

THE POLITICAL WRITINGS OF ARCHBISHOP WULFSTAN OF YORK



*Edited and translated
by Andrew Rabin*

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selected sources edited and translated

by Andrew Rabin

Manchester University Press

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PREFACE

Although Archbishop Wulfstan's *Sermo lupi ad Anglos* is familiar to every first-year Old English student, his other works have not garnered the same level of attention, even among Anglo-Saxonists. In compiling an anthology of his political writings, many of which are translated here for the first time, my goal has been to make Wulfstan's works accessible to a wider audience of students and professional scholars, both those specialising in Old English and those engaged in the study of medieval legal and political history more generally. A volume of this sort does not have a 'thesis' *per se*, but I do hope that readers will come away from this collection with a greater appreciation for Wulfstan's significance in the history of medieval political theology and, more broadly, for the theoretical sophistication of early English social thought.

If this volume proves to be a useful contribution to the study of Wulfstan and his times, it will be because of the help and support of a large number of people. I am especially grateful to Lisi Oliver, Stefan Jurasinski, Jay Gates, Stephen Harris, Tom Hall, Nicole Marafioti, Bryan Carella, and Bruce O'Brien for sharing their views on Wulfstan, providing clarification on points of law, and suggesting new or better ways of translating problematic passages. At my home institution, the University of Louisville, special thanks are due to Pamela Beattie, Tom Byers, Susan Griffin, Karen Hadley, Aaron Jaffe, Tom Maloney, Glynis Ridley, and Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe, all of whom served as sounding boards for my frequently off-kilter ideas and offered invaluable advice as the project developed. This book is infinitely better for their help; the errors that remain are, of course, my own.

Finally, thanks are due to my parents, Alan and Ellen Rabin, and most especially to my wife Shira and my sons Ari and Eli for their love and patience as this book was written. They've had to share far too much of their time with an eleventh-century archbishop, but without them, this project would never have come to fruition. It is to them that this book is dedicated.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abt.	The Laws of Æthelberht ¹
<i>Admonition</i>	<i>The Admonition to Bishops</i>
Af.	The Laws of Alfred
<i>AGu.</i>	<i>Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum</i>
As.	The Laws of Æthelstan
Atr.	The Laws of Æthelred
C.C.C.C.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College
C.U.L.	Cambridge, University Library
<i>Canons</i>	<i>The Canons of Edgar</i>
<i>Clerical Compensation</i>	<i>On Priests' Oaths and Clerical Compensation (Hadbot)</i>
Cn.	The Laws of Cnut
<i>Cn. 1020</i>	Cnut's Proclamation of 1020
Eg.	The Laws of Edgar
<i>EGu.</i>	<i>The Laws of Edward and Guthrum</i>
Em.	The Laws of Edmund
<i>Episc.</i>	<i>Concerning Episcopal Duties (Episcopus)</i>
Ew.	The Laws of Edward the Elder
<i>God's Threat</i>	<i>God's Threat to a Sinning Israel (Bethurum 19)</i>
<i>Mercian Law</i>	<i>Concerning the Law of the Mercians (Mircna laga)</i>
<i>NPL</i>	<i>The Northumbrian Priests' Law</i>
<i>On Baptism</i>	<i>On Baptism and Confirmation (Napier 24)</i>
<i>On Justice</i>	<i>On Justice, Virtue, and the Law (Napier 50)</i>
<i>On Ranks</i>	<i>Concerning the Ranks of People and Law (Gefyncðu)</i>
<i>On the Laws of God</i>	<i>On the Laws of God and the World (Napier 51)</i>

1 The abbreviations used for royal legislation were standardised by Felix Liebermann in the *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (1903–1916). When multiple pieces of legislation have been issued in a king's name, laws are cited according to legislative number, name, clause number, and if applicable, sub-clause number. Thus 'V Atr. 22.1' refers to the first sub-clause of the twenty-second clause of what has been designated Æthelred's fifth law-code. Although the numbering of law-codes was originally intended to indicate chronology, the order suggested by the numbering has been shown to be inaccurate in so many instances that the numbers are now understood as little more than a scholarly convention.

<i>On the Proper Support</i>	<i>On the Proper Support of the Church</i>
<i>On Tithes</i>	<i>On Tithes and Tithing</i> (Napier 23)
<i>On Wergild</i>	<i>Concerning Wergild/ The Northpeople's Law</i> (<i>Be wergylde/Norðleoda laga</i>)
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J.P. Migne
<i>Polity</i>	<i>The Institutes of Polity</i>
<i>Sanctuary</i>	<i>Concerning Sanctuary</i> (<i>Gridð</i>)
Wi.	The Laws of Wihtred

INTRODUCTION

It is a truth nearly universally acknowledged that the legislators of Anglo-Saxon England lacked a sophisticated, theoretical understanding of both law and politics. In early twentieth-century scholarship, this belief underlay such blunt statements as William Dunning's claim that 'the Middle Age [sic] was unpolitical', and Sir Frederick Pollock's more elaborate, if equally damning, assertion that 'an Anglo-Saxon court, whether of public or private justice, was not surrounded with such visible majesty of the law as in our own time, nor furnished with any obvious means of compelling obedience'.¹ Even the great Ernst Kantorowicz concluded that early English lawmakers were 'probably quite unaware of the highly complicated legal and constitutional premises' behind their actions.² More recently, the perception of pre-Conquest jurisprudence as primitive and theoretically impoverished has led legal historians to characterise Anglo-Saxon law as 'desperately weak' and 'calculated to avoid reasoned decision-making'.³ Similar attitudes prevail among scholars of political theory, who often dismiss the study of Anglo-Saxon governmental practices as 'belong[ing] more to the general historian than to the historian of ideas' because of their presumed origin merely in 'practical demands or responses to them'.⁴

The assumption that pre-Conquest legislators understood their duties in only the most primitive way has caused readers to overlook the influence and complexity of the largest corpus of vernacular legal and political prose to survive from the early Middle Ages.⁵ Among the

1 Dunning 1930: 131; Pollock 1893: 250. Pollock later repeated his criticism in Pollock and Maitland 1968: 14. For a critique of Pollock and Maitland's conclusions, see Wormald 1996: 1–20, and Wormald 1998: 1–25.

