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## Levels of Learning in Anglo-Saxon Worcester: the Evidence Re-assessed<sup>1</sup>

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A large number of surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are associated with Worcester Cathedral,<sup>2</sup> which is generally considered one of the most important monastic foundations of the period. King Alfred recruited seven scholars, of which no fewer than four were active in Worcester and surrounding areas in south-west Mercia, to assist him in his programme of translating books that he considered 'ða [. . .] nidbeðyrfesta [. . .] eallum monnum to witanne' [most necessary for all men to know].<sup>3</sup> In spite of Simon Keynes's and Michael Lapidge's claim that there was only a 'meagre [. . .] record of intellectual achievement during an otherwise barren century',<sup>4</sup> it is reasonable to surmise, *inter alia* from Alfred's recruitment of the Worcester scholars, that the centre had already reached respectable levels of scholarship in the latter half of the ninth century. Since Wolfgang Keller's and Ivor Atkins's sizable studies,<sup>5</sup> a number of publications have appeared on issues pertaining to the literary activity at Worcester at various times. This article presents an overview of the evidence as well as some justifiable deductions and extrapolations in order to arrive at a more fully informed picture of Worcester's intellectual development in general, and particularly of the calibre of scholarly expertise at the time of Alfred's educational reform.

The evidence for learning levels in the Worcester area is quite limited for the period prior to the end of the ninth century. Alfred's complaint about the virtually general ignorance of Latin may have been, as some have suggested, dressed in rhetorical exaggeration.<sup>6</sup>

Swa clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on Angelkynne ðætte swiðe feawe  
wæron behionan Humbre þe hiora ðenunga cuðen understandan  
on Englisc, oððe furðum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc

areccan; & ic wene ðætte nauht monige begeondan Humber næren. Swa feawe hiora wæron ðætte ic furðum anne anlepne ne mæg geðencean besuðan Temese ða ða ic to rice feng.<sup>7</sup>

[It (i.e. learning) had declined so utterly among the English that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their divine service in English, or who could even translate a letter from Latin into English; and I know that there were not many on the other side of the Humber. There were so few of them that I could not even think of a single one south of the Thames at the time when I acceded to the kingship.]

It does, however, clearly indicate that scholastic centres in general had suffered at least a significant recession. Ralph Davis seems to imply that Alfred was simply contradicting himself:

Provided that we interpret the word 'few' loosely, it need not contain any specific untruth, but it hardly prepares us for the fact that of the seven of Alfred's literary advisers whose names are known, four came from Mercia. There is every reason to believe that in that part of England a vigorous literary tradition had survived, but in this statement Alfred ignored it, with the result that the magnitude of the educational achievement of his own reign was enhanced.<sup>8</sup>

However, one can deduce that Alfred did not consider Mercia (the territory of the Hwicce, the Angles, the Mercians, and the Magonsætan) part of his own 'entire country'; although it fell within Alfred's sphere of influence,<sup>9</sup> it was at that stage still a separate kingdom. His turning to south-west Mercia to engage Wærferth as learned assistant, then, like his recruitment of three other scholars from Wales, Saxony and Flanders,<sup>10</sup> indicates that Alfred expected to find in these places the presence of teachers and books, and thus of scribes and the makings of a library whose calibre was not available in his own country.

Worcester's proximity to several Roman roads provided connections with Wessex and the east,<sup>11</sup> the Malvern Hills offered protection from the West, and the river Severn allowed access to the sea, while the inhospitable coasts of the Bristol Channel precluded Viking attacks.<sup>12</sup> All these factors contributed to the flourishing of Worcester and its development of an economic base. Numerous

royal grants of land testify that the episcopal see and the monasteries in the immediate vicinity received the patronage of the Mercian kings in the eighth century.<sup>13</sup> Such donations inevitably resulted in a thoroughly Mercian political and economic orientation and they generated an enhanced material affluence, which was a prerequisite for the development of a library, as is clear from the high prices paid for manuscripts.<sup>14</sup> Of course, if manuscripts were bought, it is plausible to infer that there would have been people able to read them, to use their contents for teaching, and to copy them. This in itself was likely to instigate and inspire the production of more literature.

A considerable number of charters, dating from throughout the ninth century, present bishops of Worcester and monasteries in the immediate vicinity as parties to transactions or donations of land, or in agreements or disputes, indicating a stable economical environment throughout the period of the Viking attacks,<sup>15</sup> during which most of Mercia was ravaged together with the rest of the country. While other monasteries lost their riches and valuable manuscripts, and had to start building up a collection all over again (if they had the means and commitment), Worcester, and perhaps other centres in south-west Mercia, may have suffered no significant interruption to their intellectual development since the seventh century, when Irish teachers were in England.<sup>16</sup> This would explain why Alfred turned to south-west Mercia to find Latinists well versed in theology. It is conceivable that more were engaged than the four mentioned by Asser, and it is certain that others would have continued studying, teaching and writing in Worcester, and possibly in other centres about which no information has survived.

Alfred's military successes against the Danes had firmly established respect for his power and authority in the rest of 'England'. The Worcester area, which was never involved in military operations, was to be approached in a different way. While there is not much clear documentary evidence that previous kings of Wessex invested in Worcester as a manifestation of political power, Alfred was clearly interested both in the standards of learning possessed by the Worcester monasteries and in expanding his network of influence into this very affluent boundary region, thereby opening up the possibility of annexing the rest of Mercia. Such political aims also seem to underlie Alfred's giving his daughter Æthelflæd in marriage to Æthelred Ealdorman of Mercia. The recruitment of four (probably south-west) Mercian scholars may have been a strategic move containing a political statement of power, possibly inspired by Charlemagne's example of inviting advisors and scholars from many areas (such as Alcuin of

York, a prominent figure well-known in England). Asser emphasises the scholars' Mercian origins:

At tunc Deus [. . .] transmisit Werfrithum [. . .] Wigernensis ecclesiae episcopum [. . .] deinde Plegmundum, Mercium genere, Dorobernensis ecclesiae archiepiscopum, venerabilem scilicet virum, sapientia praeditum; Æthelstan quoque et Werwulfum, sacerdotes et capellanos, Mercios genere, eruditos. Quos quatuor [sic] Ælfred rex de Mercia ad se advocaverat [. . .].

[But then God [. . .] sent Wærferth, [. . .] bishop of the church of Worcester [. . .] and subsequently Plegmund, a Mercian by race, archbishop of the church of Canterbury, an obviously venerable man, considerably gifted with wisdom; and also Æthelstan and Werwulf, erudite priests and chaplains and Mercians by race. King Alfred summoned these four from Mercia.]<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, all but one of the scholars (Wærferth) are explicitly said to belong to the Mercian race ('Mercius genere'). Therefore the distinct impression arises that Asser meant to present the cathedral of Worcester as part of Mercia, as well as drawing attention to the four clerics' learning. Given Worcester's undisturbed development, it is a reasonable assumption that they all originated from, or at least were trained in, the Worcester area, but Asser refers to them non-specifically as 'four men from Mercia' ('Quos quatuor [. . .] de Mercia'). Thus he evokes a sense of unity between the old kingdom of Mercia as a whole and Alfred's Wessex, and simultaneously expresses appreciation for their contribution to the success of Alfred's cultural development of his whole territory, which he so strikingly called 'Angelcynn' in spite of his own Saxon descent.<sup>18</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, charters, and ninth-century coinage, as demonstrated by Keynes,<sup>19</sup> equally provide evidence that from the early 880s onwards, Alfred was incorporating Mercia into his 'kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons' (consisting of 'English' Mercia, Wessex, Kent and Sussex). These efforts support the suggestion that at the time he wrote the prefatory letter to the *Pastoral Care* south-west Mercia was not effectively a province of his own realm yet.

