Holy Saturday are general, reiterating the fact of the Passion and its significance, as in the benediction for Tuesday (from the Canterbury Benedictional):

Ipsius resurrectionis percipiatis consortia. cuius patientiae ueneramini documenta. . . .  
Quo ab eo sempiternae uitae munus percipiatis. per cuius temporalem mortem  
aeternam uos euadere creditis.<sup>4</sup>

The commemoration begins in earnest, however, on Thursday, with a particularly rich series of events, including the Reconciliation of Penitents, discussed above. In his Second Letter for Wulfstan, Ælfric outlines its major elements (except for the Reconciliation). In the morning are the washing and stripping of the altars:

On þunres-dæg ge sculan aþwean eower weofodu, ær-þan-ðe ge mæssian and  
ge elles ne motan. And æfter æfensange ge sculon unscrydan þa weofodu, and  
standan hi swa nacode oþ þone sæternes-dæg.<sup>5</sup>

According to the *Concordia*, the pavement of the church is likewise scrubbed by unshod brethren.<sup>6</sup> This presumably applies to churches where unshod brethren might be about, and the *Concordia* makes explicit distinction between the brethren who wash the floors and the priests and ministers who wash the altars.<sup>7</sup> The key point, stressed in the *Concordia*, in Corpus 190, and in Ælfric's Letter, is that the Maundy Mass must not be held until after the altars have been washed.

Mass is held after Sext, and includes the Maundy, the washing of feet following Christ's example given at the institution of the first Communion. According to the *Concordia*, "there shall be assembled as many poor people as the abbot shall have provided

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<sup>4</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>5</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>7</sup> The same sentence, describing the split washing of the pavement and the altars, appears in the Corpus 190 manuscript (Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 239). This passage specifies that the washing of the church occurs after Terce.

for.”<sup>8</sup> Appropriate antiphons are sung<sup>9</sup> and the feet are washed, dried, and kissed. The poor are offered water for their hands, fed, and given money “according to the abbot’s discretion.” Ælfric also gives directions for the Maundy in his letter for Wulfstan. The description is more general, with nothing to specify a monastic context (although many of the directions for the rest of Holy Weekend do mention the brethren):

Dop on þam þunres-dæge, swa-swa ure drihten bebed. Apweað þearfena fet and him fodan doð; scrud, gif eow to on-hagige. And eac eow betwynan eowre fet apweað mid eadmodnysse, swa-swa Crist sylf dyde and us swa don het.<sup>10</sup>

The *Concordia* here describes only the washing and feeding of the poor, then goes onto None, the Blessing of the New Fire, the consecration of the chrism (only in passing, in conceding that the *Dominus vobiscum* will be said by the consecrating bishop), and the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified. Only after Vespers does the abbot, with his select group, carry out his “own Maundy.”<sup>11</sup> This ceremony (not reflected in Ælfric’s Letter for Wulfstan but referred to in his Letter for the Monks of Eynsham<sup>12</sup>) is remarkably elaborate, featuring special garb, a procession, and a reading of John’s account of the first Maundy. Besides the usual foot and hand washing, the abbot drinks to the health of each of the brethren. Symons claims that “this, the abbot’s special Maundy, would seem to be peculiar to the *Concordia*.”<sup>13</sup> The *Concordia* also prescribes a daily Maundy, assuming a stable of poor folk from whom three might be chosen each day,<sup>14</sup> and perhaps the abbot’s Maundy (along with the instruction to

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<sup>8</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Those prescribed by the Canterbury Benedictional explain the Maundy as a fulfilment of Christ’s command to follow his example (Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 43).

<sup>10</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>11</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>12</sup> *LME*, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 40, n. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. xxxvii. As an indication of Oswald’s piety, it is reported that he had a Lenten practice of giving the Maundy to twelve poor men daily. He passed away at the close of one such service, on the third Sunday in Lent 992 (p. xxvii).



gather together many poor folk) is a means of making special and more personal the celebration of the Maundy on the actual day of its inception. In any event, the different accounts of the Maundy in the *Concordia* and in Ælfric may indicate something about the relationship between the monastic churches, through which the tenth-century regularization of the liturgy was effected, and other Christian communities to whom Ælfric, himself a monk but writing on behalf of an Archbishop, Wulfstan, was writing, which may or may not have had monks about.

In his vernacular writings, Ælfric mentions the consecration of the oils only briefly (though not as allusively as the *Concordia*), but he treats it much more fully than does the *Concordia* in his Eynsham Letter,<sup>15</sup> reflecting its true importance in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy. The *Consecratio Chrismatis* is one of the most sumptuously provided *ordines* in liturgical books. A full *ordo* is found in the Canterbury Benedictional. The interrelationship of extant *ordines* for the consecration of the oils is tricky, and outside the purview of this discussion. Banting compares forms in the Lanalet and Egbert Pontificals and in the Missal of Robert. Of particular interest, the Lanalet *ordo* seems to be of a kind more ancient than that even in the *Ordines Romani*, apparently reflecting the practice of seventh-century Rome (and may, indeed, descend from a direct importation from early Rome, retaining even mention of the Lateran).<sup>16</sup> The forms in CB are distinct in another way. Generally, the oil is separated into three parts for different uses. The standard order of consecration is “oleum infirmorum, chrisma, oleum exorcizatum [for baptism].”<sup>17</sup> CB reverses the last two, and displaces many of the forms from consecration of the baptismal oil to consecration of the ‘true holy chrism,’ which now attracts the bulk of the liturgical attention. Perhaps this shift reflects the diminished importance of Easter baptism.

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<sup>15</sup> Jones speculates that Ælfric’s inclusion here of an episcopal rite “probably reflects a scholarly interest in the rite itself and in the unusual exposition provided by his exemplar of the *Retractio prima* [of Amalarius]” (*LME*, p. 193, n. 196).

<sup>16</sup> See Banting, *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, p. xxvii.

<sup>17</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 150.

The most important rituals for the day, however, in terms of their relationship to the events of the weekend, are the *Tenebrae* and Blessing of the New Fire ceremonies, some of the most dramatic rituals for Holy Week. The directions for *Tenebrae*, in particular, offer a wonderful glimpse at the Anglo-Saxon sense of just what it means to reenact a key biblical event through liturgical expression. The use of darkness and light in these rituals directly anticipates that in the upcoming Easter Vigils. It is through *Tenebrae* and the New Fire that many celebrants are prepared emotionally for the terror and joy of the Passion and Resurrection. The *Concordia*'s instructions for *Tenebrae* are peculiarly interesting, and give us a tantalizing glimpse into the philosophy and intentions of its compilers:

On Thursday, which is called *Cena Domini*, the night Office shall be performed according as is set down in the Antiphonar. We have also heard that, in churches of certain religious men, a practice has grown up whereby compunction of soul is aroused by means of the outward representation of that which is spiritual, namely, that when the singing for the night is over, the antiphon of the gospel finished and all the lights put out, two children should be appointed who shall stand on the right hand side of the choir and shall sing *Kyrie eleison* with a clear voice; two more on the left hand side who shall answer *Christe eleison*; and, to the west of the choir, another two who shall say *Domine miserere nobis*; after which the whole choir shall respond together *Christus Dominus factus est oboediens usque ad mortem*. The children of the right-hand choir shall then repeat what they sang above exactly as before and, the choir having finished their response, they shall repeat the same thing once again in the same way. When this has been sung the third time the brethren shall say the *preces* on their knees and in silence as usual. The same order of singing shall be observed for three nights by the brethren. This manner of arousing religious compunction was, I think, devised by Catholic men for the purpose of setting forth clearly both the terror of that darkness which, at our Lord's Passion, struck the tripartite world with unwonted fear, and the consolation of that apostolic preaching which revealed to the whole world Christ obedient to His Father even unto death for the salvation of the human race. Therefore it seemed good to us to insert these things so that if there be any to whose devotion they are pleasing, they may find therein the means of instructing those who are ignorant of this matter; no one, however, shall be forced to carry out this practice against his will.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 36-7. "Quinta feria, quae et Cena Domini dicitur, nocturnale officium agatur secundum quod in Antiphonario habetur. Comperimus etiam in quorundam reli<gi>osorum ecclesiis quiddam fieri quod ad animarum compunctionem spiritualis rei indicium exorsum est, uidelicet ut, peracto quicquid ad cantilenam illius noctis pertinet, euangelique antiphona finita nihilque iam cereorum luminis remanente, sint duo ad hoc idem destinati pueri in dextera parte chori qui sonora psallant uoce *Kyrie eleison*, duoque similiter in sinistra parte qui respondeant *Christe eleison*, nec non et in occidentali parte duo qui dicant

The extinguishing of the lights (the *Tenebrae* itself), occurring at the night Office early on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, is common, and is treated by Amalarius<sup>19</sup> and in *Ordo Romanus Primus*. Here, it is passed over, and attention is given, rather, to an elaboration that was apparently not universally favoured. The compilers of the *Concordia* used as their philosophy that shrewdly given Augustine by Gregory in the sixth century, to combine Roman usage with that which is best amongst local customs. For the tenth-century reformers, much of what the *Concordia* prescribes will have been imported from the continent, especially from Lotharingian and Cluniac centres. Perhaps the elaborations suggested here are of this category.<sup>20</sup> While familiarity with *Tenebrae* is assumed, this elaboration is something that the compilers have only heard about, “in quorundum religiosorum ecclesiis.” The expression is used again in reference to the Deposition of the Cross, where it is suggested that some may want to follow “usum quorundam religiosorum,”<sup>21</sup> and in both instances, the descriptions of the rituals feel like new importations. Although Symons translates this phrase as “in churches of certain religious men,” *religiosorum* could refer specifically to monastic houses (this usage is provided by Latham<sup>22</sup>), an expression that certainly might recall the experience of certain

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*Domine miserere nobis; quibus peractis respondeat simul omnis chorus Christus Dominus factus est oboediens usque ad mortem. Demum pueri dexteris chori repetant quae supra, eodem modo quo supra, usquequo chorus finiat quae supra; idemque tertio repetant eodem ordine. Quibus tertio finitis agant tacitas genuflexo more solito preces; qui ordo trium noctium uniformiter teneatur ab illis. Qui, ut reor, ecclesiasticae compunctionis usus a catholicis ideo repertus est ut tenebrarum terror, qui tripertitum mundum dominica passione timore perculit insolito, ac apostolicae praedicationis consolatio, quae [uniuerso mundo] Christum Patri usque ad mortem pro generis humani salute oboedientem reuelauerat, manifestissime designetur. Haec ergo inserenda censuimus ut, si quibus deuotionis gratia complacuerint, habeant in his unde huius rei ignaros instruant; qui autem noluerint, ad hoc agendum minime compellantur.”*

<sup>19</sup> *De ordine antiphonarii*, PL, 105, 1293<sup>b-c</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Symons points out that the ritual for *Tenebrae* in the *Concordia* is related to that in Verdun custom. Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 36, n. 6, and “Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation”, *Tenth-Century Studies*, ed. Parsons (1975), pp. 57-9.

<sup>21</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List* (1989), p. 400.

Anglo-Saxon reformers who spent time on the continent.<sup>23</sup> In any case, the attribution of the *Tenebrae* elaboration to “catholicis” gives it an aura of orthodoxy and authority.

It is strikingly unusual for the *Concordia* to feel the need to explain or apologize, as it has in both of these instances. The compilers state the intention of the ritual, to ‘arouse compunction of soul.’ Most uncharacteristically, they describe its effects, setting forth the terror that covered the whole world at the time of the Passion. The ritual certainly might be terrifying. Left in a darkened church, after a ritual that is to be understood as the extinguishing of the light of Christ, the celebrants, kneeling, hear, from three sides, cries to the Lord from pairs of clear, young voices, and then resounding from the entire chorus, in effect, “Christ is dead.” This is done three times, after which the brethren remain on their knees, praying silently. Although the compilers of the *Concordia* suspected that some churches might find it objectionable, or perhaps too disturbing, (and therefore do not force anyone to perform it), they felt it good to include it because of the way in which it so clearly set forth ‘the terror of that darkness,’ and they discuss its intention so that those participating in it can be instructed as to its significance. Whether or not the practice was in use in England before the 970's, the fact that the central figures of the English church were so interested in practices that provided reenactments of biblical events, so that their celebrants could feel the terror felt by the disciples of the dead Christ on the Cross as darkness covered the earth, and understand by instruction just what is happening, reveals their highly developed sense of dramatic possibility in liturgical exercises. Ælfric at least liked it, as he includes it not as an option but as an integral part of the ritual in his Eynsham Letter.<sup>24</sup> The central theme of the ritual, the relationship between the death of Christ and darkness (and by extension between the resurrection of Christ and light) is one with which the Anglo-Saxon Christians were intimate, as seen clearly in their celebration of Easter Vigils and in both Latin and vernacular

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<sup>23</sup> The Old English glossator of the version of the *Concordia* in London, BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii has glossed “religiosorum,” in its two appearances, with “ægfaestra” and “æwfæstra” (Kornexl, *Die Regularis concordia*, pp. 75, 94).

<sup>24</sup> *LME*, p. 127.

representations of the Harrowing of Hell. Their willingness to enhance the associations between the celebrants and those at the Cross demonstrates the strength, and the self-consciousness, of their use of dramatic association.

Although the *Concordia's Tenebrae* elaboration may or may not have been established already in England, the *Tenebrae* itself, the ritual extinguishing of the lights, seems to have been quite general, and the *Concordia* passes it over as familiar, concerned only with what happens "when the singing for the night is over . . . and all the lights put out." Ælfric describes the *Tenebrae* ritual that is the assumed core of the *Concordia's*:

*In cena domini et in parasceve et in sancto sabbato. On þyssum þrym swigē-nihtum ge sceolan singan ætgædere be fullan eowerne uhtsange, swa-swa se antfonere tæcð. And feower and twentig candela acwencan æt þam sealnum and æt ælcere rædingce oþ þone afte-mynsta antfon. And ge-endian þone æfter-sang swa, þæt ælc sing his pater noster on sundron and þa preces þærto butan ælcum leohte licgende on cneowum.*<sup>25</sup>

It is between the extinguishing of the twenty-fourth candle and the *preces* that the *Concordia's* elaborations would fit, and Ælfric ignores them, instructing only the silent *pater noster*. This should not necessarily be seen as a rejection of the *Concordia's* elaboration by Ælfric, for Ælfric's account is summary, and he seems to focus on those elements that he deems essential, whereas the extended *Tenebrae* and the Good Friday Deposition of the Cross (which he also ignores) are put forth in the *Concordia* as optional. It would be too much as well to argue that Ælfric ignores these elements (along with the *Visitatio Sepulchri*) in his letter for Wulfstan because they were purely for monastic observance, for the Deposition, as we shall see, had a definite role in lay celebration, and the innovations to *Tenebrae* highlight what was already there. What can be claimed is that the *Concordia's* elaborations represent easily assimilated extensions to rituals whose themes and associations already had widespread currency in the Anglo-Saxon Church.

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<sup>25</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 154.

As *Tenebrae* foreshadows the Passion, so the Blessing of the New Fire<sup>26</sup> foreshadows the Resurrection, as celebrated in Easter Vigils. Described as “ob arcanum cuiusdam mysterii indicium,” the ‘brethren,’ from the doors of the church, bear a staff “cum imagine serpentis.” Warren believes that the use of the serpent in the New Fire ritual represents an Eastern influence, via the Irish.<sup>27</sup> Symons discusses parallels to the serpent staff.<sup>28</sup> The idea that much of the liturgy, particularly before the tenth-century reforms, was either of Irish origin or influenced by the Irish is probable. The Irish church had a particular interest in the use of light and darkness, and Duchesne connects the New Fire with sixth-century Irish accounts of great fires kindled at night on Easter Eve.<sup>29</sup> However, the New Fire, as with most of the central elements of Holy Week commemoration, was widespread by the tenth century.<sup>30</sup> In the *Concordia*, the fire is struck from flint (as were the Irish bonfires) in the mouth of the serpent, and a single candle is lit from it. This candle is then used to relight the other candles before *Tenebrae*. It is explicitly the New Fire that is used on Saturday to light the paschal candle at the Easter Vigil. The light in the mouth of the serpent, through which the lights are rekindled, therefore, holds the promise of Christ’s resurrection.

The Anglo-Saxon instructions for *Tenebrae* and the New Fire reveal something about how those codifying the liturgy understood reenactment. It is a reenactment that requires all

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<sup>26</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 39-40. For a full account of the history and variety of the New Fire, see A. J. MacGregor, *Fire and Light in the Western Triduum: Their Use at Tenebrae and at the Paschal Vigil* (1992).

<sup>27</sup> See Stevenson, *Worship*, p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 39ff. See also MacGregor (1992), pp. 259-66.

<sup>29</sup> Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 250.

<sup>30</sup> Symons, “Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation”, pp. 51-2, discusses the relationship between the *Concordia*’s instructions and those for Fleury. Lilli Gjerløw, *Adoratio Crucis* (1961), pp. 29ff, gives forms for the New Fire from fragments of an eighth-century English Missal, Mi I, and discusses the relationship of its central prayer with other English witnesses. As with *Tenebrae*, the New Fire was surely familiar in both England and on the continent in the tenth century, the ritual in the *Concordia* representing a fusion rather than an importation.

present to assume a role, as the compilers want the *Tenebrae* participants to feel the terror felt by those at the original death of Christ, while at the same time remembering the prophetic promise (also made clear in preaching for the week) that the Passion will inevitably lead to the Resurrection. The point could be made quite clearly (and often was) through simple instruction, explaining the meaning and promise of the lections and liturgical collects and prefaces for the time, but the compilers of the *Concordia* elaboration are looking to do something more, to make those watching the usual *Tenebrae* understand its significance more directly by making them feel just what Christ's followers must have felt as darkness descended over the body of God on the Cross. Of course, we cannot possibly understand just what an Anglo-Saxon mind, monastic or lay, might actually have made of this pair of rituals, but we do know something about what their more learned spiritual leaders wanted them to make of it. Throughout the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon church, we can see a concerted and self-conscious effort, by means of elaborations and clarifications of the existing and familiar liturgical expressions, to bring their events and lessons to life by trying to make the faithful feel, for Easter, the terror of Christ's death and the joy in hearing the news of Christ's resurrection. The result is as aesthetically experiential as it is instructive. Because this reenactment is derived from the preexisting liturgy, the dynamic of temporal identification might be to some degree lost, as it must be to explore the Crucifixion in the early hours of Thursday morning. This is hardly a hindrance, however. It is a common characteristic of the liturgy that the commemoration of central Christian events casts forth ripples both before and after the central festival, so that the terror of the Crucifixion can be celebrated for days beforehand, and the joy of the Resurrection for days after. The dramatic elaborations of the liturgy were never attempts to represent historical events at historical times, but rather to make more directly experienced the yearly cycle of Christian history as developed over centuries in the liturgy. As such, *Tenebrae* is a reenactment of the Passion, and the *Visitatio* of the revelation of the Resurrection, in the same way that the Mass is a reenactment of Christ's self-sacrifice. There is little of 'representational' interest in the extended *Tenebrae* (in the

dramatic sense posited by Young and Hardison), no ‘costuming’ or realistic stage-directions, but although the ceremony is thoroughly ritualistic, its redactors expect the participants to feel that same ‘terror’ nonetheless. There is no sense that the reenactment, in any of these cases, was in need of historical or representational accuracy, in part because the medieval conception of biblical history was itself largely formed by the liturgy, but mainly because the liturgical expressions were central to uniting the presence of Christ, and the glory of heaven, with the space and inhabitants of the church. In this liturgical context, the *Tenebrae* on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday mornings, in its reenactment of the darkness covering the world, is as ‘dramatic’ as the announcement of the angel to the women on Easter morning, as was the announcement of the birth to the shepherds at Christmas, the acceptance of Christ by Simeon at Candlemas, and the welcoming of Christ into the city/Church on Palm Sunday.

### **Good Friday: *Adoratio Crucis***

Although temporal coincidence is certainly not necessary for reenactment, as we have seen in *Tenebrae*, and in the Eucharist almost every day, it is still a desideratum, and the Western liturgy generally demonstrates a tension between the desire to celebrate Christian events at the time of day when they might have happened and the practical need to, at times, rearrange (usually by anticipating earlier in the day) these commemorative Masses. The biblical Good Friday accounts, however, provide wonderful detail, and, as its readers knew exactly what happened at three of the liturgical hours, the liturgy takes advantage of the temporal opportunity. The collects for Terce, Sext, and None in the Leofric Collectar make reference to the events of each hour, and direct their prayers accordingly. Of particular interest is the collect for Sext, at the time when darkness fell over the earth:

Domine ihesu christe qui hora diei sexta pro redemptione mundi. crucis ascendisti lignum. ut uniuersus mundus qui in tenebras conuersus est illuminaretur. illam nobis lucem in anima et corpore nostro semper tribue. per quam ad aeternam uitam



peruenire mereamur.<sup>31</sup>

Ælfric describes the darkness at this time as an acknowledgment by the sun; “seo sunne oncneow. þa ða heo wearð apystrod on cristes þrowunge: fram middæge oð non.”<sup>32</sup> Already at the time of the darkness Christ is discussed as the light that soon will drive away that darkness. The two themes central to this collect, that Christ is a light to drive away the darkness and that this light emanates from the Cross, were quite native to the Anglo-Saxon liturgical audience, and the complex relationship between these themes and the reenactment of Christ’s death on the Cross in the ancient *Adoratio Crucis* ceremony was explored in a variety of ways from at least the eighth century. The tenth-century liturgical forms provided by the *Concordia*, and reflected in Ælfric’s Letter, present a reenactment of a different sort than that experienced at *Tenebrae*, whereby all the faithful, both monks and common folk, confront the raised up, revealed, personified, and buried Christ on the Cross.

After *Tenebrae* at the night Office, according to the *Concordia*, the brethren approach at Prime barefoot ‘until the Cross has been adored.’ This instruction is reflected in Ælfric’s Letter, “And ne beo hyra nan gesceod þæs dæges, butan he untrum sy, ær-þan-þe þis gefylled sy,”<sup>33</sup> requiring that all those to whom Ælfric is speaking, presumably both monks and secular priests (unless they are somehow unhealthy), remain barefoot for the *Adoratio Crucis* and the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified. The *Adoratio*, “from which Western liturgical drama may take its origins,”<sup>34</sup> is the day’s central event. It goes back at least to fourth-century Jerusalem and is described by Egeria. Developed in veneration of relics of the true Cross in Jerusalem (and a good deal later, by the early eighth century, in Rome), it spread throughout the church. Talley summarizes fourth-century accounts of Holy Week liturgy in Jerusalem, including the

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<sup>31</sup> Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 131.

<sup>32</sup> CH.I.xv, p. 306.

<sup>33</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 168.

<sup>34</sup> Holloway, “‘The Dream of the Rood’”, p. 29.

*Adoratio*.<sup>35</sup> From eight in the morning until noon, in the Church of Golgotha, the wood of the Cross was venerated, followed by readings of the Passion narratives until three (or ‘none,’ the ninth hour), the time of Christ’s death. The practice in some form was known throughout the church by the tenth century. Still, although the *Adoratio* is prescribed allusively in the Old Gelasian, there exists no full *ordo* until the ninth century. The prayers to the Cross that form part of the *ordines* in Anglo-Saxon witnesses are from the eighth and ninth centuries, and apparently stem from a variety of sources, including *Ordo Romanus* I (the primary source for the *Concordia*’s instructions)<sup>36</sup> and the devotional forms of the ninth-century section of the Book of Cerne, of apparent Mercian origin.<sup>37</sup> Symons lists the liturgical prayers for the Veneration of the Cross set forth in the *Concordia* as an example of a native custom preserved in the *Concordia*,<sup>38</sup> and Julia Bolton Holloway has attempted to demonstrate, with reference to the Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Brussels crosses and the Old English *Dream of the Rood* that the practice of the *Adoratio* moved from Jerusalem to Britain (by way of the Irish) to the continent.<sup>39</sup> Such an idea involves a good deal of supposition, but her argument does illustrate

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<sup>35</sup> Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 46ff.

