Dominus Episcopus

Medieval Bishops between Diocese and Court

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Contents

General abbreviations 6

Anthony John Lappin: Introduction 9

Martin J. Ryan: Bishops and canon law in pre-Viking England: Ecgberht’s Dialogus in context 14

Inka Moilanen: Bishops and pastoral obligations: Ælfric’s pastoral letters and preaching in the 11th and 12th centuries 53

Kurt Villads Jensen: Bishops on crusade 83

Emil Lauge Christensen: Justifying episcopal pluralism: The negotiation between suitability and legitimacy in the narrative of Saxo Grammaticus 100

Anthony John Lappin: Bishops and monasteries: York and Selby in the 13th century 131

Reima Välimäki: Bishops and the inquisition of heresy in late medieval Germany 186

Kirsti Salonen: Bishops and bad behaviour: Scandinavian examples of bishops who violated ecclesiastical norms 207

Rosa Vidal Doval: Bishops and the court: The Castilian episcopacy and conversos, 1450–1465 217

Martin Neuding Skoog: In defence of the aristocratic republic: The belligerent bishops of late medieval Sweden 241

Elena Balzamo: Three bishops for a see 253

The Authors 265
### General Abbreviations

**APA** Archivio Penitenziario Vaticano.


**ASV** Archivio Secreto Vaticano.


**GIR** *Konung Gustav den förstes registratur*, ed. J.A. Almqvist et al. (29 vols., Stockholm: Norstedt, 1861–1916), I. 1521–24; II. 1525; III. 1526; IV. 1527; V. 1528; VI. 1529; VII. 1530–31; VIII. 1532–33; IX. 1534; X. 1535; XI. 1536–37; XII. 1538–39; XIII. 1540–41; XIV. 1542; XV. 1543; XVI. 1544; XVII. 1545; XVIII. 1545–47; XIX. 1548; XX. 1549; XXI. 1550; XXII. 1551; XXIII. 1552; XXIV. 1552–53; XXV. 1555; XXVI. 1556; XXVII. 1557; XXVIII. 1558; XXIX 1559–60.


Bishops and pastoral obligations: 
Ælfric’s pastoral letters and preaching in the 11th and 12th centuries

Inka Moilanen

The production of homiletic writing increased in Anglo-Saxon England after c. 990 to such an extent that the genre began to dominate the corpus of vernacular prose material throughout the 11th century and beyond. Appreciation of adaptation, rewriting, and various contexts of copying, together with the recognition of the uses of the vernacular after the Conquest, has contributed to our understanding of this genre as a living and highly variable form of writing.¹ Still, or perhaps exactly because of the adaptable nature of sermons and homilies, the relationship between the written material and the practicalities of pastoral care remains difficult to determine. Indeed, of all episcopal activities, the mundane, everyday pastoral obligations and the bishop’s role in their implementation are perhaps the most elusive, and their interpretation is necessarily complicated by our reliance on mostly liturgical and prescriptive sources. As Mary Giandrea pointedly notes in her study of bishops in the later Anglo-Saxon period, it is “more than a little ironic that the two chapters about cathedral culture and pastoral care are the shortest.”² Before the onset of bishops’ registers and other documents of ecclesiastical bureaucracy, our knowledge of the details of the bishops’ pastoral activities is founded mostly on the more visible individuals such as the sainted Æthelwold (d. 984), Oswald (d. 992), or Wulfstan II (c. 1008-1095). We can be even less certain of the day-to-day activities of the lesser clergy and the bishops’ role in the implementation of pastoral duties on a local level, though this aspect of ecclesiastical life has gained more scholarly attention in recent years.³ The degree with which bishops were involved in the administration of parochial life must have varied

¹ See e.g. Swan & Treharne 2000; Lionarons 2004; Kleist 2007; Treharne 2012. A valuable tool for the research of post-Conquest manuscripts is Da Rold et al. 2010. In the following I draw also on Gameson 1999; Gneuss 2001; Gneuss & Lapidge 2015; Ker 1957.
² Giandrea 2007, 98.
³ See esp. Barrow 2015; and Thomas 2014.
and depended on the person. The manner in which the cura animarum—baptism, hearing confession and assigning appropriate penance, the collection of church dues and tithes, preaching, the visitation of the sick, and burial—was being carried out on a local level probably depended also on the nature of the relationship the smaller churches had with their bishop on the one hand and with the older minster churches on the other, as well as on their dependence on bishops, lay aristocracy, or kings. This is an important issue when considering bishops and pastoral obligations in the 11th century; the increase in the number of rural and manorial churches, established often by members of the lay aristocracy, changed the situation so that these new churches with just one priest—instead of a community—emerged into the pastoral landscape to complement the pastoral care done by the older minster churches and reformed monasteries. How much significance we are willing to assign to each of these parties has certain implications for our interpretations of pastoral care in the 11th and 12th centuries and the bishops’ role in it.

In our attempts to understand how bishops and their clerics interacted with lay people and with each other in their dioceses, and to ascertain how the vast homiletic material was used in practice, it is therefore useful to consider the materiality of our sources. The written material that concerns day-to-day pastoral care is often limited and offers us only the views and injunctions of others than the lesser clergy themselves. Preaching, too, as an activity of instruction and edification, is discussed in our source material mostly on a general, prescriptive level. Homilies and sermons themselves provide us with an array of ideas concerning the contents of preaching, but they tell us much less about how preaching and teaching functioned in practice. The textual contexts of homiletic writing, however, give us a more nuanced picture: even though full homiliaries were produced with the intention of providing systematic disposition of preaching material for the whole church year, a number of homilies and sermons survive in largely different manuscript contexts, together with a mixture of other literary genres. Regarding these manuscripts as witnesses to their own contexts has potential to eliminate some of the elusiveness that shrouds the relationship between theory and practice.

In what follows, I discuss issues related to the evaluation of the practicalities of episcopal instruction concerning pastoral activities, especially preaching. I will approach the topic with the help of a series of pastoral letters, written by Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 950–c. 1010) for the use of Wulfsige, bishop of Sherborne (c. 993–1002), and Wulfstan, bishop of London (996–1002), of Worcester (996–1016), and also arch-

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4 Giandrea 2007 gives bishops more credit as active participants in parochial life than does, for instance, John Blair, in whose view episcopal involvement in local issues was still minimal at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries: see Blair 2005, 422, 495–497; and further, Tinti 2005.
5 On the growth and development of local churches, see Blair 2005, 368–407.
bishop of York (1002–1023). My discussion focuses on the uses of these texts in the 11th and 12th centuries, thus giving more attention to their practical function than to the original intentions of Ælfric and his letters—an endeavour which has already been undertaken superbly by others. I will first situate the letters, and then turn to evaluate their contexts of copying, paying particular attention to the role of these letters as they emerge in instances of episcopal instruction to the secular clergy on how to preach. The letters seem to have been used mostly, although not exclusively, in those episcopal environments which show a concern for the matters of the secular church through the lenses of the reformed monasticism, especially in monastic cathedral centres. Towards the end of this essay I will review some issues related to the interpretation of these letters in relation to sermons *ad populum* and *ad sacerdotes* as well as other texts concerning pastoral care with which they were copied.