*Literary Activity in Pre-Alfredian Worcester*

*Oftfor's Time*

The evidence of learning and the presence of books in early Worcester is, again, sparse. As Patrick Sims-Williams remarks, 'biblical study was the ground and apex of all other studies'.<sup>20</sup> In the early medieval context, however, as he goes on to say, this presupposes the availability of a text of the Bible, or, as was more usually the case, of individual books or groups of books of the Bible, which would be in Latin and would thus require a grammar and commentaries, and a teacher to instruct in both Latin and theology. Bede's account of Oftfor's studies, travels, and consecration as bishop (691-693/4)<sup>21</sup> is the first recorded and only pre-Alfredian document illustrating education in Worcester:

[Oftfor] [. . .] cum in utroque *Hildae* abbatissae monasterio lectioni et obseruationi scripturarum operam dedisset, tandem perfectiora desiderans uenit Cantiam ad archiepiscopum beatae recordationis Theodorum. Vbi postquam aliquandiu lectionibus sacris uacauit, etiam *Romam* adire curauit, quod eo tempore magnae uirtutis aestimabatur; et inde cum rediens Britanniam adisset, diuertit ad prouinciam *Huicciorum*, cui tunc rex Osric praefuit, ibique uerbum fidei praedicans [. . .] multo tempore mansit. [. . .] [O]mnium iudicio [. . .] *in episcopatum* [. . .] electus ac [. . .] per Uilfridum [. . .] antistitem [. . .] *ordinatus* est [. . .].

[After he had devoted himself, in Abbess Hild's double monastery, to the reading and observing of the Scriptures, Oftfor eventually came to Canterbury, to Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory, desiring further perfection. Then, after he had dedicated himself for some time to holy readings, he even troubled himself to go to Rome, which at that time was deemed to be of great virtue. When he, on his return journey from there, reached Britain, he made a detour to the province of the Hwicci, which was then ruled by King Osric, and there [. . .] he stayed for a long time, [. . .] preaching the word of faith. [. . .] With a unanimous vote he was elected bishop and [. . .] ordained by priest Wilfrid [. . .].<sup>22</sup>

Bede states here that Otffor studied at both of Hild's monasteries, Streonesheal and Hartlepool, highly valued for their emphasis on the study of Scripture. Subsequently, he is said to have attended Archbishop Theodore's school in Canterbury, renowned for its unique reputation in biblical study in the Antiochene tradition, which categorically rejected the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation promoted by the earlier Alexandrine school, in favour of a very literal method of exegesis, exemplified in Theodore's commentaries.<sup>23</sup> It is perhaps a large step to take, but it is tempting to speculate that this literal approach to exegesis and biblical commentary may have been an influential element contributing to the literal style of translation practised by a Mercian school to which Wærferth and the translator of the Old English *Ecclesiastical History* could have been connected. Otffor would certainly have been well placed to exert this influence, especially, as Bede explicitly states, since he spent a long time in the 'Provincia Hwiccorum' and was ordained bishop there.

Because Otffor, as his name suggests (it may be interpreted as 'often fared'),<sup>24</sup> and as Bede's account confirms, spent some time travelling as a pilgrim within England and to Rome, he probably undertook some transportation of relics or manuscripts, for this was customary, as the example of Benedict Biscop testifies and as is reported by Bede and Æthilwald (one of Aldhelm's students).<sup>25</sup> Three surviving charters indicate that once he was ordained bishop of the Hwicce, the Church was granted several portions of land by the Mercian King Æthelred,<sup>26</sup> conceivably, as happened regularly,<sup>27</sup> in exchange for manuscripts. Otffor probably brought several books from his travels to Worcester, but there remains only one speculative indication that he may have provided a connection between the monastery of Streonesheal and Worcester in the form of the lost source used by the anonymous Streonesheal author and which is likely to have been available to Wærferth when he was translating the *Dialogi*.<sup>28</sup> The anonymous *Life of Gregory*, written at Streonesheal, possibly by a nun,<sup>29</sup> contains two unusual details which reappear exclusively in Worcester texts: Gregory's epithet 'os aureum' ('golden mouth') occurs twice in Wærferth's Old English version of Gregory's *Dialogi*,<sup>30</sup> and the anecdote of Gregory breaking the lamp on Siricius' tomb to avenge Jerome can be found only in John of Worcester's early twelfth-century marginalia in the Worcester copy of William of Malmesbury's recension of the *Liber Pontificalis*:<sup>31</sup>

obscurari lampadem. *Nec inmerito*; quia in eo lectionis quoque divine lampas hoc lucissime agendum dilucidavit.<sup>33</sup>

[His (i.e. Gregory's) celestial soul perceived something similar, that is horrible to tell, regarding that particular Pope (i.e. Siricius). This Pope, as much as was within his power, extinguished God's lamp, lit by Him with a singularly bright light, by forcing the light of Saint Jerome, the lampstand not only of the Romans but also of the whole world, in Rome (which is the head of cities and the mistress of the world), to emigrate from this city on account of his (i.e. Siricius') dreadful infidelity of judgement. He therefore justly deserved that his own lamp be extinguished by Saint Gregory, and not undeservedly, for the lamp of divine judgement in him (i.e. in Gregory) illuminated most clearly that this had to be done.]

John of Worcester passage (CUL Kk.4.6)

Erat Rome mos antiquitus institutus, ut ad apostolicorum virorum sepulcra die noctuque lumen arderet. *Nec inmerito*: nam iuxta evangelicam auctoritatem *illi lux sunt mundi* [. . .] Lucerna ardens et lucens, beatissimus videlicet Gregorius, dum paparet, dum ecclesiam Dei apostolico iure gubernaret, aut legit vel audivit a narrantibus, quid [*sic*] olim temporis vir apostolicus Siricius in beatum gesserat Ieronimum. Factum est in una dierum, lustratis Urbis interioribus, sanctus Gregorius ad tumulos virorum apostolicorum luminibus sacris ardentia lumina cernens et ad predicti papae tumbam perveniens, substitit, exclamat, indignans protinus inquit: 'Tumba tegit papam, qui mundi lumen ab Urbe expulerat dudum, quod reple[vit] dogmate mundum. Hinc vere indignum et iniustum est ardere lumen ad sepulcrum illius'. Dixit, vas fregit baculo fuditque liquorem. Et sic in Siricium vindicat Ieronimum.<sup>34</sup>

[In Rome the ancient custom had been established that at the graves of popes ('apostolic men') a light should burn night and day. Not unrightly so, for according to the authority of the Gospel those men are the light of the world [. . .] A lamp burning and bright, namely the most blessed Gregory, while he was pope, and while he was ruling the Church of God with apostolic right, either



read or heard from informers what, once upon a time, Pope Siricius had done against the blessed Jerome. On one of the days, when the inner parts of the city were lit, it happened that Saint Gregory was observing with his holy eyes the burning lights at the graves of the popes and when he arrived at the grave of the aforementioned pope he stopped and cried out. Indignant he immediately started to speak: 'This grave covers the pope who, a while ago, expelled from the City the world's light, which filled the world with the Learning. Hence it is truly shameful and unjust for a light to burn at his grave.' So he spoke, and broke the lamp with his stick and spilled the liquid. And thus he avenged Jerome upon Siricius.]