<sup>36</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>37</sup> Banting, *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, pp. xxix-xxxii, discusses the interrelationship of these forms in English witnesses, especially in regards to the Egbert Pontifical, which has a form of the prayer *Domine Iesu Christe adoro te in cruce ascendentem* of the ‘common’ strain represented in Cerne, rather than the ‘rare’ form represented in the *Concordia* and in the *Portiforium Wulstani*. Gjerløw, *Adoratio Crucis* prints and discusses fifteen forms in Cerne, the last five of which correspond to the first *Concordia* prayer, concluding that “The Insular character of language and phraseology would seem to indicate an Insular, or Irish-Northumbrian, origin of this text” (16). The prayers are found in a wide range of manuscripts from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries and found their way to France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Norway (18ff). See also Michelle Brown, *The Book of Cerne* (1996). Brown discusses Bishop’s analysis of possible ‘Spanish’ elements, pointing out that both the Irish and the Carolingian Churches were influenced by these Spanish/Gallican forms, and concluding that the *D. I. C. adoro te* prayer “textually embodies the central prayer of the *Mysterium Crucis* from the Good Friday Office of the Mozarabic Missal” (139).

<sup>38</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. xlvi.

<sup>39</sup> Holloway, “‘The Dream of the Rood’”, pp. 31ff, goes on to express her opinion that the *Visitatio*, and even the Orléans Playbook, may have derived from England, but her view

to what degree the themes and images of the Adoration of the Cross, with its corollary theme of the Cross as infused with the power of Christ, were natural to the Anglo-Saxon church from at least the eighth century.

The *Concordia*'s instructions for the ritual surrounding the *Adoratio* are extensive. At the hour of None (regularly the time of the *Adoratio* from the Gelasian to the Anglo-Saxon witnesses), the abbot and the brethren proceed to the church. After a pair of lessons with tracts and responds, the Passion according to John is read. This aspect of Good Friday worship is perhaps the most ancient (in the Roman liturgy) and, along with the *orationes sollemnes*, made up the pre-eighth-century Roman liturgy for the day. Particularly exciting is an instruction for the reading of the gospel Passion (taken from *Ordo Romanus* I and included in Ælfric's Eynsham Letter<sup>40</sup>), "et quando legitur in euangelio *Partiti sunt uestimenta mea et reliqua, statim duo diaconi nudent altare sindone quae prius fuerat sub euangelio posita, in modum furantis.*"<sup>41</sup> The stripping of the cloth from under the gospel book, clearly playing out the role of the 'thieves' stripping away Christ's robe, accompanied by the temporal

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swims firmly against the critical stream. Much of Holloway's argument stems from an assumption that the *adoro te* prayers constitute an "*Adoratio Crucis* which is earlier and longer than the Winchester version" (30). Several other critics have made this same assumption, often quoting Holloway (see Earl Anderson, "Liturgical Influence in the Dream of the Rood", *Neophilologus* 73 (1989), p. 294). However, the *adoro te on crucem ascendentem* prayers mentioned in the *Concordia* correspond only to the last five of fifteen *adoro te* prayers in Cerne. Taken together, the fifteen prayers (as printed in Gjerløw, *Adoratio Crucis*, pp. 16-17) adore Christ creating light ("*Fiat lux*"), calling Adam, saving Noah, freeing the Israelites from Pharaoh, descending into the Virgin's womb, being baptized, performing miracles (three prayers), raising Lazarus, and then ascending the Cross, being deposited in the sepulchre, descending to hell to free the captives (where the devils sing 'Who is this king of glory?' reflecting the Gospel of Nicodemus), ascending into heaven (*adoro te ascendentem in caelos*, with the same verb as used for the Crucifixion), and coming in Judgement (specifically referring to Christ's Advent). The forms here are a bit too general to be tied to Good Friday, and should be considered (as does Brown) devotional prayers. That they were actually used as part of the *Adoratio* at some stage is certain, but their presentation in Cerne can be considered at most as analogous to or reflective of the liturgy.

<sup>40</sup> See *LME*, p. 133.

<sup>41</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 42.

coincidence, represents an attempt to vivify the gospel account with visual representation, a dynamic exercised throughout the Anglo-Saxon liturgy for the high festivals.

Following the reading from John are sung the *Orationes sollemnes*. These prayers go back to the earliest Western witnesses, and are represented in both the Gregorian and the Gelasian sacramentaries.<sup>42</sup> The prayers serve to bring all of Christendom, and all of humanity in need of Christendom, under the shadow of the Cross, before the Cross is formally addressed and venerated, including specific mention of the Pope, the “imperatore vel rege,”<sup>43</sup> new catechumens, heretics and schismatics, the Jews who sacrificed Christ,<sup>44</sup> and the pagans, to name a few. Most interesting here is Ælfric’s explanation in his Eynsham Letter that “the abbot begins the *orationes sollemnes* that follow, because on that same day our Saviour also prayed from the cross for the whole church.”<sup>45</sup>

Now follows the *Adoratio* itself, presented with extraordinary detail in the *Concordia*, and clearly the climax of the day.<sup>46</sup> The Cross is set up before the altar and held up by two deacons who sing the first of the *Improperia*, or the Reproaches (*Popule meus*), “addressed from the Saviour to the ungrateful people.”<sup>47</sup> As Gjerløw explains, these chants “have pre-Caroline antecedents,”<sup>48</sup> and they can still be found in modern missals. Barbara Raw discusses vernacular elaborations of Christ’s reproaches to the people in the eighth Vercelli

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<sup>42</sup> See Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, pp. 75-7.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> In his Eynsham Letter (*LME*, p. 133), Ælfric, adapting Amalarius, instructs that “All the orationes should be performed with genuflexions, except for the one wherein we pray for the treacherous Jews” who derided Christ by bending their knees. But see *LME*, p. 197, n. 219.

<sup>45</sup> *LME*, p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 42-4.

<sup>47</sup> Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 690.

<sup>48</sup> Gjerløw, *Adoratio Crucis*, p. 15.

homily and in *Christ III*.<sup>49</sup> Their relationship with Vercelli VIII is particularly compelling. Francis Clough describes their apparent role in this eschatological homily, in what seems to be a usurpation of the address to the goats by a series of Reproach-like<sup>50</sup> complaints:

Delivered in the first person, with no homiletic breaks, this address reminds the wicked of Christ's passion and death, accusing them of forgetfulness and ingratitude, and ends with Christ condemning them to hell. It may be that the author, delivering the address in this way, enacted a kind of mini-drama, with himself playing Christ and the audience the damned souls, thus rendering even more effective and immediate an already dramatic motif.<sup>51</sup>

In its liturgical context, this 'mini-drama,' although it has no biblical antecedent, serves both to make Christ present on the liturgical Cross and to develop some of the tension implicit in being a member of the humanity that caused him to be nailed up there, and that needs to be made to appreciate as much as possible the magnitude of his sacrifice. Between each of the *Improperia*, subdeacons and the *schola* respond in Greek and Latin, respectively, *Agios o Theos* and *Sanctus Deus*, again reminding the audience of exactly who is speaking to them. After the first pair of responses, the Cross is carried to the altar and laid on a cushion. Ælfric specifies that the Cross should be "mid hrægle be-wæfed."<sup>52</sup> After a second Reproach (*Quia eduxi vos per desertum*) and its responses, the Cross is raised up, and a third Reproach is sung. The Cross is unveiled and turned to the clergy, and the deacons sing the widely-attested antiphons *Ecce lignum crucis* and *Crucem tuam adoramus Domine*, among others. The antiphons draw attention jointly to 'the wood of the Cross' and to Christ on the Cross, and this joint address is central to the rest of the *Adoratio* prayers (and from there to more general prayers in veneration of the Cross). The abbot and the brethren prostrate themselves, and the

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<sup>49</sup> Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 65-6.

<sup>50</sup> This address comes from the *Admonitio de die iudicii*, also found in Caesarius, and, taken from him, in a homily for Rogationtide (BC, p. 126). Although their potential relationship to the Reproaches is uncertain, the similarity of their style and format certainly recalls the *Improperia*.

<sup>51</sup> Francis Clough, Introduction to *The Vercelli Book Homilies: Translations*, ed. Lewis Nicholson (1991), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtensbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 163.

prayers to the Cross are said “with deep and heartfelt sighs.” The prayers are given (unusually) in full. The first, the *Domine Ihesu Christe, adoro te . . .* set, praises Christ ascending the Cross, wounded, laid in the grave, descending into hell to free the prisoners, rising from the grave and ascending to heaven, and coming in judgement.<sup>53</sup> After psalms and a collect, the abbot kisses the Cross, followed by the brethren, and then *omnis clerus ac populus*. Ælfric, in his Second Letter for Wulfstan, gives (not unexpectedly) a simplified version of the rite, with most of the same central elements. After the John gospel (and after “þa collecta swa-swa seo mæsse-boc him tæcð,” which may refer to the *orationes sollemnes*),

Æfter þam beran twegen gebroþru þa rode forð mid hrægle be-wæfed and singan þa fers: *Popule meus*. Þwegen gebroþru him andwyrdon on grecisc: *Agios o theos*, oþ ende. And hi ealle þonne singan on leden: *Sanctus deus, sanctus fortis*. Þonne þæt oþer fers: *Quia eduxi uos*: þonne eft: *agios, o theos*, and: *sanctus deus*. Þonne þæt þrydde fers: *Quid ultra debui* and: *Agios* and: *Sanctus*. Unwreon þonne þa rode and singan: *Ecce lignum crucis* and þa oþre antifonas. Þa hwile þe þa gebroþru hi gebiddað æt þære rode and þæt læwede folc eall-swa do.<sup>54</sup>

The key elements of the *Adoratio* are the Reproaches, sung, as it were, by the Cross as Christ to the people, the responses in Greek and Latin, the revelation of the ‘wood of the Cross,’ and the veneration, made jointly by brethren and lay-folk (where applicable). The Cross here is something more than wood in the same way that the Eucharist is something more than bread and wine, and Ælfric in a homily for the Invention of the Holy Cross, explains its nature:

Cristene men sceolon soðlice abugan to gehalgodre rode on ðæs hælendes naman. for ðan ðe we nabbað ða ðe he on ðrowade. ac hire anlicnys bið halig swa ðeah. to ðære we abugað on gebedum symle. to ðam mihtigan drihtne þe for mannum ðrowade. and seo rod is gemynd. his mæran þrowunge. halig ðurh hine. ðeah ðe heo on holte weoxe.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> These prayers are distinct from those found in Cerne primarily in the addition of the adoration of Christ wounded on the Cross and in the shortening of the Harrowing adoration, where a quick narrative derived from apocryphal sources and including the voice of the devils is replaced in favour of the simpler “I adore Thee descending into hell to set free those in prison there; I beseech Thee not to suffer me to enter there” (Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 43).

<sup>54</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 163-4.

<sup>55</sup> CH.II.xviii, p. 175.

Particularly on Good Friday, each adored cross is to be seen as just as holy as the actual Cross, a connection made easier by the mixed addresses to the Cross and to Christ both in the liturgical forms for the day and elsewhere.

The power of the Cross, specifically as somehow standing in for or reflecting Christ's power, often depicted in terms of light conquering darkness, was certainly a familiar theme in Old English treatments of it. In a *Lives of Saints* homily on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, "drihtnes rode" is seen "deorwurð-lice þær scinan" in the heavens.<sup>56</sup> At times, the Cross is granted even more kinetic power. In one of a series of prayers to the Cross found in the *Portiforium* of Wulstan is one addressed to "sancta et veneranda crux," beseeching the Cross to protect the suppliant, free him from the devil and from sin, confirm him in good works, and

in hora exitus mei per te de potestate tenebrarum eripiat, et a flamma totum saeculum clementer conseruatura protegat, et in die ire et reuelationis iusti iudicii sui agnoscat quod sanctitatis tue cultor extiterim, atque me in sanctorum societate qui redemit me perducatur, qui uiuit et regnat pro nobis in te crucifixus . . .<sup>57</sup>

The Cross here, ripping away the darkness of the devil's dominion, is granted the saving power of Christ, such that the suppliant is in a sense praying to both at once.<sup>58</sup> Following this prayer is a series of orations in Latin and in English, translations of the prayers to the cross for the *Adoratio*, as well as many of the accompanying forms. Many address Christ himself; a few address the Cross instead:

Drihten þine halgan rode we geadmedað ⁊ we heriað ⁊ wuldriað þine þa halgan æriste forþam soðlice blis com eallum middanearde þurh þa halgan rode . . . Hala þu gebletsode rod þu ðe ana wyrðe wære to beorene heofona cyning ⁊ hlaford.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, v. 2, p. 150.

<sup>57</sup> Hughes, *The Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*, v. 2, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> The Cross as a focal point of the End is developed in a number of places, including the Blickling Easter homily, discussed below, pp. 216ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

It is quite rare to find direct English translations of parts of the liturgy. We have translations of baptismal rubrics in the Red Book of Darley<sup>60</sup> and of the *Absolvimus*, the key element of the Reconciliation, in the Pontifical of Egbert. The latter might provide for the lay participants understanding of at least the central part of the ritual, and perhaps the translations here are for much the same purpose (although there is no indication here that they were intended actually to be used in the Good Friday liturgy).<sup>61</sup> It is not at all rare to find translations of private devotional prayers, from which at least the *adoro te* set derive, but the selection of translated passages here, and their layout (with Latin original followed by English translation with the headings “Latine” and “Anglice,” and interspersed Psalms and readings), reveal at least an awareness of the place of these prayers in the liturgy. In any event, their translation here shows a vernacular interest in the *Adoratio*, reflective of the consequences of elements of the *Adoratio* liturgy such as the *Improperia*, making those before the Cross hear Christ himself speaking from it, or through it, to them.

This relationship between the Cross and Christ is strengthened in the Deposition, a natural extension of the *Adoratio* but not so widely attested. The *Concordia*’s directions are worth quoting in full because of their wonderfully self-conscious sense of reenactment:

Now since in that day we solemnize the burial of the Body of our Saviour, if anyone should care or think fit to follow in a becoming manner certain religious men in a practice worthy to be imitated for the strengthening of the faith of unlearned common persons and neophytes, we have decreed this only: on that part of the altar where there is space for it there shall be a representation as it were of a sepulchre, hung about with a curtain, in which the holy Cross, when it has been venerated, shall be placed in the following manner: the deacons who carried

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<sup>60</sup> See R. I. Page, “Old English Liturgical Rubrics in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 422”, *Anglia* 96 (1978), pp. 149-58.

<sup>61</sup> They are, rather, part of a set of devotional Cross prayers, possibly reflecting a number of liturgical offices. See Brian Møller Jensen, “An interpretation of the Tropes to the Inventio Sanctae Crucis”, *Ecclesia Orans* 3 (1991), pp. 305-323, for a discussion of the interrelationship of the festivals in praise of the cross, by which “the Inventio as commemorated on the third of May somehow reflects the veneration of the cross in the Good Friday liturgy” (318). Barbara Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, discusses more generally the devotional nature of the prayers in the Portiforium of Wulstan and of the *Adoratio* prayers as they appear elsewhere (56ff).



the Cross before shall come forward and, having wrapped the Cross in a napkin there where it was venerated, they shall bear it thence, singing the antiphons *In pace in idipsum*, *Habitabit*, and *Caro mea requiescet in spe*, to the place of the sepulchre. When they have laid the cross therein, in imitation as it were of the burial of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, they shall sing the antiphon *Sepulto Domino, signatum est monumentum, penentes milites qui custodirent eum*. In that same place the holy Cross shall be guarded with all reverence until the night of the Lord's Resurrection. And during the night let brethren be chosen by twos and threes, if the community be large enough, who shall keep faithful watch, chanting psalms.<sup>62</sup>

As with the *Tenebrae* elaborations, the instructions here have the feel of an importation, and Symons clearly regards it as one, although "The only other example comparable to the custom [is from] an Ordinarium of Toul . . . , evidently a late form of the very custom here borrowed."<sup>63</sup> There is no evidence of it in the Lotharingian or Cluniac forms of the time, and the antiphons are taken from those for Nocturns on Holy Saturday. The Deposition of the Cross was quite well known in the later Middle Ages, drawing a good deal of attention, along with a corresponding *Elevatio* on Easter morning. To see it here in such an early form, and with such a clear understanding of its dramatic characteristics, is exciting, but hardly surprising, given the clear sense of dramatic possibility seen elsewhere. The practice is set forth specifically as a visual supplement to the story of the Burial of Christ (recently provided from John's gospel) for "the strengthening of the faith of unlearned common persons and neophytes." In fundamentally the same way as the later liturgical dramas, faith is

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<sup>62</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 44-5. "Nam, quia ea die depositionem corporis Saluatoris nostri celebramus, usum quorundam religiosorum, imitabilem ad fidem indocti vulgi ac neophytorum corroborandam, aequiperando sequi si ita cui visum fuerit uel sibi taliter placuerit, hoc modo decreuimus: sit autem in una parte altaris, qua uacuum fuerit, quaedam assimilatio sepulchri uelamenque quoddam in gyro tensum quo, dum sancta crux adorata fuerit, deponatur hoc ordine. Veniant diaconi qui prius portauerunt eam et inuoluant eam sindone in loco ubi adorata est; tunc reportent eam canentes antiphonas *In pace in idipsum*, alia: *Habitabit*; item: *Caro mea requiescet in spe*, donec ueniant ad locum monumenti; depositaque cruce, ac si Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi corpore sepulto, dicant antiphonam *Sepulto Domino, signatum est monumentum ponentes milites qui custodirent eum*. In eodem loco sancta crux cum omni reuerentia custodiatur usque dominicam noctem Resurrectionis. Nocte uero ordinentur duo fratres aut tres aut plures, si tanta fuerit congregatio, qui ibidem psalmos decantando excubias fideles exercent."

<sup>63</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 44, n. 5.

strengthened by allowing these folk actually to see Christ wrapped in a cloth, borne away to the sepulchre by the two deacons (here perhaps a nice parallel to Joseph and Nicodemus, who wrap and bury Christ's body in John's account, and who are generally present in illumination of the Deposition from the Cross), placed inside, and guarded. That the burial was carried out in a processional fashion, and therefore would bear little resemblance to the actual events of the burial, is a non-issue, for these "unlearned common persons and neophytes" would have reaped their primary understanding of biblical events from the liturgy, and it is anachronistic to think that they would see it as somehow unrealistic. As we have seen throughout the Temporale, most notably at Candlemas and Palm Sunday, liturgical commemoration commonly determines how biblical history is visualized in art and in vernacular narratives, even in translations of the gospel. Illumination of the Crucifixion and Deposition not infrequently present Christ on what looks like a liturgical Cross, more a dramatic portrait of a crucifix than an historically accurate presentation. That it is the Cross itself, rather than Christ, that is literally taken down and buried is likewise not a hindrance to reenactment, for totems like the Cross and the Candle frequently stand liturgically for the presence of Christ, and come thereby to absorb much of his divinity, and to warrant reverence accordingly. In the *Adoratio* and the *Depositio*, then, the participants watch in awe Christ dead on the Cross, taken down, and buried, yet all the while burning with conquering power, with the promise of Harrowing and Resurrection.

The *Concordia* representation is carried on throughout the weekend, as the brethren hold vigil before the tomb. There seem to be two sets of brethren remaining at the tomb, one possibly representing the historical guards,<sup>64</sup> the other (chanting psalms in groups of two or three) perhaps reflecting the idea expressed by the author of a sermon for Holy Saturday, that the faithful (specifically, for this homilist, Christ's mother and the other women) on the night

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<sup>64</sup> Egeria provides a wonderful explanation for the two guards at the Jerusalem *Adoratio*. She was told, she reports, that the Cross was guarded because someone had made off with a bit of the true Cross by taking a bite out of it. See George Gingras, tr. *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage* (1970), p. 111.

before the Resurrection kept awake all night, visiting the tomb repeatedly.<sup>65</sup> This continuation of the *Adoratio* and *Depositio* through the night, and until Easter vigils, again draws attention to the different relationships of the monks and the lay-people to the Good Friday liturgy. The instructions for the *Adoratio* provide another rare instance where the joint participation of monks and lay-people is made explicit. The relationship between monastic and lay participation in these events would differ greatly, of course, from place to place, but at a monastic cathedral like Winchester, given the universal nature of *Adoratio* celebration in the Western church, one might imagine the entire demographic of Anglo-Saxon England, from King to slave, adoring the Cross. Both the *Concordia* and Ælfric specify at least that monks and then lay-people (*Concordia* ‘populus’, Ælfric ‘þæt læwede folc’) would kiss the Cross.<sup>66</sup> A greater role, however, must be played by the deacons and the brethren. The *Concordia* has deacons holding up the Cross before the altar, singing the Reproaches (subdeacons sing the Greek responses), then raising and revealing, wrapping, and burying the Cross.<sup>67</sup> The abbot and those brethren ‘of the right hand side of the choir,’ after all present are reproached and the Cross is unveiled, prostrate themselves before it, singing the penitential psalms and the *Adoratio* prayers (*adoro te*, etc), and are then the first to kiss it. Brethren also then guard the ‘tomb,’ singing songs in vigil. After the *Depositio*, the presence of the guards and the vigil-holding faithful demonstrates the degree to which the monastic communities might enjoy a richer sense of reenactment than the common folk, as is the case year-round. Their expanded role in the *Adoratio* and *Depositio* themselves, however, sets up more immediately a

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<sup>65</sup> See Ruth Evans, ed. “An anonymous Old English homily for Holy Saturday”, *LSE* n.s. 12 (1981), pp. 137-8.

<sup>66</sup> Ælfric does not actually specify that the Cross is kissed, just that the brethren and then the lay-folk “gebiddað æt þære rode” (Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 164). One manuscript (X) has as a gloss to “gebiddað” *adorant*, which could include both the actions of praying and kissing. The *Concordia* does seem to specify that the Cross is kissed (*decosculans*) by the abbot and the brethren, and then the clergy and the people *hoc idem faciat*.

<sup>67</sup> Ælfric assigns all these actions simply to “gebropu,” again revealing the monastic model from which he is trying to extract, on behalf of Wulfstan and thus in the interest of lay observance, an explanation of the fundamental elements of these festivals.

separation between the two groups, which might be roughly analogous to an ‘actors-audience’ dichotomy. The brethren have the job of staging this event for the *indocti vulgi*, and creating the atmosphere whereby they can feel that they are witnessing first-hand what has just been set forth in John’s Passion narrative. The purpose of the ritual, as expressed here, is to make the audience assume the role of those witnessing the burial, and all the ceremonial elements, as ‘unrealistic’ as many of them may be, like the Reproaches, the kissing of the Cross, and the procession to the sepulchre, are crucial to the reenactment, serving to bring the divine presence of Christ into the ritual, and establish the relationship between the people and the Cross. The deacons and brethren play shifting roles, and any attempt to describe them as ‘actors’ would become bogged down in the fact that they don’t hold down biblical roles in any clear or sustained way (as is often the case in liturgical reenactment). For this reason, descriptions of dramatic ritual as early drama often resort to expressions like ‘quasi-dramatic,’ concluding that these are awkward attempts at impersonation, constrained by ritual habit from fully realizing their histrionic potential. Such a description, however, would not do justice to the power of these Good Friday ceremonies. It is the ritual *Improperia* that brings the power of the Cross to life. It is through the liturgical expressions of shame and wonder that all present come to terms with the fact that Christ is on the Cross before them, both in agony to pay for their sins and in power to free them from hell.