Pastoral letters for the use of bishops

As far as we can tell, during his career Ælfric wrote five pastoral letters for the use of bishops. The matters concerning the secular church in these texts are clearly influenced by issues familiar from Carolingian capitularies, penitentials and other material from the continent, which became available in England in the mid-10th century through the reform movement. As such they are good examples of transmission of pastoral knowledge. Ælfric began instructing his ecclesiastical contemporaries while a monk and mass-priest at Cerne Abbas in Dorset, where he composed the bulk of his works, most notably the two series of *Catholic homilies* and the collection now known as the *Lives of saints*. Among his early works is a pastoral letter on the clerical way

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6 For later hostility to such episcopal pluralism, see Lauge Christensen in this volume.
7 Edited in Fehr 1966; the letter for Wulfsga and the first Old English letter for Wulfstan also in Whitelock et al. 1981, 191–226, 255–302. For a discussion on the purpose and effectiveness of the letters in their manuscript contexts see especially Hill 1992.
8 Fehr 1966: the letter for Wulfsga (Brief 1), 1–34; the first Latin letter for Wulfstan (Brief 2), 35–57; the second Latin letter for Wulfstan (Brief 3), 58–67; the first Old English letter for Wulfstan (Brief II), 68–145; and the second Old English letter for Wulfstan (Brief III), 146–221.
9 Hill 1992, 108–109. Ælfric drew on a breadth of material, and it is not always possible to say whether he used a text directly or if he wrote from memory. Fehr discusses the sources in detail in Fehr 1966, lxxxiii–cxxxvi. These include the Carolingian capatialy of Aachen (c. 802), known as *Iura quae sacerdotes debent habere*, the *Regularis concordia*, and several other texts, such as Isidore’s *Etymologiae* and *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, Rufinus’ *Historia ecclesiæ* and homiletic material. Other sources may have been *De regula canoniconum* assigned to Amalarius of Metz and the capitularies of Theodore of Orleans, although it is uncertain whether Ælfric used them directly. See also Whitelock et al. 1981, 195.
10 For an outline of Ælfric’s life and career, see Hill 2009.
of life, written c. 993x995, on behalf of Bishop Wulfsege III of Sherborne. Wulfsege was Ælfric’s own bishop and in every way superior to him, which makes it difficult to imagine a situation in which he would have felt it necessary to ask advice on the matters of the secular church from an ordinary monk, as Malcolm Godden has remarked: Ælfric’s criticizing tone in many of his works might have indeed contributed to the fact that he never made a career in the higher echelons of the church hierarchy. About a decade later, probably shortly after he himself was appointed abbot of Eynsham, a newly established reformed monastery in Oxfordshire c. 1005, he composed two Latin letters on similar issues for the use of Wulfstan of York, by then already archbishop. He subsequently translated and modified the Latin letters into Old English, presumably at Wulfstan’s request, and Wulfstan also altered them according to his own needs.

It should also be noted that Archbishop Wulfstan used these letters as source material for his own canonical work. The vernacular letters are not direct translations, as fits the custom of the day, but differ in certain parts from the Latin ones. A notable addition in the second Old English letter is a lengthy passage on the liturgical practices of Holy Week that was not included in the Latin. The differences between the Latin and vernacular letters may indicate an awareness of different audiences for the letters written in the vernacular, perhaps consisting of priests who could not understand Latin.

The letters pertain to various issues of pastoral care, including preaching and teaching, celebrating the mass, and administration of certain rites such as baptism or anointing the sick. Aside from giving practical guidelines for pastoral care, the letters function as reminders of what a good priest was expected to be like. In the spirit of the Benedictine reform movement, they also advocate clerical celibacy—a theme that dominates the beginning of the letter for Wulfsege and which occurs regularly in the first Latin and Old English letters for Wulfstan. As Joyce Hill points out, the pastoral letters should be read as representatives of the aspirations and interests of the reformed monasticism, and as such their testimonial value, when it concerns the secular church, is not always evident. Hill describes the letters as an attempt to bridge “a significant gap between the standards of the monastic and the secular churches”, but at the same time acknowledges that their effect is difficult to estimate. I will return to these issues later during this essay.

12 The so-called “private letter” to Wulfstan (Fehr 1966, Brief 2a, 222–227) is not included in my discussion, because it addresses the archbishop directly and is written in a different style, not as a “model sermon” for the use of the archbishop.
13 These changes are most visible in a mid-11th-century manuscript, one of Wulfstan’s “commonplace books” (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, part B), in which several, most notably Latin, passages are omitted. Other modifications to the contents and rhetoric of the text are also clear, especially when it concerns matters of monastic life.
14 Hill 1992, 104.
The letters are written in the first person as if spoken by the bishop, and their function is perhaps best understood if conceived as “model sermons” delivered by the bishop to his clergy. Initially they might have been intended to be read aloud at synodal meetings, when the clergy was gathered to the cathedral see. At least in later instances they were definitely understood as sermons, as they have been titled as such in many of the manuscripts in which they were copied. Francesca Tinti has pointed out that the letters—the second letter for Wulfstan in particular—would have been especially suitable to be used on Maundy Thursday, when the priests were expected to fetch the holy oils from the cathedral see. The letter situates itself on this particular day, and in most of the manuscripts it bears the title Quando diuidis crismam. Joyce Hill, in turn, believes that the letters were at least intended to be circulated in a more modest written format, to be sent to parish priests as guidelines to their work on the field, but that “the nature of the surviving manuscripts is such that they do not generally allow us to see the pastoral letters being used in the circles for which they were intended”. As this sort of practical literature has rarely survived, there is no evidence of the kind of dissemination suggested by Hill, but there is no reason to reject the idea, either. Whether the texts should be termed “letters” or “sermons”, therefore, depends on the way they are approached, and on what kind of context one decides they were employed. Regardless of how one categorizes the genre, estimations of the uses of written pastoral letters in an oral context must remain conjectural. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the list-like layout of the Latin letters in some of the manuscripts seems suitable to be used as written guidelines for the bishop himself while preparing to instruct his clergy or in connection with his own episcopal duties. In practice their function may have been more varied, of course, and one type of use would not exclude others.

The texts survive in ten manuscripts altogether, listed here in a rough chronological order of their production (fuller descriptions are provided in the appendix):
1. Cambridge, University Library, ms. Gg.3.28, c. 1000.
3. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, pp. 8–160, 167–176, s. xi or xi

Malcolm Godden notes that the Latin letters are often titled Sermo instead of Epistola: Godden 2004, 358. This applies also to one of the Old English pastoral letters which is rubricated To gehadedum mannun (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, p. 31), in a similar manner with other sermons in the collection.

Tinti 2010, 279–280.
18 “Forþon-þe we to-dæg sceolan delan urne ele, on þreo wisan gehalgodne, swa-sa ús gewissað seo bóc: Id est oleum sanctum et oleum crismatis et oleum infirmorum; þæt is on englisc: halig ele, óper is crisma and seoccra manna ele” (Fehr 1966, 146–147). The title is extant in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190, p. 336; Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121, fol. 111; Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343, fol. 137v.

4. British Library, Cotton Tiberius, ms. A.iii, fols. 2–173, s. xi<sup>med</sup>.
5. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190, pp. iii–xii, i–294, 295–420, s. xi<sup>†</sup>, additions s. xi<sup>‡</sup>.
6. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265, pp. 1–268 s. xi<sup>med</sup>–xi<sup>¼</sup>, additions s. xi<sup>‡</sup>–xii<sup>c</sup>.
7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121, s. xi<sup>‡</sup> (1060–1072), additions s. xi<sup>‡</sup>.
9. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343, s. xii<sup>‡</sup> (c. 1175).
10. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Barlow 37, fols. 1–61, s. xii<sup>es</sup> (extracts only).

Even though Ælfric’s letters are usually—as in this essay—considered as a group and discussed in similar terms, they were never copied together as a group. More commonly, but not consistently, the letters for Wulfstan appear in pairs, Latin and Old English letters copied consecutively in different manuscripts. The letter for Wulfsgie appears once alone on spare leaves in the end of a vernacular homiletic collection that was probably supervised by Ælfric himself (Cambridge, University Library, ms. Gg.3.28), but since the manuscript has suffered material loss after copying, the letter is incomplete. It is twice copied in manuscripts that also contain Ælfric’s other pastoral letters. There survives only one manuscript in which all five letters are present (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190), and even in this example they represent different layers of production and were not copied in the book at the same time. It could also be remarked that the letters are not isolated texts, but occur together with other tracts which could also be described as “pastoral letters”, but which are occluded from one’s sight when the focus falls exclusively on a known author and his texts. This has important implications for the following discussion. That the letters should be seen as a group with consistent intentions and aspirations applies only to the immediate context of Ælfric, Wulfsgie and Wulfstan, but not necessarily to their use during the following century and a half. In turn, the later textual contexts cannot, in a strict sense, be seen as evidence of the initial intentions and aspirations of Ælfric for his letters. The meaning and meaningfulness of a text cannot be reduced to one instance or motive. It is by way of looking at each text beyond its original intentions that we may get a glimpse of “the Church’s diversity on the ground”,<sup>20</sup> of which little can be seen otherwise. The elusive role of the bishop in the establishment of parochial discipline in later Anglo-Saxon England may also become more visible thereby.