The fact that Wærferth refers to Gregory's epithet not only in Old English and in Latin, but also in Greek, possibly suggests, based on the evidence of glosses and biblical commentaries, that there may have been knowledge of Greek (as mentioned earlier) and Hebrew in early ninth-century Mercia, which necessarily would have been supported by a culture of erudition.<sup>35</sup>

Mainly on the basis that only one, ninth-century continental, manuscript survives, it has generally been held that the Streoneshealh *vita* had only a very limited circulation in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>36</sup> Precisely on the basis of the 'os aureum' and 'gyldenmuþ' epithets, which the *vita* and Wærferth's *Dialogues* have in common, it is worth considering the possibility that a copy of the Streoneshealh *vita* either was at Worcester shortly before or during Wærferth's time,<sup>37</sup> or at least that he had direct or indirect access to it. Sims-Williams mentions that both authors could have drawn on another (lost) source.<sup>38</sup> The fact that both Wærferth's and John of Worcester's additions are more elaborate than the Streoneshealh *vita* supports this suggestion, yet it does not preclude the possibility that the Streoneshealh text was also available to them. We know that Oftfor studied at Streoneshealh and suspect that he travelled and transported manuscripts. It is therefore conceivable that he was responsible either for taking to Worcester a copy of the lost Latin source of the Streoneshealh *vita*, or for having learnt the two details and having passed them on in some form in Worcester so that they reached Wærferth and John of Worcester, or indeed that he may have taken a copy of the *vita* itself to Worcester. In any event, this confirms the interest in Gregory at both Streoneshealh and Worcester, and moreover indicates that some

exchange of learning (in the form of manuscripts or teaching, but most likely both) was taking place between Worcester and other monastic centres.

*Evidence of Books at Worcester*

Worcester doubtlessly acquired the necessary liturgical books immediately after its foundation as a bishopric in 680. In about 780 King Offa is alleged to have donated a bible to the church, as a charter in his name testifies: '[. . .] Insuper dedi ad praedictam ecclesiam (i.e. 'ad episcopalem sedem Wigorcestrengis aeclesiae') bibliothecam optimam cum duabus armillis' [In addition I have granted to the aforementioned church (that is to the Episcopal see of the Church of Worcester) an excellent bible with two golden bands].<sup>39</sup> Cuthbert Turner, Ivor Atkins and Neil R. Ker established that the following three fragments could come from this bible, which was identified in the eleventh century with Offa's bible: London, British Library, MSS Additional 37777, Additional 45025 and Loan 81.<sup>40</sup> Three leaves of Gospel fragments from the second half of the eighth century, three bifolia from biblical commentaries (two seventh- and one eighth-century), and a single leaf from a copy of Isidore's *Sententiae* are preserved in Worcester Cathedral Library,<sup>41</sup> but it cannot be proven that they were already there during the second half of the ninth century.

During 1622-3, when Patrick Young compiled his catalogue, the library of Worcester contained only three manuscripts of the eighth or ninth centuries, which included an eighth-century copy of the *Rule of Benedict* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 48) and an eighth- or ninth- century book on the office of mass 'charactere Saxonico' (MS Hatton 93).<sup>42</sup> The age and useful nature of these books hint that they may have been copied at Worcester or that they may have been there shortly after their production, but of course they could have arrived at any time between the reigns of Alfred and King James. A third surviving eighth-century book is London, British Library, MS Royal 2 A. XX, written in Mercia in the 950s.<sup>43</sup>

There is no real evidence for the presence of books in pre-Alfredian Worcester, as no account by contemporary witnesses has survived. In the tenth and eleventh century the copying of manuscripts and the production of new literary works is more fully documented. Richard Gameson has identified fifty-nine manuscripts connected with Worcester, datable between the end of the ninth and the end of the eleventh century, and Rodney Thomson lists some fifty surviving books originating in twelfth-century Worcester.<sup>44</sup> The presence in Worcester of some of these is confirmed by three surviving Worcester booklists.

*Levels of Learning in Anglo-Saxon Worcester*

The oldest one, contained in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 367 (s. xi<sup>med</sup>) lists eight titles, three of which refer to two copies:<sup>45</sup>

Deo englissce passionale

7 .ii. englissce dialogas

7 Oddan boc

7 þe englisca martirlogium

7 .ii. englisce salteras

7 .ii. pastorales englisce

7 þe englisca regol

7 Barontus

[The English passional, and two English *Dialogues*, and Odda's book, and the English *Martyrology*, and two English Psalters, and two English *Pastoral Care* books, and the English *Rule* (i.e. of St Benedict), and the *Visio Baronti*]

The two *Dialogues* have been convincingly identified by Christine Franzen as British Library, MS Cotton Otho C. I part 2 (s. xi<sup>in</sup>-xii<sup>med</sup>) and Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 76 (s. xi<sup>1</sup>). Franzen argues that the two *Pastoral Care* volumes are probably Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 12 (s. x<sup>2</sup>) and Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 20 (s. xi<sup>ex</sup>).<sup>46</sup> The second booklist on the last leaf of a Latin copy of Gregory's *Dialogi*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 3 (s. xi<sup>ex</sup>) contains sixty titles mainly consisting of liturgical and teaching material and is not, with any certainty, identifiable as originating in Worcester.<sup>47</sup> The third list is located on fol. 149 of Cotton Otho C. I part 2 (s. xiii).<sup>48</sup> Due to fire damage only five titles are discernable, and the entry 'vita et m[. . .]' can probably not be identified:

Liber dialogorum gre[. . .]

Vitas patrum

Beda de gestis anglorum

vita et m[. . .]

synonima ysydori

Boecius De consola[. . .]