2 Kantorowicz 1957: 343.

3 Baker 1990: 4–5; Whitman 2008: 41, 53. For a more extended discussion of Baker's comments, see Rabin 2007: 225–6.

4 Ryan 2012: 219. Ryan is unusual in even mentioning the Anglo-Saxon period. More common in general histories of political thought is the omission of the Anglo-Saxon period entirely, as is the case, for instance, in McClelland 1996 and Klosko 2011. A notable exception is Burns 1988.

5 All told, the pre-Conquest legal corpus is comprised of roughly seventy legislative texts (most of which are included in Felix Liebermann's three-volume *Gesetze*

most significant texts in this corpus are the laws, homilies, and political tracts produced by the early eleventh-century ecclesiastic Archbishop Wulfstan of York. Wulfstan was the leading English churchman of his day, serving as bishop of London from 996 to 1002, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York from 1002 to 1016, and archbishop of York alone from 1016 until his death in 1023. More than just an ecclesiastical administrator, Wulfstan used his episcopate to advance his vision of a ‘Holy Society’, one in which the organisation of a Christian state mirrored both the divinely ordained hierarchy of a Christian cosmos and the moral order of the individual Christian soul.⁶ This vision took shape in a series of homilies and political tracts that Wulfstan wrote and repeatedly revised throughout his career, as well as in the legislation he composed on behalf of Kings Æthelred (r. 978–1016) and Cnut (r. 1016–1035). Among Anglo-Saxonists, Wulfstan has come to be recognised as a political theorist ‘of prodigious abilities’,⁷ a ‘prose stylist of the first importance’,⁸ ‘one of the half dozen leading influences on the formation of Early English culture’,⁹ and ‘the greatest English ideologue of the age’.¹⁰ Yet, despite Wulfstan’s influence, many of his works, especially the legal homilies and shorter political tracts, remain unfamiliar to those interested in the history of early medieval social thought.¹¹ The majority of his writings were last edited more than a century ago, in many cases prior to their attribution to Wulfstan, and published in volumes which are now out-of-print, unreliable, or difficult to use for those not conversant with late nineteenth-century academic German.¹² Accordingly, in making these texts available in new, more accessible translations, it is hoped that this volume will both introduce readers to the range of Wulfstan’s political writings and shed light on the development of English law during the early eleventh century.

der Angelsachsen) and approximately 1,500 charters. The foremost histories of pre-Conquest law are Wormald 1999d and Hudson 2012. Overviews of the Old English legal corpus can be found in Hough 2001, Rabin 2012, and Oliver 2013.

6 The first, and still most influential, account of Wulfstan’s vision of a Holy Society can be found in Wormald 1999a: 244–6.

7 Keynes 1980: 190.

8 Gatch 1977: 18.

9 Wormald 1999a: 225.

10 Blair 2005: 496.

11 On this point, see Abels 1988b: 294; Powell 1994; Wormald 1999d: 330; Orchard 2002: 311–12.

12 This issue has been discussed by, among others, Dammary 1994: 51–61; Lionarons 2004b: 165–8; Orchard 2004: 63–4; Orchard 2007: 318–19; Lionarons 2010: 2.

Background: politics and society in early medieval England

Understanding the origins of Wulfstan's political thought requires some knowledge of the troubled history of later Anglo-Saxon England. His vision of a holy society cannot be separated from the social and intellectual upheavals that radically reshaped English culture between the eighth and tenth centuries.¹³ On one hand, the consolidation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the centralisation of royal authority, and the growth of a vibrant vernacular textual tradition all fostered a sense of cultural identity more self-consciously 'English' than ever before.¹⁴ At the same time, the on-going Viking invasions and the regional aristocracy's resistance to an increasingly ambitious monarchy contributed to a degree of instability that periodically resulted in the failure of the government or worse, the collapse of the state itself. Wulfstan captured the tension between the emergent kingdom's promise and its unstable reality in his image of a throne perched precariously on the three pillars of clergy, aristocracy, and labour. As long as these estates observed their moral and social duties, the throne would stand securely; however, 'if any of them weaken, immediately the throne will tremble; and if any of them fracture, then the throne will crumble to pieces, and that will bring the people all to ruin'.¹⁵ For Wulfstan and his contemporaries, England's recent history vividly illustrated the need for strong governance as well as the constant potential for catastrophe. It was this history that served as the backdrop for Wulfstan's thought and career.