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Tools for preaching

As a pastoral activity preaching played an important part in the instruction of the laity, though the question of who was, first, authorized and, secondly, obliged to preach was ambiguous and variable before the ecclesiastical reforms of the 11th century and especially after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Though an episcopal privilege in theory, preaching was soon assigned to ordained priests and also to deacons in the early medieval period. William of Malmesbury’s account of a “foreign monk” (“transmarinae nationis monachus”), who disapproved of St. Wulfstan’s preaching activities when only a prior at Worcester, is usually seen as an illustrative example that monastic communities also participated in preaching to the laity in Anglo-Saxon England. The foreign monk in William’s narrative saw preaching as an inappropriate task for a prior, and thought it better, in fact exclusively, suited for bishops. Texts from later Anglo-Saxon England, not least Ælfric’s letters and homilies, also assume that priests were expected to preach. This part of pastoral care is generally taken for granted, which might explain the lack of precision in the instructions that concern it. The ambiguity of determining who was authorized and obliged to preach influences also the inconsistency in the terminology concerning priests, clerics and monks. It is therefore helpful to keep in mind that categories that pertain to the clergy and pastoral care were not as clear in the 10th and 11th century as they would be afterwards, and that this period should be considered as a period of formation in this regard.

The most explicit advice that the letters give on preaching concerns the duty of priests to preach on Sundays and feast days: “the mass-priest must expound the meaning of the Gospel to the people in English on Sundays and on mass-days.” This advice resembles those given in Carolingian capitularies and, for instance, in the enlarged rule of Chrodegang, which state that priests should preach to the laity every other week (or even better, every week) in such a way that people understand them. The enlarged rule of Chrodegang may indeed be what Ælfric is referring to in his letter when he says that “you [i.e. the secular clergy] also have a rule—if you would just read it—in which you can see what has been decreed about you.” Which specific rule Ælfric means is

\[\text{References}\]

23 “Se mæssepreost sceal secgan sunnandagum & mæssedagum þæs godspelles angyt on englisc þam folce” (Fehr 1966, 14).
24 Though, the rule does not specifically refer to using the vernacular: “et iuxta quod intelligere uulgus possit, ita predicandum est” and “& do ma þa larbodunge be þam þe þæt folc understandan mage” (cap. 42: Napier 1916, 49–50).
25 “Ge habbað eac regol, gyf ge hine rædan woldan, on þam ge magon geseon, hu hit geset is be eow” (Fehr 1966, 23).
not clear, though. Hill has noted that this sort of vagueness suggests certain familiarity with issues at hand: behind this obscurity lies an apparent assumption that the audience would know to which rule Ælfric is referring, and which was not expected to require further explanation.\textsuperscript{26} Whatever rule Ælfric had in mind, at least in one instance the pastoral letters were used in a community following the rule of Chrodegang. This is Exeter, where the manuscript containing all five letters (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190) was compiled at the time of Bishop Leofric (1050–1072).

Similar vagueness seems to apply to the practicalities of preaching. Regulations on other pastoral obligations appear to be more clearly formulated, but when it comes to preaching, the instructions are more general in nature. This is not to say that preaching in itself is difficult to discern, on the contrary: the great number of sermons and homilies speaks for itself, and the interest in instruction of the laity is a pervasive theme in 11th-century sources, indicating an awareness and occupation with this kind of activity—and as such, with the education of the clergy.

The mass on Sundays must in any case be seen as the main context in which the laity came into contact with preaching. Mary Clayton has pointed out that Ælfric himself, when referring to the use of his own homilies, often associates them with the reading in the mass or \textit{in ecclesia}.\textsuperscript{27} Occasions like the consecration of a church, translations of relics, and other feast days were also good occasions to hear the clergy giving sermons, but apparently some kind of catechetical teaching was expected to happen in other instances, too, since the pastoral letters and their manuscript contexts seem to point to this sort of activity. As a follow-up to preaching on Sundays, the letters exhort priests to explain the Creed and the Paternoster to people as often as they can (\textit{swa he oftost mage}),\textsuperscript{28} giving no clear indication of the type of context in which this sort of teaching happened. Mary Giandrea has remarked that it is possible that also priests “learned the fundamentals of faith from the homilies and sermons of Ælfric and Wulfstan”, instead of formal training.\textsuperscript{29} In Ælfric’s pastoral letters priests are encouraged to “preach the true faith to the people and tell them homilies” in a rather general manner.\textsuperscript{30} Behind this generality may lie assumptions of an activity that is so self-evident that it does not warrant any further comment. One possible context could be confession, as some \textit{ordines} instruct the confessor to sit with the penitent and to talk about vices and virtues prior to confession, and to exhort the penitent to pursue

\textsuperscript{26} Hill 1992, 109–110. Other possibilities are \textit{De regula canonicorum} or the Capitulary of Aachen (\textit{Iura quae sacerdotes debent habere}): Whitelock \textit{et al.} 1981, 216.

\textsuperscript{27} Clayton 1985, 226, 231–232.

\textsuperscript{28} Fehr 1966, 15.

\textsuperscript{29} Giandrea 2007, 101.

\textsuperscript{30} “Se mæsse-preost sceal mannum bōne soðan geleafan and hym lār-spel secgan” (Fehr 1966, 130–131).
a virtuous life.31 Notably, several manuscripts in which the letters survive contain not only handbooks for a confessor, but also a number of sermons that are thematically suitable for confessional use, as they touch upon the suffering of Christ, the coming of the Antichrist, the Last Judgement, and the fate of unrepentant sinners in Hell.32

A significant amount of sermons of which the priests could have made use, survives in miscellaneous or anthologizing collections instead of full homiliaries. To a degree, the use of full homiliaries would seem to be somewhat clearer to imagine than the use of collections with more miscellaneous material, but also their use was complex and varied. In addition to reading in the mass, they could be used in the monastic night Office or in private, devotional reading.33 Full homiliaries, such as those Ælfric himself produced, would be more suitable to be used in situ when preaching in the mass than the anthologizing collections with a mixture of liturgical and non-liturgical material. To what extent do these large “reference collections” correlate to preaching, then? This is a more difficult question, which the imprecise advice to teach the laity at any available occasion does not make easier. As an example of these difficulties we can take a look at the manuscripts in which the pastoral letters have survived. They are mostly large collections that contain a wide array of miscellaneous material on matters of the secular church, canonical regulation, legislation, liturgy, and monastic life. They are hard to pin down into one category which in turn complicates the interpretation of their practical uses. There is a clear concentration of the letters in manuscripts that represent the so-called “Wulfstan’s commonplace book” tradition. These “commonplace books” are a group of manuscripts containing miscellaneous material assembled by Wulfstan: sermons, letters, liturgical, penitential, and canonical texts.34 So far, eleven manuscripts have been identified as belonging to this group.35 Five of them contain one or more pastoral letters.