[A book of Gre[gory's] *Dialogues*, the *Lives of the Fathers*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, the Life and m[iracles? . . .], Isidore's *Synonyms*, Boethius' *Consola[tion of Philosophy]*]

The copy of the *Dialogues* is obviously identifiable with the manuscript containing this list, and Franzen suggested, based on its glosses by the Tremulous Hand, that 'Beda de gestis anglorum' refers to the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*, Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk 3.18 (s. xi<sup>2</sup>).<sup>49</sup> None of the other titles have been connected with surviving manuscripts.<sup>50</sup>

It finally needs to be noted in this context that in addition to preserving Old English manuscripts, twelfth-century Worcester also imported a significant quantity of Anglo-Saxon and especially Old English material. Mary Swan has recently adduced evidence about pre-conquest books being taken to Worcester and being re-collated.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Possible Literary Achievements of Ninth-Century Worcester?*

As to the context of Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogi*, modern scholars have propounded a wide range of views over the last hundred years. Peter Hunter-Blair does not include the Old English *Dialogues* or the Old English *Ecclesiastical History* in his list of accepted Mercian literary works and Keller simply states that Worcester enters the history of literature with Wærferth's translation.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, in his first *Critical History of Old English Literature* Stanley Greenfield presents, without evidence, the long reign of the 'anti-ecclesiastical and tyrannical king Æthelbald' (716-57) as an element which would have favoured the development of a vernacular Mercian prose tradition.<sup>53</sup> However, his characterisation of this king seems doubtful when we consider that of the twenty-four charters preserved from his reign, twenty regard land, privileges, and tax exemptions that he granted to various abbeys, monasteries, churches and bishops in his kingdom, including Worcester.<sup>54</sup> In their *New Critical History of Old English Literature*, Greenfield and Donald Calder more successfully involve Alfred's recruitment of Mercian scholars in the argument for the pre-existence of a Mercian school of vernacular prose translation, referring also to the *Martyrology* and the *Life of St Chad* as likely candidates to have originated in the same context.<sup>55</sup>

It has furthermore been suggested that ninth-century Mercian originals may form the basis of the Old English prose *Guthlac*, the *Blickling Homilies*, the *Leechbook*, and the prose texts in the *Beowulf* manuscript.<sup>56</sup> The language of the Blickling homilies leads Donald Scragg to believe that their origin was Mercian, as does the texts' close affinity with Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 198,

and a Worcester origin cannot be excluded, especially in the light of the links with the Worcester manuscripts Bodleian Library, MS Junius 121 and MSS Hatton 113 and 114.<sup>57</sup> Around the same time, in his *Study of Old English Literature*, Charles Wrenn describes the Anglo-Saxons' first steps in the craft of translation, emphasising their use of interlinear glossing: at first, in the eighth century, only 'hard words' were glossed, and then, by the ninth century 'we find evidence of interlinear glossing so completely word for word as to amount almost to literal rendering of the Latin', of which the first example happens to be the *Vespasian Psalter Gloss*, 'copied about the beginning of Alfred's reign from a Mercian text into a [. . .] Latin Psalter and Canticles'.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Wrenn briefly mentions the possibility that the *Life of St Chad* 'seems to look back on an already existing Mercian homiletic tradition', a possibility which he supports mainly by reference to the fact that Mercia was also the place of origin of Alfred's four English assistants.<sup>59</sup>

Almost twenty years later, and cautious about assuming a flourishing vernacular tradition without any hard evidence, Keynes and Lapidge suppose that Mercia had 'at least some (albeit meagre) record of intellectual achievement during an otherwise barren century',<sup>60</sup> although they offer no particular evidence for this barrenness either. It seems reasonable to assume that the pre-existence of a scholarly tradition is a condition precedent for the production of various ninth-century vernacular writings in Mercia: the poetry of Cynewulf,<sup>61</sup> a *Life of St Chad*, the Old English *Martyrology*, the *Dialogues*, and the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*. However, the dating and provenance of these works is more problematic than this brief assertion suggests.<sup>62</sup>

With regard to Cynewulf's poems, Kenneth Sisam established a dating between the first half of the ninth century and the middle of the tenth, based on orthographical features as they are recorded in the Exeter and Vercelli Books, where the poems are preserved.<sup>63</sup> Because of accurate copying practices in the tenth century, however, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the compilations were made at that time—or indeed in that place—or whether they are just very faithful copies of an earlier collection. For the *terminus post quem* the main argument is the spelling of the first element of the author's name as *cyne-* or *cyni-*, which renders the question of dating inextricable from that of the poems' original language. This language is regarded as being either Mercian or Northumbrian, but Sisam argues that 'the case for Mercia seems to be overwhelming', not only on the grounds that the dialect and spellings match those of the so-called 'Northumbrian Genealogies' in London, British Library, MS

Cotton Vespasian B. VI, but also, and more convincingly, because of the fact that the only bishops list that was updated was that of Lichfield, the ecclesiastical centre of the old Mercian kingdom, while for the northern sees the lists remain almost as they were first written.<sup>64</sup>

The contents of the poems allow the dating to be refined to the ninth century. Cynewulf's *Ascension (Christ II)* was demonstrated by Dietrich in 1853 to draw upon Gregory's Homilies 29 (closely) and 10 (more freely paraphrased).<sup>65</sup> This seems to support Sisam's opinion that the poem is a product of the time when the demand for direct biblical material in the vernacular had passed its greatest urgency and the most popular themes were devotional and martyrological.<sup>66</sup> This is in agreement with both the Anglo-Saxon interest in Gregory's *Dialogi* and *Homiliae*, and with the themes covered by the three other vernacular works which are generally considered to be of Mercian origin: the *Martyrology*, the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*, and the *Life of St Chad*. This content-based argument is further supported by the more hypothetical results of linguistic and metrical tests.<sup>67</sup> It needs to be emphasised, however, that there is no compelling evidence allowing Cynewulf to be dated in more precise or more confident terms than 'probably ninth century', nor to be located with any certainty in Mercia.

The Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is generally accepted to be of Mercian origin and merits association with the same stage in the development of ecclesiastical interests as the Old English *Martyrology*. Although presented as a historical work, the translator's distinct orientation towards saintly deeds and miracles is clear from the fact that, while the work omits substantial parts of Bede's Latin original, all but one of the miracle stories have been faithfully translated. The same argument can be used to demonstrate the translator's interest in Gregory the Great, which the Old English *Ecclesiastical History* has in common with other early Mercian works. Furthermore, Dorothy Whitelock argues on the grounds of language, style and content that it was most probably produced around the end of the ninth century and by a Mercian educated in a school 'similar to that which trained Bishop Wærferth'.<sup>68</sup> Whitelock indeed also cautiously states that although 'certain words used in the Old English Bede occur only in Mercian texts [. . .] it must be remembered that there are no comparable Northumbrian texts until nearly a century later'.<sup>69</sup>

Another work whose Mercian origin has been generally accepted is the *Life of St Chad*. An important connection between this homily and Mercia is that Chad was most venerated in the Lichfield diocese, as is deducible from the great number of church dedications. Rudolf Vleeskruyer demonstrates in detail the

dialectal and stylistic similarity between this text and Wærferth's *Dialogues*. He theorises that there was already a 'vigorous tradition of Mercian vernacular writing' preceding, and to a large extent facilitating, Alfred's revival of learning.<sup>70</sup> However, he does not present any external textual or historical evidence, but extrapolates this from the very existence of these two literary texts, the exact dates of composition and provenance of which remain uncertain. To a limited extent such an extrapolation is of course valid: scholarship and literary production are necessarily preceded by the collection and copying of literary works from elsewhere, for the purpose of education, training and inspiration. Yet Vleeskruyer also asserts that Mercian was the first English dialect in which vernacular writings were produced.<sup>71</sup> Although plausible, there is no evidence for this other than the few texts discussed, and the absence of texts in other dialects is only negative evidence.