Although we have no substantive liturgical witnesses to the *Adoratio* before those in the *Concordia*, Anglo-Saxon treatment of the Cross, in particular of Christ on the Cross, reveal from as early as the seventh century a deep familiarity with the central elements of the liturgical reenactment, which to a large extent dominate any exploration of the Crucifixion. Vernacular treatments of the events of Good Friday in many ways seem to reflect this familiarity. The first Vercelli homily resonates quite well with the Good Friday liturgy.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup> For the two versions of this sermon and its relationship to manuscripts of Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies, see Paul E. Szarmach, “The Earlier Homily: ‘De Parasceve’”, in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Szarmach and Huppé, pp. 381-99. See also Scragg, “The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies”, pp. 223-77, and *The Vercelli Homilies*, pp. 1-5. Only the A version

homily is actually a translation (or version) of the Passion according to John, and may itself have been part of the services for the day, in place of a sermon. Ælfric claimed that no sermon should be preached on the three “swigdagas” of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and therefore did not provide any, but several manuscripts of the Catholic Homilies include anonymous sermons for these three days, added later, including Vercelli I for Good Friday.<sup>69</sup> In general, the writer follows John’s account quite closely, at times bringing in details from other accounts (often to illuminate the fulfilment of prophecy), or filling in his own. From the account of Christ’s scourging by the soldiers, the homilist changes the colour of Christ’s robe from purple to red (“mid reade hrægle”<sup>70</sup>), seemingly drawing from the ‘scarlet’ robe of Matthew. This adaptation fits nicely with the idea of a gold-covered adored Cross, which is itself part of the vision in the Dream of the Rood.<sup>71</sup> He also brings in the account of the hours and of the darkness that covered the earth (in the A version only), absent in John:

Wæs hit middæg þa hie hine on rode hengen. ⁊ þa he on rode ahangen wæs, þa gebystrode hit ⁊ efne fæstlice genihtode ofer eallne middangeard fram middum dæge oð non. ⁊ sio sunne ⁊ ealle þa heofontungulu hira leoht betyndon ⁊ behyddon, þæt hie þ[æt] mo[rð]or geseon ne woldon þæt men her on eorþan wið hira scyppend fremedon.<sup>72</sup>

Matthew mentions the darkness, and Mark adds more specifically the failing of the sun’s light, but the Vercelli homilist’s elaboration is extra-biblical. The entry for March 25 in the Old English Martyrology (typologically the day of the Crucifixion, as of the completed creation of the world and the Annunciation) similarly draws from Luke, mentioning the darkness and the failing sun, but not the ‘heaven-stars,’ and certainly not the anthropomorphic

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provides the Harrowing of Hell.

<sup>69</sup> See Hill, “Ælfric’s ‘Silent Days’”, pp. 118-31. See also *LME*, pp. 184-6, n. 171.

<sup>70</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 28.

<sup>71</sup> Rosemary Woolf, “Doctrinal Influences on *The Dream of the Rood*”, *Medium Ævum* 27 (1958), pp. 137-8, notes the relationship between The Dream of the Rood and both jewelled and red crosses used in the liturgy.

<sup>72</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 36.

motivation of the heavenly bodies.<sup>73</sup> Of course the account of the hours and the emphasis on the darkness covering Christ on the Cross go back to the earliest days of the Church, and are expressed in a variety of ways, but their inclusion here certainly must reflect the liturgy potentially surrounding their use on Good Friday. In any event, the homilist apparently felt that the inclusion of the hours and the elaborated account of the darkness were important enough to Good Friday reckoning of the Passion to interrupt John's liturgically prescribed account with them.

The importance of light overcoming darkness and the liturgically-established divinity afforded the Cross are developed in more potent ways in the Blickling homily for Easter. Because of the Cross' ability to transport the faithful to the saving events of Christ's Passion and resurrection, it frequently appears in accounts of the End. The constant eschatological overlay to discussion of the Crucifixion and Resurrection led, naturally enough, to expect the end either at None on 'Long' Friday or on Easter itself, as does the writer of the Blickling homily, claiming that "seo wyrd on þas ondweardan tid geworþan sceal, þæt se ilc[a] Scyppend gesittan wile on his domsetle."<sup>74</sup> After a brief account of the Resurrection, the audience is given a lengthy and quite dramatic rendition of the Harrowing of Hell. Christ, we are told, sent his spirit to hell, troubling its inhabitants, breaking down its gates, and bringing out the elect, so that "þæra deofla þeostro he oforgeat mid his þæm scinendan leohte" (85), as he did, symbolically, at the New Fire, and at Easter vigils. His victory is brought to life first in the long speech of the devils, asking their chief why he brought Christ into hell so that they were defeated. In the course of the speech, the devils note that those who have been taken away by Christ, "þeah hie ær þæs ecan lifes orwene wæron, hie synt nu swiþe bliþe" (85). It is specifically through the Cross that the people are freed, as the devils lament, "þurh Cristes

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<sup>73</sup> See Günter Kotzor, ed. *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, v. II (1981), pp. 43-5, or George Herzfeld, ed. *An Old English Martyrology* (1900), p. 48. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 158-9, points out illustrations of the Crucifixion in which figures representing the sun and moon hide their faces.

<sup>74</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 83. Subsequent page references are to this text.

rode is eal þin blis to unrotnesse geworden” (85). After the Harrowing is an account of the Last Days, and the Cross appears again, as a power, presumably shining (‘amongst the stars’): “seo rod ures Drihtnes bið aræred on þæt gewrixle þara tungla, seo nu on middangearde awergde gastas flemeþ” (91). These sorts of developments of the nature of the Cross both reflect the veneration granted it on Good Friday and help strengthen understanding of its divinity for the sake of the liturgical adoration.

As does the liturgical arrangement for Good Friday, illumination of Christ on the Cross emphasizes more the power implicit in Christ’s self-sacrificial mounting than the tragedy of the dying Christ. If the Cross is to be seen as standing in for Christ, to the degree that it is adored and buried in a sepulchre, it might not be surprising that Christ, in turn, comes to resemble the impersonal, enigmatic, and powerful Cross. This portrayal of Christ is often compared to later gothic depictions of him suffering, very personal and very human. These depictions come in conjunction with the gothic usurpation of the Cross in liturgical drama and in art with the figure of the suffering Christ himself.<sup>75</sup> While Anglo-Saxon portrayals of Christ on the Cross allow for pity, Christ is also seen ruling from the Cross, as if only after mounting the Cross has he fully come into his power.<sup>76</sup> The account of the Harrowing and the description of Doomsday in the Blickling Easter homily combine this intricate relationship between the Cross and Christ in power with the images and moods of the pre-Easter ceremonies, and with the expectation of the Second Coming nurtured throughout the pre-Paschal season, a combination that has particular resonance with the *Adoratio*.

Other vernacular descriptions of Christ or the Cross as glowing in opposition to darkness are plentiful. Perhaps the most exciting manifestation of the Cross in Old English Literature is that in *The Dream of the Rood*, which describes the Cross as a still but dynamic

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<sup>75</sup> It is perhaps in relation to this shifting portrayal of Christ that later medieval versions of the *adoro te* prayers “as a rule have the beginning ‘Adore te, D. I. C. in cruce pendentem’” (Gjerløw, *Adoratio Crucis*, p. 17), abandoning Christ’s ‘mounting’ the Cross in favour of a much more passively tragic image.

<sup>76</sup> See Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 87ff.

representation of, and window to, the events of Good Friday. A number of critics have attempted to describe parallels between this poem and the *Adoratio*. One of the first to deal with this tantalizing relationship was Howard Patch. Patch discussed the possible relationships between the vision of the jewel-adorned Cross in the poem and evidence for jewelled (and possibly red) crosses in England. He also looked for reflections of Latin hymnody in the poem. While mentioning a few hymns and liturgical forms that reflect many of the same ideas, he was forced to admit that “the results of our search for liturgical influence are surprisingly small.”<sup>77</sup> Much more recently, Earl Anderson tried to find sources or analogues for a number of passages in the poem, pointing to, among other things, two hymns of Fortunatus, readings in the Leofric Missal and in the Missal of Robert, the Book of Cerne, and the ‘horae passionis’ tradition. Like Patch, Anderson had to conclude that he had at most “clarified only three or four phrases in the poem,”<sup>78</sup> and even these represented similarities, not sources. Because of the difficulty of connecting directly liturgical forms with the poem, Rosemary Woolf saw its importance as doctrinal rather than liturgical, expressing Christological debate.<sup>79</sup> Éamon Ó Carragáin, while agreeing with Woolf’s shift away from “the rather mechanistic search for verbal parallels for individual passages” in *The Dream of the Rood*, asserted that (focussing on early bits of the poem) “the genesis of the Ruthwell Cross poem should be sought not in Christological controversies but in the liturgical innovations of the Northumbrian Church in the early eighth century” and that “the sort of cleric who, in the tenth century, read the Vercelli *Dream of the Rood* would also have found such liturgical concerns comprehensible and important.”<sup>80</sup> Ó Carragáin discussed in great

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<sup>77</sup> Howard Patch, “Liturgical Influence in The Dream of the Rood”, *PMLA* 34 (1919), p. 257.

<sup>78</sup> Earl Anderson, “Liturgical Influence in The Dream of the Rood”, *Neophilologus* 73 (1989), p. 301.

<sup>79</sup> See Woolf, “Doctrinal Influences”.

<sup>80</sup> Éamon Ó Carragáin, “Crucifixion as Annunciation: The Relation of ‘The Dream of the Rood’ to the Liturgy Reconsidered”, *English Studies* 63 (1983), pp. 487, 488.



detail the relationship between the enduring Cross and the accepting Mary at the Annunciation (illustrating the connection between the time of the Annunciation and the Crucifixion). He also talked about the possible relationship between the poem and the experience of confronting the Ruthwell Cross itself, with its range of devotional and (possibly) liturgical meanings. Peggy Samuels, making reference to Ó Carragáin's article, attempted to describe the poem as "a dramatic re-creation of the communicant's cathartic experience during the ritual drama of the Easter liturgy, especially as highlighted at the most intense moment of the lenten agon, the commemoration of the Crucifixion on Good Friday."<sup>81</sup> Edward B. Irving, discussing the poem in terms of dramatic narrative rather than drama (as did Samuels), gave an account of "the operative elements in *The Dream of the Rood*'s massive emotional power" with reference to Good Friday.<sup>82</sup> The general consensus of those looking to place *The Dream of the Rood* in some sort of liturgical context is that due to the individual genius of the poet of the Vercelli version (and due to the fact that we know little about the liturgical forms at the stages of the poem's development), we can find only echoes of the liturgy, not direct borrowings, and that we must therefore discuss the poem and the liturgy in terms of analogues, not sources. However, almost all agree that there is some sort of relationship between the poem and the liturgy, which is why there remains an interest in exploring it despite the difficulties experienced decades ago by Patch. However we conceive its origin and its context, the poem encapsulates the dynamic elements of the Cross established in the Good Friday liturgy. Most importantly, the poem says something about the experience of confronting a Cross that one has been trained to see both as a Cross and as the central figure of the reenactment of Christ's Passion.

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<sup>81</sup> Peggy Samuels, "The Audience Written into the Script of *The Dream of the Rood*", *Modern Language Quarterly* 49 (1988), p. 320.

<sup>82</sup> Edward B. Irving, "Crucifixion Witnessed, or Dramatic Interaction in *The Dream of the Rood*", in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature*, eds. Phyllis Brown, et al. (1986), pp. 101-13.

The poet's initial vision, dropping to him 'from midnight,' presents a shining, gold-sheathed beacon.<sup>83</sup> The poet is humbled before it, "forwunded mid wommum," while around him are invoked angels, spirits, and men, bringing all creation into its presence. The vision then shifts into a dual one, with the cross at once bedecked with shining gold and jewels and bleeding in agony from its right side, as if it were pierced along with Christ. The Cross shifts back and forth between blood-red and gold, allowing the poet to see in the gold-wrapped Cross the actual Crucifixion. In the Cross' memory, the Saviour 'mounts' the Cross, active, not passive, the poet using the same root word ('gestigan') as did the translator of the *Adoratio* prayers in the Portiforium of Wulstan ("astigende", translating "ascendentem"). The Cross shares Christ's wounds, and darkness descends over the shining body:

Geseah ic weruda god  
 pearle þenian. Þystro hæfdon  
 bewrigen mid wolcnum wealdendes hræw,  
 scirne sciman, sceadu forðeode,  
 wann under wolcnum. Weop eal gesceaft,  
 cwiðdon cyninges fyll. Crist wæs on rode. (lines 51-6)

The Cross sees Christ's followers actually chisel out a new tomb then and there and place the body inside. That there is more than one person involved in the burial corresponds best with John's account (and with illumination of the *Depositio*), as the synoptic gospels mention only Joseph of Arimathea. They then "Ongunnon . . . sorhleod galan / earme on þa æfentide, þa hie woldon eft siðian, / meðe fram þam mæran þeodne. Reste he ðær mæte weorode" (lines 67-9). The singing of the dirge and procession from the tomb are extra-biblical details that certainly might have invoked a Good Friday liturgy, perhaps a service intended to end at Vespers, which is often referred to as "æfentide" or "æfensang."<sup>84</sup> If, as Symons seems to think, the *Depositio* ceremony is a recent importation, it might be too early to look for

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<sup>83</sup> See George P. Krapp, ed. *The Vercelli Book* (1932), pp. 61-5.

<sup>84</sup> In his Second Letter for Wulfstan, Ælfric specifies that the Mass for Easter Vigils and the "æfensang" should end with one collect (Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 170). The *Concordia* also instructs that the Mass and Vespers should end with one prayer on that day (Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 48).

parallels in the Dream of the Rood. The *Adoratio*, however, certainly seems to have been in practice in some form. If so, it would not be too difficult to imagine a *Depositio* elaboration (whether or not one similar to that in the *Concordia*), for in a culture that has so fully developed the idea of the power of Christ bestowed upon the Cross, the taking down of the Cross after the *Adoratio* might be performed with some dignity, and therefore be naturally parallel to the deposition (and perhaps burial) of Christ's body, perhaps accompanied by prayers, or a 'dirge in the dusk.'

In any event, whether the 'dirge' reflects an *Adoratio* or a Deposition song, the return of the poet's voice brings us back to the adoration of the Cross. The Cross is described as having the power to heal, to lead people to Heaven and open its gates, and to transport the faithful to the Lord. The Cross itself, in commanding that people pray to it, perhaps announces the pre-paschal season (if we can take "sæl" to mean 'season' rather than, more generally, 'time' or 'age of the world'): "Is nu sæl cumen / þæt me weorðiað wide ond side / menn ofer moldan ond eall þeos mære gesceaft, / gebiddaþ him to þyssum beacne" (lines 80-3). The verb "gebiddaþ" is the same used by Ælfric in his instructions for the *Adoratio*, and which was understood by one glossator as *adorant*. The poet, at the close of the vision, himself offers 'cheerful prayers to that cross,' as should the poet's audience on Good Friday. The possible relationship between the Dream of the Rood and an early *Adoratio* ceremony has particular resonance if one might consider, as does Holloway, the possible use of crosses bearing part of the poem in the Good Friday liturgy. In any case, the Cross seen by the Dreamer, shining against the descending darkness, speaking to the Dreamer about the events of Christ's death (describing the wounds and tortures suffered by both together), demonstrating both the blood of the Passion and the gold and jewels of Christ crowned, and revealing through itself the story (a story with ritual elements) of the Passion, seems above all else to represent the reaction of a masterful poet to the mixed horror and wonder that is the heart of the Good Friday liturgy. The poet must have been familiar with the liturgical idea that it is through the gold Cross that contemporary appreciation of the Passion is translated,

and both the structure and the emotional power of the poem are determined by the mental disjunction between seeing the familiar liturgical Cross, understood as one with the True Cross and thus the celebrant's witness to the events, and seeing through it the bloody Christ mounting the Cross, shining against the darkness, taken down, and processionally buried. Whatever the liturgy for Good Friday before the tenth century, *The Dream of the Rood* demonstrates that the highly dramatic liturgy presented in the *Concordia* was, in its central themes and dynamics, entirely native to Anglo-Saxon understanding of the Cross and of commemoration of the Crucifixion.

### The Harrowing of Hell and the Easter Vigil

After Christ's death, according to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Christ descended to hell and freed those righteous who died before Christ's Passion opened up the way to Heaven for them, and who were being held in some shallow part of Hell (as opposed to the abyss into which Christ proceeds to throw the devil). There are numerous accounts of this Harrowing, many quite short, as is the entry for March 26 (representing Holy Saturday) in the Old English Martyrology.<sup>85</sup> Harrowings can also be found in three Easter weekend sermons.<sup>86</sup> The sermon in Corpus 41 begins with a passage indicating its sense of time:

Men þa leofestan, her sagað an þissum bocum [ymbe] ða miclan gewird þe to ðisse nihte wearð, þæt ure Drihten, Hælend Crist, on ðas niht gewearð, þe nu to niht wæs, þæt he of deaðe aras to midre nihte, and he astagh niðer to helwarum to þan, þæt he wolde þa helle bereafian, and swa gedyde, and þæt ealdordeoful oferswiðan.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, v. II, pp. 45-7, or Herzfeld, *An Old English Martyrology*, p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> Cameron numbers B8.5.3.1-3. The first and second (from London, BL, MS. Cotton Vespasian D.xiv and from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 41, were edited by William Hulme, "The Old English Gospel of Nicodemus", *Modern Philology* I (1903-4), pp. 570-614. The third, from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 303 and closely related to the sermon in Corpus 41, is unedited.

<sup>87</sup> Hulme, "The Old English Gospel of Nicodemus", p. 610.

Another version of the same sermon from Corpus 303 begins with the rubric *Sermo in resurrectione domini*, and then follows with more or less the same passage. If we can take the rubric to mean that the homily was proper to Easter Vigils (rather than to Friday night), it would seem that the adapters of this sermon understood Saturday evening as being the time first for the Harrowing and then for the Resurrection. In the third, the homily from Cotton Vespasian D.xiv<sup>88</sup> (based more broadly on the *Acti Pilati*), the introduction mentions that its initial events are proper to Friday, including the begging of the body by Joseph and the council inquiries, and then specifies that Sunday has arrived before Carinus and Leuticius, two of those freed from hell and raised with Christ, come along to tell of the Harrowing. These three homilies reveal some of the complex questions confronting those attempting to come to grips with the Anglo-Saxon sense of just what happened between the time of Christ's death on Friday afternoon and his resurrection sometime in the early hours of Sunday. The differences in the various accounts of the Descent into Hell are far too complicated to be dealt with here in any complete way, and I will discuss only briefly its relationship to the liturgy.<sup>89</sup>

When exactly did Christ harrow hell? The Old English Martyrology assigns it generally to March 26, which stands for Holy Saturday (March 25 is dedicated to the Crucifixion, and March 27 to the Resurrection), but this tells us nothing about whether Christ began harrowing hell on Friday night/early Saturday morning or waited a bit until it was closer to the time of the Resurrection. Liturgically, the final *Tenebrae* early on Saturday, with its dramatic use of darkness, might certainly remind the participants of the darkness of Hell as well as the darkness that covered the world at the time of the Crucifixion. In fact, the version of the ritual in Corpus 190 prescribes for Saturday the antiphon *Vita in ligno moritur, infernus ex morsu expoliatur*.<sup>90</sup> But *Tenebrae* is thematically wrong for a commemoration of the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. pp. 591-610.

<sup>89</sup> See James Cross, ed. *Two Old English Apocrypha and their Manuscript Source* (1997) for an introduction to and bibliography for a study of these texts.

<sup>90</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 238. The use of three antiphons, one for each day, is hinted at in the Verdun ritual (although only the first is given), but not in the *Concordia*. See

Harrowing, for the light is being extinguished, and the faithful are left in the terror of darkness, rather than freed from it. Actually, the idea that the faithful are in darkness awaiting the light of Christ resonates wonderfully with the idea that by early Saturday morning those in hell still awaited the light of Christ. Many versions of the Harrowing are so extensive, however, that one might imagine the various addresses of prophets and kings to take a day and a half, with the Harrowing beginning quite early. Even in the accounts of Christ's release of the captives from hell we can get no clear sense of time. In the earliest Greek and Latin versions of the Descent,<sup>91</sup> Christ blesses Adam and the others, takes them out of Hell, and delivers them to the archangel Michael, who leads them to Paradise, where they meet Enoch, Elijah, and the thief. There is no further mention of Christ, and no reason to think that he has accompanied them to Paradise. The thief had already arrived, bearing his Cross as a means of gaining entry, and there is no indication as to how long he had been there. He had arrived by himself, and it would seem from the narrative that his first post-death contact with Christ must have happened at some other time. If we can imagine that they had already met sometime Friday night, after the thief had entered Paradise, then the promise, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise,' would have been fulfilled, and the events of the Harrowing could still have happened later. In any case, the question is avoided. Certain of the freed (such as the witnesses Carinus and Leuticius) are then sent back down to earth, where they seem to be raised along with Christ, to give testimony on Sunday. Whether this happens directly, or many hours later, is not specified. There is certainly no consistency in Anglo-Saxon treatment of these issues. According to the Martyrology, Christ releases the prisoners and sends them

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Symons, "Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation", pp. 57-9 for the Verdun ritual and discussion.

<sup>91</sup> See M. R. James, tr. *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), pp. 94-146, for translation and comparison of many of the Gospel of Nicodemus passages and recensions. An Old English version of the Gospel was printed by Hulme, "The Old English Version of the Gospel of Nicodemus" (1898), pp. 471-515.

forth, “ðā he wolde gesigefæsted eft siðian to þæm lichoman,”<sup>92</sup> with no indication whether Christ himself went to Paradise or Heaven, or how long it all took. The homilies in Corpus 303 and Corpus 41 seem to have a different arrangement, as the destination of the prisoners has changed:

ure drihten nam þa adam be his handa & teah hine of þære helle & ealle þa halgan sawla þe þær on wæron. & on þone dæg þe nu todæg is mycele here hi þa haligra sawla he lædde mid him up of þære helle & brohte to heofonu & gefeolde þa setl mid þam sawlum þe lange ær weste stodon.<sup>93</sup>

Christ himself seems to bring Adam and the company to heaven (rather than ‘paradise’<sup>94</sup>), here explained as filling the place in Heaven that had lain waste, presumably after the fall of the angels (a motif discussed elsewhere, in a different context, by Ælfric). The homilist then goes on to hint at the relationship between Christ’s arising on this First Eastereve and his coming at the End. The rest of the homily is an account of the End, including the Reproach-like address of Christ in judgement also found in Vercelli VIII.<sup>95</sup> Again, the gap between the delivery of the freed and the resurrection of Christ is passed over silently. It would seem, from the opening passage of the homily, that the events take place on Saturday evening, but this is by no means certain, and much hinges on whether we are to take the phrase “he of deaðe aras to midre niht,” after which he descends to hell, to mean that his spirit arose and

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<sup>92</sup> See Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, v. II, p. 47, or Herzfeld, *An Old English Martyrology*, p. 50.

<sup>93</sup> See Hulme, “The Old English Gospel of Nicodemus”.

<sup>94</sup> Cross’ parallel edition and translation of the Latin and Old English version of the Gospel of Nicodemus highlights the confusion evident on the part of some writers of this account. According to the Latin, Christ hands Adam over to Michael, who leads all into Paradise (it does not say whether or not Christ went along, although he does not seem to have). The Old English version says that Christ gives Adam to Michael, then goes up to heaven himself (“on heofenas”) while the others are led to paradise (“neorxenawang,” Cross, *Two Old English Apocrypha*, pp. 232-3). Perhaps the account in the two Corpus homilies reflects a confusion from these sources of Christ’s going to heaven and the saints to Paradise.