As David Dumville points out, it is often notoriously difficult to classify manuscripts that contain both liturgical and non-liturgical texts.36 For instance, British Li-
library, ms. Cotton Tiberius, A.iii, which contains the second Old English letter for Wulfstan (on the consecration of the holy oils), has been labelled under wildly different categories. It has been seen as a book with special offices, as a pontifical, as a monastic consuetudinary and as a private prayer-book.\(^{37}\) Dumville points out that even this list “does not exhaust its potential”, referring to its contradictory material proportions: its heavy glosses—and contents—suggest use in a monastic classroom, but its decoration would “point to another direction”.\(^{38}\) Dumville sees similar problems with Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265, which in turn contains the two Latin letters for Wulfstan.\(^{39}\) Dumville describes the contents and their textual sources as “appallingly complex”. This codex is one of Wulfstan’s commonplace books, and has been identified as being used by Bishop Wulfstan II of Worcester, presumably as a companion volume to two homiletic collections by the same scribe (Oxford, Bodleian Library, mss. Hatton 113 and 114). Wulfstan II was apparently famous and popular as a preacher, which would make the homiletic collections appropriate for this sort of purpose. But what sort of practical function would the sermons in collections like Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265 serve, then? When we encounter books that escape categories, especially if they have been produced in the same environment as those that are more easily labelled, it is not easy to find an answer to this simple question. As it is difficult to imagine this kind of book being used in a liturgical context, classifying it “as a reference-book would seem to be the least troublesome explanation”.\(^{40}\)

It seems as if the survival of the letters in collections like these has thus been seen as a hindrance to the elucidation of their original, practical uses. Describing a book as a reference collection with archival intentions is convenient when nothing else applies, but it may also convey a somewhat pejorative image of these books, implying that the “real” use of texts that they incorporate must have lain somewhere else. Therefore, as the letters in these large collections are obviously not “letters” in their original contexts of composition, but copies, their function must be sought from their relation to the other texts copied in the collections.

The required books: Demands and practices

One notable feature that deserves discussion concerns the letters’ call for the “necessary weapons” every priest should have at their disposal. These “weapons” are an impressive array of liturgical books, repeated with some variation in each letter. *In toto* they include: a psalter, an epistolary, an evangelary, a missal or a sacramentary, songbook(s), i.e. antiphonaries or graduals, a manual or a handbook for the occasional


\(^{38}\) Dumville 1992, 137.

\(^{39}\) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265, consecutively on pp. 160–180.

\(^{40}\) Dumville 1992, 138.
rites priests would have to perform, a computus for the reckoning of time, a passional, a penitential and general reading book(s). The letter for Wulfège says that prior to his ordination, a priest should have obtained the following ten books: “saltere & pistolboc, godspellboc & mæsseboc, sangboc & handboc, gerim & passionalem, penitentialem & rædingboc”. The list in the first Latin letter for Wulfstan, too, consists of ten books but in a different order. Compared with these, the translated Old English letter mentions only eight of the ten books, omitting godspellboc and passionalem. Wulfstan’s own modified version in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, lists only seven books, further omitting pistolboc, but mentioning rædingboc in plural.

These demands must be regarded as unrealistic. Even though there are examples of every type of book that has survived from this period—except for a “manual”—it is unlikely that a parish priest in the backwaters would have owned an example of each of these books. As a way of comparison, we might get a picture of the scale when looking at numbers drawn from the surviving booklists from Anglo-Saxon England. It seems likely that even a well-equipped monastery library would have counted its books in tens rather than hundreds before the end of the 11th century. It is well known that when Bishop Leofric rose to the see of Exeter, he found there “only a handful of worn-out service-books”. By the end of his episcopacy in 1072 he was able to bequeath as many as 66 books to the cathedral, but most booklists are more modest in numbers: an inventory of the belongings of the church of Sherburn-in-Elmet in the mid-11th century lists nine books, for instance. This inventory, which comes closest to the level of a parish church, is actually quite similar to the requirements presented in the pastoral letters. In this case, it has to be taken into account, however, that Sherburn-in-Elmet belonged to the estates of the archbishop of York. Thus it might have had a somewhat better access to the more “desirable” books than churches outside the direct sphere of episcopal influence. Still, the inventory does not mention a manual, nor a computus, a passional, a penitential or a reading book, some of which would have been quite sizeable and expensive. And more notably, there is no mention of the church owning a homiliary, either.

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41 See a more nuanced discussion of the terminology and its interpretation in Fehr 1966, lxxxvi-xcii; Gneuss 1985.
42 Fehr 1966, 13.
43 “Presbyter debet habere etiam spiritalia arma, id sunt diuinios libros, sciliter missalem, lectionarium, quod quidam uocant epistolarium, psalterium, nocturnalem, gradalem, manualem, passionalem, pẹnitentialem, compotum, et librum cum lectionibus ad nocturnas” (Fehr 1966, 51).
44 Fehr 1966, 126.
45 Gneuss 1985, 134.
46 Lapidge 1985, 64. See further Treharne 2003.
It has often been pointed out that Ælfric’s high demands are at odds with his dismissive attitude towards the educational, and even intellectual, level of the secular clergy. Joyce Hill, for instance, comments that Ælfric’s expectations towards the clergy disagrees with the picture his pastoral letters give of the educational and professional level of the secular clergy otherwise. Whilst, on the one hand, the clergy was expected to possess all these books and to be capable of using them, on the other hand they “needed to be told not to get drunk, not to let the reserved host go mouldy, not to cavort in church instead of keeping vigil, not to celebrate mass with a wooden or horn chalice, not to poach dead bodies from other parishes, and not to let mouse-droppings or dung lie on the altar”. On top of all that, they do not understand Latin. The derogatory attitude of Ælfric and other reform-minded authors, Byrhtferth of Ramsey in particular, towards the level of education of the secular clergy is apparent in many other texts, too. There is comparable discrepancy in Byrhtferth’s *Enchiridion*, shown in the way he writes about (and seems to address) lazy secular canons, but does this in complex, hermeneutic Latin, which would not have been easily decipherable for an uneducated audience. Instead of reading this as a reflection of the low level of education among the secular clergy at the end of the 10th century, it would be better understood as a means of monastic self-identification, confirming the image of the Benedictine reformers to themselves.

Ælfric laments the shortcomings of priests in several instances. In the second Latin letter for Wulfs tan he devotes the end of the text to reprimand both contemporary bishops and priests, who were supposed to be “the pillars of the Church”, but instead show negligence in their duties: they are ignorant of the word of God, do not teach well enough, and are prone to secular honour, greed, and avarice. Worse still, they provide bad examples for the laity. “They do not have courage to speak of justice, since they do not perform or value justice themselves,” Ælfric com plains. Acting as a good example is a continuous theme in Ælfric’s oeuvre of admonishing the clergy. In another instance, he writes that if the priest cannot teach the layman with words, at least he should show a good example with his deeds.

49 Hill 1992, 110.  
50 On the self-definition of the Benedictine reformers through negative portrayal of secular clerics, see Stephenson 2009; and further, Stephenson 2015.  
51 “Sed ualde dolendum est, quia his diebus tanta neglegentia est in sacerdotibus et episcopis, qui deberent esse columna Ecclesie, ut non attendant divinam scripturam, nec docent discipulos qui sibi succedant, sicut legimus de sanctis uiris, qui multis perfectos discipulos successores sibi reliquerunt, sed honores saequare et cupiditates uel avaritiam sectantes, plus quam laici mala exempla subditis praebentes. Non audent de iustitia loqui, quia iustitiam nec faciant nec diligunt” (Fehr 1966, 67).  
52 Ælfric of Eynsham, ‘In natale plurimorum apostolorum’ (*Catholic homilies* II.36), in Godden 1979, 306.
together with the unrealistic demands of the books they should be able to acquire and use, might be seen as serving the purpose of the reformers. Especially if we think about the new local, rural churches which were emerging into the landscape, it is unlikely that they would have been as well-equipped with books as those which had access to the libraries of larger mother-churches or monasteries to which they were tied.\textsuperscript{53} When creating the supposed standards for the secular clergy that only few could have lived up to, the reformers could call attention to the alleged incompetence of the secular (unreformed) clergy, and perhaps even use it as a justification for their replacement by members of the reform movement.\textsuperscript{54} This can also be seen as a reflection of a time when the boundaries between monks and clerics were in a process of becoming clearer, and Ælfric takes a stance in positioning himself as a figure of authority in their definition.