The translation technique apparent in the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*, and to a greater extent that of the *Dialogues*, can be characterised by the use of doublets and by a striking closeness to the source, often approaching literalness. This caused Vleeskruyer to propound that the translators were probably working from interlinear glosses. This has never been corroborated, but, if correct, suggests that these works may perhaps have originated at a stage when vernacular writing had not yet advanced far enough to have more independence from the structure of the Latin original. Their clearly similar technique could, however, as Whitelock suggested, point to a particular tradition; perhaps the translators had been trained in the same centre, or possibly there was already an existing tradition, or school, producing vernacular translations.<sup>72</sup> Given the image Alfred sketches of the lack of learning elsewhere, it seems tempting to imagine that this school was actually based in Worcester, or at least somewhere in south-west Mercia, but one cannot exclude the possibility that the translators were originally trained in another region altogether.

Vleeskruyer also confidently includes the Old English *Martyrology* in the group. At about the same time, Celia Sisam's more cautious article offers two plausible, but nevertheless hypothetical, explanations for the Mercian elements in the *Martyrology*: that the text may originate in Mercia and have been mainly transmitted in Wessex, or that its author may have been one of Alfred's Mercian assistants.<sup>73</sup> Almost thirty years later Günther Kotzor convincingly dealt with the matter, establishing a *terminus post quem* of around 871, supported by palaeographical evidence which allows 'eine zeitgenössige Datierung' with Alfred's version of the *Cura Pastoralis*.<sup>74</sup> This seems to preclude the possibility of

the Old English *Martyrology* belonging to an earlier ninth-century Mercian vernacular tradition, if such ever existed.

Several modern scholars have felt the strong inclination to trace Worcester's post-Alfredian cultural importance back into its unknown earlier history. In fact only a very limited amount of conjecture can be justified: if Wærferth translated the *Dialogi*, he must have had a reasonably good Latin education first and this may or may not have taken place in Worcester or elsewhere in south-west Mercia. As is true of many Anglo-Saxon scholars and indeed throughout the Middle Ages, Wærferth might have studied in several places, but it is inevitable that at least his long connection with Worcester as bishop (872-915) led to a significant mutual influence between himself and the learned circle in Worcester and, probably to a lesser extent, the surrounding (south-west Mercian) area. There is insufficient evidence to establish whether an actual 'School of Worcester' existed in Wærferth's time, in the sense of a tradition of translation, but the charters confirm the existence of a Worcester monastery ('monasterium Uuigornense') from 716/717 onwards.<sup>75</sup> In addition there were numerous other monasteries in the diocese,<sup>76</sup> with the bishop and the cathedral almost certainly having a *familia*.<sup>77</sup> It is therefore unlikely that only Wærferth was interested in religious literature. He would probably have contributed to the learning of this community with his knowledge, and possibly even with such written material as he may have gathered or produced himself while studying elsewhere. At the very least he must have had access to a copy of the Latin text of Gregory's *Dialogi*, but it cannot be the copy the Tremulous Hand used four centuries later, Cambridge, Clare College, MS 30, as this is dated to s.xi<sup>2</sup> or xi<sup>3/4</sup>.<sup>78</sup> Irrespective of the physical place where Wærferth wrote his translation—in his bishopric or at King Alfred's court—the work either directly or indirectly originated in Worcester.

### *Worcester as Intellectual Centre from the Tenth Century Onwards*

During the tenth and eleventh centuries Worcester was one of the principal centres of the Benedictine Reform and it is most likely that this well-known prestigious stature was a culmination of a successful tradition developed during the previous period. This level of learning strongly suggests the presence of a library (though, as said before, explicit evidence is not available). There would at least have been a respectable standard of learning prior to the tenth century, upon



which further scholarly activity could be grafted. Admittedly some reform monasteries were newly founded during the Benedictine Reform, but these could only operate with support (in the form of books and teachers) from pre-existing leading intellectual centres such as that in Worcester. Moreover, the monastery survived as the longest lasting substantial bastion of Anglo-Saxon scholarship throughout the twelfth century, a fact often attributed to the longevity of its last Anglo-Saxon bishop, Wulfstan II.<sup>79</sup> The speed of its library's recovery as well as the high standard to which St Wulfstan (1062-95) managed to restore it after the destruction (brought about as punishment for rebellion by Harthacnut in 1041),<sup>80</sup> further support the claim that it was an extensive collection, studied and enhanced by a circle of active scribes and scholars. Even in the early thirteenth century, although probably on a relatively small scale, Worcester may be regarded as one of the last strongholds of Anglo-Saxon religious literature.<sup>81</sup> Such is indicated by the work of the anonymous 'Tremulous Hand', who worked at (or near) Worcester and who appears to have had an antiquarian interest in homiletic, devotional, penitential and medical Old English texts. Eighteen manuscripts survive which the Tremulous Hand supplied with Latin (and a few with early Middle English) glosses, probably for his own use and conceivably also for the convenience of other readers, at a time when Old English was no longer easily understood.<sup>82</sup> This once more confirms the idea of how deep-rooted the interest in Anglo-Saxon scholarship was at Worcester, and of how well-stocked with Old English books its library still was. Some additional evidence that there was an ongoing interest in pre-Conquest vernacular writing in the Worcester area is provided by London, Lambeth Palace, MS 487, the contents of which presuppose that its compiler had access to a number of pre-Conquest texts including material by Wulfstan and Ælfric.<sup>83</sup>

### *Conclusion*

It is difficult to reach firm conclusions about the levels of learning in south-west Mercia before Alfred's time. From the existence and the cautious dating of the other Mercian texts that are preserved, it is possible to deduce that Alfred's four Mercian scholars, Wærferth, Plegmund, Werwulf and Æthelstan, may have been able to draw on a tradition of scholarship with a predominant interest in Gregory the Great, saints' lives and miracles.<sup>84</sup> There was at least some vernacular literary activity based on Latin sources before Alfred's cultural renaissance, even if it only

constituted a 'meagre record of intellectual activity'.<sup>85</sup> The similarities in style and translation technique between the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Life of St Chad*, and the Old English *Dialogues*, probably suggest that, if they did not originate in the same centre, they were all produced by authors with a similar education, which may or may not have taken place at Worcester. The possibility cannot be excluded that Wærferth's translation of the *Dialogi* originated as a Mercian and pre-Alfredian idea and that it was only associated with Alfred and his programme *post factum*. Alternatively Wærferth may have produced this text at Alfred's request but given the work's consistent methodology and rationale, it seems unlikely that it was written entirely independently of any pre-existing tradition of vernacular translation.