The origins of the eleventh-century English state lay in the clutch of regional kingdoms founded by migrating Germanic tribes in the fifth and sixth centuries. Following the withdrawal of Roman legions from Britain in *ca.* 409–410, invading Saxon, Jute, and Anglian settlers quickly overthrew the remnants of the Romano-Celtic aristocracy and established a series of local chiefdoms that gradually evolved into the principal early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex, Sussex, Essex, Kent, Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumbria. This list of kingdoms, sometimes called the 'Heptarchy', should be seen as something of a historical fiction, however: the social and political volatility of this period meant that communities subdivided and combined with a regularity

13 For authoritative histories of the Anglo-Saxon period, see Stenton 1971; Blair 1977; Campbell 1982; Fleming 2011; and Higham and Ryan 2013.

14 On the development of a unified notion of an 'English' cultural identity during this period, see Reynolds 1985 and Foot 1996.

15 *Polity* IV.

that left both boundaries and allegiances in a state of constant flux.¹⁶ In the late sixth century, the arrival of Roman and Irish missionaries began the process of Christianisation that led both to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and to the establishment of major ecclesiastical foundations at such sites as Canterbury, Whitby, Lindisfarne, York, and Monkwearmouth-Jarrow.¹⁷ These communities supported a thriving textual culture that produced such major figures of early Anglo-Saxon letters as the venerable Bede and Bishop Aldhelm of Sherborne. An equally important consequence of the conversion was the promulgation by King Æthelberht of Kent (r. ca. 590–616) of the earliest vernacular written code of English law – composed, in Bede’s words, ‘after the example of the Romans’ (‘iuxta exempla Romanorum’).¹⁸ By the end of the eighth century, the conversion had taken hold to such an extent that Anglo-Saxon clerics such as Boniface were despatched to the continent to pursue missionary work in the northern Frankish empire, and scholars such as Alcuin of York were invited to join Charlemagne’s court school at Aachen.

The eighth century would come to be remembered by Wulfstan and his contemporaries as a golden age, particularly in light of what followed. The Viking raids that began with the destruction of the great abbey at Lindisfarne on 8 June 793, put an end to the first flowering of Anglo-Saxon Christian culture and struck fear into Britain’s inhabitants. The anonymous author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s* entry for 793 wrote that the Viking attacks were preceded by ‘extreme lightning’ (‘ormete ligræscas’) and visions of ‘fiery dragons’ (‘fyrene dracan’), while Alcuin bemoaned that, ‘never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered’.¹⁹ Over the course of the ninth century, the raids grew more frequent, eventually becoming a full invasion. By the early 870s, most of the earlier Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had collapsed, the principal ecclesiastical foundations of the previous century lay in ruins,

16 On the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain and conversion to Christianity, see Blair 1963; Arnold 1988; Kirby 1991; Higham 1997; and Lambert 2010.

17 Although the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms brought enhanced prestige to these sites, it should be noted that in many cases – including Canterbury and York – conversion-era foundations were built on locations that had previously been centres of Christian worship during the Roman period.

18 Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. II, ch. 5, ed. Colgrave and Mynors 1991: 150. What Bede actually meant by ‘the example of the Romans’ has been the subject of considerable debate. On this point, see Wormald 1999b and Oliver 2002: 18–20.

19 The references to lightning and dragons occur in the entry for 793 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Irvine 2004: 42. Alcuin’s complaint can be found in his second letter to King Æthelred of Northumbria (r. 774–96), tr. in Whitelock 1979: 842.

and Viking armies occupied the majority of northern, central, and eastern Britain. When a young Alfred assumed the throne of Wessex in 871, he ruled little more than a rump state, which was further reduced by Viking victories over the first seven years of his reign.²⁰ Despite early setbacks, however, Alfred won significant victories in 878 at Edington and Chippenham which enabled him to negotiate a treaty expelling the Vikings from Wessex and large portions of Essex and Mercia. Alfred consolidated the reconquered territories into a single West Saxon kingdom (sometimes referred to as 'greater Wessex' by modern historians), while the area that remained under Viking rule came to be known as the 'Danelaw', a region that would preserve Scandinavian legal and cultural practices well into Wulfstan's own time.²¹ Following the pattern of Charlemagne, Alfred used his military success as a catalyst for cultural revival. Famously observing that 'learning had declined so thoroughly in England that there were very few men on this side of the Humber who could understand their divine services in English', Alfred encouraged vernacular literacy among the aristocracy and oversaw the translation into English of works by such authors as Augustine and Pope Gregory I.²² As part of his project of cultural renewal, Alfred also compiled an extensive code of laws to which he attached a lengthy prologue situating his legislation within a tradition of lawgiving stretching back to Moses on Mount Sinai.²³ The Alfredian *domboc* provided the model for much of the law promulgated over the next hundred years. It would remain the most comprehensive body of English legislation until supplanted by the laws Wulfstan composed on behalf of the conqueror Cnut in the early eleventh century.²⁴

The reconquest continued under Alfred's successors, Edward the Elder (r. 899–924) and Æthelstan (r. 924–939), so that by the latter's death, the rulers of greater Wessex had begun to refer to themselves as kings of a united England. More than just political consolidation, though, their military successes also made possible the revival of English religious

20 On Alfred's reign, see Abels 1998 and Pratt 2007.

21 See Hadley 2000 and Hadley 2006.

22 Alfred's observation on the decline in learning occurs in the prose preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, quoted in Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 125.