<sup>95</sup> Both of these homilies include both the Reproach address and that to the sheep and the goats. The Corpus 41 version also has the apocryphal accounts of Holy Mary, St. Michael, and St. Peter each praying for the forgiveness of a third part of those to be saved.

went to hell (which could refer to any time) or that he bodily arose on Saturday night, bodily went to hell, freed the prisoners, and took them to heaven. The latter explanation is particularly intriguing, although for the homilist to be saying that Christ went bodily to hell would be surprising.<sup>96</sup>

The Blickling Easter homily may be following a different tradition. After the thanksgiving prayers of Adam, Eve, and the crowd of holy souls, “þe Drihten þa þa here-hyhb þe on helle genumen hæfde, raþe he lifgende ut eode of his byrgenne mid his agenre mihte aweht, & eft mid his unwemmmum lichoman hine gegyrede.”<sup>97</sup> If indeed Christ has straightaway taken the freed, the ‘plunder’, with him to his own resurrection (there is no indication of where they go after that), then the Harrowing and the Resurrection are concurrent. The account in the Martyrology is short, but it too gives no indication of the destination of the freed. In fact, they are not led out by Christ, but are sent forth before him (“unrim bliðes folces him beforan onsende”) as Christ prepares to return to his body in triumph. The fact that there are so many arrangements of the events leading up to the Resurrection and that none of them provides a clear, unambiguous indication of just when the events occurred probably demonstrates more than anything else that the Anglo-Saxons themselves did not know, and that therefore the entire time between late Friday and late Saturday/early Sunday might be considered as the time of the Harrowing.

Liturgically, references are made to the Harrowing both in the final *Tenebrae* and in the liturgy for Easter Vigils. The first benediction for the Easter Vigil mass in CB invokes the Harrowing: “Deus sacratissime noctis huius splendor lucifluus. qui uirtute diuina mortis

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<sup>96</sup> See Zbigniew Izydorczyk’s discussion of this apparent arrangement in the Corpus 41 homily, as well as in the Exeter Book’s *Descent into Hell*, as “an early instance of the practice that achieved some currency in later medieval art and literature, in spite of its divergence from the usual patristic and credal chronology” in “The Inversion of Paschal Events in the Old English *Descent into Hell*”, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91.4 (1990), p. 441.

<sup>97</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 89.



confractis uiribus. leo fortis claustra dirupit tartarea. benedicat uos . . .”<sup>98</sup> More dynamically, and more promisingly in terms of timing the events, the prayers for the blessing of the Paschal candle (from the Winchcombe Sacramentary), in singing about the wonder of the holy night of the Resurrection, seem to include the Harrowing as one of the events of that night:

Haec est nox, in qua primum patres nostros filios israel eduxisti de aegypto, quos postea rubrum mare sicco uestigio transire fecisti. Haec igitur nox est, quae peccatorum tenebras columnae inluminatione purgauit. Haec nox est: quae hodiae per uniuersum mundum in christum credentes, a uitiiis saeculi segregatos: et caligine peccatorum, reddit gratiae, sociatque sanctitati. Haec nox est: in qua destructis uinculis mortis, christus ab inferis uictor ascendit. Nihil enim nobis nasci profuit, nisi redimi profuisset. . . . O beata nox: quae sola meruit scire tempus et horam, in qua christus ab inferis resurrexit. Haec nox est: de qua scriptum est, et nox ut dies inluminabitur, et nox inluminatio in deliciis meis.<sup>99</sup>

The idea that Christ’s light purged away the darkness of sin certainly reflects the central image of the Old English Harrowings, the appearance of the light in the darkness. The reference to Christ ‘breaking the chains of death’ might refer to his own resurrection rather than to the freeing of those in hell, but that he, after breaking the bonds, ‘rose up, the victor, from the netherworld’ seems to make it a reference to both events, as he both exits hell and rises from the dead on the same night, celebrated in Easter Vigils, specifically at the part of the liturgy for the day where light first appears. The reference to the mystery of exactly what time Christ ‘rose up from the netherworld’ reflects the inability of medieval Christians to pin down this chronology, and allows the conflation of commemoration both of the Harrowing and of the Resurrection at Vigils.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps the tradition evident in the Blickling homily, in which the destination of the freed saints and the whereabouts of Christ between the Harrowing

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<sup>98</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 45.

<sup>99</sup> Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, p. 82.

<sup>100</sup> Perhaps, as well, it reflects the widespread desire to expect the End at the time of commemoration of the Resurrection. Matthew 24: 36ff makes clear that “about the day and the hour [of the end of the world] no one knows,” and the phrasing of this liturgical clause might allow just enough ambiguity to conform with Christ’s prophecy and still expect the Second Coming some time during the night.

and the Resurrection are passed over, reflects the force of the liturgically-established idea that Christ defeated death and rose from the dead concurrently.

The Harrowing of Hell can have dramatic force not just because it makes an exciting story, but because those reading the story, or hearing the sermon, or partaking in the liturgy are themselves being freed from the darkness of hell, mimicked by the darkness of the church before the lighting of the Paschal candle.<sup>101</sup> This connection is implied in the prayer above for the candle blessing, where the ideas of Christ arising the Victor from Hell and of each faithful needing to be not just born but redeemed are juxtaposed. Anglo-Saxon treatments of the Harrowing reveal an interest in establishing sympathetic identifications with those being freed. From at least the ninth century, the Harrowing of Hell has been made personal to the Anglo-Saxons, devotionally, through narrative technique, and in the liturgy. Although, as was the case with the *Adoratio*, we can say little about the particulars of the Easter liturgy before the tenth century, exploration of the Harrowing in Anglo-Saxon England shows great familiarity with the idea of direct identification with those freed from hell, a familiarity that had dramatic consequences for Easter Vigils.

The central elements of the Harrowing, in its narrative developments, include the appearance of a light in the darkness of hell, the complaints/questions of the devils in response to the light, the breaking of the gates, the driving of the devils into the abyss, the complaints of the faithful (including the likes of Abraham and David, and often several of the prophets) to be freed, and then of Adam and, especially, Eve, who invokes her daughter Mary. Quite frequently, the Harrowing is followed by an account of the end of the world. Vercelli homily I (in the A version) and the Dream of the Rood both end with the Harrowing, a natural conclusion for a Good Friday homily and for a poem that reflects so strongly the liturgical and thematic dynamics of Good Friday. Most dominant is the importance of light versus darkness. In the Martyrology's account, Adam and Eve "asmoredē wæron mid deopum

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<sup>101</sup> The church is to be understood as dark before the appearance of the light from the New Fire from which the Paschal candle is lit, even though the Mass would have been celebrated, according to recent Roman custom, in the afternoon (see below, pp. 235ff).

ðeostrum” until they “gesawon his þæt beorhte leoht æfter þære langan worolde.”<sup>102</sup> The Cotton Vespasian Harrowing homily (following more closely the Gospel of Nicodemus than do many Anglo-Saxon versions of the Descent) allows Carinus and Leuticius to describe Christ’s arrival in Hell:

Carinus and Leuticius þa ongunnen writen, Efne we wæron þa mid eallen uren fæderen on þære deopen helle, þær becom mycel brihtnysse ofer us ealle swylce sunne leome. Sathanas and eall hellewerod wæron afyrhte and þuss cwædon, Hwæt is þiss liht þæt her swa færlice scinð? þa wæs sona eall þæt mænnisc cynn blissigende and Adam mid eallen hehfæferen and witegan for þan mycelan lihte, and heo þuss cwæden, þiss liht is of Godes lihte . . .<sup>103</sup>

This sort of narrative device, putting the explanation of the Harrowing into the mouths of those freed, encourages the audience to sympathize with these two protagonists, and by proxy prepares them to see themselves freed from sin by the light of Christ appearing, fittingly, on Easter eve.

The dramatic potential of the Harrowing story, especially in its core petitions by Adam and Eve to be freed, was realized in more devotional forms as well. In many ways, its earliest extant manifestation is still its most interesting. At the end of the ninth-century section of the Book of Cerne is a Latin version of the Harrowing, from the general prayers of those in hell to the petition of Eve (during which the text breaks off). The Cerne Harrowing was edited and discussed by David Dumville.<sup>104</sup> The text consists of a series of petitions separated by rubrics indicating the shift in speakers. Of particular interest to Dumville are two points. First, red ink seems to have been used “in order to differentiate clearly between narrative and spoken sections” (380), possibly so as to assist performance by three soloists (a narrator, Adam, and Eve) as well as the full choir. Dumville also postulates that the red sections may be “rubrics

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<sup>102</sup> See Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, v. II, p. 46, or Herzfeld, *An Old English Martyrology*, p. 50.

<sup>103</sup> See Hulme, “The Old English Gospel of Nicodemus”.

<sup>104</sup> David Dumville, “Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory from the Eighth Century? A Re-Examination of the Origin and Contents of the Ninth-Century Book of Cerne”, *JTS* 23 (1972), pp. 374-388. Subsequent page references are to this text.

or ‘stage directions’ in our earliest surviving example of Christian dramatic literature, written specifically to be acted” (381). Second, many of the verbs used in the narrative sections are in the present tense (although a few remain in the past tense, which Dumville attempts to explain or emend). I will give an outline of the extant piece, providing the rubrics as printed in Dumville (376-7) and extracting or summarizing the prayers so as to demonstrate the structure of the piece:

*Hæc est oratio innumerabilis sanctorum populi / qui tenebantur in inferni captiuitate./ Lacrimabili uoce et obsecratione Saluatorem deposcunt,/ dicentes, quando ad infernos descendit:*

(A prayer in response to Christ’s appearance in Hell beginning “Aduenisti Redemptor mundi; aduenisti quem desiderantes cotidie sperabamus; aduenisti quem nobis futurum lux nuntiauerat et prophetae; aduenisti donans in carne uiuis indulgentiam peccatoribus mundi. Solue defunctos captiuos inferni!” and including the penitential petition “Memento congregationis tue quam creasti ab initio.” Christ also sets up his cross-sign in Hell.)

*Postquam autem audita est postulatio et obsecratio innumerabilium captiuorum,/ statim iubente Domini omnes antiqui iusti,/ sine aliqua mora ad imperium Domini Saluatoris resolutis uinculis,/ Domini Saluatoris genibus obuoluti,/ humili supplicatione cum ineffabili gaudio clamantes;<sup>105</sup>*

(a short prayer in the plural to break the chains, beginning “Disrupti, Domine, uincula nostra”)

*Adam autem et Eua adhuc non sunt desoluti de uinculis./ Tunc Adam lugubri ac miserabili uoce clamabat ad Dominum, dicens:*

(a prayer in the singular, again that the chains be broken, beginning “Miserere mei, Deus,” and further praying that the speaker’s spirit not be left in the inferno)

*Tunc, Domino miserante, Adam, e uinculis resolutus,/ Iesu Christi genibus prouolutus.*

(a prayer of thanksgiving for forgiveness, beginning “Benedic, anima mea, Dominum” and making no specific reference to the Harrowing, instead speaking generally in terms of freedom from ‘langour’ and destruction)

*Adhuc Eua persistit in fletu, dicens:*

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<sup>105</sup> Dumville discusses problems with this introduction (383), attributing the lack of a main verb, and other difficulties, to problems in authorial editing.

(another quite general prayer for mercy, making no reference to the Harrowing itself or to the intervention of Mary, before ending, as Dumville believes, imperfectly)

Perhaps the inconsistency in verb tense in these rubrics is due to an imperfect adaptation from a narrative original to a set of rubrics providing context for a series of vocal prayers.

Dumville sees in this Harrowing “very early evidence for the development of the liturgical drama, antedating the earliest extant *Quem quaeritis* text (from Saint-Martial de Limoges) by a century” (381). He goes on to postulate that the version in this ninth-century text (dated c. 800-820 by Dumville, c. 820-840 by Brown<sup>106</sup>) is a copy of an earlier Northumbrian text of the eighth century, such that “The possibility of an original home for the liturgical drama would be shifted from a Continental to an Irish-influenced Anglo-Saxon context” (381). To support the idea, he points to “an eighth-century MS (probably from a Northumbrian centre) containing the Gospels of Luke and John” (from Luke 22ff and John 18ff, covering the Passion) which “has a series of liturgical lection-marks entered in the margin by a later Anglo-Saxon hand. These occur in the sections on the Passion, an *l* denoting the words of Christ, a *c* those of the narrator” (381-2, n. 2). This presentation certainly bears similarity to later medieval chanting of the Passion narratives according to parts, as part of the development of liturgical drama. With such an early appreciation for the possibilities of sung parts differentiated by character, perhaps Cerne’s Harrowing is indeed “the earliest example of liturgical drama which is extant” (374).

Brown, however, is dubious about its role in terms of performance:

Whatever the original function of this text, its appearance in Cerne lies, I would suggest, in the relevance of its theme to Cerne’s overall preoccupation with the *communio sanctorum*. In such an interpretation of Cerne’s major theme, the Harrowing therefore would appear as a motif of the Church Expectant, rather than as a functioning piece of liturgical drama.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 18.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 146.

Taken this way, the Harrowing texts are more parallel to the *Adoratio* prayers earlier in the MS, more devotional than performance-based. The Harrowing of Hell, in a narrative context, would have been quite well known to the compilers of this manuscript (Dumville<sup>108</sup> and Brown<sup>109</sup> discuss certain sources) who here have adapted prayers taken largely from the Psalms (the Harrowing is preceded by an Irish-influenced Breviate Psalter) and mixed them with details and rubrics placing the prayers in the context of the Harrowing of Hell. Whether or not the piece had a liturgical function, it is certainly consonant both with the elements of the liturgy that refer to the Harrowing and with other vernacular and devotional treatments of the idea. Actually, it may be misleading to refer to this piece as a 'Harrowing of Hell,' even though that is clearly its inspiration. There are no laments of the angels, no casting of the Devil into the abyss. We are given simply the voices of those in chains, seeing Christ appearing as a light and begging him to free them. General, psalm-based devotional prayers are given to Adam and Eve, so that the voices of those freed from chains are joined with the voices of those singing these prayers. This is the primary purpose of the rubrics, whatever their functional context, to make the singer feel that he or she is one of those seeing the light of Christ, begging for release, and being granted specific pardon. It is this sense of unity with those in the Harrowing, developed, as we shall see, in the liturgy, in particular in the liturgy for Holy Saturday, that makes the piece dramatic. Although it would be too much, with this, to look for an Irish-influenced Anglo-Saxon tradition of liturgical drama, we can say that the Anglo-Saxon church from an early stage was intimate with the idea of dramatic identification which was the impetus for and heart of the liturgical drama throughout the Middle Ages. We can also say more specifically that from an early stage Anglo-Saxons were developing devotional pieces that allowed them to sing with the voices of Adam and Eve, praying to be forgiven and released from the darkness of sin and praising God for his saving power. By the time of the tenth-century liturgy, developing this identification with those in hell in the

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<sup>108</sup> David Dumville, "Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory", pp. 386-8.

<sup>109</sup> Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 145.

prayers for the new light at Vigils might have been merely a dramatic adaptation of a widespread and longstanding native dynamic.

The most complete vernacular account of this strain of the Harrowing is in the Blickling Easter Homily. Many of the elements of the Gospel of Nicodemus, including the witnessing of the twins and the chain of prophets and kings who proclaim at length, are absent, and the story focuses on the light of Christ and the prayers of Adam and Eve, such that it seems more indebted to Cerne (or, as is generally posited, to a common lost Latin original<sup>110</sup>) than to Nicodemus. Christ's victory is specifically described as 'overcoming the devil's darkness with his shining light.' The kinetic details and the dramatic use of dialogue in the sermon make its audience sympathize with the main protagonists, Adam and Eve. The connection between the congregation and those delivered from hell is strengthened in the account of their forgiveness. The other captives have been sent on ahead, and the devil cast into the abyss. Adam and Eve, however, the first sinners, are specifically left in bonds. Adam begs forgiveness in a few lines, is set free, and responds with a song of thanksgiving (both of his prayers are, with minor differences, the Psalm-based prayers given him in Cerne). Eve, through all this, "þa gyt on bendum & owope þurhwunode."<sup>111</sup> Her prayer is longer, and more heartfelt. It follows her prayer in Cerne until Cerne breaks off, at "ne declines in ira ab ancilla tua."<sup>112</sup> She acknowledges her guilt, that "ic wæs mid weorþmende on neorxna wange, & ic þæt ne ongeat" and, pointing to her time of weeping and lamentation, admits that she is dust and ashes. She begs him, by Mary, who is 'flesh of her flesh', to release her, after which she is freed. This plea reminds us of the role of Mary as expressed in the Blickling homily on the Annunciation of St. Mary, where Mary is portrayed as the direct contrast of Eve, succeeding exactly where Eve failed (a common topos). As Adam's failure was absolved by the new Adam, Christ, so Eve's was absolved by the new Eve, Mary. The dramatic forgiveness of

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<sup>110</sup> See Dumville, "Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory", p. 375.

<sup>111</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 89.

<sup>112</sup> Dumville, "Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory", p. 377.

Adam and Eve, presented to the audience in direct dialogue, focuses forgiveness for Lenten repentance to this one point. Particularly given the intense associations between the participants and Adam established in Lent, Adam's forgiveness is theirs. It is at this moment, the triumphant return of Christ with the original sinners to which the homilist then points, that the fruits of correct and zealous Lenten and Holy Week observance are realized.

In fact, this dramatic, liturgically-consonant understanding of the Harrowing may even have influenced certain versions of the *Acti Pilati* itself. A few aspects of the Harrowing presented in Cerne and developed in Blickling do not seem to have been properly part of the *Acti* until a later date. Regarding Cerne's relationship to the *Acti*, Dumville points out:

Evidence seems to be lacking in this text for a direct knowledge of the *Acti Pilati*. While there is a certain similarity with the Latin A Recension, Art ii, c. viii, the B recension, cc. ix/x, introduces Eve, Christ's placing His cross in Hell, and the use of the verb 'prouoluere'. The most likely explanation is that our text's source, now represented only by the Blickling version in Old English, was responsible for the introduction of these features.<sup>113</sup>

The Harrowing story developed separately from the rest of the *Acti Pilati*, and was only later attached to it. Other English Harrowings (see the homilies based on the Gospel of Nicodemus) focus on Recension A, with the prayers of Esaias, Simeon, John the Baptist, David, and Isaiah, among others, with elements of Recension B (to which the Blickling version is related) mixed in (M. R. James provides a schema comparing the elements of the two recensions and presenting them in parallel<sup>114</sup>). Recension B is shorter and, while it keeps speeches from Seth, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and David, the story of the actual removal of the faithful from hell focuses on Adam and Eve and the setting up of the Cross in Hell rather than, in Recension A, the greeting of Adam, speeches from several others, and meetings with Enoch, Elias, and the thief. This section of Recension B is altogether more dramatically concise, and more personally applicable, perhaps because of its development in terms of dramatic identification by the Anglo-Saxon adapters.

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<sup>113</sup> Dumville, "Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory", p. 377, n. c.

<sup>114</sup> See James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 118ff.



This dramatic identification informs part of the liturgy for Holy Saturday, specifically the lighting and blessing of the Paschal candle with which Easter Vigils begins. The Mass at the end of Vigils was the original Easter Mass, and probably from apostolic times the commemoration consisted of an all-night vigil. Its early development has been discussed by most historians of the early church liturgy.<sup>115</sup> From at least the third century, it has been associated with baptism, which would be performed at the end of the Vigils (and before the Mass), in the early dawn. Talley discusses the ritual in fourth-century Jerusalem, and its result: “Topologically, as well as sacramentally, the newborn are introduced into the Church having just stepped from the tomb of Christ” at the time of the Resurrection.<sup>116</sup> Also from an early stage, at least in Africa, in the churches of Gaul, and in parts of Italy, the lighting of the Paschal Candle has been a dominant feature.<sup>117</sup> The Vigil was shortened over the centuries, however, possibly due to a decrease in Easter baptisms, and sometime between the eighth and tenth centuries it was anticipated on the previous afternoon (at None in most Anglo-Saxon witnesses). In the Gelasian, the liturgy for Saturday begins with the *Abrenuntio*, given the catechumens, and then goes on to the blessing of the Paschal candle, which includes several references to the Harrowing, especially in terms of light and darkness, and the participants speak as those seeing the light and being freed:

Deus qui iacentem mundum in tenebris luce perspicua retexisti . . . In quo Dominicae resurrectionis miraculo diem sibi introductum tenebrae inveteratae senserunt, et mors quae olim fuerat aeterna nocte damnata, inserto veri fulgoris lumine, captivam se trahi Dominicis triumphis obstupuit, et quod praevaricante primoplasto tenebrosa praesumptione fuerat in servitute damnatum, huius noctis miraculo splendore libertatis irradiat. . . . Nam ut, praecedente huius luminis gratia, tenebrarum horror excluditur, ita, Domine, lucescente maiestatis tuae imperio, peccatorum sarcinae diluuntur.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 5ff. Also, Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 261ff; Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 234ff; and Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 1226-7.

<sup>116</sup> Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, p. 51.

<sup>117</sup> See Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 252ff.

<sup>118</sup> Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 80.

The Gelasian then gives ten scriptural lessons from the Old Testament,<sup>119</sup> and all proceed to the font for its blessing and for baptism, followed by the first Easter Mass, and the first communication for the newly baptized, at the end of Vigils. The reading for this Mass, which originally would have been coincident with the time of the Resurrection, seems to have been Matthew's account of the women at the tomb. Later on Easter day was a second Mass, which had for its reading the following passage in Matthew, where Christ appears to all the disciples at Galilee. Although we can only speculate as to the liturgy of eighth-century Northumbria, this seems to be the liturgical arrangement with which Bede was familiar, and which his homilies reflect. Bede has a homily for Holy Saturday, apparently for a Main Mass preceding Vigils, discussing Mark 7:31-37, the deaf-mute healed by Christ with the word "Effeta".<sup>120</sup> His exegesis makes clear and repetitive references to baptism, explicitly an upcoming baptism for catechumens in his audience. For Easter Vigils, Bede gives exegesis for Matthew 28:1-10, the story of the women at the tomb.<sup>121</sup> After mentioning the time of the Passion and the 'declining' sun (not obscured totally, but declining naturally in the afternoon), he explains

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<sup>119</sup> The later Gelasian witnesses present the classic 12 lessons (see the Murbach *comes*). Twelve Old Testament lessons were prescribed in the Armenian lectionary, which Talley postulates as reflecting the use in Egeria's Jerusalem. The 12 lessons were taken up in many places in the West, especially in Spain and Gaul, with some variation in makeup of the twelve (a detailed comparison is given by Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, pp. 48ff). He considers the spread of the 12 lessons to reflect a "community of tradition" for the vigil spreading from Jerusalem to Gaul. In the Gregorian form, a longer vigil was reduced to four readings (always beginning, as did the 12, with Genesis 1:1), possibly from an earlier seven-reading format (Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, p. 53). The Gregorian Sacramentary sent to the Carolingians had apparently the four forms (see Deshusses, *Le sacramentaire grégorien*, pp. 183-5), but the Supplement, drawing from Gelasian witnesses, provides the Gelasian 12. Reflecting either this doubling in their primary liturgical sources or a lingering influence from their own earlier Gelasian forms, later Anglo-Saxon witnesses inconsistently provide four or twelve. The Robert Missal, the *Concordia*, and the instructions for Vigils in Corpus 190 (see Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 228-31) have only four. Leofric A and the Winchcombe Sacramentary have 12.