## Levels of Learning in Anglo-Saxon Worcester

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Eric Stanley, David Levene, Alfred Hiatt, and Iain Kerr for useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney M. Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in Worcester Cathedral Library* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. by Henry Sweet, EETS o.s. 45, 50 (London: N. Trübner, 1871-2), p. 6. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>4</sup> *Alfred the Great. Asser's 'Life of King Alfred' and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 259, n. 167.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Keller, *Die litterarischen Bestrebungen von Worcester in angelsächsischer Zeit*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker, 84 (Strasbourg: K. J. Trübner, 1900); Ivor Atkins, 'The Church of Worcester from the 8th to the 12th Century', *Antiquaries Journal*, 20 (1940), 1-48 (Part I), 203-29 (Part II).

<sup>6</sup> Ralph H. C. Davis, 'Alfred the Great: Propaganda and Truth', *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, 56 (1971), 169-82; Jennifer Morrish, 'King Alfred's Letter as a Source on Learning', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose. Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 87-107. Stenton, on the other hand, accords Alfred and his cultural achievements much more credit: Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford History of England, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 269-72. The 'mære mynster' also apparently escaped the Vikings; according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Wilfrid had it built at Ripon and it stood until 948, when King Eadred had it burnt down: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Vol. 6, MS. D*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), *sub anno* 948.

<sup>7</sup> *Pastoral Care*, ed. by Sweet, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, 'Alfred the Great: Propaganda and Truth', p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> The close relationship between Mercia and Wessex especially during Alfred's reign is thoroughly discussed in Simon Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', in *Kings, Currency and Alliances. History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, ed. by Mark A. S. Blackburn and David N. Dumville (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1998), pp. 1-45.

<sup>10</sup> *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. by William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), repr. with an article on 'Recent Work on Asser's Life of Alfred', by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), chapters 78-9.

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas Codrington, *Roman Roads in Britain* (London: SPCK, 1903), maps pp. 273 and 331, and Peter Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), map VI.

<sup>12</sup> The Vikings did venture into the Bristol Channel, and camped on a few islands (Lundy, Flatholme and Steepholme), but the coast was too inaccessible, offering few natural harbours, and it was too far from other main areas of refuge for them to carry out systematic large-scale raids. They never managed to sail far enough up the Severn to reach Worcester.

<sup>13</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. by Walter de Gray Birch, 3 vols (London: Whiting, 1885-93), I-II, and Peter H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 192-7.

<sup>15</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I-II and Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*. Keynes discusses how in 877, when the Vikings conquered eastern Mercia, the western part remained under Ceolwulf's control, evidence for which can be found in the Mercian regnal list in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A. XIII, fol. 114v; Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Hunter-Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 313 and 351. See also Ivor Atkins, 'The Church of Worcester from the 8th to the 12th Century', *Antiquaries Journal*, 20 (1940), 1-48 (Part I), 203-29 (Part II).

<sup>17</sup> *Asser*, ed. by Stevenson, chapter 77, lines 1-18.

<sup>18</sup> *Pastoral Care*, ed. by Sweet, pp. 2-5. The use of the term as a significant indication of Alfred's ideology is discussed by Sarah Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 6, 6 (1996), p. 29, n. 25, and pp. 41-2. Keynes suggests that Asser's emphasis on 'Saxon' language and literature (chapters 23, 75, 76) can probably be explained as 'a Welshman's idiom for what [Alfred] would have called "English"'; Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', p. 25, n. 112 and p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', pp. 1-45. This article also includes a discussion of the Mercian element in Alfred's court culture.

<sup>20</sup> Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 186.

<sup>21</sup> All that can be said with certainty is that he acceded in 691 and died after August 693. No independently recorded date is available for his successor Ecgwine (died 30 Dec 717): *Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. by Fryde *et al.*, p. 223.

<sup>22</sup> *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and Roger A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 408-10, IV.23 (emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> The Greek patristic authorities which underlie the Antiochene school, and thus also these commentaries, were not normally accessible to scholars in the medieval west. Medieval exegesis (for example Gregory and Bede) was therefore almost universally allegorical in its orientation: *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, ed.

by Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 243-74, esp. pp. 244 and 247; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 102 and 184.

<sup>24</sup> See Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 188. Hecht was the first to notice this similarity: Hans Hecht, *Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der 'Dialoge' Gregors des Grossen: Einleitung*, 2 vols (Hamburg: Wigand, 1907), II 37.

<sup>25</sup> For Benedict Biscop's acquisition of books ample evidence is provided in Bede's *Lives of Abbots*, in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I 367 (chapter 4): '[. . .] tertiam [. . .] Romam iter [. . .] solita prosperitate conpleuit librosque omnis diuinae eruditionis non paucos uel placito praetio emptos, uel amicorum dono largitos retulit' [He (Benedict Biscop) completed his third trip to Rome with his usual success and brought back a considerable number of books regarding all sorts of sacred erudition, some of which he had acquired for a favourable price and some of which friends had given him as a gift.]; I 368-9 (chapter 6): '[. . .] Romanis e finibus [. . .] innumerabilem librorum omnis generis copiam adportauit' [from Rome [. . .] he (Benedict Biscop) imported an inestimable abundance of books of all kinds]; I 373 (chapter 9): '[. . .] quinta vice [. . .] Romam adcurrrens, innumeris sicut semper aecclesiasticorum donis commodorum locupletatus rediit; magna quidem copia uoluminum sacrorum' [He (Benedict Biscop) went to Rome for the fifth time, and returned as always laden with uncountable gifts of ecclesiastical commodities; there was indeed a great abundance of sacred volumes]. See also the anonymous *Historia Abbatum*, also included in the collection *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by Plummer, I 395 (chapter 20) 'et bibliothecam, quam de Roma uel ipse, uel Benedictus adtulerat, nobiliter ampliauit' [He (St Ceolfrith) made generous additions to the library which he and Benedict had accumulated from Rome]. Æthelwald describes in a short poem how many books by divinely inspired prophets and apostles were brought back from Rome to England (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Rudolph Ehwald, MGH Auctores antiquissimi, 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), p. 531). Bede also indicates that pilgrims travelling to Rome were expected to bring back books or relics; *Bedaes Venerabilis Opera, pars 2 Opera exegetica: 3 in Lucae euangelium expositio; in Marci euangelium expositio*, ed. by David Hurst, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), p. 93 (I.13). See also Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 187-94.

<sup>26</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I, no. 75: Grant by Æthelred, King of the Mercians, to Oftfor, Bishop of Worcester, of land at Heanbury, co. Worcester etc. AD 691-2; no. 76: Grant by Æthelred, King of the Mercians, to Oftfor, Bishop of Worcester, of land at Fledanburg, or Fladbury, co. Worcester etc. AD 691-2; no. 77. Grant by Æthelred, King of the Mercians, to Worcester Cathedral, of land at Wichbold, co. Worcester, in reversion AD 691-2 (respectively Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. 77, 76, 75). In the last charter Oftfor is not

explicitly named, but as it originates during his episcopate his influence is likely to have played a role.