23 See Liebermann 1908; Wormald 1999d: 416–29; Carella 2011; Jurasinski 2011; Carella 2012; and Jurasinski 2012.

24 The most complete discussion of Alfred's laws remains Wormald 1999d: 265–85, 416–30.

life that scholars now refer to as the Monastic Reform.²⁵ Begun under Æthelstan and reaching its peak during the reign of King Edgar ‘the Peaceable’ (r. 959–975), the Reform looked to both Alfredian and continental precedents in order to restore the English Church and reshape the relationship between royal and ecclesiastical authority. Never a unified movement in the modern sense, reformers allied themselves with competing political factions and drew on different sources, but they nonetheless shared certain priorities: antagonism toward lay monastic leadership; nostalgia for the religious life of Bede’s Northumbria; advocacy for the uniform observance of the Benedictine Rule in all English monasteries; a desire to recast the episcopacy as a monastic institution; and a portrayal of the king as special patron and guardian of religious life.²⁶ In particular, the emphasis on royal patronage points to the productive collaboration that developed between the Reformers and the king. Using their influence at court, the leading proponents of the Reform – Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury, Archbishop Oswald of York, and Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester – sought royal sanction for the seizure of alienated Church lands and the expulsion of regional aristocrats from monastic property. In exchange, they offered financial and ideological support to Edgar’s attempts to further centralise the kingdom’s government under the authority of the crown. Æthelwold encapsulated this partnership in an imagined address from God to the king: ‘because you zealously protect and advance my name and dominion – that is, my Church which I rightly have in my special dominion – as a recompense to you I will glorify your name and increase and advance in prosperity your kingdom which you hold under my dominion’.²⁷ For Æthelwold and his fellow reformers, this partnership between *rex* and *ecclesia* provided the foundation for a revitalised English Church; for Wulfstan, writing a generation later, it would serve as one of the principal sources for his vision of a holy society.

The Reform encountered its most significant crisis when King Edgar died unexpectedly on 8 July 975, and the resulting dispute between supporters of Edgar’s underage sons Edward and Æthelred brought the kingdom to the brink of civil war. Although the succession was finally

25 There are a number of excellent studies of the Monastic Reform. See especially John 1966; Parsons 1975; Stafford 1978a; Stafford 1989; Cubitt 1997; and Gretsch 1999.

26 This list taken from Rabin 2013: 225.

27 This passage occurs in Æthelwold’s preface to his Old English translation of the Benedictine Rule, edited as ‘King Edgar’s Establishment of the Monasteries’ in Whitelock 1981: 142–54, at 147.

settled in favour of Edward, the young king lacked the means to protect the Church from those who had opposed the consolidation of royal and ecclesiastical authority under his father. The sudden weakening of royal protection left the Church vulnerable to members of the regional aristocracy who had been dispossessed by the Reform, a situation they were quick to exploit through lawsuits and violent attacks on monastic foundations.²⁸ The trauma of this period was such that Wulfstan, writing the *Institutes of Polity* nearly fifty years later, would refer to it as the moment when the moral character of English government began to unravel: 'since Edgar died, just as God willed, it has come to pass all too much that there are more thieves than righteous people, and it is a terrible thing that they are thieves who should be the shepherds of the Christian people'.²⁹ The situation reached its nadir with the assassination of Edward by supporters of his brother Æthelred in 978. Though Æthelred was likely innocent of any collusion in the murder, when he assumed the throne later that year it was under a cloud of suspicion that he lacked the political influence or strength of character to dispel.

The legal and extra-legal attacks on Church property continued through the first decade of Æthelred's reign.³⁰ Although he eventually atoned for his early acquisitiveness and susceptibility to bad companions, Æthelred never escaped his early reputation for being *unræd* ('of poor counsel'). His reputation suffered further from his inability to counter the escalation in Viking raids in the late 980s which led to England being forced to pay an annual tribute to the Danes beginning in 991. The next twenty years were marked by the periodic resumption of the raids until Æthelred could gather enough money to buy off the invaders with an increased tribute. These years also witnessed a series of increasingly horrific events, including the St. Brice's Day Massacre – the government-sanctioned murder of Danes living in England ordered by Æthelred in 1002 – and the martyrdom of Archbishop Alphege of Canterbury in 1012 by a Viking army under the command of Thurkil the Tall.³¹ King Sweyn of Denmark launched a formal invasion of England in 1013 which led to the collapse of Æthelred's government, an event

28 The succession crisis and resulting 'anti-monastic reaction' remains one of the most controversial and least understood periods in later Anglo-Saxon history. See especially Fisher 1952; Jayakumar 2009; and Rabin 2013.

29 *Polity* X.

30 On the reign of Æthelred, see Stafford 1978b; Wormald 1978; Keynes 1980; Stafford 1989; Keynes 1991; Lavelle 2002; Williams 2003a; and Keynes 2007.

31 See n. to the first clause of *Cn. 1020* below.

commemorated by Wulfstan in his most famous homily, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* ('The Sermon of the Wolf to the English'). Æthelred resumed the throne the next year following Sweyn's death; however, the invasion continued under Sweyn's son Cnut, whose conquest of England was nearly complete by the time Æthelred died in early 1016. Æthelred's son, Edmund Ironside, continued to resist the Danish invasion, but his own death a few months later left Cnut wholly in control of the kingdom.