As can be seen above, the list of required books changes and shortens with each occurrence of writing. None of the lists, however, include a homiliary. This is an odd omission from a man who himself spent so much time and effort in composing two comprehensive sets of homilies for the whole church year, and whose works overall show a particular interest in providing means for the clergy to engage in orthodox pastoral care. Since Ælfric emphasized the importance of vernacular teaching throughout his other works, it seems perplexing that he would have excluded homilies as necessary tools for secular priests. And finally, considering that Carolingian capitularies and other contemporary texts, such as Burchard of Worms’s \textit{Decretum} and the \textit{Excretiones pseudo-Ecgberhti} (also known as Wulfstan’s \textit{Canon law collection} and \textit{Collectio canonum wigorniensis}), that contain similar booklists do include “homeliae per circulum anni”, the absence becomes even more puzzling. It is notable, though, that none of these examples says that priests should \textit{own} the books, but that they should learn their contents (“necessaria sunt ad discendum” or “ut discat ea quae ei necessaria sint”).\textsuperscript{55} Ælfric in turn is clearly referring to books as objects to have in possession (\textit{debet habe} and \textit{sceal habban}).

That Ælfric would have seen it unnecessary for a priest to obtain books for preach-

\textsuperscript{53} Wilcox 2005, 58–60.
\textsuperscript{54} Thanks to Aidan Conti for pointing this out.
\textsuperscript{55} E.g. Haito, ‘\textit{Capitula ecclesiastica}’ states: “Sexto, quae ipsis sacerdotibus necessaria sunt ad discendum, id est sacramentarium, lectionarium, antifonarius, baptisterium, compotus, canon penitentialis, psalterium, homeliae per circulum anni dominicis diebus et singulis festivitatibus aptae” (Haito, ‘\textit{Capitula ecclesiastica}’, 363). Burchard’s list is clearly related to the list in the prologue in the so-called \textit{Excretiones pseudo-Ecgberhti}, but the items are listed differently: “Nunc ergo, o fratres, qui uoluerit sacerdotis nomen habere, in primis propter deum cogitet, ut discat ea quae ei necessaria sint, antequam manus episcopi caput ejus tangat: id est, psalterium, lectionarium, cum evangeliis, sacramentorum librum, baptisterium: et computum, cum cyclo cum commendationibus animarum, martyrologium, homelias per circulum anni plebibus praedicandas” (Burchard of Worms, ‘\textit{Libri decretorum}’, \textit{PL} 140, 979C). See, further, Ryan in this volume, 12–50.
ing does not therefore seem plausible. One could, however, see this contradiction as a kind of mixture of idealistic hopes and pragmatic realities. Robert Upchurch has argued that Ælfric, however idealistic towards the reformative movement, was also practical. Upchurch states that his pastoral letters were meant from the beginning to the clergy in general, and questions their limited sphere of influence within the reformist circles. He demonstrates that Ælfric was very flexible in his terminology of what kind of priest he meant in his instructions (whether regular, secular, or mixed). It is to some extent unclear, and a topic of constant re-evaluation, what the role of reformed monasteries was in pastoral care on the grassroots level, and how they influenced the overall pastoral landscape in the 10th and 11th centuries. Given the scarce evidence we have of the influence of reformed monasteries on the pastoral landscape of later Anglo-Saxon England, it is possible that their impact was more limited than what Ælfric might have wished for. It would be tempting to see this sort of practicality in the instructions of the required books, too, and to see them as indications of the heterogeneity that prevailed on the field. As always, one can find a spectrum of different practicalities that do not conform to a neat mould.

The fact that Ælfric does not include homiliaries in his list does not thus necessarily mean he did not see sermons as essential. He might have realized or anticipated that homilies and sermons circulated also in smaller formats, especially in the context of the secular church—despite his equally often-noted insistence in the concluding prayer to his second series of Catholic homilies that they should be copied in that particular manner and not be mixed with any other texts. When we look at all the manuscripts that contain the pastoral letters, we immediately see that they often do contain several sermons and homilies, but that they could not with good conscience be called “homiliaries”. Only in two manuscripts homilies and sermons form the major part of their contents (Cambridge University Library, ms. Gg.3.28 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343). Other manuscripts with pastoral letters incorporate homilies, too, but in addition to them they also have a wide selection of diverse material for the use of the secular church, and as such escape clear categories. The strikingly controversial requirements of the books for every priest to have could thus be seen as a sign of an anticipation of the practicalities of teaching and preaching, which could happen in instances outside the parchment pages. This pertains also to teaching and preaching to the clergy itself.

If one is to place homilies and sermons under one of the categories in Ælfric’s lists of books, they would most comfortably sit together with “reading books”. It is somewhat unclear what exactly is meant by this term, but Helmut Gneuss has interpreted

56 Upchurch 2012, esp. 69–73.
57 For a recent discussion, see Jones 2009, Tinti 2015.
it as an office lectionary, which could include bible lessons for Nocturns, as well as sermons and homilies. He says the term in this particular case would be a translation of the Latin “librum cum lectionibus ad nocturnas”. There are some uncertainties with the other terms, too, such as the appearance of redingboc and spelboc (sumer & wintres) in other texts with apparently different meanings, as well as the translation of godspellboc or godspeltraht as homiliary in some other instances. Preaching seems to be assumed to have worked without any specific book category: a full homiliary is still missing from the list. There are several reasons why this might be so. Firstly, it might reflect a more general assumption that sermons could be adapted orally from written texts. Secondly, it may be plausible to assume that individual homilies could be copied and borrowed in a smaller format, like booklets, and that this practice—which is acknowledged to have been common in later Anglo-Saxon England—was an anticipated course of action in pastoral care on the grassroots level. Or thirdly, as it seems to be the case with several miscellaneous or anthologizing collections, homilies and sermons may have been expected to be scattered among other texts, forming no clear category other than a “reading book”.

It is indeed noteworthy that the majority of the manuscripts in which the pastoral letters survive, are either composed of booklets (or “blocks”) or have been written gradually over time, by adding new texts to the existing codex. As an illustrative example, a Latin manuscript which contains two pastoral letters for Wulfstan, Copenhagen Kongelige Bibliotek, GKS ms. 1595, is composed of seven sections, which all have a somewhat consistent internal logic. The pastoral letters in this manuscript are positioned in a section that contains sermons for the laity and other texts on priestly pastoral functions. The book as a whole is eminently suitable to be used in an episcopal context within the secular church. This sort of structuring of the book is an indication

59 The term godspellboc in the list is somewhat unclear. It occurs only in two texts in the whole Old English corpus. The Dictionary of Old English gives “a gospel-book, possibly an evangelistary, a lectionary containing the portions of the gospels that comprise part of the liturgy” (Cameron et al. 2016, s.v. godspellboc). This sort of book is elsewhere normally described as Cristes-boc, however, and the sense of “gospel-book” became dominant only in the Middle English period. It further complicates the matter that elsewhere Ælfric describes his own homiliaries as spelbec, and that godspellboc disappears from the list after its first occurrence. For terminology, see Gneuss 1985.

60 See esp. Robinson 1978; and Wilcox 2009.

61 Manuscripts that consist of booklets produced contemporaneously or have been added with booklets produced on a different occasion: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265; Copenhagen, GKS ms. 1595; London, British Library, ms. Cotton Vespasian D.xiv; Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121; Manuscripts put together gradually with several layers of copying or compilation: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190; London, British Library, ms. Cotton Tiberius A.iii.

62 Copenhagen, GKS ms. 1595, section VII, quires ix and x, fols. 67r–82v.
of the process of production in which smaller booklets were produced separately and then assembled together in a varied manner—or they could be used independently before they were later bound together with other texts, as noted by Christopher Jones. Michael Elliot’s study of Wulfstan’s commonplace manuscripts supports the idea that book production at Worcester and York at Wulfstan’s time would have resembled the later pecia-system in that they were produced as booklets (hence the similar but heterogeneous thematic “blocks” in the commonplace books), which could be easily combined or stacked with other booklets according to current needs. There are also examples of independent homiletic booklets in the manuscripts which contain pastoral letters, suggesting that preaching was also practised in this way, with the help of small, very portable and lightweight units, and that this practice was most likely well-known and expected.