<sup>27</sup> Bede reports in his *Historia abbatum*, ch. 15, that Ceolfrith, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, sold a high status manuscript for eight hides to King Aldfrith: '[D]ato quoque Cosmographiorum codice mirandi operis, quem Romae Benedictus emerat, *terram octo familiarum* iuxta fluuium Fresca ab Alfrido rege in scripturis doctissimo in possessionem monasterii beati Pauli apostoli comparauit' [From Alfred, a king very learned in the Scripture, he also received an admirably crafted codex of the Cosmographers, which Benedictus had purchased in Rome. In exchange he acquired for the monastery of St Paul eight hides of land adjacent to the river Fresca.]; *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by Plummer, I 380 (emphasis added).

<sup>28</sup> Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 188.

<sup>29</sup> Given that the leadership of double monasteries was almost always in the hands of abbesses rather than abbots, Brooks's suggestion that the author may well have been a nun should be granted more prominence: Nicholas Brooks, 'Bede and the English', Jarrow Lecture 1999 (Jarrow: [s.n.], 2000), p. 19. In the debate on the precise location of Streoneshealh—whether it be Whitby or Strensall near York—Fell, Cramp, and Blair are of the opinion that the linguistic arguments in favour of identifying Streoneshealh with Strensall do not weigh up against the archaeological evidence discovered at Whitby, which amply demonstrates that there was a literate community: Christine Fell, 'Hild, Abbess of Streonæshalch', in *Hagiography and Medieval Literature. A Symposium*, ed. by Hans Bekker-Nelsen *et al.* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 76-99 (pp. 84-5); Rosemary Cramp, 'A Reconsideration of the Monastic Site of Whitby', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. by R. M. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland; Stroud: Sutton, 1993), pp. 64-73 (p. 64); John Blair, 'Whitby', in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge *et al.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 472-3 (p. 472). However, Karkov appears less certain, stating that '[i]t is unclear whether the site identified by Bede and his contemporaries as Streanæshalch is the site now called Whitby, although no satisfactory alternatives have been suggested': Catherine E. Karkov, 'Whitby, Jarrow and the Commemoration of Death in Northumbria', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. by Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 126-35 (p. 126). Since no firm conclusion has been reached regarding the precise location of Streoneshealh, I refer to this text as 'the Streoneshealh *vita*'.

<sup>30</sup> *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave, rev. edn (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), pp. 116-18; *Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des grossen*, ed. by Hans Hecht, 2 vols (Leipzig: Wigand, 1900-7), I 94.

<sup>31</sup> The John of Worcester marginalia (Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk. 4. 6, 233r and 244v) are printed and discussed by W. Levison, 'Aus englischen Bibliotheken II: Englische Handschriften des Liber Pontificalis', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 35 (1910), 333-431 (p. 426), and summarized by *The Earliest Life*, ed. by Colgrave, p. 159, n. 120. Sims-Williams suggests that Whitelock (Dorothy Whitelock, 'The Prose of Alfred's Reign', in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. by Eric G. Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), pp. 67-103, p. 72) was mistaken in dating the marginalia as late twelfth-century; *Religion and Literature*, p. 188, n. 52. The hand was attributed to William of Malmesbury by Montague R. James, *Two Ancient English Scholars: St. Aldhelm and William of Malmesbury* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie, 1931), p. 21, but has subsequently been ascribed to John of Worcester. See Neil R. Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. by Andrew G. Watson (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 65-6; Rodney M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 75, 122 and 172; and Martin Brett, 'John of Worcester and his Contemporaries', in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. by Ralph H. C. Davis and John M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 101-26 (p. 105, n. 2).

<sup>32</sup> The emendations are taken from readings offered by London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho C. I part 2, as printed in Hecht's critical apparatus. The superiority of the Cotton Otho text over the Cambridge version has been cogently argued by Pieter N. U. Harting, 'The Text of the Old English Translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*', *Neophilologus*, 22 (1937), 281-302.

<sup>33</sup> In a forthcoming article I will discuss my emendation 'lucerna<m>' and other textual problems of this passage. I am grateful to David Levene for his advice in this matter.

<sup>34</sup> The emendation 'reple[vit]' (from 'replete' as printed by Levison in his 'Aus englischen Bibliotheken II', p. 426) is my own and its reasons are discussed in a forthcoming article.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'The Study of Greek at the School of Canterbury in the Seventh Century', in *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: The Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Michael W. Herren (London: King's College, 1988), pp. 169-94.

<sup>36</sup> Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 187.

<sup>37</sup> Mechthild Gretsche, 'Ælfric and Gregory the Great', in *Ælfric's Lives of Canonised Popes*, ed. by Donald Scragg (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 20-1, 40 and 51.

<sup>38</sup> Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 188.

<sup>39</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I, no. 235 (Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 118). For a more detailed discussion regarding the authenticity of this charter, see Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>40</sup> For an extremely useful introduction to the current understanding of Worcester Cathedral library, see Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in*

Worcester (p. xx); Cuthbert H. Turner, *Early Worcester MSS* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), pp. xli-xlii; *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Wigorniensis, made in 1622-1623 by Patrick Young, Librarian to King James I*, ed. by Ivor Atkins and Neil R. Ker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), pp. 77-9.

<sup>41</sup> The fragments are respectively Worcester, Cathedral Library, MSS Additional 1, 2, 4 and 5. See Turner, *Early Worcester MSS*, pp. vii-viii, x-xviii, and xxiv-xxvii; and *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin MSS Prior to the Ninth Century*, ed. by Elias Avery Lowe, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1934-72), Suppl. no. 1777.

<sup>42</sup> Young incorrectly describes Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 76 as '*Dialogi Gregorii translati ab AElfredo in linguam saxoniam*' (Gregory's *Dialogues* translated by Alfred into the Saxon language): *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Wigorniensis* [...] by Patrick Young, ed. by Atkins and Ker, p. 57 (emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> Alicia Corrêa, 'The Liturgical Manuscripts of Oswald's Houses', in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), pp. 285-324 (pp. 288-92).

<sup>44</sup> Richard Gameson, 'Book Production and Decoration at Worcester in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *St Oswald of Worcester*, ed. by Brooks and Cubitt, pp. 194-243 and Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts*, p. xxii.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985), pp. 33-89 (pp. 62-4).

<sup>46</sup> Christine Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester. A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 75 and 77.

<sup>47</sup> Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 69-73.

<sup>48</sup> Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester*, p. 78. The list was first printed in Kenneth Sisam, 'An Old English Translation of a Letter from Wynfrith to Eadburga (A.D. 716-17) in Cotton MS. Otho C. i', in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 199-224 (pp. 201-2), p. 204, n. 2. See also Neil R. Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 237.

<sup>49</sup> Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester*, p. 78.

<sup>50</sup> The 'synonyma ysydori', which refers to Isidore of Seville's *Synonyma de lamentatione animae peccatricis* was referred to by Ker in the citation of glosses in three manuscripts: Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts*, nos. 210, 228 and 400.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Swan, 'Mobile Libraries: Old English manuscript production in Worcester and the West Midlands, 1090-1215', paper due to be published in the proceedings of the conference 'Manuscripts of the West Midlands' (held at Westmere, University of Birmingham, 4th-6th April 2003).