Cnut quickly consolidated his rule by forcing the surviving members of the West Saxon royal family into exile in Normandy and marrying Æthelred's widow, Emma (this despite the fact that he was already married to the Northumbrian noblewoman Ælfgifu).³² The success of his conquest meant that England now formed the centrepiece of an Anglo-Scandinavian empire encompassing Denmark, Norway, and parts of Sweden, and drawing tribute from portions of modern-day Poland, Ireland, France, Scotland, and Germany. Although Cnut based his throne in England, the military and diplomatic demands of an empire this size obliged him to spend much of his reign travelling. As a result, he relied on a number of English deputies and advisors, among the most important of whom was Wulfstan, a leading figure on the royal council and principal author of the legislation promulgated in Cnut's name.³³ Despite his periods of absenteeism and history of invasion, Cnut appears to have been perceived as a successful ruler: he took considerable interest in the just governance of his English subjects and his patronage of the Church earned him a reputation for generosity far exceeding that of his predecessor. Cnut died in 1035 at a relatively young age – his date of birth is unknown, but he seems to have been around forty – and the failure of his sons to secure the kingdom led to the recall of Edward, heir to the West Saxon throne, thus setting in motion a sequence of events that would ultimately lead to the Norman Conquest of 1066.

32 On the reign of Cnut, see Stafford 1971; Lawson 1993; and Bolton 2009.

33 Wulfstan's involvement in Cnut's legislation has been widely discussed. See especially Whitelock 1948; Whitelock 1955; Kennedy 1983; Lawson 1992; and Richards 2010.

Wulfstan's life and career

Despite his contemporary prominence, much about Wulfstan's life remains a mystery. Although the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* notes his death in its entry for the year 1023, his age and date of birth are unrecorded.³⁴ Yet while reliable information is scarce, the few surviving facts do allow for some tentative deductions. If we assume that Wulfstan's elevation to the episcopacy in 996 coincided with canonical practice, his birth can be plausibly dated to sometime between 946 and 966.³⁵ Wulfstan's decision to be buried at Ely and his patronage of Peterborough have given rise to speculation that his family originated in the south-eastern Danelaw; however, the fact that he and several of his relatives were connected to the foundation at Worcester has led some scholars to propose the west midlands as a potential alternative.³⁶ What little information there is about Wulfstan's early life comes from the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*, which records that he 'did not lack either noble birth or worldly honour', that he was born through caesarean section, and that he was reared on cow's milk 'through the industriousness of his kinsmen'.³⁷ Claims such as these are not uncommon in hagiography of the period – and the *Liber Eliensis* narrative certainly seems to have been composed with Wulfstan's candidacy for sainthood in mind³⁸ – yet they are not necessarily inaccurate: it is unlikely that Wulfstan could have ascended to a bishopric without an aristocratic background and his letters to Ælfric do reveal an interest in the legality of caesarean procedures, though this may be nothing more than coincidence.³⁹ Concerning other members of Wulfstan's family, the *Liber Eliensis* notes that Brihteah, a

34 The relevant section of *Chronicle* entry for 1023 reads only, 'Here died Archbishop Wulfstan, and Ælfric succeeded [him]'. See Irvine 2004: 75.

35 Prior to the Council of Trent in 1545, the canonical age for ordination varied between thirty and thirty-five, with the former being more common. Age at appointment to a bishopric could vary widely, though: Dunstan became bishop of Worcester in 957 at the age of 48 and Æthelwold was between 54 and 59 when named bishop of Winchester in 963, but his successor Alphege was only 30 at his election in 984.

36 Bethurum 1957: 55; Whitelock 1966: 7; Cooper 1970: 3; Gatch 1977: 18; Williams 2003a: 85; and Wormald 2004: 13. Whitelock notes that further support for a location in the Fenlands or east midlands may be adduced from the fact that Wulfstan's three predecessors as archbishop of York all originated in the same region. Whitelock 1937–45: 170; and Whitelock 1959: 75–6. On the later history of Wulfstan's family, see Williams 1996: 394–7.

37 Blake 1962: II.87.

38 On this point, see Crook 2004: 524.

39 Bethurum 1957: 55 and Cooper 1970: 3.

later bishop of Worcester, was the son of Wulfstan's sister, while the existence of a second sister is attested by a later charter recording her marriage to one Wulfric. Another charter mentions a brother, Elfwise, to whom Wulfstan leased several estates, and the likelihood of a second brother is indicated by a deed in which a certain Wulfmær is referred to as 'the brother of the bishop', who may be tentatively identified with Wulfstan, then bishop of London.⁴⁰ Yet, if records such as these suggest that Wulfstan maintained ties with his relatives throughout his career, the nature of those ties, the depth of his affection, and the influence of family members on his intellectual development remain unknown.

Wulfstan's later identification with the Monastic Reform movement and the similarities between his ideas and those of Bishop Æthelwold have led some modern scholars to suggest that he may have been educated as a Benedictine novice at Winchester, although no hard evidence exists to support this supposition.⁴¹ Frank Barlow raises the further possibility that Wulfstan's later correspondence with Ælfric may even 'be due to a common schooling'.⁴² However, tempting as it is to imagine a young 'Wulfie' and 'Ælfie' passing notes under Æthelwold's stern, schoolmarm's gaze, such a vision is, sadly, entirely without warrant.⁴³ John of Worcester records that prior to becoming bishop of London, Wulfstan had been abbot of the monastery at Worcester, which would suggest that he had previously been a monk of that foundation.⁴⁴ John's chronicle is inaccurate concerning other details of Wulfstan's career, though, and in the absence of corroborating evidence, this detail must be viewed with suspicion.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, whether he was associated with Winchester, Worcester, both, or neither, it remains most likely that Wulfstan lived and was educated as a monk prior to 996. Not only do his writings indicate an extensive knowledge of monastic texts, including both the Benedictine Rule and the *Regularis Concordia*, but

40 Whitelock 1930: 136; Robertson 1956: 388–9; Bethurum 1957: 55–6; and Baxter 2007: 24–5.

41 Knowles 1963: 63; Barlow 1979: 68–9. Disputing this supposition, Patrick Wormald writes, 'there is strikingly little evidence that our Wulfstan was educated in the Æthelwoldian style'. Wormald 2004: 13.