<sup>120</sup> See Martin and Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, v. 2, pp. 51-7.

<sup>121</sup> See Ibid. pp. 58-68.

how the women could be approaching both the night before and in the dawning of Easter, claiming that, on this night,

Our Lord, the author and controller of time, he who rose [from the dead] during the final part of the night, surely caused the whole of it to be festal and bright by the light of his resurrection. . . . we who have come to know that this special night has been illumined by the grace of our Lord's resurrection must also take particular care lest any part of it become dark in our hearts. All of it should become light as day for us, especially now when we are keeping vigil with the devotion of worthy praise, and are awaiting with a pure and sober conscience the feast of Easter Sunday when we have completed this vigil.<sup>122</sup>

However long Bede's vigil actually went on, it was still understood as lasting all night, and ending with a Mass that represented the main Easter Mass, with the reading of the first proof of his resurrection.

A passage in the Old English Life of St. Machutus seems to reflect this early arrangement:

To þæm mynstre wæs cumende sancte machutes modor on þone halgan easteræfen · 7 þa niht þær to wacianne · 7 heo þa þæ[r] on þa niht hire sunu cende sanctum machutem· *De baptismo eius*· Þone brendanus [the abbot] gefulgade · 7 hine of þon fonte uparærde · 7 syþþan hine for gastlice sunu hæfde · 7 hine getrywlice 7 geleaffullice fedde fram fruman his ylde · oþþæt he spreca mihte · 7 andget hæfde.<sup>123</sup>

A future saint can have no more holy a start in life than to be born early on Easter Vigils, baptized at its end (presumably in the morning, if Machutus' mother planned to stay awake all night), with the abbot as his godfather, speaking for him in the baptismal Credo, and given his first Mass on the feast of the Resurrection. One could hardly be born in a manner so directly parallel to Christ's 'rebirth' over the same course of time and not become a saint. Awareness of the early Vigil arrangement allows for the hero's birth story. By the time of the tenth-century church, however, Vigils had been moved to None on Saturday afternoon, ending in

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. pp. 60-1.

<sup>123</sup> Yerkes, *The Old English Life of St. Machutus*, p. 5.

the early night (with “æfensang” in Ælfric’s Letter and Vespers in the *Concordia*<sup>124</sup>). A few witnesses provide the OT lessons and baptismal forms for Holy Saturday (see above, “Baptism”), but their place in Easter is by now tenuous, and while the font is still blessed, Easter baptisms are not assumed in instructions for the day. Directions are given in the *Concordia*, in Corpus 190, and in Ælfric’s Second Letter for Wulfstan, and all agree as to its fundamental elements, although the *Concordia*, typically, has elaborations.<sup>125</sup> According to the *Concordia*, at None, the new fire is brought in and used to light the Paschal candle, which had been placed on the altar. The candle, freshly lit, is blessed, ‘as is the custom,’ with the prayer *Exultet iam angelica turba coelorum*.<sup>126</sup> This prayer and the following readings come from the Supplement to the Gregorian Sacramentary.<sup>127</sup> As did the Gelasian prayers, they describe those present as freed from the bonds of darkness by this new light of Christ. After a second candle is lit (the second candle is not mentioned in Ælfric’s Letter or in Corpus 190), the four Gregorian lessons are given. All then process to the font singing seven litanies, and the font is blessed, along with five more litanies. They return to the altar with three more litanies for the return of the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, which had been absent from the liturgy since Septuagesima Sunday.

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<sup>124</sup> A rubric in the Leofric Collectar, following None on Holy Saturday, reflects the combined monastic/secular nature of the vigil and the intended time of its conclusion: “Vespertinalis sinaxis infra missam et cum missa ipsius diei completur” (Dewick and Frere, *The Leofric Collectar*, p. 133). This combined nature is highlighted by the *Concordia*’s instruction that the Monastic Office be replaced by the Secular Office from Maundy Thursday through Easter Week (Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 49, n. 3).

<sup>125</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 47-9; Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 228-31 and pp. 168-71.

<sup>126</sup> Among the relics listed at Exeter (see Max Förster, ed. *Zur Geschichte des Reliquienkultus in Altengland* (1943), p. 70), along with a piece of the True Cross and relics from the Sepulchre, Christ’s garment, the manger, the spear, the Burning Bush, and the altar that ‘Christ himself hallowed’ (presumably on Maundy Thursday), is “Of þære candeale, ðe Godes engel ontende mid heofenlicum leohte æt ures Drihtenes sepulchre on easteræfen.” The idea that God’s angel kept a candle burning in vigil at the tomb on Eastereve shows how dependant Anglo-Saxon perception of the events at the tomb was on the liturgical expression.

<sup>127</sup> See Deshusses, *Le sacramentaire grégorien*, pp. 360-61.

In the vernacular accounts, now follow the *Gloria* and the vigil Mass, including the *Alleluia*. The Benedictions for this Mass (see above) again make reference to the Harrowing in terms of light. Nothing more is mentioned, and the service has most certainly lost the sense of an all-night vigil. However, it still retains much of the flavour of its original function as the primary Easter Mass, with the reintroduction of the *Gloria* and the *Alleluia*. The *Concordia* adds a bit of drama to the anticipated *Gloria* (as an elaboration of the Vigil Mass). With only the two candles lit,

antequam cantatur *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, magister scholae dicat alta uoce  
*Accendite*. Et tunc illuminentur omnia luminaria ecclesiae et, abbate incipiente  
*Gloria in excelsis Deo*, pulsentur omnia signa,<sup>128</sup>

followed by the Collect of the Mass. This elaboration, with the powerful *Accendite*, the sudden lighting of the whole church, the triumphant *Gloria*, and the pealing of the bells, certainly reflects the idea that the *Gloria* is reintroduced to the liturgy in response to Christ's resurrection. The fact that the Eucharist can be blessed, as it could not on Friday or earlier on Saturday, indicates that Christ has risen, as does the gospel for the Mass, the account of the women at the sepulchre (whether Matthew's or Mark's is a matter of confusion, as discussed below, pp. 242ff). Also, it would seem that the guards set before the buried Cross after the *Depositio* and told to keep watch "usque dominicam noctem Resurrectionis" end their vigil at this time. We are told that no lights are to proceed the gospel book as it is processed to the altar, but only incense, a practice that Amalarius describes as in imitation of the holy women.<sup>129</sup> Alongside this recognition of the Vigil's original import, however, is a sense that, as it is still Saturday evening, Christ has not indeed yet risen. While the dominant mood at the end of Easter Vigils is one of triumph in the Resurrection, there remains a feeling of expectation. The *Concordia* and the ritual of Fleury are peculiar in prescribing a chapter

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<sup>128</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 48. Ælfric in his Eynsham Letter says that the "Accendite" is to be said three times (*LME*, p. 135).

<sup>129</sup> See Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 231, n. dd. Ælfric repeats Amalarius' interpretation in his Eynsham Letter (*LME*, p. 135).

announcement for Holy Saturday. Throughout the year, the festival for the following day is announced from the Martyrology at Chapter. In the *Concordia*'s instructions for Christmas, the feast of Christmas is announced on the Vigil, in expectation of Christ's coming on the following day. Then follows the instruction:

Sabbato quoque Sancto Paschae, dum a puero Resurrectio Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi legitur, quamquam in martyrologio id non habetur, propter eius gloriosissimi uictoriam triumphi qua, destructis Herebi claustris, secum fideles quosque in caelos aduexit, nobis etiam rediuiuis spem ascendendi concessit, uniformiter agatur.<sup>130</sup>

The chapter announcement leads the brethren to expect on Sunday to celebrate Christ's rising with those rescued from Hell. What we see here is the same sort of thing that happened to the Christmas liturgy. As both Bede and the anonymous author of a homily titled *In Sabbato sancto* (discussed below, pp. 242ff) tell us, Christ rose from the dead during the night (the Old English writer actually specifies that he rose "on ðysse halgan nihte ufanweardre"<sup>131</sup>), just as he had been born during the night at Christmas, and was revealed to the world sometime in the dawning of the day. When the *In Nocte* Christmas Mass, at which the *Gloria* is reintroduced after Advent (in its original significance, whereby the angels reveal to the shepherds that Christ has been born), was moved earlier and earlier in the night, a previously unrelated Mass for the Byzantine Anastasia was shifted to early dawn on Christmas morning, and the celebration of Christ's birth was split by the two (see above, "Christmas and Epiphany"). So here, when Easter Vigils lost some of its temporal coincidence, a new Mass was introduced on Easter morning, with another reading about the women at the sepulchre, and the revelation of Christ's resurrection was celebrated in both. Early Easter morning is also, for the same reasons, the prescribed time for what was developed as a liturgical highlight to this Easter morning revelation, the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, a ritual based on these same two readings (those from Matthew and Mark).

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<sup>130</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 28.

<sup>131</sup> Evans, "An anonymous Old English homily", p. 138.

Easter Vigils is fundamentally a festival of the Resurrection. However, with the relative loss of temporal coincidence with the Resurrection and the proliferation of liturgical forms that make reference to the Harrowing, along with the lingering sense of anticipation, Easter Vigils can be examined as a reenactment of the events preceding the Resurrection. The congregation, thoroughly familiar with the voices of those in the darkness of hell (many of them might have heard or read about the Harrowing in some version on this day, reinforcing the potential identification), see a new light spring up in the mouth of the serpent (the third New Fire), sing its praises in terms of the Harrowing as the light becomes, in the lighting of the Paschal candle, clearly revealed as the light of Christ here to free them from the darkness of their sins, and expect soon Christ's resurrection, the inevitable outcome of the defeat of sin and death that is the point of the Harrowing. The distance between the lighting of the Paschal candle and the final Mass, when the gospel of the women at the tomb is read, can be understood as the distance between Christ's appearance as a light in Hell and the full revelation of his victory in the early hours of the morning, the second following hard upon the first, and celebrated more fully the following morning.

### **Easter Morning and the Visitatio**

This brings us to the ritual that, as Peter Dronke laments, has "received an almost inordinate amount of scholarly attention -- and controversy -- in the last half-century" in the study of the earliest forms of Western drama.<sup>132</sup> It is hard to divorce the *Visitatio Sepulchri* from this general history of drama, of which it has been for so long the cornerstone, although more and more critics urge that we do so. Exploration of the function and significance of the *Visitatio* must begin with an understanding of the liturgical milieu from which it was never made distinct. Liturgical ritual and 'representative' drama are entirely different media, as different as ballet and film or as miming and method acting in their styles and imperatives of

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<sup>132</sup> Peter Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays* (1994), p. xvii.

reenactment, and to explain the *Visitatio* as budding representative drama undercuts appreciation of its real power, in its own context, in bringing alive the announcement of the angels to the holy women. As with the other instances of dramatic ritual evident so prominently throughout the Temporale in late Anglo-Saxon England, the vernacular preaching texts and other treatments of the events of Easter morning help establish and strengthen the identification with the holy women that is the driving force of the Easter reenactment.

The *Visitatio* represents a curious mix of details from various gospel accounts, and is therefore related to the readings both for Vigils and for Easter day. Witnesses for Holy Saturday and Easter seem to reveal a discrepancy in the understanding of which gospel accounts are proper to which Mass. There is one anonymous homily entitled *In Sabbato sancto*, one of the three sermons that, along with Vercelli I, was inserted into several manuscripts of the Catholic Homilies to fill out the days for which sermons were forbidden by Ælfric (see above). Based on the reading from Matthew 28:1 ff, it takes much of its exegesis from Bede's homily for Easter Vigils (although this homilist has expanded and rearranged a good deal), which owned the Matthew 28 pericope. It also draws on Augustine (possibly indirectly) and Smaragdus. If this sermon ever was preached at Vigils, it would have been fundamentally redundant with Ælfric's First Series sermon for Easter, which itself seems to give an exegesis of the Matthew gospel. Bodley 340 and Corpus 198 present the two in conjunction.<sup>133</sup> The anonymous *In Sabbato Sancto* and Ælfric's CH.I.xv take remarkably different avenues of exegesis, and seem to have different sources (while coinciding in one stunning regard, discussed below, pp. 253ff), but each deals with the material presented in the Matthew reading. The standard allocation of gospel lections in the West gives Matthew 28:1 ff to Vigils and Mark 15:47ff to Easter day. This is the arrangement used by St. Augustine and by Gregory.<sup>134</sup> It is attested in Leofric A, in rubrics to the Old English

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<sup>133</sup> See CH.I, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>134</sup> See G. G. Willis, *St. Augustine's Lectionary* (1962), pp. 66, 84.



Gospels,<sup>135</sup> and throughout the later medieval missals. Bede used the Neapolitan arrangement, found in the Gospel Book of St. Cuthbert (c. 700) and representing the use of Naples in the early seventh century, whereby Matthew 28 is split between Vigils and the main Mass for Easter.<sup>136</sup> There are a very few instances where the lections, according to the Roman arrangement, may have been switched. The Lectionary of St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop of Ravenna (d. 450) assigns Matthew 28 to Easter Day.<sup>137</sup> Amalarius may also have understood the Matthew reading as proper to Easter. Ælfric's focus on Matthew for Easter day may be related to prescriptions for Vigils in the Corpus 190 texts, in a passage derived from Amalarius, related to the procession with incense at Vigils, in which the Mark reading seems to be assigned to Vigils, which might leave the Matthew material for Easter Day:

Ante euangelium non portantur luminaria in ipsa nocte, sed incensum tantum. Ad imitationem mulierum, quia hoc tantum modo obtulerunt mulieres, ut dicit euangelium: Cum transisset sabbatum et reliqua [Mark 16:1].<sup>138</sup>

In his *Liber Officialis*, Amalarius, quoting Bede on Mark, gives Mark's as the Vigil gospel; "Evangelium narrat secundum Marcum *modum conventus feminarum* et dicat: <<Cum transisset . . . >>," proceeding to explain the possible meanings of the gospel lection and the omission of the lights before the gospel book:

Ut opinor, propter mulierum imitationem dicit romanus Libellus non portari hac nocte ante euangelium aliud nisi timiama, sive quia dubitat utrum iam carnem suam plenam munere lucis revexisset ab inferis Dominus. Hoc tanummodo obtulerunt mulieres.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> See R. M. Liuzza, ed. *The Old English Version of the Gospels* (1994), pp. 61, 96.

<sup>136</sup> See Willis, *St. Augustine's Lectionary*, p. 90.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. pp. 94-5.

<sup>138</sup> Fehr, *Die hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 231.

<sup>139</sup> Hanssens, *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgical omnia*, v. 2, p. 160.

Hanssens considers this use of Mark at Vigils an error and points to related examples.<sup>140</sup> Both readings, Mark 15:47ff. and Matthew 28:1ff, treat the account of the women at the tomb, and many of the elements of Bede's and the anonymous Old English author's exegesis of Matthew, such as the explanation of the purchase of the spices, are taken from Mark's account, perhaps allowing for the confusion. Ælfric recognizes the standard arrangement, and gives for his incipit "Maria magdelene et maria iacobi. et reliqua," the beginning of the Mark pericope (Mark 15:47), but then goes on to present in his Old English 'translation' the petition of the Jews that the tomb be guarded, from Matthew, and continues using Matthew as his base (with details from other gospels). Perhaps his preference for the Matthew material for the Easter sermon stems partly from the influence of Amalarius, partly from the fact that many of his sources are Vigil homilies (or other exegetical discussions of Matthew 28), and partly from a desire to focus on certain aspects of the story, both exegetical and liturgical, that required him to conflate the gospel accounts in certain ways.

The standard order of Matthew for vigils and Mark for Easter day might have had a particular temporal quality when the two would have been only a few hours apart (before the Vigil was anticipated in the afternoon). It is possible to read the two accounts as sequential. In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and another Mary approach as the day is dawning, see the angel come down and roll back the stone (frightening the guards), then hear of the Resurrection and go away. In Mark, the three women (one of them Mary Magdalene) approach after the sun has already risen, see the stone already rolled away, and hear an announcement from what seems to be a different angel, seated inside the tomb rather than on the stone. This order works particularly well when the first is read at Vigils, before the sun has risen, and the other later in the day. There are problems with such a reading, however, including the question in Mark, "Who will roll away the stone?" (if Mary Magdalene had already seen it rolled away, there should have been no worry). In any case, Anglo-Saxon treatments of these two passages

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<sup>140</sup> "Evangelium namque Marci (16, 1-7) non in nocte, sed ipsa resurrectionis die canendum erat" (160).

seem to follow the efforts of Augustine, Bede, and Smaragdus to explain these difficulties synthetically and harmonize the gospel accounts.<sup>141</sup> The fact that for Ælfric Vigils was on late Saturday afternoon (and that, therefore, the Matthew reading was somewhat removed from the primary commemoration of the announcement) might have inspired him, who as we have seen had a great interest in making sure that his audience understood the liturgical significance of the high festivals, to himself compose a single, synthetic account of the announcement to the women, one that has particular resonance with the rituals proper to Easter morning, especially the *Visitatio*.

Although Ælfric omits it from his Letter to the Monks at Eynsham, Symons claims (following Karl Young) that the *Visitatio* was “widespread.”<sup>142</sup> However, the *Concordia*’s ritual is one of the very earliest, and certainly the earliest to include such a wealth of directions. It is founded on the *Quem quaeritis in sepulchro* dialogue, also found in the Winchester Troper, and has been discussed widely. There is little consensus concerning the origins of the *Quem Quaeritis*, and I will discuss only its function in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy.<sup>143</sup> The *Concordia*’s instructions for the ‘play’ are as follows:

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<sup>141</sup> Augustine, in his *Harmony of the Gospels* (Book III, Ch. XXIV), while allowing that there might have been two angelic announcements, explains them as immediately sequential, such that the women might have seen the stone rolled away, heard the first announcement, gone inside, seen the second angel sitting on the right hand side, and then gone out. Even from this he shies away, however, explaining alternatively that the ‘second angel’ may be the same as the first, as his ‘sitting on the right side’ could still refer to the stone before the tomb (see Findlay and Salmond, tr. *Sermon on the Mount; Harmony of the Evangelists* (1873), pp. 441-55). Although these explanations don’t appear in Anglo-Saxon exegesis, other attempts to harmonize the gospels (in particular the time of day of the announcement) draw frequently on Augustine’s and Smaragdus’ efforts to explain a single incident. See also Augustinus Hipponensis, *De consensu Evangelistarum*, Book III, Ch. XXIV, PL 34, 1196ff., and Smaragdus S. Michaelis, *Collectiones in epistolas et evangelia*, PL 102, 222Bff.

<sup>142</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 49.

<sup>143</sup> Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, p. 219, believes that the *Q.Q.* first developed as a ceremony associated with the Vigil Mass and was moved to Easter Matins as the Vigil lost its temporal coincidence. That the *Visitatio* in the *Concordia* was set at Matins for the sake of temporal coincidence is well taken, although the shift of the Vigil Mass to Saturday afternoon may have happened before the direct ancestor of the *Visitatio* took form. The weight of critical opinion holds that the *Q.Q.* was developed somewhere on the continent during the

While the third lesson is being read, four of the brethren shall vest, one of whom, wearing an alb as though for some different purpose, shall enter and go stealthily to the place of the 'sepulchre' and sit there quietly, holding a palm in his hand. Then, while the third respond is being sung, the other three brethren, vested in copes and holding thuribles in their hands, shall enter in their turn and go to the place of the 'sepulchre', step by step, as though searching for something. Now these things are done in imitation of the angel seated on the tomb and of the women coming with perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus. When, therefore, he that is seated shall see these three draw nigh, wandering about as it were and seeking something, he shall begin to sing softly and sweetly, *Quem quaeritis?* As soon as this has been sung right through, the three shall answer together, *Ihesum Nazarenum*. Then he that is seated shall say *Non est hic. Surrexit sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis*. At this command the three shall turn to the choir saying *Alleluia. Resurrexit Dominus*. When this has been sung he that is seated, as though calling them back, shall say the antiphon *Venite et videte locum*, and then, rising and lifting up the veil, he shall show them the place void of the Cross and with only the linen in which the Cross has been wrapped. Seeing this the three shall lay down their thuribles in that same 'sepulchre' and, taking the linen, shall hold it up before the clergy; and, as though showing that the Lord was risen and was no longer wrapped in it, they shall sing this antiphon: *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*. They shall then lay the linen on the altar.<sup>144</sup>

Critics of liturgical drama have lauded the ceremony's designation of roles, its use of costuming and stage directions, and its clear dialogue. This is the first of the representative

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eighth or, more likely, the ninth century. For a summary of many key arguments see David A. Bjork, "On the Dissemination of *Quem quaeritis* and the *Visitatio sepulchri* and the Chronology of their Early Sources", *Comparative Drama*, 14.1 (1980), pp. 46-69.

<sup>144</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 49-50. "Dum tertia recitatur lectio, quattuor fratres induant se, quorum unus, alba indutus ac si ad aliud agendum, ingrediatur atque latenter sepulcri locum adeat ibique, manu tenens palmam, quietus sedeat. Dumque tertium percelebratur responsorium residui tres succedant, omnes quidem cappis induti, turibula cum incensu manibus gestantes, ac pedetemptim ad similitudinem quaerentium quid, ueniant ante locum sepulcri. Aguntur enim haec ad imitationem angeli sedentis in monumento, atque mulierum cum aromatibus uenientium ut ungerent corpus Ihesu. Cum ergo ille residens tres, uelut erraneos ac aliquid quaerentes, uiderit sibi approximare, incipiat mediocri uoce dulcisone cantare *Quem quaeritis [in sepulchro O Christicolae]*? Quo decantato finetenus, respondeant hi tres, uno ore, *Ihesum Nazarenum*. Quibus ille: *Non est hic. Surrexit sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis*. Cuius iussionis uoce uertant se illi tres ad chorum, dicentes *Alleluia. Resurrexit Dominus*. Dicto hoc, rursus ille residens, uelut reuocans illos, dicat antiphonam: *Venite et uidete locum*. Haec uero dicens, surgat et erigat uelum ostendatque eis locum, cruce nudatum sed tantum linteanima posita quibus crux inuoluta erat; quo uiso deponant turibula quae gestauerant in eodem sepulcro, suamque linteum et extendant contra clerum ac, ueluti ostendentes quod surrexerit Dominus et iam non sit illo inuolutus, hanc canant antiphonam: *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*, superponantque linteum altari."

dramas for which Young, Chambers, and Hardison are looking, with its relative verisimilitude. Its more ritualistic elements, it is claimed, work against the play's effectiveness (as drama), and these critics then look to more 'advanced' versions, versions which have shed many of these ritualistic tendencies in favour of more realistic impersonation. Referring primarily to the ritual action of presenting the gravecloth to the congregation, Hardison concludes that, "judged by representational standards, this sequence is awkward and illogical. It is best understood as a ceremonial survival rather than as an addition to an already representational form."<sup>145</sup> It is interesting to note, however, the resistance of the *Visitatio* scene to this 'shift from ritual to representational mode.' The eleventh-century Aquileia *Visitatio*, despite some innovative scenes surrounding it, retains what to Young and Hardison is an "inept arrangement arising apparently from a reverent unwillingness to disturb the original simple structure of the trope *Q. Q.* - and from a lack of dramatic resourcefulness."<sup>146</sup> The twelfth-century Ripoll Resurrection play, which otherwise "shows a conscious desire for verisimilitude," leaves "the *Quem Quaeritis* in the form established in the tenth century, retaining even the *Te Deum*."<sup>147</sup> To Hardison this resistance to evolution is a flaw, a settling for "something less than pure representation."<sup>148</sup> However, the *Visitatio* and its core *Quem Quaeritis* are powerful and successful not because they are almost representational, but because they are ritual. It is misleading to judge the ceremony by representational standards, as it was not intended to be representational. Johann Drumbl describes these dramatic rituals as attempts to recast growing dramatic impulses (developed

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<sup>145</sup> Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, p. 233.