With the kinds of varied material characteristics that these mixed collections have, it is beneficial to think of the homiletic genre and the practice of preaching in much more fluid terms than what is hinted at by the systematic collections in full homiliaries. In the remaining pages of this essay I will chart out and discuss the possible practical contexts in which the manuscripts with pastoral letters could have been used.

The uses of pastoral letters from c. 1000 to c. 1175

The biggest proportion of the books in which Ælfric’s pastoral letters are copied can with different degrees of certainty be situated in episcopal contexts throughout the 11th century. Not surprisingly, most of those five manuscripts that represent the tradition of Wulfstan’s “commonplace books” are known to have been used by a bishop, or at least to have been produced for such intent. A notable number of these books originate from the cathedral community of Worcester. One of them was produced during Wulfstan’s own episcopate (Copenhagen, GKS ms. 1595) and two under the episcopacy of Wulfstan II, around the time of the Norman Conquest (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121). An additional two manuscripts (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, part B, and the older part of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190) were probably produced at Worcester in the first half or in the middle of the 11th century, and afterwards augmented with further material elsewhere. A 12th-century homiletic manuscript with two Old

Elliot 2012, 34–36.
Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121, fols. 138r–60r, contains a separate section with five homilies in different hands: Ælfric’s ‘Dominica prima de aduentu Domini’ and ‘Dominica secunda de aduentu Domini’, an anonymous sermon for Easter Day (‘De descensu Christi ad inferos’ [title added later]), Ælfric’s preface to the first series of Catholic homilies adapted as a homily, and his ‘In assumptione Sanctæ Marie uirginis’.
English letters for Wulfstan (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343)—not one of the “commonplace books”—has been estimated to have originated from somewhere nearby, though not necessarily from the Worcester Cathedral scriptorium itself. On the one hand the concentration of these books in the Worcester area indicates certain continuity in textual production in the West Midlands, but on the other hand restricts the reading of these letters as evidence of a wider practice.

There are, however, examples of circulation of the pastoral letters also in other episcopal environments. One of them is the wholly Latin Copenhagen manuscript, which was at some point (perhaps as early as in the 11th century) taken to Denmark. The Latin sermons, canonical and liturgical tracts in this modest book would have provided a practical handbook for basic catechetical teaching of the laity, in addition to functioning as a guide for episcopal work. The sermons in this manuscript are stripped from complex theological discussion and they summarize the basic themes a prelate would need at his work. Their form and style suggest that they could have functioned as drafts for the preparation of preaching, for elaboration in either oral delivery or further adaptation in writing. But since the date of the manuscript’s transfer to Denmark is unclear, it is difficult to estimate the scope of the uses of this book. James Cross and Jennifer Morrish Tunberg considered it unlikely that the manuscript would have left England during Wulfstan’s time, because of its “frankly utilitarian” content and appearance. As such it would not have been an “obvious choice for presentation” for Cnut or someone connected with him.

This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that it was brought to Denmark around the same time on a less prestigious occasion. Johan Gerritsen, in turn, has argued that the book was, in fact, a gift for the newly appointed bishop of Roskilde, Gerbrand, who was consecrated at Canterbury by Archbishop Æthelnoth in 1022, and that the booklet-format with eight scribes points to a hurried production of a manuscript that was from its beginnings planned as a whole. However, taking into account the practice of book production at Worcester at this time, this sort of structure does not necessarily implicate haste or an unusual, immediate need. On the contrary, these “blocks” could have been made with the intent of being on stock for later compilation, as Jones’ and others’ observations on book production at Worcester suggests.

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66 Irvine 1993, xix, liii.
67 Cross & Tunberg 1993, 60–61. Tunberg suggests the later context of Benedictine community of Evesham’s establishment of a daughter house in Odense, c. 1095–1096. The contents of the book would, however, point to a direction of the secular church, bearing no indication of monastic interests.
69 Cf. Gerritsen 1998, 509–510, “In Wulfstan’s day, copying was still definitely for a purpose. Copying for stock does not appear until, again, the fifteenth century. The fact that these ten quires now form one volume is therefore prima facie evidence that they were copied to make this very book.”
Despite these uncertainties, the pastoral contents in the book form a coherent whole from which a bishop could draw general guidelines or inspiration in the composition of sermons in Wulfstan’s “commonplace” manuscripts. The section in which the pastoral letters occur in the Copenhagen manuscripts concerns solely and exclusively clerical instruction. Furthermore, both letters in this manuscript are titled as sermons for the clergy: the first letter has a rubric *Sermo episcopi ad clericos*, and the second *Item sermo ad sacerdotes*, both added by Wulfstan himself. The other texts that surround the letters concern the practice of baptism, the blessing of the chrism, the preparation of the wine, bread and water for the mass, and short definitions of lower clerical grades (*hostiarius* and *lector*). The contents are wholly suitable for the use of the secular church, and taking into account the book’s later Danish provenance, it would be tempting to see it as part of the practical establishment of ecclesiastical administration in Scandinavia. But since there are few signs of use, marginalia or annotations other than Wulfstan’s own corrections, a small addition in an 11th-century continental hand, and darkening of the lower corners, not much can be ascertained about its specific contexts of use.

Two further examples of circulation outside the Worcester area that can be placed in more specific episcopal sees include the homiliary that was most likely produced at Cerne and supervised by Ælfric containing the letter for Wulfsgie (Cambridge University Library, ms. Gg.3.28). This manuscript is the sole example that contains both series of Ælfric’s *Catholic homilies*, and therefore it is often seen in the context of the monastic reform. Hill describes it as a “file copy” to be kept at Cerne, but Upchurch has recently argued for a more secular context. The book’s Durham provenance, Upchurch suggests, may date from a time soon after its production, as its contents and composition would have been especially suitable for the use of the community of secular priests, established at Durham by Bishop Aldhun in 995. That the pastoral letter for Wulfsgie was added to this manuscript after the homilies would confirm its use in a new episcopal environment. New contexts can also be seen in the way an early or mid-11th-century Latin “commonplace book” containing legislation, liturgy and sermons (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190) was augmented with penitential, canonical and homiletic material, mostly in the vernacular, together with some excerpts from the rule of Chrodegang and from the councils after the battle of Hastings. As mentioned above, the resulting book is the only example in which all the five pasto-

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70 Copenhagen, GKS ms. 1595, section VII, quires ix and x, fols. 67r–82v.
71 Fol. 82 contains a Gloria and neumes in an 11th-century hand that belonged possibly to someone from Germany or eastern parts of Francia. This may either tell of the relationships between continental centres and England, or between the continent and Denmark. It is not possible to determine if the neumes were drawn on the margins in England, in Denmark, or on the continent. See Cross & Tunberg 1993.
ral letters are present, since the additions made at Exeter include not just the two Old English letters for Wulfstan, but also the letter for Wulfsgie, which appears here with a title *Be preoste synode*. The book has a very complex compilation, but at the same time it shows the flexibility of book (re)production and use: it has been transformed into a useful compilation for the use of the cathedral community of Exeter, and as such it reflects the interests of the community following the enlarged rule of Chrodegang, and probably even more those of Bishop Leofric himself. As a man educated on the continent, and having spent much time there, practical handbooks like these would probably have been very useful in dealing with pastoral care in an English context. Judging from its wear and tear and numerous additions and annotations, it seems to have been in active use, too.

These episcopal manuscripts are valuable when estimating the role of the bishop in the organization of pastoral care and preaching in the dioceses. Often the sermons and homilies that are copied in these collections do not form a separate part, but are scattered in a piecemeal fashion or in thematic groups among other texts: this sort of flexibility conforms well to the vagueness of the list of the required books and the absence of homiliary from it.