42 Barlow 1979: 68.

43 Malcolm Godden has shown that it is unlikely that Ælfric came into contact with Wulfstan prior to their first exchange of letters in 1002. See Godden 2004: 354, 372.

44 See the annal for 1002 in Darlington, McGurk et al. 1995: 452. It should be noted that John confuses the years of Wulfstan's appointment to the see at London with that of his elevation to the sees of Worcester and York.

45 Whitelock 1937: 464–5.

his affiliation with the Reform movement – among the principal tenets of which was the belief that bishops should be chosen from monasteries – make it unlikely that he would have ascended to the episcopacy from anything other than a monastic setting.⁴⁶

Wulfstan's appointment as bishop of London in 996 marks his entrance into the historical record. It was during this time in London that his earliest extant sermons, the eschatological homilies numbered 1–3 in Bethurum's edition, were probably composed. Dorothy Bethurum and Patrick Wormald also assign homilies 4 and 5 to this period, although Sara Pons-Sanz dates these approximately ten years later. Based on linguistic evidence, Pons-Sanz classifies homilies 14, 15, and 19 (the last of which is translated below, pp. 173–6) among Wulfstan's London compositions, yet here Bethurum and Wormald argue for a later date, locating 14 and 15 between 1002 and 1005 and 19 to the period just before Æthelred's brief deposition in 1014.⁴⁷ Whatever the precise dating of these homilies may be – and Wulfstanian chronology is, as Wormald concedes, 'a fraught affair'⁴⁸ – it appears that even at this stage in his career Wulfstan had already come to be known as a skilled author and homilist, a reputation attested by a surviving letter to the then-bishop praising him for his eloquence and sagacity.⁴⁹ These years also witness Wulfstan beginning to circulate his homilies under the pen-name *Lupus*. His reasons for adopting a pseudonym are unclear: the obviousness of *Lupus* (a translation of his name's first syllable) makes a desire for anonymity unlikely, and the fact that he always appears as 'Wulfstan' or 'Wulfstanus' in official documents indicates that he did not see it merely as a convenient Latinisation. It is possible that he adopted a pseudonym to imitate those used by members of the Carolingian court school that grew up around Alcuin, though Simon Keynes has suggested that the reason may be somewhat simpler:

46 Though not conclusive, it is also worth noting that only fourteen of the 116 bishops appointed between 960 and 1066 were non-monastics, none of whom occupied the see of York. Bethurum 1957: 57 and Hill 2004: 311.

47 Bethurum 1957: 101–2; Wormald 2004: 26; and Pons-Sanz 2007: 25.

48 Wormald 2004: 16.

49 The letter is edited in Bethurum 1957: 376–7. Sara Pons-Sanz points out that this praise 'should be taken with a pinch of salt because his correspondent was begging off translating materials which Wulfstan had requested; however, it cannot be completely discarded as evidence that his contemporaries were already aware of his characteristic style'. Pons-Sanz 2004: 281n. 281. Wulfstan's rising reputation is also indicated by contemporary charters, in which he is given precedence over all other ecclesiastics except the archbishops and the bishop of Winchester. Williams 2003a: 36–7.

‘perhaps one should sense in Archbishop Wulfstan’s use of the Latin *Lupus* (‘wolf’), as his pen-name, a warning to his flock that he was out on the prowl’.⁵⁰

In 1002, Wulfstan left London to become bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York. Writing a little over a century later, William of Malmesbury condemned Wulfstan’s acceptance of this double appointment, which he described as evidence that the newly named archbishop was less than his predecessors ‘in both holiness and custom’.⁵¹ The joint holding seems to have been viewed – retroactively, at least – with some suspicion in Worcester as well: one twelfth-century list of bishops labels Wulfstan ‘impious’ while a second refers to him as ‘the reprobate’.⁵² It would be wrong to take such subsequent judgments as indicative of contemporary attitudes, though. Wulfstan’s predecessors Eadwulf (archbishop from 995 to 1002) and Oswald (archbishop from 971 to 992) also occupied the York and Worcester sees jointly, while Oscytl (archbishop from 958 to 971) held York in plurality with the see of Dorchester. Although pluralism was frowned upon – it later would serve as the justification for the excommunication of Stigand, simultaneously bishop of Winchester and Archbishop of Canterbury – it nonetheless appears to have provided a useful solution to two related problems. Not only was York among the poorer sees in England, but generations of Danish occupation had left it with a long tradition of disloyalty towards the Wessex-based English monarchy. Pairing an archiepiscopal appointment to York with an episcopal appointment to a diocese such as Worcester or Dorchester gave Wulfstan and his predecessors a much-needed extra source of income while also ensuring that they always retained an interest in the more loyal south.⁵³

50 Keynes 2005: 22. The suggestion that he may have been imitating Carolingian court scholars occurs in Whitelock 1942: 40.