<sup>146</sup> Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (1933), pp. 246-7, reprinted in Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, p. 233.

<sup>147</sup> However, after the long, melodramatic *planctus* of the three Marys at the place of the ointment merchant, the staid, conservative *Quem Quaeritis* dialogue is a striking contrast, providing much the same effect as the conservative worshipping of the infant Christ scene at the end of the Second Shepherds' play. The solemnity of the scene is heightened, not diminished, by its context.

<sup>148</sup> Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama*, pp. 247, 244, 248.

outside of the liturgy) into something more consonant with liturgical expression.<sup>149</sup> That there was a good deal of cross-fertilization between liturgical and secular forms of reenactment over time is certain (although describing their exact relationship is notoriously tricky), but the idea that a ritual like the *Visitatio* might work the same way, and thus can be discussed in the same terms, as later secular drama must be put to rest. Surely there is something ‘dramatic’ here. Both modern drama and medieval dramatic ritual use sympathetic identification to connect all present to the world that is created in the playing space. The liturgy, however, has its own way of uniting the space of the church with the world of biblical history, and the participants with the biblical figures, through the ritual expressions and actions that had for a thousand years unified the bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ himself. The *Visitatio* uses this same liturgically dramatic language to unify the congregation with the holy women, juxtaposing the contemporary church with the sepulchre of Christ and making the congregation play a role, not so much the ‘actors.’ Its ritual elements, not the details that resemble characteristics of modern drama, are the key to its success. In this context, the *Visitatio* is dramatic in the same way as the rituals for the rest of the high festivals, and its elevation above the rest of the Anglo-Saxon dramatic liturgy is based on a misunderstanding of its ritual power.

Ritual substitutions for historical details are not necessarily ‘unrealistic’ here. Illustrations of the women at the sepulchre in the Benedictionals of Archbishop Robert and of Æthelwold show the foremost woman holding not a jar of ointment, but a thurible of incense. This detail reflects Amalarius’ instruction that incense only be carried before the gospel book in imitation of the holy women approaching the tomb. The tomb itself is understood both liturgically and in illumination as a modern church structure (itself a stylized representation of the Jerusalem site), as Barbara Raw discusses concerning the illustration of the women at the tomb in the mid-eleventh-century Tiberius psalter:

. . . the drawing of the three Maries at the sepulchre . . . shows the tomb as a

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<sup>149</sup> See Johann Drumbl, *Quem quaeritis* (1981).

circular staged tower with a square base and a crypt beneath, which is closely similar to the western church of the Saviour at Saint-Riquier and which may perhaps have been modelled on the tower built by Bishop Ælfheah at the Old Minster and dedicated in 993-4. . . . the ritual tomb [for the *Concordia's Adoratio* and *Depositio*] must have stood under Ælfheah's tower and it would have been appropriate to represent the historical tomb by a picture of this tower in the Psalter.<sup>150</sup>

The ritual action of presenting the graveclothes to the audience, rather than ruining the emerging representational mode, solidifies the identification between the holy women and the congregation, drawing focus to the purpose of the ceremony, to wonder and exult in the risen Lord, as did the three holy women. This gravecloth is similarly important in illumination, and it stands out prominently in the illustration in the Robert Missal. As much as the announcement of the angel, the fact of the shroud is understood as the emotional climax of the story of the women at the tomb, and the redactors of the *Concordia's Visitatio* have accordingly made it the dramatic climax. Hardison and others, in attempting to map the first sprouts of the sort of church drama seen at the time of the Corpus Christi cycles, are looking for 'verisimilitude' as a yardstick for dramatic maturity. The problem is, they are looking for verisimilitude with a much later conception of the events of Easter morning. Whether or not a sense of realism was important to the liturgical participants, there is no reason to believe that the Anglo-Saxon participants of the ritual, as of other rituals year-round, saw anything unrealistic in the *Visitatio*. Certainly they would have known that the monks were men, wearing liturgical garb. Perhaps they might even have enjoyed seeing some of their familiar brethren trying to follow the instruction to walk about as women 'as if seeking something'. There is no reason to divorce aesthetic enjoyment from ritual power, either in describing the *Visitatio* or in describing the development of later drama. However, the ritual 'tomb' was still the sepulchre, the brethren seeking the Lord, and through them all present, were one with the women approaching the proof of Christ's resurrection, and the cloth was still the shroud in which Christ was wrapped, to the degree that these ritual elements are central to every presentation of the events, liturgical, artistic, and textual. This is the same dynamic in which

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<sup>150</sup> Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 46-7.

the Anglo-Saxon church has proved itself fluent year-round, both in native practices like the *Adoratio* and in its enthusiastic adaptations of the successful experiments of other churches, readily accepted and integrated into the services that already held the seeds for the liturgical establishment of identification and dramatic objective.

As the identification with the holy women is the dramatic core of the *Visitatio*, so it is what is personalized in other parts of the liturgy, and in vernacular preaching. In CB, the *Benedictio ad Matutinales Laudes* sets forth the example of the women as a means of seeing the proof of the Resurrection:

Laetificet uos sanctum pascha dominicae resurrectionis. et beatae in christo participemini gloria immortalitatis. . . Quique sanctarum mulierum exemplo. orto iam sole christum ueneramini in sepulcro. cum angelis cooperti stola candida. crucifixum resurrexisse uideamini in gloria.<sup>151</sup>

In Ælfric's First Series sermon for Easter, he relates the believing Christian to the holy women:

Ac þeos dæd getacnað sum ðing to donne: on godes gelaðunge; We ðe gelyfað cristes æriste: we cumað gewislice to his byrgene: mid deorwurðre sealfe: Gif we beoð gefyllede mid bræðe haligra mihta: ⁊ gif we mid hlisan godra weorca urne drihten secað;”<sup>152</sup>

Also like the holy women, the faithful stand in awe of the signs of Christ's resurrection evident on Easter and expect soon to see him in person. The *Visitatio*, as part of the Easter liturgical scheme, is not so much interested in having the 'actors' seem like the holy women as it is in making all present feel that they are at one with the women, seeing the cloth along with them.

The force of this connection is more subtly evident in Ælfric's translation of the Matthew account of the women at the tomb, demonstrating how fully biblical narrative and liturgical commemoration have become conflated for the Anglo-Saxon perception of the events of Easter morning. That this account is going to be distinct is immediately clear from

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<sup>151</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 45.

<sup>152</sup> CH.I.xv, p. 302.



its cast of characters. Biblical commentators have always striven to reconcile the inconsistent gospel accounts of exactly which women were involved in the events of Easter Weekend. Pope, in a long note to his first supplementary homily of Ælfric, for the Nativity, discusses some of the problems involved in the gospel lists of the women present at the Crucifixion. Following a string of suppositions, Ælfric, seemingly following Haymo, asserts that the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, was Mary Salome (the third woman at the tomb on Easter morning according to Mark), and that she was a sister of the Virgin Mary.<sup>153</sup> Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, and Bede, as Pope shows, followed a different line of supposition in conflating these accounts, one that conflicts with the position apparently taken by Ælfric.<sup>154</sup> The question of which women were at the tomb is equally problematic, and Ælfric's Matthew-based solution is particularly curious. The synoptic gospel accounts present women who saw where Jesus' body was laid on Good Friday, those who bought and/or prepared spices, and those who approached the tomb on Easter morning (John is distinct, and tells only of Mary Magdalene finding the empty tomb). Luke's account is general, discussing 'mulieres quae cum ipso venerant de Galilaea' (Luke 23:55a), and the same nameless band of women seems to perform all three functions. Matthew and Mark give more detail, and it is from Mark that Ælfric draws many of his innovations to his Matthew base, despite the fact that these two accounts are somewhat hard to reconcile. Mark tells us that 'Maria autem Magdalene et Maria Ioseph aspiciebant ubi poneretur' (Mark 15:47), and then gives us a separate set of women for the purchase of the spices (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, also known as Mary Salome), and it seems by syntax to be these three who approach the tomb on Easter morning. Witnessing the burial, Matthew has 'Maria Magdalene et altera Maria' (Matthew 27:61) which fits well enough with Mark, but Matthew makes no mention of the purchase of spices, and for Easter morning relates simply, 'venit Maria Magdalene et altera Maria videre sepulchrum' (Matthew 28:1b).

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<sup>153</sup> See Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric*, v. I, pp. 217-20, n. 5b.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

A bit of creative juggling might have brought the accounts together, specifically alternative interpretations of Matthew's 'the other Mary' and the assumption of a silent third Mary at the tomb, but Ælfric takes a surprisingly original tack, and one that has no obvious purpose. On Good Friday, according to Ælfric,

þa beheold maria þæs hælendes moder. ⁊ þa wimmen þe hyre mid wæron: hwær he bebiriged wæs. ⁊ eodon ða ongear to ðære birig ⁊ seo magdalenisce maria ⁊ maria. iacobes moder bohton deorwyrðe sealfe þe bið geworht to smyrigenne deadra manna lic mid. þ hi scolon late rotian. ⁊ eodon ða ða wimmen on þisum dæge on ærnemerien. ⁊ woldon his lic behwyrfan. swa hit þær gewunlic wæs on ðære þeode;<sup>155</sup>

There seems to be no authority for including Mary Christ's mother amongst those witnessing the burial. The general account in Luke might allow for it, and less likely, one might interpret 'the other Mary' to mean the Virgin, but Mark's account, from which Ælfric takes the bulk of his collated additions, and which provides the actual pericope for the day, leaves no room for her. Also curious, Ælfric, in bringing in from Mark the purchase of the 'precious ointment,' reduces the number of purchasers from three to two, Mary Magdalene and Mary Jacobi. This reduction leaves him with (possibly, by syntax) these two women approaching the tomb on Easter morning, bringing it more or less into accord with the Matthew base, and perhaps this is his reason here. If so, however, this care for consistency with Matthew makes his addition of Mary Christ's mother at the tomb (seeing where the body was buried) and his implicit expansion of the number of women present at the burial beyond two all the more inexplicable. Further, in Ælfric it is not so clear as it seems to be in Mark that the women who bought the spices were the ones to approach the empty tomb. Rather than resorting to the unspecific (implied in the Latin) pronoun 'they,' as does Mark, Ælfric relates that "eodon ða ða wimmen on þisum dæge on ærnemerien." The construction here separates this bit somewhat from the account of the ointment purchase, leaving unclear exactly to which group "ða wimmen" refers, and therefore just how many women were involved. Perhaps this is Ælfric's purpose here, for in leaving his audience with an indefinite number of unspecified women he makes it

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<sup>155</sup> CH.I.xv, pp. 299-300.

easier to make the association between the liturgical participants and the women at the empty tomb (as Amalarius seems to have done in his general discussion of the ‘mulieres’ approaching the tomb with spices/incense).

The idea of the Virgin at the Sepulchre does occur in one other place in Anglo-Saxon witnesses, in the anonymous homily *In Sabbato sancto*, and it is presented in terms strikingly similar to those used by Ælfric. Scragg considers the set of homilies of which this is a part to represent “what was available in Canterbury when Ælfric’s work first arrived there.”<sup>156</sup> Here, it seems to be precisely through the unlikely interpretation of Matthew’s ‘the other Mary’ as the Virgin that she is introduced to the tomb. A more complete study of the sources and structure of this sermon would be valuable, but its core (at least in its exegetical first part) is related to the first part of an exegetical homily for Easter Vigils by Bede on Matthew 28:1-10. After a discussion of the solemnity of the time and of Christ’s joint humanity and divinity (focussing on the proof of his bodily resurrection, echoed by those resurrected with him), the Old English homilist begins his translation of the gospel. With no recourse to authority or explanation, he translates “venit maria magdalene et altera maria videre sepulcrum” as “þa com Maria seo Magdalenisca ⁊ oðer Maria, þæt wæs Cristes lichamlice modor, to ðære byrigenne.”<sup>157</sup> In three other places in the translation, he inserts “þa halgan wif” where the gospel account has either an implied pronoun or the more general ‘women’. Finally, as he begins his exegesis, he makes the same silent yet startling shift made by Ælfric, claiming:

Hwæt, we gehyrdon þæt se godspellere cwæð, þæt Sancta Maria, Cristes lichamlice modor, ⁊ þa oðre wifmen þa ðe eac mid hire wæron, þæt heo to ðære byrigenne comon þy æfenne þæs restedæges, se ðe lihteð on ðone ærestan restedæg. (137)

Of course, we have heard no such thing, but the homilist has subtly prepared the reader to accept this. Bede, here, describes Maria Magdalene and the other Mary as representing the Jews and the Gentiles, respectively, come to celebrate the Passion and Resurrection from

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<sup>156</sup> Scragg, “The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies”, p. 266.

<sup>157</sup> Evans, “An anonymous Old English homily”, p. 136. Subsequent page references are to this text.

those who believe the world over.<sup>158</sup> This section comes after Bede's discussion of the time of the approach to the tomb, and he then goes on to talk about the shaking of the earth and the role and characteristics of the stone-rolling angel. The anonymous homilist gives no explanation concerning the women, simply presenting us with a group of women headed by Christ's mother. It would seem that he has had the idea in his mind that the story should feature 'Mary Christ's mother and the women who were with her,' and his translation of the Latin followed by his general insertion of 'the holy women' has been his excuse, and his way of making the idea seem authoritative. Again, while explaining the time of day according to Augustine and Smaragdus, he claims (as Augustine and Smaragdus did not)<sup>159</sup> that

. . . ac heora æghwylc þæs soð sæde, forðanðe heo Sancta Maria ⁊ þa oðre wifmenn, þa ðe eac mid hire wæron, ealle þa niht wacedon ⁊ gelomlice to ðære byrgenne eodan ⁊ eft fram, for ðære micclan lufan þe heo to him Drihtne hæfdon. (137)

Finally, after his long discussion of the time of day, with several comparisons of darkness and light, he presents a version of the approach to the tomb that by now bears little resemblance to Matthew, and that we know is based on Matthew only because of the steps he has used to bring us here:

þæt wæs on ðam dæge þe to merigene bið, þætte Sancta Maria and þa halgan wifmen mid swetum wyrtum ⁊ mid deorwurðum smyrenyssum to ðære drihtenlican byrgenne coman, þæt heo his þone halgan lichaman mid þam smyrian woldan, þy læs he brosnian mihte. Mid þy wæs getacnod þæt we ealle, þe on ðone ilcan Drihten geleafað ⁊ his naman andettað, þæt we hine sceolon þurh halige lustas ⁊ þurh manige halige dæde gelomlice secan ⁊ mid ure modgeðance ofer ealle oðre þing to hycgan ⁊ to hihtan. (138)

This passage bears a striking resemblance to Ælfric's, with the expression 'Mary Christ's mother and the holy women,' the mention of the ointment and its purpose, to prevent rotting, and the idea that the women present for us a model. The choice of words and phrasing is quite different, and neither the mention of the spices (also in Bede) or the idea that the women provide a model are particularly original. But the mention of the Virgin, and in particular the

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<sup>158</sup> See Martin and Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels*, v. 2, p. 61.

<sup>159</sup> See Augustinus Hipponensis, *De consensu Evangelistarum*, Book III, Ch. XXIV, PL 34, 1196ff., and Smaragdus S. Michaelis, *Collectiones in epistolas et evangelia*, PL 102, 222Bff.

phrase used earlier, ‘Holy Mary Christ’s mother and the women who were with her,’ is too similar to Ælfric’s to ignore, particularly as it is the only other extant witness to the idea. It is certainly possible that the anonymous homilist, possibly being a fan of the Virgin, simply combined Matthew’s ambiguity with a natural desire to place the Virgin, who he knew to have been present at Christ’s death, at the site of the most important event in Christian history. If the idea were spontaneously his, then Ælfric may have seen it and liked the idea, recasting the anonymous passage into one reflecting his own style and keeping Mary Christ’s mother at the burial, where Matthew might allow her, but not clearly at the Resurrection (Ælfric separates the two, as the anonymous homilist does not). And yet, that he would bother to (possibly) separate her from the Resurrection and yet keep her and the women at the burial does not seem like him. Ælfric is notoriously distrustful of anonymous and apocryphal details, and looks for biblical and patristic authority for everything. As such, it seems unlikely that he would make such a drastic departure from scripture and from established exegesis on the authority of one anonymous homilist. The gradual presentation of the idea in the anonymous homily is a bit forced, and seems to reflect a desire to justify some tradition expressed in the later two passages. Perhaps Ælfric’s partial allowance of the idea has the same basis.

Illumination gives no direct support for such an idea, as in the Æthelwold and Robert illustrations of the women at the sepulchre none of the women are nimbed, as the Virgin surely would be. There is an exegetical connection between Mary and the tomb taken up by Ælfric in his Second Series Palm Sunday sermon:

Rihtlice wæ seo byrgen. swa niwe gefunden. and nænne oðerne. næfre ne underfeng. swa swa maria wæs. moder cristes. mæden and modor. and oðerne ne gebær;<sup>160</sup>

This passage is given in the course of an exegetically-expanded gospel narrative at the point at which Christ is laid in Joseph’s new tomb, and would correspond narratively with the women watching the burial in Matthew. Still, if this is part of its origin, there is quite a step to be accounted for between describing Mary as a mirror of the tomb and actually placing her there

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<sup>160</sup> CH.II.xiv, p. 149.

in what is supposedly a translation of the gospel pericope. The Virgin does appear at the tomb in later medieval accounts, as she does in the Second Greek Form of the Gospel of Nicodemus.<sup>161</sup> After Joseph begs the body of Christ, a whole company, including the Virgin and Mary Magdalene, prepare and bury Christ, after which the Virgin and Mary Magdalene lament at the tomb. There is no known copy of this text earlier than the fifteenth century, however. As such, this use of the Virgin probably reflects more an expansion of the *planctus* proper to her in later liturgical drama than any tradition from as early as the tenth century. In any case, while the presence of Christ's mother remains a mystery, the general conflation of the specific women to 'the women' seems to be consonant with the liturgical imperatives.

What certainly carries liturgical resonance in these similar passages, whatever their ultimate sources, is the introduction to the Matthew base of the 'precious ointment' bought after the burial and carried by the women to the empty tomb. Ælfric's most jarring innovation, however, comes right at the end, after the words of the angel to the women:

þa lagon ða scytan innon þære byrgene. þe he mid bewunden wæs. ⁊ þa wif  
gecyrdon þa to cristes leorningnihtum: Mid miclum ege ⁊ mid micelre blisse. ⁊  
woldon him cyþan cristes ærist;<sup>162</sup>

There is no mention of Christ's burial cloth in Matthew or in Mark. Luke and John each mention the gravecloth, but in each case it is seen and/or handled by Peter or John, and nowhere in the four accounts is there any relationship between the women and the cloth. Here, however, the fact of the gravecloth, the symbol and proof of Christ's resurrection, is transferred to the women, who then turn to proclaim it to the apostles. This innovation, as of the introduction of the ointment, seems to derive not from biblical or patristic authority but from methods of presenting the women at the tomb that were quite familiar to the Anglo-Saxons, both in illumination and dramatically in the *Visitatio*. The *Concordia*'s instructions for the occasion reenact a story that, compared to scriptural accounts, is partly composite and partly original in its symbolism. The *Concordia* arms the women at the tomb with thuribles

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<sup>161</sup> See James' (1924) Greek Recension B of the *Acti Pilati*, summarized, pp. 115-17.

<sup>162</sup> CH.I.xv, p. 300.

of incense meant to represent the ointment bought by the women in Mark with which to anoint Christ's body and gives them the extra-biblical honour of taking up the 'gravecloth' and turning to show it to the 'disciples', announcing the Resurrection as commanded by the angel. While relating a story dissimilar from any of the individual gospel accounts, the outline of this ritual resonates well with Ælfric's account particularly on those details that differ from Matthew. It is specifically these women, carrying ointment to the sepulchre, that Ælfric admonishes his audience to emulate. The sympathetic association with the holy women established so creatively in the liturgy is both reflected in and strengthened by Ælfric's reinvented version of the gospel story.

The joy granted the women, and through them the entire church, as expressed dramatically in the *Visitatio*, brings them into a state of revelation, and the festival continues until Pentecost. The readings for Easter Week, described as an extension of Easter Sunday, tell of the appearances of Christ to his disciples and of other proofs of his Resurrection, looking forward to his Ascension, in which the faithful, having been freed from the darkness of sins by the power of the Cross and been shown first-hand the proof of Christ's resurrection, can now participate. They are brought to this unity by a marriage of dramatic elaboration of the liturgy and vernacular explanation and reinforcement, allowing them to understand, and plumb the depths of, the significance of the liturgical reenactments. It is perhaps a bit misleading to discuss the liturgical elaborations expressed in the *Concordia* as either 'native' or 'imported,' just as it is misleading to discuss tenth-century liturgical forms as 'Roman' or 'Gallican'. While the particular manifestations of rituals such as *Tenebrae*, the *Depositio*, and the *Visitatio* might have been drawn from continental use when compiling the *Concordia*, these ceremonies are expansions of dynamics that seem to have been already firmly in place, and surely found expression in great variety throughout England. In many ways, it is more revealing to examine what the Anglo-Saxons did with what they found in other churches, how they combined them with their own traditions and means of expression to make them their own. These rituals work by matching the expectations and aesthetic predispositions of their

participants to the liturgical reenactment, and surely as these qualities changed over time so did the nature of liturgical expression. That the tenth-century English church was able to bring into accord such a wide range of highly dramatic liturgical exercises might indicate that the people were responsive to their functions (or at least that their more learned redactors thought that they would be). That artistic and vernacular treatments of the same biblical (or apocryphal) stories present such creative and vivid manifestations of their themes and images testifies to their success. These rituals do not represent baby-steps towards the later medieval Passion plays, put forward by a few cloistered monks. They are just as successful, and developments in the liturgically-based rituals in the following centuries are due more to changes in the expectations and aesthetics of their participants (in no small part due to the emergence and development of secular drama) than to an increasing mastery of dramatic realism. An Anglo-Saxon listening to explanations and narrative presentations of the biblical accounts and then participating in the liturgy that brings the events into the space of the church will have relived directly, carried along by the events of Christ's life, God's plan of salvation.



## Rogationtide and the Ascension

For an observance that goes back to the very beginning of Anglo-Saxon Christianity and held such an important place in English liturgical devotion, Rogationtide has been surprisingly understudied. Neil Ker and Rudolph Willard helped define the corpus of vernacular pieces proper to Rogationtide, twenty-four in all according to the revised count in the introduction of Bazire and Cross' *Eleven Old English Rogationtide Homilies*. The presentation of eleven of the more inaccessible pieces by Bazire and Cross has made easier examination of the corpus of preaching for Rogationtide. The festival, consisting of three days of processions, attracted such a large body of preaching material partly because its prescribed topics were quite broad, and the sorts of sermons that might be written 'for any time of year' tended to migrate towards this dramatic penitential period. Bazire and Cross provide a short list of the sorts of themes that come up again and again in Rogationtide sermons, themes of penance, the care of the soul, basic instruction (with sermons on the Creed and the Lord's Prayer), the importance of listening to teachers, and appropriate behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Such tracts are quite familiar to penitential literature, and some of the relevant passages appear in sermons for both Lent and Rogationtide. The wealth of topics proper to Rogationtide makes generalizations about its dramatic propensities tricky. As is often the case in the liturgy, several things are happening at once in the Rogationtide processions. Crops are blessed, disaster averted, Christian principles learned and strengthened, and heaven approached. I wish here to focus on the last of these, the recurrent theme of Rogationtide as a preparatory approach to union with heaven on the feast of the Ascension, which directly follows Rogationtide. Although Rogationtide and the Ascension have different origins, by the time of the late Anglo-Saxon church, the relationship between the two has been recognized and enhanced to grant the Rogations an eschatological focus and to allow liturgical participants to process to the threshold of heaven along with Christ at his Ascension.