The sermons surrounding the pastoral letters are often addressed to the general public or to the clergy, but on the other hand they are not as strict as to indicate any specific audience, and could perhaps be adjusted according to the situation. It is worth noting that in several manuscripts the pastoral letters are situated near or in the immediate context of sermons that explain the necessity and meaning of baptism. Other issues closely related to pastoral care that appear together with the pastoral letters are the importance of confession, the visitation of the sick and the dying, and the payment of church dues. All these issues indicate interest in the practicalities and organization of pastoral care, of which the letters were clearly part, and demonstrate that the survival of practical texts such as these letters only in large “reference collections” is not an impassable obstacle in our attempts to estimate their possible uses.

Administration of baptism is one of the subjects in the letters themselves, in the like manner of Wulfstan’s other homilies. For instance, in one of the two manuscripts that were produced in the 12th century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343, the two Old English letters are preceded with Wulfstan’s *Sermo de baptismate*. This large collection that contains both Latin and Old English homilies is more distinctly homiletic than most of the other manuscripts in which the pastoral letters are cop-

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73 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190, p. 205.
74 The growing interest in the payment of tithes was most likely related to the changing relationships between lay landlords and the clergy, and the new organization and establishment of local churches by the lay magnate: Tinti 2010, 289.
75 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343, fols. 132r–33r, printed by Bethurum 1957, 175–184, as VIIIc, ‘Sermo de baptismate’.
ied. The contents of this late manuscript are part of the vernacular preaching tradition which started before Ælfric’s endeavours, and as such testify to the continued interest in the use of the vernacular well beyond the Norman Conquest. The texts in the section in which the letters appear—though “with no apparent pattern in their arrangement”—are generally suitable for episcopal and pastoral work. The section includes texts that concern the dedication of a church, clerical instruction, the blessing of the chrism, baptism and preaching, several by Wulfstan himself. Its large size (in its current state with trimmed pages it measures up to c. $310 \times 205$ mm) makes it impractical for use in pastoral care in the field. It has been estimated to have been used for devotional reading or as a secondary resource for preaching, though the idiosyncratic method of compilation of the manuscript would also point to an archival intent. Archiving “does not, it should be acknowledged, define an end unto itself”, but can serve as a beginning for a range of other uses, such as instruction or preaching, as Aidan Conti remarks.

The surrounding texts that were copied together with the letters, and in this way imply a certain degree of association, often give clues as to the intended uses of these texts. For instance, in one of Wulfstan’s “commonplace books” (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, part B), the first Old English pastoral letter is copied among several sermons that are addressed to the laity (to folce). Despite its mixed contents and complex compilation, the book has an internal logic: it starts with a homily on Adam and an outline of the history of the world and its six ages. It is quite common for homiletic manuscripts to situate preaching in a meaningful context of the faith with a beginning that deals with Christian cosmology and history. Then follows a number of sermons (or pastoral letters on archiepiscopal functions) addressed to the general public, “to eallum folce”, which are in turn followed by a cluster of sermons and exhortations that pertain to the functions and obligations of priests. Then the sermons’ address seems to change once again, as they discuss the matters of worldly rule and the sinfulness of evil rulers. These pieces are then followed by a group of sermons on the coming of the Antichrist and the end of the world. Passages on legislation, regulation, and various pastoral functions fill the rest of the book, together with an Old English prose version of Apollonius of Tyre and a list of the resting places of assorted kings, saints, and bishops.

The letter itself is clearly regarded to function as a sermon, as well, and to be

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76 Conti 2012, 262–263.
77 Irvine 1993, xlvi.
80 Conti 2012, 271.
81 The sermons are centred roughly on pp. 8–87, though not all readings in this part are actual sermons.
preached to the clergy, evidently by the bishop himself. It has a rubric *To gehadedum mannum*, and is followed by two additional readings to men in orders from Wulfstan’s *Institutes of polity* (*Be gehadedum mannum*, and *To gehadedum & læwedum mannum*), and an exhortation to “all Christian men”. These exhortations are then followed by three pages of legal regulations for clerics from the *Northumbrian priests’ law*. In this manuscript the first Old English letter for Wulfstan is modified by him, and the sermons have a particular tone bearing his authority, as they often retain his name as an author. The book contains a number of his own pastoral letters, divided in three readings, all with a rubric *to folce*, in which the archbishop “greets friendly both thegns and people, mutually both clerical and lay”, and asks them to heed to his moral exhortations. These tracts can be seen as the most notable archiepiscopal authorization for the contents of the whole book, giving certain force to the role of the bishops in the pastoral landscape also after Wulfstan’s own episcopate.

Similar association with sermons *ad populum* and *ad sacerdotes* is visible also in the mid-11th-century manuscript from Christ Church, Canterbury mentioned above (British Library, Cotton Tiberius, ms. A.iii), which otherwise is somewhat dissimilar to other manuscripts with the pastoral letters. Here the second pastoral letter for Wulfstan, which ends abruptly, is situated among confessional material together with sermons addressed to the general public and the clergy. The book, however, contains much more monastic material than those discussed above, such as the Rule of St. Benedict and Ælfric’s *Colloquy*—both of which are thoroughly glossed—, and a tract on monastic sign language and several prognostics. Although not previously seen to have had a pastoral function, but described as a monastic book or a reference book for clerical instruction, the mixture of monastic, clerical and archiepiscopal material in compilations like these highlights the various practices of pastoral care, especially in those cathedral environments that were proponents of the reformed monasticism, and in which both monks and clerics could have a pastoral role. The sermons to the general public expound on the fleeting nature of human life on earth, they explain the meaning of Christ’s death, and exhort to alms-giving, to the payment of tithes, and the renunciation of one’s sins and wrongdoings—lest one perishes in the eternal fires of hell. Topics such as these would certainly be suitable for the purposes of a monastic community that also engaged in pastoral activities in the surrounding areas.

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82 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, pp. 31–46.
83 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, pp. 19–22.
85 Especially the work by Tracey-Ann Cooper has shed new light on the long life of this manuscript and its functions in an environment of reformed monasticism that also included pastoral care by the archbishop. See Cooper 2005, and further, Cooper 2015; Tinti 2015, 242–243.
Pastoral and episcopal work seems therefore to have been the main function of these letters, but at least in one instance the letters were used in a context completely removed from pastoral care. This is one of the two manuscripts that were produced in the 12th century, British Library, Cotton Vespasian ms. D.xiv, part I. This manuscript was compiled apparently at the cathedral priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, in 1140–1160. In the late 12th century the book was evidently used in a female community, or at least was read by a member of one, as there are additions in the beginning of the book by a scribe who identifies herself as an *ancilla*, perhaps from the nunnery of St Sepulchre in Canterbury.\(^\text{87}\) The nature of the manuscript is quite different when compared to the rest of the books in which the pastoral letters survive, since it does not appear to indicate any liturgical or pastoral interest, but is a compilation of homiletic, hagiographic, educational and other material, many of them excerpted or abridged. Neither of the two pastoral letters for Wulstan that the compiler used in this collection is complete. Only a selected passage has been copied from both letters: that on the Ten Commandments with a rubric *Decalogum Moysi*, and that on the visions of St John the Evangelist and Daniel on the ascendance of Christ. The latter excerpt is not rubricated, but it addresses an apparently monastic audience by its call for chastity that the holy servants of God (“halige þenas & halige þinena”) are expected to keep.\(^\text{88}\) The pastoral letters stand apart from each other, unlike in many previous instances of copying, and are situated among texts that deal with rather basic doctrinal edification, such as the Old English version of the *Disticha Catonis*, an excerpted homiletic passage on the Trinity and the nature of man,\(^\text{89}\) and Ælfric’s *De duodecimabusivis*.\(^\text{90}\) The surrounding contents have no bearing on liturgy, the secular church or pastoral care, nor do the passages taken from the pastoral letters show any signs of their “original” intentions of educating the secular clergy.