51 Ch. iii.115.11 in Winterbottom 2007: 380.

52 The first of these occurs on fol. 2 of the Worcester Cartulary. See Darlington 1968: 1. The second is quoted in Whitelock 1966: 8–9. Stephen Baxter has recently found evidence that Wulfstan’s accession was viewed much more positively at the time. A short piece of Latin doggerel copied into a Worcester cartulary wishes ‘peace, long life, and also salvation for the Wolf’. Baxter 2004: 161. See also Barrow 1992: 53–74.

53 On this point, see Bethurum 1957: 59–60; Whitelock 1959: 72–6; and Whitelock 1966: 10. It is possible that in Wulfstan’s case, though, one may see the reverse of this pattern: instead of an effort to ensure that a northern cleric retained a southern interest, Wulfstan’s appointment may indicate an attempt to place an ecclesiastic with southern loyalties and affiliations in a position of power over a northern see. For this theory, see Stafford 1978b: 34. The difficulties in governing the north have been usefully illustrated in Fletcher 2003.

Although Worcester was a prosperous diocese with extensive real estate holdings, the scant evidence that survives for York Minster during this period suggests that Wulfstan would have found a relatively impoverished church suffering from a series of recent property losses and a clergy accustomed to more heterodox practices than the new archbishop was prepared to countenance.⁵⁴ Wulfstan's actions as a Church administrator and manager of ecclesiastical property remain among the least understood aspects of his career;⁵⁵ nonetheless, he appears to have been, in the words of one historian, 'someone who took estate administration seriously' and who engaged in 'extraordinarily well-conceived and innovative' strategies for securing the tenurial rights of the properties he oversaw.⁵⁶ At Worcester, Wulfstan almost certainly commissioned the production of the *Liber Wigorniensis*, the oldest surviving Anglo-Saxon cartulary, as a means of ensuring that leased ecclesiastical property would revert to the Church when current tenancy agreements ended.⁵⁷ Likewise, at York, he aggressively pursued the recovery of alienated Church property, expanded the foundation's endowment, and consolidated the minster's real estate holdings.⁵⁸ It cannot be a coincidence that Wulfstan's early years at York and Worcester also witnessed his first forays into legal composition, including the *Laws of Edward and Guthrum*, *Concerning Episcopal Duties* (*Episcopus*), the 'Compilation on Status', and the initial version of the *Canons of Edgar*.⁵⁹ It is likely that the shared focus of these texts on clerical status, the moral obligations of priests, Church property rights, and episcopal duties provided an ideological framework for Wulfstan's approach to ecclesiastical administration.⁶⁰ In the demands that these texts place on clergy and communicants, as well as in their nostalgic vision of the early tenth century, the vision of a revived Christian community in the northern diocese becomes a model for the restoration of a holy society in England as a whole.

54 Brooke 1977: 12–43; Keynes 1986: 89–90; Baxter 2004: 161–206; Norton 2004: 207–34; and Woodman 2012: 55ff.

55 Those who have addressed this topic include Whitelock 1965: 214–31; Keynes 1986: 81–99; Barrow 2004: 141–60; Baxter 2004: 161–207; and Woodman 2012: 61–4.

56 Baxter 2004: 190.

57 Ker 1948: 49–75; Stafford 1978a: 23; Baxter 2004: 175–6; and Woodman 2012: 62.

58 Keynes 1986: 88–91 and Baxter 2004: 186–7.

59 Whitelock 1941: 1–21 and Bethurum 1950: 449–63. On the dating of these texts, see Wormald 2004: 26 and Pons-Sanz 2007: 25.

60 Cf. Stephen Baxter, who argues that 'Wulfstan regarded the protection of God's property to be an integral element of his wider programme for the regeneration of Christian society'. Baxter 2004: 163.

The years between 1008 and 1016 were a critical period in Wulfstan's development as a lawmaker and political theorist. Although the archbishop had long served as one of Æthelred's advisors – charter witness-lists produced during his London years record his frequent attendance upon the king and participation in the royal council⁶¹ – it is with the Council of Enham in 1008 that he begins to make his mark as a legislator. The laws promulgated after Enham, edited by Felix Liebermann as V and VI Æthelred, are the first to be composed in Wulfstan's distinctive homiletic style, indicating his principal role in the texts' composition.⁶² The meeting at Enham may also have been the occasion on which Wulfstan preached the earliest of his surviving addresses to the royal council (translated below, pp. 127–30).⁶³ The Enham texts bear witness to Wulfstan's newfound pre-eminence as a legislator, yet they also mark both a significant evolution in his political thought and the emergence of a new form of Old English legal composition. V and VI Æthelred initiate what Wormald has described as 'the last phase' of Anglo-Saxon legislation, characterised by increasing sophistication in expression and content.⁶⁴ More specifically, the laws' fusion of legal and homiletic rhetoric as well as their rigorous emphasis on the practices necessary to lead a Christian life point to Wulfstan's growing recognition of legislation's potential as a vehicle for realising his vision of a holy society.⁶⁵

Over the course of the next eight years, though, the fulfilment of this vision must have seemed increasingly unlikely as Wulfstan found himself confronted with Æthelred's diminishing power and the mounting aggressiveness of the Viking invasions. The impact of these trends on Wulfstan's thought can be seen in the works he produces during this period, including the law-codes VII–X Æthelred, the first version of the *Institutes of Polity*, as well as such homilies as the *Sermo ad Populum* (Bethurum 13) and Wulfstan's most famous work, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (Bethurum 20). These writings are characterised by a movement away from the general admonitions and eschatological prophesying of

61 See, for instance, S 877, 878, 879, 887, 888, 889, 892, 895, 896, 897, 898, and 899. Charters are cited according to the number assigned to them in Sawyer 1968.