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<sup>1</sup> BC, pp. xxiv-xxv.

The elevation of humanity, through which this approach to heaven is made possible, is the primary theme of the Ascension. This central idea and its importance to the faithful are expressed by Ælfric in his First Series sermon for the day:

On his acennednyssse wæs gepuht swilce seo godcundnyss wære geeadmet. ⁊ on his upstige wæs seo menniscnys ahafen ⁊ gemærsod; Mid his upstige is adylegod þæt cyrografum ure genyðerunge. ⁊ se cwyde ure brosnunge is awend;  
 ða ða adam agylt hæfde. ða cwæð se ælmihtiga wealdend him to þu eart eorðe ⁊ þu gewentst to eorþan; ðu eart dust ⁊ þu gewentst to duste; Nu todæg þæt ilce gecynd ferde unbrosniendlic into heofenan rice;<sup>2</sup>

It is not just Christ in power that ascends to heaven on Holy Thursday, but specifically ‘humanity,’ the same humanity that Adam ruined when he ate the apple. The Ascension is in essence a celebration of the unity of humanity with divinity, and our entrance into heaven is made possible by this elevation of humanity through Christ. This is the point of the liturgy for the day, that through the liturgical expression of the Ascension liturgy the communicants are made one with Christ, and by that granted unity with the divinity of Heaven. The vigil of the Ascension, which coincides with the third Rogation day, anticipates these themes, and its liturgical forms focus on the need to prepare oneself, by purification, for joining in Christ’s ascension the following day. Although the Rogation days originally had something of a different function, one still retained throughout their treatment, their juxtaposition with the Ascension (dating from the time of Rogationtide’s inception) makes them to some degree an extended vigil, reflected in Amalarius’ description of them as “ieiunium triduanum in vigilia ascensionis Domini.”<sup>3</sup> Ælfric reminds us that Christ will return in the same way that he went up on Ascension Day, and this parallel, along with the general idea of entrance into heaven, drew a good deal of eschatological expectation, so that Rogationtide sermons are filled with quite dramatic visions of Heaven and Hell and accounts of Judgement Day. This emphasis makes the penitential processions of Rogationtide a preparation for approaching heaven, and failure to observe the Rogations, or failure to do so appropriately, carries the threat of

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<sup>2</sup> CH.I.xxi, pp. 347-8.

<sup>3</sup> Hanssens, *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgical omnia*, v. 2, p. 178.

punishment in hell. As well as being a recapitulation of the penitential pleading of the Ninevites in the time of Jonah, and of the inhabitants of Vienne under Mamertus, Rogationtide is an instructive and a liturgical preparation for the reenactment of the ascension into heaven, specifically of its elevation of humanity to heaven, in the Rogationtide and Ascension liturgies.

Bazire and Cross give a good, concise account of the early history of Rogationtide.<sup>4</sup> There are several traditions concerning the origins of the festival (each of which I discuss in more detail below), each one emphasizing a certain aspect of the festival. Some say that it is a descendant of the fast of the Ninevites after the warning of Jonah, who attempted to avert the hovering fire of God's retribution, or that it was begun by Gregory the Great in response to a plague, or by St. Peter in answer to three days of pagan processions for the prosperity of fields and cattle. The standard account, and the one most accepted by modern historians, claims that the three processional days were instituted by the bishop Mamertus of Vienne around the year 470 in response to a rash of afflictions to the city and the surrounding countryside. Accounts of this affliction include earthquakes, attacks by wild animals, and fire. According to reports, Mamertus established before the Ascension three days of fasting and processional supplication, after which the affliction ceased. Whatever its origin, because of its success the practice was picked up in other churches and became general throughout the Gallican church in the sixth century. Rogationtide was not accepted in the Roman church until the pontificate of Leo III (795-816). The three days were referred to as the 'minor Rogations' in the Roman calendar, as opposed to the 'Greater litany' on April 25. The Council of Clofesho in 747 prescribed both festivals, the Roman 'Greater litany' and the three Rogation days "according to the custom of our forefathers, three days before the Ascension of our Lord into the heavens."<sup>5</sup> These designations are also attested in the Old English Martyrology, but by some time in the ninth century the Rogations were instead considered the 'Greater litanies' in

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<sup>4</sup> BC, pp. xv-xvii.

<sup>5</sup> See BC, p. xvi.

England, and they are referred to as *Letania Maiore* in all late Anglo-Saxon witnesses. The general term, used in most of the vernacular witnesses, is “gangdagas,” although Ælfric (and apparently Wulfstan, following Ælfric)<sup>6</sup> calls them the “gebeddagas,”<sup>7</sup> reflecting their original purpose, to show evidence of repentance and to pray that God will withhold the destruction that the sinful people rightly deserve. Byrhtferth similarly calls them “Bendagas,” although he uses the more general “gangdagum” when explaining their computational relationship to Easter.<sup>8</sup> The two names reflect the two central elements of the Rogationtide liturgy, the procession and the stational penitential prayers.

Despite the many descriptions of the Rogations, it is difficult to pin down exactly what took place. One of the earliest references to the processions is in the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Baedae*, which testifies that “at nine o’clock we went in procession with the relics as the custom of the day required.”<sup>9</sup> This starting time is also attested in Homily 6 of Bazire and Cross, a sermon for the first Rogation day, which instructs:

Forðan ic bidde eow and manige þæt ge don swa eow Godes bec lærað, þæt ge mid micclum ege gan mid Godes reliquium, na mid idelum wordum and unnyttum spræcum . . . Forðan us is micel þearf þæt we ðas dagas rihtlice healdan for Cristes upastygennysse. On þysum ðrym dagum cristene menn sculon forlætan heora þa woruldlican weorc on þa ðriddan tid dæges, þæt is on undern sylfne, and forðgan mid þam halgum reliquium oþ þa nigoðan tid, þæt is oð non.<sup>10</sup>

The twelfth Vercelli homily gives a bit more detail concerning what was in the procession, including relics, the gospel books, the cross of Christ, and the remains of holy men.<sup>11</sup> The faithful were to fast until the ninth hour, and several homilies warn of diabolical consequences

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<sup>6</sup> One of the homilies printed by Bazire and Cross, Homily 8, seems to be based on a lost homily for Rogationtide by Wulfstan, itself based on one of Ælfric’s (BC, pp. 104-7).

<sup>7</sup> CH.I.xviii, p. 317.

<sup>8</sup> See Lapidge and Baker, eds. *Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion* (1995), pp. 156, 152.

<sup>9</sup> Translated in BC, p. xvi.

<sup>10</sup> BC, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> See BC, pp. xxii-xxiv for a number of translated accounts of Rogationtide observance.

for breaking the fast. The procession went both inside and outside of the church, for Ælfric asserts that we should offer up prayers and “fylian urum haligdomum ut 7 in.”<sup>12</sup> It would have involved several stations, and must have ranged through the countryside, for the penitents are warned that they must walk barefoot, not ride. Bazire and Cross’ homily 5 may mention the stations:

Forþon, broðor mine, on þas andweardantide beoð reliquias haligra manna  
uppahafene and forðaborene mid leofsange and mid gastlicum sange on sunderlice  
stowe gehwilce swa hwær swa hi gesette beoð.<sup>13</sup>

Homily 8 specifies that, with the Cross, the books, and the holy relics, “we sceal bletsian ure þa eorðlican speda, þæt synd æceras and wudu and ure ceap and eall þa þing þe us God forgyfen hafað to brucanne.”<sup>14</sup> It would seem that, along with the proscription against riding instead of walking, the procession must have covered at least a sampling of the countryside, stopping periodically at certain sites, probably other churches or shrines, for the prayers. Several witnesses mention visits to shrines as part of the observance of the day, although it is not entirely clear that this is necessarily part of the procession itself, as it tends to be mentioned along with other matters of general observance, including vigils, fasting, and almsgiving. The forms for the first day’s procession are to be found in the Leofric Missal, which specify the Roman stations, including *Ad sanctum laurentium*, *Ad sanctum valentinum*, *Ad pontem molbi*, *Ad crucem*, and *In atrio*.<sup>15</sup> The mass forms follow, and possibly the *In atrio* form would precede the re-entrance into the church for mass at None. It is uncertain how well this skeletal processional scheme translated into the Anglo-Saxon observance, however. The forms appear in the Robert Missal (which has a definite relationship with Leofric) in the same

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<sup>12</sup> CH.I.xviii, p. 318.

<sup>13</sup> BC, pp. 72-3.

<sup>14</sup> BC, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> See Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 107.

order, and with the same invocation of “beato laurentio martyre”<sup>16</sup> in the first prayer, but without any of Leofric’s rubrics (all simply headed *Alia*). The same forms appear in the Portiforium of Wulstan, but the order of the forms is jumbled, and the stational rubrics are likewise lost. The set of prayers comes under the heading “In Letania Maiori, Statio Ad Sanctum Vincentium.”<sup>17</sup> The first prayer is the same as the *Ad sanctum laurentium* in Leofric, and is identical except that the “beato laurentio martyre” in the first prayer has been changed to “beato vincentio martyre.” There is no indication, however, with the loss of stational rubrics, that all of the forms do not fall under the heading “Statio Ad Sanctum Vincentium,” even though each form is clearly for a different station in Leofric. Apart from this small hint in Wulstan, rubrics indicating possible stations are hard to come by. Perhaps the stations might change from year to year, and certainly the local nature of the processions and the fact that forms in liturgical books rarely give an indication of locality make it difficult to expect to find that sort of detail. In any case, some of the stations surely would have been outside the church complex for there to be the potential of riders, and for there to have been even a semblance of blessing all the surrounding countryside.

Most of the high liturgical festivals in late Anglo-Saxon England seem to involve ceremonies and liturgical elaborations that were developed in monastic settings and extended, to some extent, to include lay participation. Rogationtide is an exception, for from the time of its inception it was a practice for the common people, and would have involved the whole demographic of Anglo-Saxon society. Bazire and Cross demonstrate in a number of cases that many of the sermons for Rogationtide were clearly directed at the unlearned.<sup>18</sup> Instructions for liturgical festivals for monks tend to assume absolute involvement in the spirit and purpose of the ritual elements. Instructions for Rogationtide do not. Throughout the exhortations are injunctions against riding, hunting, bearing a weapon, and gaming, from

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<sup>16</sup> Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, p. 111.

<sup>17</sup> Hughes, *The Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*, v. 1, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, their comments on Homily 3, BC, p. 41.

‘vain deeds and empty words,’ and from “idele spellunga and hlacerunga” in God’s house.<sup>19</sup> These sorts of proscriptions tend to be featured in those sermons most clearly directed at the unlearned, along with highly emotional warnings of eternal retribution and descriptions of hell, constructed more to arouse than to inform. The tendency of the people to misinterpret the fast as a festival is reflected as early as the Council of Clofesho, which beseeches that the three days not be “intermingled with vanities, as is the custom among most people, neither with negligence, nor with ignorant wickedness, that is, with games and horse-races and too great feasts; but rather that the whole people should humbly pray . . . with fear and trembling.”<sup>20</sup> The gap between how the wise teachers expected the people to understand these festivals and how they actually did, a gap that is impossible to define, has important consequences for our appreciation of the nature of Anglo-Saxon dramatic ritual. It is precisely this gap that is being addressed in vernacular preaching, for the inspiration behind most of these sermons is clearly to make the people appreciate first that they are under the direct threat of divine retribution for their sins, as were the Ninevites and the people of Vienne, and that they must purify themselves before the upcoming Ascension, where they can either join Christ’s elevation of humanity to heaven or be left out, ‘where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.’

The liturgical dynamics of Rogationtide and the Ascension include everybody, and in many places there must have been quite a throng of people marching barefoot in procession through the land. Wulfstan assumed that there would be a crowd when he instructed in the Canons of Edgar:

And riht is þæt preostas folc mynegian þæs þe hi Gode don sculon to gerihtum on teoþungum and on oðrum þingum. And riht is þæt man þisses mynegige to eastum, oðre siðe to gangdagum, þridan siðe to middan sumera þonne bið mæst folces gegaderod.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> BC, p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> BC, p. xxiv.

<sup>21</sup> Fowler, *Wulfstan’s Canons of Edgar*, p. 13.

The Vision of Leofric offers a compelling glimpse at contemporary perception of the Rogation crowd. The dreamer, having crossed a bridge and come to a bright field with a sweet smell, sees a throng of people, in a description very similar to that of the place where the faithful wait to enter Heaven in the vision of Drihthelm, presented by Ælfric<sup>22</sup>:

Ða þa he ofere wæs, þa com him lateow ongean ⁊ hyne lædde to anum swyðe  
 wlitigan felde ⁊ swyþe fægeran, mid swetan stence afylled. Þa geseah he swyþe  
 mycele weorud swylce on gangdagan, ⁊ þa wæron ealle mid snawhwitum reafe  
 gescrydde, ⁊ þ on þa wisan þe se diacon bið þonne he godspell ret. ⁊ wæs an  
 þæra on middan standende on mæssepreostes reafe, swyþe heah ⁊ swyðe mycel  
 ofer eal þæt oþer folc.<sup>23</sup>

Where the vision of Drihthelm describes the “ungerime meniu hwittra manna,” the dreamer here invokes an image of the Rogation crowd, which at least for him must have been tremendous. Particularly as the Rogation crowd are specifically trying to make themselves worthy to wear white and approach heaven, actualized in the Ascension Mass (in the Vision of Leofric, the highlight is a Mass performed by St. Paul himself), the Vision presents a nice portrait of the spiritual fulfilment of the liturgical aims of the season, realized by all the participating folk.

The Rogations are, first of all, a recapitulation of the penance exercised by the Ninevites and the inhabitants of Vienne, as both the liturgical forms and the vernacular texts make clear. The prayers make frequent reference to current afflictions, describing them as deserved, and beg God to recognize the penance of the supplicants:

Deus, qui culpas delinquentium districtae feriendo percutis, fletus quoque lugentium non recuses, ut qui pondus tuae animaduersione(is) cognouimus, etiam pietatis gratiam sentiamus.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See CH.II.xxi, p. 201.

<sup>23</sup> See A. S. Napier, ed. “An Old English Vision of Leofric, Earl of Mercia”, *Philological Society Transactions* (1908), p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 107.



It is not difficult to see the affliction of Vienne underlying prayers like these. Other prayers specifically recall the Ninevites (from the Mass for the second day in Robert, different from that in Leofric):

Clamantium ad te quesumus domine praeces dignanter exaudi. ut sicut niniuitis in afflictione positos pepercisti. ita et nobis in praesenti tribulatione succurras.<sup>25</sup>

Those processing are to realize the danger of their sinful state by seeing themselves as one with the people of Ninevah and of Vienne, under the threat of direct and fiery retribution from God, needing desperately to turn God's anger. The depictions of the tribulations of Ninevah and Vienne in many of the vernacular accounts reinforce this connection by describing them in similar ways, and by extending the threat, often in terms of fire, to the Rogationtide participants. Bazire and Cross' Homily 1 recasts the account of the Ninevites in a way that seems to reflect Mamertus' account, and through that the contemporary arrangement. Following the Old Latin reading (as did Caesarius), this homilist speaks of a three-day fast in Ninevah after Jonah's warning, rather than the forty days of the Vulgate reading. The forty days are mentioned later (in a rather confused way), when the homilist reports that, after the Ninevites' fast, God removed the "fyrene clyne"<sup>26</sup> that had been hovering over the city, and was to destroy it within forty days. Bazire and Cross suggest that the extra-biblical presence of the fiery ball might be drawn from the account of the fire that burned the palace in Mamertus' Vienne. Ælfric mentions this fire in his First Series sermon when discussing the institution of the fast by Mamertus. Ælfric claims that Mamertus was inspired by the Ninevites, and Ælfric too considers their fast as lasting three days. Although Ælfric has no fiery ball, the threat of heavenly fire still hangs over the Ninevites for him, as he claims that God did not destroy them "swa swa he ær þa twa buruhwara. sodomam. et gomorram. for heora leahtrum mid heofenlicum fyre forbærnde."<sup>27</sup> Ælfric goes on to connect the current

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<sup>25</sup> Wilson, *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, p. 112.

<sup>26</sup> BC, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> CH.I.xviii, p. 318.

Rogation-goers with the Ninevites, asserting that ‘we also should on these days offer up our prayers, and follow our relics in and out.’ Ælfric’s specification of the threat as ‘heavenly fire’ reminds the current Rogationtide participants, who are doing the same fast for the same reasons, of the danger facing them. Fire (usually hellfire) is frequently mentioned as a threat against contemporary participants, either for failing to follow in the rogations or for doing inappropriate things, like wearing shoes or speaking vainly. Ælfric dramatizes the sense that the fire of retribution hangs over the current world in two Second Series pieces, the visions of Furseus and of Drihthelm. Drihthelm sees, as the ultimate threat, a vision of hell that cannot be described visually, as could Purgatory, but only as an overwhelming sense of darkness and flames. For Furseus, the danger is more immediate. As he is being led about by the angels, he sees the world as a low, darkened valley, over which are poised four fires, waiting to devour sinners:

[He] geseah ðær feower ormæte fyr atende. and se engel cwæð him to; þas feower fyr ontendað ealne middaneard. and onælað þæra manna sawla. þe heora fulluhtes andetnysse. and behat ðurh forgægednysse awægdon;<sup>28</sup>

Each of the fires is intended for sinners of a certain kind, and the implication is that for everyone in the audience there is a fire ready to devour that can only be turned aside by prayer and penance. Even Furseus, whose sin is tremendously small (he accepted a piece of cloth from a sinful man), cannot entirely escape the fire, and he receives a burn that transfers over to his body after he is sent back to it, as a testimony to others. This sort of dramatic portrayal of the threat facing the sinners at Rogationtide solidifies the connection with the Ninevites and the inhabitants of Vienne developed as well in the processional liturgy, and in the Masses with which they end.

There is much more to the processions than just a recapitulation of these appeasing fasts, however. Besides praying that God turn aside his anger, the procession is intended to dedicate fields, woods, cattle, and so forth to God. This dynamic of the Rogations is related to an alternate tradition concerning its origins. The first three Vercelli homilies for Rogationtide

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<sup>28</sup> CH.II.xx, p. 193.

(Vercelli XI-XIII) claim that the festival was begun by St. Peter. According to this homilist, “geo hæðene liode hæfdon þry dagas synderlice beforan hira oðrum gewunan þæt hie onguldon hira godum, ⁊ hiera ceapes wæstma ⁊ ealle hira æhta hie hira gode bebudon.”<sup>29</sup> The three Rogation days, according to this tradition, were set up by St. Peter to counteract this heathen practice. The attribution to St. Peter is a mystery, although he does make a brief appearance in the processional prayers, in the *In atrio*, in which the supplicants pray for help in the form of a heavenly shield “intercedente beato petro apostolo tuo.”<sup>30</sup> Although the attribution to Peter is without a known source, pagan Rome did know three days of procession, at about the same time of year (in May), the *Amburbale*, and the idea that Mamertus’ festival is a usurpation of this pagan one would have been compelling, whether or not there is any truth to it. In any case, a central element of the Rogations is to mark off territory as God’s. It is more than just a dedication of fruits, trees, and cows to God. What vernacular descriptions of the procession illustrate is that those walking about with Christ’s Cross and the holy relics are spreading about the presence of God, marking God’s territory by allowing the divinity that has been accorded the Cross, the gospel books, and the holy relics to drive out the presence of the devil and to unify the earthly places with God’s divinity, which is also the central idea of the Ascension. This is what Augustine was doing when he approached Canterbury in 597, holding aloft the Cross and the image of Christ, singing a litany from the Gallican Rogationtide liturgy, claiming the city as God’s.<sup>31</sup> The prayer that they sang is similar to those found in the later Anglo-Saxon liturgy, “We beseech thee, O Lord, in thy great mercy, that thy wrath and anger may be turned away from this city and from

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<sup>29</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 228.

<sup>30</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 107.

<sup>31</sup> But see Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 130, who cautions that the account of Augustine’s Rogation-like approach “is more likely to reflect a later tradition (of Canterbury origin?) engrafted on to tales of Augustine’s arrival than the introduction of a Frankish custom by the Gregorian missionaries.” Still, there is no reason, given Gregory’s mandate, why Augustine might not have introduced elements of the Gallican liturgy, and the festival certainly seems to have had a history by the time of the Council of Clofesho in 747.

thy holy house, for we have sinned.”<sup>32</sup> The prayers that God’s anger be turned were from the beginning married to the idea of claiming territory by infusing it with God’s presence.

This latter idea is part of the nature of all liturgical procession, to bring the benevolent presence of God into the processed space, and by that to drive out the powers of the devil. The rubrics to the procession before the Maundy Thursday *Consecratio Chrismalis* in the Canterbury Benedictional provide a wonderful examination of the general function of processions in the Anglo-Saxon liturgy.<sup>33</sup> After *cena domini*, those present, wearing sacred garb, carry the Cross, “duo bina uexilla deferant quasi contra diaboli uersutas nequitas christi inuicto auxilio pugnaturi.” At the beginning of the procession, the conflict is set forth, the ‘crafty evils of the devil,’ and they are to process as if ready to fight them with Christ’s power. Two carrying candles follow, “ut christi uirtute uictores. celesti lumine flagrare dinoscantur.” The candle light is the light of heaven, infusing the space of the church, and making it an extension of heaven. Two more ‘pursue’ carrying thuribles, “ut deifico lumine calentes. christi bono odore fraglare conprobentur.” Twin gospel books accompany them, “ut iam christi bono odore referti dominica dicta scutari conseruare corde puro conentur.” Only with this infusion of the presence of heaven, in the divine light and the odour of Christ that have filled the room, driving out the dangers of the devil, can the chrism be brought in. This ability of the liturgical procession to define a space as God’s is exploited at Rogationtide. In Bazire and Cross’ Homily 5, the special ‘meeting-place’ that surrounds the relics at the processional stages is defined as a ‘ghostly place,’ a pocket of God’s presence, in which those present are before Christ’s throne, both for current edification and for final judgement. Explaining how men with a conflict find a “gemotstow” in order to find reconciliation, the homilist defines the space:

Be þære bysne we magon ongytan þas halgan tide, forþon ðe þas dagas syndon ure gemotdagas gastlicra gemota, þonne bið ure gastlice gemotstow on ymbhwyrfte ure reliquia, swa on cyrican swa butan swa on hwylcre stowe hi on gesette beoð.

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<sup>32</sup> See BC, xv.

<sup>33</sup> Woolley, *The Canterbury Benedictional*, p. 36.

Wite þonne þæt æghwylc mann þæra þe in þysum gemote wunige and þis godspell gehyreð, þæt he eac þam georne mid eadmedum ontyne þære heortan earan to manunge þyses godspelles and to þæs gastlican Deman Cristes sylfes. . . . Gyf we þas gastlican domas gelæstan willað, þe Crist sylf on his godspelle beodað on þisse gemotstowe þonne beoð we beforan Cristes heahsetle . . . and we þonne motan gehyran þone cwyde þe he sylf cwæð to þam þe he sette on þa swyðran healfe, 'Cumað, ge gebletsode . . .'<sup>34</sup>

It is not just the church that can be set aside as a 'ghostly' space, but 'in whatever place' the relics are put in the course of the procession. It is the divinity radiating from these objects, driving out the presence of the devil, that allows the space to become otherworldly. Those who lose themselves to this space, and incline the 'ears of their hearts' to the message held therein and emanating from the gospel books, can through that find themselves on the right side at the Judgement (indeed, they are already there). It is unity with this space that allows their approach to heaven. This is the purpose and the result of the dedication of all the space and goods to God, to allow through that the unity of the faithful who inhabit that space with heaven.