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<sup>52</sup> Hunter-Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 304. Keller, *Die litterarischen Bestrebungen von Worcester*, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Stanley B. Greenfield, *A Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I; and Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*.

<sup>55</sup> Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, 'The Alfredian Translations and Related Ninth-Century Texts', in *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), pp. 38-67 (p. 62).

<sup>56</sup> Greenfield and Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, p. 63.

<sup>57</sup> From the differences in language and textual tradition between the Blickling Homilies and those of the Vercelli book, Scragg deduces that '[i]t is probably safe to conclude that [the former are] not of south-eastern origin': Donald G. Scragg, 'The Homilies of the Blickling Manuscript', in *Learning and Literature*, ed. by Lapidge and Gneuss, pp. 299-316 (p. 315). For a detailed discussion of the dialect used in the Blickling homilies, see Robert J. Menner, 'The Anglian Vocabulary of the Blickling Homilies', in *Philologica: the Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. by Thomas A. Kirby and Henry B. Woolf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), pp. 56-64; *The Life of St Chad: An Old English Homily*, ed. by Rudolf Vleeskruyer (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1953), esp. pp. 39-71; and Otto Funke, 'Studien zur alliterierenden und rhythmisierenden Prosa in der älteren altenglischen Homiletik', *Anglia*, 53 (1962), 9-36. For some reservations about Vleeskruyer's Mercian and early dating enthusiasm, see Celia Sisam, 'Review of: *The Life of St. Chad*, ed. Rudolf Vleeskruyer (Amsterdam, 1953)', *Review of English Studies*, 6 (1955), 302-3.

<sup>58</sup> Charles L. Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London: Harrap, 1967), p. 200. The Vespasian Psalter gloss has been dated to the mid-ninth century.

<sup>59</sup> Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature*, p. 222.

<sup>60</sup> *Alfred the Great*, trans. by Keynes and Lapidge, p. 259, n. 167.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Sisam, 'Cynwulf and his Poetry', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 18 (1933), repr. in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 1-28.

<sup>62</sup> This is discussed in detail by Janet M. Bately, 'Old English Prose Before and During the Reign of Alfred', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), 93-138, esp. pp. 104-14.

<sup>63</sup> Sisam, 'Cynwulf and his Poetry', pp. 1-2.

<sup>64</sup> Sisam, 'Cynwulf and his Poetry', pp. 5-6.

<sup>65</sup> Exeter book fol. 34 line 18 to fol. 48 corresponds to Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangeliam*, PL 76, 29.9-11 (col. 1218); Dietrich, 'Cyneulf's Christ', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 9 (1853), 193-214 (pp. 204 and 212).

<sup>66</sup> Sisam, 'Cynwulf and his Poetry', p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Sisam, 'Cynewulf and his Poetry', pp. 6-7.

<sup>68</sup> Dorothy Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 48 (1962), p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', p. 76 and n. 6, p. 249.

<sup>70</sup> *The Life of St Chad*, ed. by Vleeskruyer, pp. 19 and 41, and more explicitly p. 61: 'The number of texts that can with varying certainty be referred to an independent, and probably in the main pre-Alfredian, tradition of English prose-writing is thus significantly large'.

<sup>71</sup> *The Life of St Chad*, ed. by Vleeskruyer, esp. pp. 48-50.

<sup>72</sup> Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', p. 76.

<sup>73</sup> Celia Sisam, 'An Early Fragment of the Old English *Martyrology*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 4 (1953), 209-20. She names Plegmund as the possible translator (p. 217).

<sup>74</sup> *Martyrologium Anglo-Saxonicum*, ed. by Günter Kotzor, 2 vols (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), I 53-4.

<sup>75</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I, no. 137 (716 x 717), no. 204 (770), no. 226 (775 x 778), no. 233 (779), no. 283 (781 x 798) (respectively Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. 102, 60, 145, 126, 1413).

<sup>76</sup> *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I-II and Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*.

<sup>77</sup> Royal grants of land and privileges to the Cathedral and the See of Worcester are attested in the charters; *Cartularium saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, I, no. 123 (704 x 709), no. 216 (774), no. 220 (757 x 775), no. 231 (778 x 779), no. 234 (730 for 780), no. 235 (783), no. 239 (781), no. 240 (781) (respectively Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos. 64, 104, 1411, 147, 117, 118, 120, 121).

<sup>78</sup> Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> Anne Dawtry, 'The Benedictine Revival in the North: the Last Bulwark of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism?', in *Religion and National Identity*, ed. by Stuart Mews (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 87-98 (pp. 88 and 98). Old English manuscripts also continued to be produced in Rochester throughout the twelfth century but a smaller quantity survives than from Worcester. See Mary P. Richards, 'Texts and Their Traditions in the Medieval Library of Rochester Cathedral Priory', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 78 (1988), i-ix, 1-129 (see pp. 9 and 19 for the continuation of interest in works by Gregory the Great and p. 90 for Rochester's interest in Old English homilies, especially by Ælfric) and Susan Irvine, 'The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing Old English in the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 41-61.

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<sup>80</sup> For the state of the library during Wulfstan's episcopate see Emma Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester c. 1008-1095* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 1-28. The destruction of Worcester monastery at the command of Harthacnut, which could reasonably be assumed to imply extensive damage to the library, is reported in the *ASC* for the year 1041: 'Her let Harðacnut hergian eall Wihracestrescire for his twegra huscarla þingon, ðe þæt strange gyld budon. Þa sloh þæt folc hi binnan port innan ðam mynstre.' [In this year Harthacnut had all of Worcestershire harried because of his two housecarls who had been collecting heavy taxes. The people had slain them then in the town, inside the cathedral]: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Vol. 5, MS. C*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001). This passage also occurs in the related *Chronicle* manuscript D: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Vol. 6, MS. D*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin.

<sup>81</sup> Of course other cultural centres took an interest in the Anglo-Saxon past. Crick discusses how the monks of St Albans forged charters in the name of Offa and how those of Westminster studied other archives in order to remedy the gaps in their records of Anglo-Saxon history: Julia Crick, 'St. Albans, Westminster and Some Twelfth-century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in *Anglo-Norman Studies, XXV: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 2002*, ed. by John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 65-83. For an overview of current research on post-Conquest interest in the Anglo-Saxon past and specifically Old English literary material, see *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Swan and Treharne.

<sup>82</sup> For a detailed study of this scribe's methods and rationale, and for the phases in his work, see Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester*.

<sup>83</sup> For a description of MS Lambeth 487 see *Wulfstan Texts and Other Homiletic Materials*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), pp. 72-8 (pp. 72 and 75-6).

<sup>84</sup> Mason points out that this was still the case in the eleventh century under the bishopric of Wulfstan; Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester*, p. 159.

<sup>85</sup> *Alfred the Great*, trans. by Keynes and Lapidge, p. 259, n. 167.