62 Wormald 1978: 49–58; Lawson 1992: 573–8; Wormald 1999d: 332–5; Williams 2003a: 92–3; and Keynes 2007: 177–9.

63 On the date of this text, see Jost 1950: 108. Wormald has proposed 1014 as an alternative, but concedes the possibility of the earlier date. Wormald 1999d: 337n. 344.

64 Wormald 1999d: 330. On this point, see also Schwyter 1998: 221–2.

65 Wormald 1999d: 345 and Wormald 1999a: 244.

his early works and towards more specific calls for moral and political transformation. As a result, by 1016, Wulfstan had, in Wormald's words, 'moved from herald of Antichrist and the end of all things, through apprentice welder of English canonical tradition, to prophet and engineer of social reconstruction and political transition. It was an astonishing intellectual odyssey with few parallels in the history of the medieval West'.⁶⁶ Wulfstan's emergence as a political thinker of the first order would have practical consequences: the collapse of the West Saxon monarchy in 1016 left Wulfstan as the country's foremost legislator, and thus in a perfect position to influence the laws of England's new ruler, King Cnut of Denmark.

Among the greatest mysteries of Wulfstan's career is the question of how he negotiated the period of Danish conquest between 1014 and 1016. The uneven documentary record has left it impossible to discern how his loyalties evolved, when he transferred his allegiance, whether he submitted to Cnut's regime willingly or out of political necessity, and if he sought out the new king on his own or if the young conqueror instead approached the more experienced archbishop for counsel and support.⁶⁷ What is clear, however, is that Wulfstan weathered these years with his prestige undiminished. Although he retired as Bishop of Worcester in 1016, he retained his influence over the diocese through his replacement Leofsig, who likely acted only as a suffragan.⁶⁸ More importantly, not only did he continue to be the principal author of English legislation, but evidence of Wulfstan's revisions to Cnut's proclamation of 1020 (translated below, pp. 192–6) suggests that he served as one of the principal intermediaries between the Anglo-Saxons and their new Danish king.⁶⁹ Wulfstan's service to Cnut provides the backdrop for the composition of many of his most important works, including I and II Cnut, the series of homilies preserved in the York Gospels (translated below, pp. 154–64), and the revised versions of the

66 Wormald 1999a: 246. On this point, see also Godden 1994: 142–60; Rabin 2006: 388–414; and Keynes 2007: 170–89. Wormald elsewhere notes the effect of this transition on Wulfstan's prose style: 'The contrast between 1008 and 1014 is important. It is part of the evidence that Wulfstan was moving from a basically homiletic mode to one with a more evenly balanced blend of the conventions of preaching and law-making'. Wormald 1999d: 340–1.

67 These questions have been usefully explored by M.K. Lawson, whose study of Cnut's reign highlights the political interdependence of Crown and Church during the period of conquest. Lawson 1993: 117–60.

68 Whitelock 1966: 9.

69 Bethurum 1957: 63–4; Lawson 1993: 125–9; and Bolton 2009: 83–4.

Canons of Edgar and the *Institutes of Polity* (translated below, pp. 85–100 and 101–24). This last, which sets forth Wulfstan's view of the three orders of society and argues for the central importance of the episcopacy to a Christian polity, provides the most extensive elaboration of his social vision and represents the most sophisticated work of English political theory before John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*.

Wulfstan died at York on 28 May 1023. In accordance with his wishes, his body was transported to Ely, where he was buried in the cathedral. Renovations to the cathedral over the succeeding centuries resulted in his remains being reinterred several times before reaching their current resting place in the chantry chapel of Bishop Nicholas West in 1771.⁷⁰

Style and canon

Unlike his contemporary Ælfric, relatively few of Wulfstan's writings circulated under his own name. Even those attributed to *Lupus* do not link the pseudonymous author with the archbishop of York. As a result, the establishment of Wulfstan's canon is an on-going project, and the past half-century has witnessed a number of scholars arguing for or against particular Wulfstanian attributions.⁷¹ In the absence of historical or contextual evidence, the principal forms of proof brought to bear on such arguments concern Wulfstan's distinctive prose style. Although Wulfstan's writings encompass a range of genres, his rhetorical practices remained largely consistent. Accordingly, even as Wulfstan is rightly praised as one of Anglo-Saxon England's most sophisticated prose stylists, he may also be considered one of its most easily identifiable.⁷² Unfortunately, translation into modern English obscures many of the most important features of Wulfstan's prose; nonetheless, the centrality of the archbishop's mode of expression to his meaning makes it useful to enumerate some of those features here.

70 Wulfstan shares his tomb with six other prominent figures in Ely's early history, including Byrhtnoth, leader of the Anglo-Saxon forces at the Battle of Maldon in 991. On the history of Wulfstan's remains, see Crook 2004: 501–24.

71 The list of contributions to this discussion is far too lengthy to be recounted here, but some classic examples include Whitelock 1941; Bethurum 1950; and Whitelock 1955. For more recent instances, see Wilcox 1992; Wormald 1999f; Orchard 2002; Hall 2004; Clayton 2008; and Rabin 2010a.

72 For general overviews of Wulfstan's style, see Kinard 1897: 19–31 and McIntosh 1949; Bethurum 1957: 87–98; Bethurum 1966: 229–35; Orchard 1992; Orchard 2002; Dance 2004; Orchard 2004; and Gates 2010: §22–§33.