This unity with heaven permeates the various Rogationtide themes. In particular, there is an interest in Christ's humanity, in the unity of body and soul, and in the relationship of the body to Heaven that is repeated throughout the week. It is the ultimate aim of the liturgical forms. While the processional forms (of which we have far too few examples) focus on turning away God's wrath, the Mass forms look increasingly forward to the Ascension. The Preface for the second Rogation day (Feria iii in Ascension week) beseeches God to free the supplicants from "noxiiis uoluptatibus" and from "mundanis cladibus."<sup>35</sup> These sorts of prayers to be separated from the corrupting and damaging influence of the world are, of course, general to any penitential period, but the Mass for the third Rogation day, also the Mass *In vigilia ascensionis*, explains this desire in terms of unity with Christ as a means to reach heaven. The collect for the Mass (I discuss the forms in Leofric, but this Mass is quite

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<sup>34</sup> BC, p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Warren, *The Leofric Missal*, p. 108.

general) begins by invoking Christ's entrance into glory. The second form (the *Secreta*) personalizes the event, as "nunc preuenimus ascensione."<sup>36</sup> In particular, the faithful anticipate joining him in this ascension: "et nos per ipsum his commerciis sacrosanctis ad caelestia consurgamus." The Preface mentions Christ's humanity, his defeat of the devil, and his elevation of the substance of humanity. The *Ad complendum* again personalizes the idea, as the faithful think of themselves as part of the same substance that is about to ascend: "Tribue, quesumus, domine, ut per haec sacramenta quae sumpsimus, illuc tendat nostrae deuotionis affectus, quo tecum est nostra substantia, ihesus christus dominus noster." Finally, the *Ad uesperos* reminds God that we are the members of the body of which Christ is the head, with the implication that where the head goes, the body will follow. The vigil Mass is essentially a preparation, spiritual and mental, for the celebration of the Ascension, in which the faithful will take part, on Thursday. As the Rogation days can be thought of as 'three days in vigil of the Ascension,' the interest in humanity approaching heaven abounds in the vernacular witnesses. The first Vercelli set of Rogationtide homilies and the set of Rogationtide pieces by Ælfric demonstrate how two authors used this same focus in different ways to help define the purification and separation from the world at Rogationtide as a preparation for ascension into heaven with Christ.

The Vercelli manuscript has two sets of Rogationtide homilies. The first set (Vercelli XI-XIII) is perhaps the more interesting, as all three pieces seem to have been written or pulled together by a single author, who makes references back and forth between them. In the sermon for the first Rogation day, after describing the procession and relating it to St. Peter, and after a paragraph on the need to seek true joy in Heaven, the homilist returns to a theme that throughout the Temporale has stood for the present state of mankind in relation to the salvation history that is reenacted and commemorated in the liturgy. He explains that:

For þæs ærestan mannes synnum, Adam[e]s, we wurdon aworpene of  
neorxnawanges eðle 7 on þas wræcworuld sende, 7 we swa syndon on þyssum

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

middangearde swa we her nænig eðel ne habbað.<sup>37</sup>

It is only in the next world that we can find true joy and have a homeland, which we seek by departing this world for the joy of heaven. The homilist then describes the heavenly city, where we will see our kin and our ancestors, and where the angels are our townspeople. The rest of the sermon deals with the idea of the ‘spiritual chapman,’ trading earthly things for heavenly, with an emphasis on love for the eternal homeland, and finally with a reminder of the approaching End. The homily is primarily an adapted translation of a sermon by Caesarius<sup>38</sup> for another occasion, but its use here, especially with its expanded account of the evil of present days, describes the time not only as one of dedication to God in opposition to pagan practice, but also of appreciation of the benefits of eschewing the worldly for the heavenly. Vercelli XII, after a longer description of the procession, and after specifying that God is present in the Rogationtide company, further develops the idea of the ‘spiritual chapman’ in terms of approaching heaven personally. Speaking of the fear of God, the homilist tells us:

Mid þam egesan we us geceapiað he[o]fenlicu þing, englas for mannum, lif for deaðe, god for yfele, swete for bitere, leoht for þiestrum, soðfæstnesse for unsoðfæstnesse, yðnesse for niðe, sawle mægen for licumlicre mettrymnesse. Gif we wilnigan rixian mid Criste, bebigen we ða woruldcundan lustas for undeaðlicnesse. ⁊ don we symle eal þa þing mid dryhtnes egesan. Se egesa us gelædeð fram helwarum, ⁊ he us onfehð to þam uplican rice . . . (229-30)

The idea of the ‘spiritual chapman’ taken from Caesarius has here been expanded and reinterpreted in a way that is specific to a processional, pre-Ascension time, described in terms of movement from hell to the upward kingdom. The homily for the third day makes this connection between Rogationtide and the Ascension explicit, explaining that one of the reasons for the establishment of the three days is so that any uncleanness practised in the forty days between Easter and the Ascension can be purged, allowing the celebrant to be “þys

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<sup>37</sup> Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies*, p. 223. Subsequent page references are to this text.

<sup>38</sup> See Ibid. pp. 219ff. on the relationship between the homily by Caesarius and the Vercelli homily.

mergenlican dæge æt þære halgan dryhtnes upastignestide clæne æt dryhtnes wiofode, ⁊ þær onfon weddes þæs ecan rices, þæt is Cristes sylfes lichoma ⁊ his blod þæt we nu nemnaþ husl” (234). Of course, the celebrants have been receiving Christ’s body and blood all week, but there is a special need that they be prepared to do so the next day, as unity with Christ on that day is unity with Christ ascending to heaven, and they certainly want to be on board. Much of the rest of this sermon is lost, but the end features the dry bones speaking to the audience from the grave about the certainty of death, along with a reminder of Doomsday, when all men will be either ‘in the height of the kingdom of heaven’ or ‘in hell-pains,’ ending with an exhortation to listen to the holy teaching so that the hearers can be “þe beteran ⁊ þe selran for bæm lifum, in ealra woruld world to widan feore” (236) with the three members of the Trinity. Much of the end here is from a general sermon by Caesarius. The Vercelli homilist has appropriated its material, and many of the more general themes of Rogationtide, into a strong, consistent exhortation, using emotionally dramatic devices like the speaking of the dry bones to the audience and the polarization of Judgement Day to encourage the folk to make themselves prepared to ascend to Heaven with Christ on Thursday.

Ælfric’s sermons for Rogationtide deal with many of the same themes, but he also branches into more theological discussions on such topics as praying, the Pater Noster and the Creed, chastity, and so forth. Many of his theological discussions have a particular relevance to the Ascension. In his First Series homily for the second Rogation day, in explaining the Lord’s Prayer, he discusses prayer in terms of what is pertinent to this life and what to the life to come. His description of heaven includes both a short version of the quite common topos of the “Joys of Heaven” (at times called the “Seven Joys,” although the number and nature of them varies) and the doctrine of the unity of humanity with divinity: “þær beoð gepwære sawul. ⁊ lichama. þe nu on þysum life him betwynan winnað; ðær ne bið an untrumnyss ne geswinc. newana nanre godnysse. ac crist bið mid us eallum.”<sup>39</sup> The idea of Christ being with us is further explained using the description of Christ as the head of the body, and of all

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<sup>39</sup> CH.I.xix, pp. 332-3.



Christian men as one man. This interest in the relationship between the body and the afterlife comes up again in his homily on the catholic faith for the following day, when he, after explaining the doctrine of the Trinity, asserts that “ælc lichama þe sawla underfeng sceal arisan on domes dæge mid þam ylcan lichaman þe he nu hæfð. ⁊ sceal onfon edlean ealra his dæda.”<sup>40</sup> The good will have eternal life, while the evil will suffer. The relationship between our re-assumed bodies and Christ’s humanity is strengthened in Ælfric’s next homily, for the Ascension, in which he explains, while exploring the theme of ‘godhead humbled, humanity exalted,’ that just as Christ’s re-assumed body did not need food (he ate only so as to make manifest his true body), so ours will not: “Soðlice æfter þam gemænelicum æriste ne behofiað ure lichaman nanre strangunge eorðlicra metta.”<sup>41</sup> As did the Vercelli homilist (for Rogationtide, not for the Ascension), Ælfric explains Christ’s new, ascending humanity as the same that Adam ruined.

This emphasis on the elevation of humanity, both in Rogationtide and in the feast of the Ascension, permeates his Second Series pieces as well. Although he explains at the beginning of his tract for Monday that his first imperative is to teach evangelical lore, his account of the End encourages his audience to hope that, through prayer, “we moton forfleon. ða toweardan frecednysse. and standan on gesihðe. his soðan menniscnysse.”<sup>42</sup> The visions of Fursey and of Drihthelm deal intensely with the relationship between the soul and the body. The latter vision presents vivid portrayals of heaven and hell (as of Purgatory and of the place of those waiting to enter into heaven), concluding with a prayer that refers to the audience’s potential future in one of these places. His Second Series sermon for Wednesday, being a discussion of the Ascension, deals almost entirely with the nature of Christ’s humanity and our unity with it, concluding that “on ðam dæge [tomorrow] abær se ælmihtiga godes sunu urne lichaman to ðam heofonlican eðle. þær ðær næfre ær ne becom nan ðing ðæs

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<sup>40</sup> CH.I.xx, p. 344.

<sup>41</sup> CH.I.xxi, p. 346.

<sup>42</sup> CH.II.xix, p. 188.

gecyndes.’<sup>43</sup> He then goes on to explain why he has been so concerned that his audience learn these things, summing up his imperatives for Rogationtide preaching:

Nu behofige ge læwede men micelre lare on ðisne timan. for ðan ðe þeos woruld is micclum geswenct ðurh menigfealdum gedrefednyssum. and swa near ende þyssere worulde swa mare ehtnys þæs deofles. and bið unstrengre mennisc ðurh maran tyddernysse; Nu behofige ge ðæs þe swiðor þæs boclican frofres. þæt ge ðurh ða lare eowere mod awendon of ðisum wræcfullum life to ðam ecum þe we ymbe sprecað;<sup>44</sup>

Both the Vercelli homilist and Ælfric are addressing laymen, and each of them encourages the folk to better themselves in relation to the significance of the time, the first through emotional and dramatic exhortation, the second through a combination of reasoned instruction and vivid portrayals of where the laymen might go if they attain unity with Christ’s perfected humanity (and where they will go if they don’t). This preparation for ascension to heaven with Christ is the thematic centre of Ascension week, and is a key part of the Rogationtide processions as well.

Bazire and Cross have said of their anonymous Homily 10 that “this sermon must have been worth hearing” and that “its unknown composer deserves remembrance.”<sup>45</sup> This homilist brings together nicely the polyvalent significance of the Rogationtide processions. He begins with an assertion of the need for penance and the remedy of the soul, reminding the audience of the time’s original function. The importance of this remedy is that it will allow the faithful to be placed on the right side at Judgement Day. Specifically, their cleanliness is for presentation to God, in preparation of being returned to him: “he wilnað þæt we clænsien ure sawla and ure lichaman, þæt we magon heo him swa clæne agyfan swa he hi us ær clæne befæste” (132). This is a cleansing of both the soul and the body, both of which are to be returned in their idyllic, pre-Fall state. The homilist includes a dramatic account of the End, including the *Admonitio de die iudicii* that featured so prominently in Easter sermons. He also

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<sup>43</sup> CH.II.xxii, p. 211.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 212.

<sup>45</sup> BC, p. 129. Subsequent page references are to this text.

includes descriptions of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell, reminding all of what is at stake. At the close of the sermon, he explains how the processions relate to the entrance into heaven:

Men þa leofestan, geþence we geornlice and smealice forhwan eall cristen folc þas andweardan tide þus lufiað and weorþiað and ða halgan reliquias folgiað. Buton tweon swutolice we magon þurh þa halgan gesamnunga ongytan þa ecan reste, and æghwylcum þara bið heofona rices duru ongear untynd þe þa halgan reliquias mid geleafan folgiað. We þonne, men ða leofestan, habbað nedþearfe þæt we mid soðre lufan and mid rihtan geleafan þa gesamnunge secan and ða godcundan lare gehyran. þonne beo we æt urum ytemestan dæge gewlitegode mid Godes þæm gecorenum, be þæm is awriten and ðus cweden, ‘Ðær þa soðfæsten men scinað . . .’ (135)

By following the relics about, as a ‘holy assembly’ reflective of the white-clad crowd in the visions of Drihthelm and of Leofric (which compared the crowd to a Rogationtide crowd), the doors of heaven are opened to them, and they can approach the threshold with Christ on Holy Thursday. It is through love and true faith, two topics about which Ælfric expounds thoroughly in his Rogationtide sermons, that unity with this assembly is made possible, and through them with the chosen of God, who will enjoy the wonders of heaven.

Rogationtide is a polyvalent festival, and the multiple theories of origins reflect the multiple directions granted the liturgical forms and, especially, the preaching for the period. Binding all of these strands of meaning, however, is the theme of the elevation of humanity as a means of approaching heaven with Christ on Thursday. The processions range across the countryside, but they are increasingly given an upward direction as the Ascension approaches. The abiding image of the Ascension, realized in the liturgy for the week, is that explored poetically by Cynewulf in *Christ II*. Setting up a contrast between Christmas and the Ascension, as the beginning and the end of Christ’s time in the world, the poet establishes the ‘thanes’ as a sympathetic model for his audience:

Hwæpre in bocum ne cwið  
þæt hy in hwitum þær hræglum oðywden  
in þa æpelan tid, swa hie eft dydon  
ða se brega mæra to Bethania,  
þeoden þrymfæst, his þegna gedryht  
gelaðade, leof weorud. Hy þæs lareowes  
on þam wildæge word ne gehyrwdon,

hyra sincgiefan. Sona wæron gearwe,  
 hæleð mid hlaford, to þære halgan byrg,  
 þær him tacna fela tires brytta  
 onwrah, wuldres helm, wordgerynum,  
 ærþon up stige ancenned sunu . . .<sup>46</sup>

His thanes have accompanied him to ‘that holy city,’ to a liminal place that serves as a gateway to Heaven, akin to the middle-place in the visions of Ferseus and Leofric. This place is contemporized by describing it as a temple with an open roof. A loud harmony is heard, the angels approach, and “Cyning ure gewat / þurh þæs temples hrof þær hy to segun / þa þe leofes þa gen last weardedum / on þam þingstede, þegnas gecorene” (68, lines 494-7). This is the same temple described so vividly in the Blickling homily for the Ascension,<sup>47</sup> with Christ’s final footprints still in evidence, and able to perform miracles, anachronistically extended back to the time of the actual Ascension.

Through the rest of the poem, we are positioned with the accompanying disciples, hearing the words of Christ and of the angel, feeling joy at his return to Heaven and sorrow that we must remain awhile on earth. These thanes cannot yet enter Heaven, although they participate in it vicariously, and Christ does not enter alone. Extra-biblically, the poet brings in the host of those freed from hell on Easter eve. Cynewulf describes the throng -- “Wel þæt gedafenað / þæt to þære blisse, beorhte gewerede, / in þæs þeodnes burg þegnas cwoman, / weorud wlitescyne” (70, lines 551-4) -- and then explains from whence they have come: “þær he of hæfte ahlod hupa mæste / of feonda byrig, folces unrim, / þisne ilcan preat þe ge her on stariað” (71, lines 568-70). Then, with the angel giving commentary, we see humanity and divinity entering Heaven together, as one unified body:

Geatu ontynað.  
 Wile in to eow ealles waldend  
 cyning on ceastre, corðre ne lytle,  
 fynweorca fruma, folc gelædan

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard Muir, ed. *The Exeter Anthology*, v. I (1994), p. 66, lines 453-64. Subsequent page and line references are to this text. For compatibility with other editions, I give the traditional lineation, which Muir provides alongside his own.

<sup>47</sup> See Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, pp. 125-9.

in dreama dream, ðe he on deoflum genom  
 þurh his sylfes sygor. Sib sceal gemæne  
 englum ond ældum a forð heonan  
 wesan wideferh. Wære is ætsomne  
 godes ond monna . . . (71, lines 576-84)

This is the elevation of humanity, approached in Rogationtide and realized at the Ascension, that is the point of the dramatic liturgy for the week. At Christmas, the faithful participating in the liturgy were allowed, as the shepherds, to see heavenly things in the union of humanity with divinity in Christ. At the Ascension, they are allowed to see the consummation of this union in the reconciliation between men and angels and the opening of heaven to humanity.

## The End and the Beginning

The broad demographic of Rogationtide testifies to the widespread appeal of dramatic ritual in late Anglo-Saxon England. The efforts of Ælfric, Wulfstan, and others to extend monastic practice to the laity and to ensure understanding of what is happening in the liturgy surely enhanced the experience. This experience extended beyond Rogationtide and the festival of the Ascension into Pentecost and on to the end of the liturgical year, at Advent. That some sense of completion was engendered by the commemoration of the Ascension is reflected in the concluding exhortation of the Blickling homily for Ascension Thursday, “teolian we þonne þeos halige tid eft cume embe twelf monað, þe se lifge þæt he betre sy þonne he nu is.”<sup>1</sup> After providing a rousing account of the Lord’s ascension and a lengthy description of the glowing temple surrounding his last footprints (intended to connect his audience with past events and present miracles), the homilist establishes this festival as a yearly yardstick for measuring personal growth towards unity with God. This is a fitting dynamic for a festival that so thoroughly links liturgical participation with the reunion of humanity and divinity in Christ’s reunion with heaven.

Although the commemoration of the life of Christ has ended with his Ascension, however, those left on earth still have a directive to follow, to wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This happens for the liturgical celebrants, as it did for Christ’s disciples, at Pentecost. Liturgically, Pentecost is celebrated as the beginning of the new age, in which mankind is no longer under the law, but under grace. It is a day when, as Ælfric specifies, men are turned to gods by the infusion of the Holy Ghost. In the Whitsunday liturgy, participants call on the presence of the Holy Ghost in the same terms used to describe the original events in Acts, and vernacular treatments of the day and illumination portray Pentecost as a celebration of unity with God, of full confirmation of the participants’ place in God’s plan, and eventual place in Heaven. As such, the festival serves as something of a

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, *The Blickling Homilies*, p. 131.

denouement to the liturgical celebrations from Christmas through Easter and the Ascension, and it continues the practice of dynamically establishing biblical figures as models for liturgical commemoration.

Although the summer represents something of a liturgical downtime, the faithful move in a new direction as the year comes to a close with Advent. Advent serves both as an end and a beginning, and liturgical books giving forms for a year inconsistently begin with Advent rather than Christmas (though Christmas is the usual beginning in Anglo-Saxon witnesses). Its primary function is parallel to that of Lent, to provide a period of reflection and anticipation before the celebration of Christmas. Anticipation of Christ's first coming, however, is echoed by, and to some extent becomes overpowered by, anticipation of his Second Coming in treatments of the period, most notably in the famous Advent 'O' antiphons and poems like *Christ III*. This anticipation is integral to both the preaching and the liturgical forms for Advent, all of which together presents a dramatic prefiguring of the Last Judgement. Reflecting the dual themes of Advent, participants in the Advent liturgy speak alternatively with the voices of those 'in darkness awaiting a great light' and of those awaiting the imminent Judgement of Christ.

### **The Anglo-Saxon Dramatic Aesthetic**

This dynamic of setting up biblical models in the liturgy is intrinsic to Christian worship, and was certainly not invented by the Anglo-Saxons. It is fundamentally the same strategy employed in fourth-century Jerusalem and in the ninth-century Carolingian empire, indeed wherever and whenever the faithful celebrated the life of Christ by means of the action of the liturgy. This brings us back, then, to the initial question: What is happening in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England? What is so new there that the same critics who scoff at the idea of an Anglo-Saxon drama want to see in this milieu 'the birth of liturgical drama'? It is not the spontaneous introduction of a new, representational form in the *Visitatio*, a virus that

over the centuries infected Europe with dramatic fervour. It is, rather, a widespread appreciation of the power and edifying possibilities of liturgical reenactment, of which the *Visitatio* is only one product. Because it is celebrated at Easter, and because it happens to look more like later conceptions of drama than do the rituals for Candlemas, *Tenebrae*, and Rogationtide, it has been mistakenly elevated above these equally dramatic reenactments. Yes, tenth-century England is doing something new, and that something is often expressed as visual representation, with ‘actors’ playing the roles of those wailing at the Crucifixion, or of the guards at the tomb, or of the women approaching the sepulchre. But this sort of visual representation is not the heart of the drama. It is a trapping, one of many techniques brought to bear in order to appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities of the people, encouraging them to invest themselves fully in the liturgy and facilitating the establishment of the dramatic identification in the ‘audience’.

This is the fundamental distinction between dramatic liturgy and representational drama. While representational drama always involves the ‘drawing-in’ of the audience, much more so in the Middle Ages than in our modern, proscenium-based aesthetic, the primary focus is on the representation, and any role played by the audience is supplemental to the staged action. In dramatic ritual, the emphasis is on the ‘role’ played by the congregation, and any representational enhancements are simply that. Surely, in the later Middle Ages, liturgical dramas came to emphasize representation, and look much more like ‘plays’ than does even the *Visitatio*. This is because many of them were plays, developed not out of a burgeoning tradition of representation in the liturgy but in response to the aesthetics of their own participants. Peter Dronke and Johann Drumbl have both suggested that the dramatic developments in the early medieval liturgy might be due more to the attempt to accommodate outside impulses than to a spontaneous generation of drama within the liturgy.<sup>2</sup> Lizette Larson-Miller describes the cultural relationship between a congregation and its liturgy:

The continuing development of liturgy since its normative formation in the early

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<sup>2</sup> See Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays*, p. xviii; Drumbl, *Quem quaeritis*.



church was often a cultural action and reaction, allowing the contemporary study of historical liturgy to provide a mirror into what a particular society and its leaders saw as most important and most central to the meaning of life. Nowhere is this marriage of culture and liturgy more evident than in the church of the medieval West.<sup>3</sup>

Rosamund McKitterick, in describing liturgical innovation (specifically the development of the *schola cantorum*) under Pippin, has emphasized the role of aesthetics. Reminding us that “the Frankish clergy did believe they should make the effort to ensure that the laity were comprehending and even delighted participants in the offices of the church,”<sup>4</sup> she asserts that Pippin’s contribution

. . . could also have helped to make the participation of the laity in the services a more active one, for it permitted them to join in the singing of portions of the Mass. The effort to increase the beauty of the liturgical Offices in this manner would also have appealed to the aesthetic sensibilities of the people, and been an incentive to them to go to church.<sup>5</sup>

This marriage of instructional fervour with aesthetically-compelling liturgical innovation rules Ælfric’s relationship with the liturgy. While, as McKitterick has demonstrated, the Franks showed some interest in this sort of dramatic development, the controversy inspired by Amalarius’ dramatic interpretation of the liturgy perhaps reveals a stunted development of the dramatic propensities of the liturgy. The Anglo-Saxons, however, show no such reticence, and Ælfric grants Amalarius nearly the authority of a Church Father. What is new in the late Anglo-Saxon church is the degree to which the appreciation and the enhancement of the dramatic qualities of the liturgy were given free reign. If the liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church may provide a mirror into what that society deemed important, the image we are presented with is one of innovation in music, art, preaching, and drama. Whatever the origins of the Anglo-Saxon dramatic aesthetic, its by-products are widely evident in the richly dramatic late Anglo-Saxon liturgy.

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<sup>3</sup> Lizette Larson-Miller, ed. *Medieval Liturgy* (1997), p. ix.

<sup>4</sup> McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

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