In fact, as George Younge has pointed out, when selecting material for the collection the compiler of Vespasian D.xiv has throughout the book skilfully avoided material that pertains to the teaching of the ordinary laity, and selected material more exclusively applicable to monastic life. Younge states that characterizing the manuscript as “commonplace book”, a “preaching manual”, or a “teaching manual for young religious” does not fully explain the contents of the book. Instead, the choices within the collection point to the conclusion that it would have been especially suitable for private reading among an audience consisting of *conversi*, adult postulants to the monastic life, but Younge does not exclude the option that it might have found its way to

\(^{87}\) Treharne 2010.


\(^{89}\) Excerpted from Ælfric’s ‘Feria IIII de fide Catholica’ (*Catholic homilies* I.20).

\(^{90}\) The parts in which the pastoral letters occur, described by Handley as “blocks” B and C, contain material more generally on the early church. The book as a whole forms a coherent series of thematic blocks, starting from the Creation to the early church, and to the Resurrection and the afterlife: Younge 2013, 2; Handley 1974.
pastoral care through the monks of Christ Church.\textsuperscript{91} However, there is less evidence of the latter—unless the folded booklet that forms the beginning of the codex could be seen as an indication of pastoral activities outside the monastery before its inclusion to the rest of the book.\textsuperscript{92} The modification of the pastoral letters from their more common function as episcopal sermons to the secular clergy to two selected passages on basic doctrinal issues that show no interest towards pastoral care or the secular church would in turn point to a use within the monastic walls. In mid-12th century, the letters were therefore used at least in two quite different contexts, one that resembles their original intention as aid in episcopal and pastoral work, and another that seems to be consciously removed from it. These differences are not indications of an evolutionary development of these texts, but show in a concrete way the diversity of the church’s function on the ground.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as we do not have any other evidence of the circulation of the letters than what remains in large collections, they must first and foremost be seen as declarations of authority on the bishops’ part to define the rules and obligations for standardized pastoral work in their own dioceses. The manuscript evidence shows that there was certain continuity in these episcopal aspirations in the Worcester diocese also after the Norman Conquest, shown most clearly during the episcopacy of Wulfstan II, whose own manuscript compilations are an interesting source of information on what was considered essential in the pastoral landscape in the diocese of Worcester. Despite the concentration of material to the West Midlands area the letters were evidently used also in other contexts, most notably as part of episcopal work in other sees such as Exeter and perhaps also in Durham. On a more cautious note, they may have played a part in the early stages of the establishment of pastoral work in a Danish context. Less clear is the use of the pastoral letters in monastic environments, except for monastic cathedrals, but they could also serve as sources for devotional reading in a situation stripped from the matters of the secular church.

The aspirations of the letters together with the varied manuscript contexts may be seen as an indication of certain flexibility in the production and communication of pastoral care. Acknowledging that the pastoral letters survive only in miscellaneous, commonplace, or reference books does not do justice to the living practices of pastoral care. Large collections with miscellaneous or anthologizing material like these

\begin{footnotes}
\item[91] Young 2013, esp. 5–7, 16–17.
\item[92] British Library, ms. Cotton Vespasian, D.xiv, fols. 4\textsuperscript{v}–6\textsuperscript{v}, which contains an excerpted account of the creation of the world, adapted from a homily by Ælfric, and has a horizontal folding mark across the leaves.
\end{footnotes}
did not have only an archival function, but could be used in further copying of individual items, and then used in dioceses separately, or as material for the preparation of preaching. The bishop himself could use this material when preaching to his clergy, who would then rely on their memory of his teachings in the delivery of pastoral care in practice. Estimations of uses like these are necessarily conjectural, but nonetheless appealing in light of the living nature of homiletic writing and pastoral letters in their varying contexts. It is perhaps useful to imagine not a single purpose for these letters, but a range of wider contexts that we can only approach indirectly, with the help of the expectations towards clerical instruction, the production of booklets to be used for preaching or later compilation, and the varying textual contexts and associations with other texts. Even though we must always be wary of the limitations of manuscript evidence, and to avoid making too broad generalizations based on such fragmentary evidence, there is sufficient reason to consider the possibility that the admonitions in these letters were indeed taught and preached in practice, too.

APPENDIX:
Manuscripts that contain Ælfric’s pastoral letters, listed in a rough chronological order of production

K = Ker 1957, G = Gneuss 2001

Cambridge, University Library, ms. Gg.3.28
K 15, G 11
Date: c. 1000
Contents in brief: Ælfric’s Catholic homilies I & II
Contains pastoral letters: Letter for Wulfsige (incomplete, fols. 264r–266v)
Origin/Provenance: Cerne? prov. Durham

Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Gl. Kgl. Sam., ms. 1595 4°
K —, G 814
Date: c. 1002–1023
Contents in brief: Wulfstan’s commonplace book (Latin)
Contains pastoral letters: First and Second Latin letters for Wulfstan (fols. 67r–74r, 74r–77v)
Origin/Provenance: Worcester; prov. Denmark (Odense?)
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 201, pp. 8–160, 167–176
K 49B, G 65,5
Date: s. xi or xi^med
Contents in brief: Homiletic, canonical, legal and miscellaneous material
Contains pastoral letters: First Old English letter for Wulfstan (modified, pp. 31–46)
Origin/Provenance: Winchester, New Minster?; prov. Worcester?

British Library, ms. Cotton Tiberius, A.iii, fols. 2–173
K 186, G 363
Date: s. xi^med
Contents in brief: Miscellaneous monastic, confessional, scientific and homiletic material
Contains pastoral letters: Second Old English letter for Wulfstan (ends abruptly; fols. 106^r–7^r)
Origin/Provenance: Canterbury, Christ Church

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 190, pp. iii–xii, 1–294, 295–420
K 186, G 363
Date: s. xi; additions s. xi^2
Contents in brief: Wulfstan’s commonplace book (Latin), added with canonical, penitential and other ecclesiastical material mostly in the vernacular
Contains pastoral letters: First and Second Latin letters for Wulfstan (pp. 151–159, 188–201); Letter for Wulfsige (pp. 295–308); First and Second Old English letters for Wulfstan (pp. 320–336, 336–349)
Origin/Provenance: Worcester? Added to at Exeter, prov. Exeter (whole ms.)

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, ms. 265, pp. i–268
K 53, G 73
Date: s. xi^med–xi^3/4; additions s. xi^3–xii^im
Contents in brief: Wulfstan’s commonplace book (Latin)
Contains pastoral letters: First and second Latin letters for Wulfstan (pp. 160–173, 174–180)
Origin/Provenance: Worcester

Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Junius 121
K 338, G 64,4
Date: s. xi^2 (1060–1072); additions s. xi^2
Contents in brief: Wulfstan’s commonplace book
Contains pastoral letters: Letter for Wulfsige (fols. 101^v–10^v); Second Old English letter for Wulfstan (fols. 111^r–2.4^r)
Origin/Provenance: Worcester
British Library, ms. Cotton Vespasian, D.xiv, fols. 4–169
K 209, G —
Date: 1140–1160
Contents in brief: Homiletic, educational and miscellaneous material
Contains pastoral letters: Extracts from the first and second Old English letters for Wulfstan (fols. 130r–150r, 750r–v)
Origin/Provenance: Canterbury, Christ Church

Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Bodley 343
K 310, G —
Date: s. xii (c. 1175)
Contents in brief: Homilies and saints’ Lives
Contains pastoral letters: First and second Old English letters for Wulfstan (fols. 135r–37v, 137r–40r)
Origin/Provenance: Unknown, south-west Midlands?

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barlow 37, fols. 1–61
K —, G —
Date: s. xii
Contents in brief: Wulfstan’s commonplace book (Latin)
Contains pastoral letters: Extracts from the first and second Latin letters for Wulfstan (41v–42v, 44r–45v)
Provenance: Unknown
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