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0521855411 - Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England

Mechthild Gretsch

Excerpt

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Ælfric's *sanctorale* and the Benedictional of Æthelwold

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ See Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*'.

⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 119–23.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ See *Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat I, 6. ¹¹ See *Catholic Homilies* I, ed. Clemons, p. 173.

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ See above, p. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In addition to the factors I have touched on so far, there were no doubt other forces at work in the shaping of Ælfric's *sanctorale* – literary and liturgical forces, for example. The so-called Cotton-Corpus legendary has been identified as one such shaping force of paramount importance, especially for the *Lives of Saints*. The Cotton-Corpus legendary is a collection of 165 saints' *uitae* and *passiones* written at Worcester in the third quarter of the eleventh century, and now preserved as London, BL, Cotton Nero E. i and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 9.²⁴ Although obviously the Cotton-Corpus manuscript itself cannot have been the manuscript which was consulted by Ælfric, it has been shown that in many cases where a number of variant redactions of a saint's Life have survived it is the form

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

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

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

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

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as transmitted in Cotton-Corpus which is closest to Ælfric.²⁵ Furthermore, some eccentricities in Ælfric's *sanctorale* can plausibly be explained at a stroke on the assumption that he had regular recourse to a predecessor of the Cotton-Corpus manuscript, as Michael Lapidge has shown. For example, Ælfric seems to have taken not only the text of the *Vita S. Eugeniae* from the Cotton-Corpus legendary but also the date against which she is commemorated. This date is peculiar indeed, inasmuch as it is 25 December, Christ's Nativity, and no Anglo-Saxon calendar has her feast against that date; in Winchester especially she does not seem to have been culted extensively, since none of the Winchester calendars commemorates her at all.²⁶ In what follows, I want to suggest a further literary and liturgical, but also art-historical, source which, in my view, influenced the structure of Ælfric's *sanctorale*: the famous Benedictional of Æthelwold (London, BL, Add. 49598), a lavishly produced manuscript made for Æthelwold's personal use as bishop of Winchester and very possibly for the occasion of King Edgar's coronation at Bath in 973.²⁷ There are some striking parallels, as I hope to show, between the commemoration of saints in Æthelwold's Benedictional and Ælfric's *sanctorale*, parallels which can plausibly and economically be explained on the assumption that the teacher's most valuable book, in the production of which he seems to have taken an active interest,²⁸ was a major shaping influence for the *sanctorale* which the pupil devised for the instruction and edification of a lay audience. We may begin by looking at some figures. Ælfric's *sanctorale* contains, as we have seen, fifty-four feasts; the Benedictional of Æthelwold has blessings for thirty-eight feasts of the *sanctorale*. Thirty-six of these thirty-eight feasts are provided with a homily by Ælfric. The two feasts which have blessings in the Benedictional but no homily by Ælfric are St Vedastus (6 February; Æ 41, CBP 704)²⁹ and

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

²⁶ See Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', p. 123.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁴ For Ælfric's penchant for this type, see above, p. 4.

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

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

³⁷ See Zettel, 'Saints' Lives in Old English', p. 37.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴³ Le Havre, Bibliothèque municipale, 330, s. xi², from the New Minster, Winchester, ptd Turner, *The Missal of the New Minster*.