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'Deor and Nytenu mid Us': Animals in the Works of Ælfric

by

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Abbreviations:

ASE Anglo-Saxon England
CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CH Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*
EETS Early English Text Society
KJB King James Bible
LS Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*
PL Patrologia Latina

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Letty Nijhuis
Cork, March 2008

1. Introduction

1.1 General

> Ylp is ormæte nyten mare þonne sum hus . eall mid banum befangen binnan þam felle butan æt ðam nauelan and he næfre ne lið .
>
> [An elephant is a huge animal, greater than a house, completely surrounded with bones, within the skin, except at the navel, and he never lies down.] [1]

Ælfric (ca. 955-1020), one of the most prolific authors of the Old English period, describes the elephant here, providing his audience with information they most likely did not have first-hand: the first elephant was yet to come to England as a present for King Richard III, given to him by King Louis of France in 1255 - it managed to survive for four years. This medieval description of the elephant, ultimately derived from other sources such as Ambrose and Isidore, had a long literary life and was for example still used by John Donne in 1612.[2]

Literature about animals was highly popular in the Middle Ages, judging by the manuscript evidence. Influential works like the *Physiologus* circulated in great numbers, as did copies of Isidore's *Etymologies* and Pliny's *Natural History*. Many bestiaries survive, too, the first of which started to appear around the turn of the first millennium, and may have been available in England at the time. In England, a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon booklist mentions a *Liber Bestiarum*, which was probably a copy of the *Physiologus*.[3] An Old English version of this work certainly existed, but the surviving copy contains accounts of only three animals (panther, whale and partridge), so is by no means complete.[4] Nevertheless, it is clear that the *Physiologus* was both available and in use at the time, as the work was known to Aldhelm and used as a source for the *Liber Monstrorum*.[5]

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[1] *LS*2, XXV Passio Machabeorum, p. 104, ll. 566-568.
[2] "Nature's great masterpiece, an elephant [...] Yet nature hath given him no knees to bend" Donne, p. 329.
[3] Lapidge 1985, p. 55.
[4] Although it has been argued that the OE *Physiologus* was intended as a complete text, rather than a fragment: see chapter 2.
[5] Ibid., p. 55.

We do not know much about Ælfric's life, except that he was a monk in Winchester and Cerne Abbas, and became abbot of the monastery of Eynsham around 1005.[6] Studying in Winchester under Bishop Æthelwold, Ælfric was under the influence of the Benedictine Reform, a revival in religion, learning and literature. Benefiting from this Reform, Ælfric would have had access to an increasing number of Latin works. Among the latter were a number of the afore-mentioned works on natural history. These are sources which Ælfric may have consulted, and in certain cases there is evidence that he did so, for instance when quoting several authorities on the elephant.[7]

Although Anglo-Saxon scholars based much of their knowledge on biblical, classical, patristic and early Christian sources, there is also evidence that there were local traditions in animal lore - the motif of the 'beasts of battle' that occurs several times in Old English poetry is a case in point – and Ælfric would presumably have been aware of these traditions as well.

Animals, as a part of the Creation, are a subject that seems to have fascinated Ælfric. [8] Not only did he write the *Exameron Anglice*, a work dealing exclusively with the Creation, but his version of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigewulfi Presbyteri in Genesin* and his *Catholic Homilies* also show a strong interest in the same topic. It is no surprise then that animals appear frequently throughout Ælfric's works. Ælfric refers to more than 400 animals in his *Lives of Saints* and *Catholic Homilies* alone, animals that range from maggots to lions and birds to camels, from the above-mentioned elephants in the homily on the Maccabees to the seals (or are they otters?) that dry St Cuthbert's feet.

1.2 Research Questions and Methodology

The frequent use of animals in Ælfric's work raises many questions. When trying to describe the use of animal imagery in Ælfric, a few things need to be considered. What information about animals was available to him from patristic and classical sources, such as Augustine, Pliny, or Isidore and which of these sources were then used by him? How did the transmission of external sources

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[6] For a biography, see White 1974. For a more general background to Ælfric and the Benedictine Reform, see for example Gatch 1978.
[7] See Chapter 5. Sources examined in detail in Cross 1965: 367-373.
[8] Crawford 1968, p. 18.

take place, and what was the impact of these sources on the way Ælfric viewed animals? What 'native' traditions existed in animal imagery, and were they acknowledged by Ælfric in his work? And, finally, how are animals used in Ælfric's texts?

The aim of this work is to attempt to answer these questions by providing an inventory and discussion of the use of animals in the works of Ælfric. The dissertation will offer a survey of the animal imagery used, the sources on which Ælfric based this imagery, the contexts in which the animals occur, and the ways in which they are presented. The work of Ælfric is particularly suited for such an examination, as many of his sources are known, either through his own admission or by the considerable body of extant source studies. Ælfric regularly combines several different sources for his information on animals, showing that he has carefully researched the topic. As Ælfric lived and wrote just before or at the start of the great upsurge in the production of bestiaries in the eleventh century, it should be useful to see what the state of animal imagery was in Anglo-Saxon England before this new influx.

To carry out this project, all references to animals made by Ælfric in his most important works, the *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*, were collected. These were then entered into a searchable database, making the data easily accessible. The animal imagery thus found is then considered against the background of medieval views of animals, paying specific attention to processes of transmission.

After a consideration of the present state of research in the field of medieval 'zoology' in section 1.3, chapter 2 discusses what sources on animals were available to the Anglo-Saxons, and, more specifically, to Ælfric. It charts which sources were used by Ælfric himself, and how he used them. For information on Ælfric's sources, I have relied on several studies, the most important of which are the combined commentaries on Ælfric's works, the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* project,[9] and the *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture* project.[10] In the same chapter, I also briefly consider Ælfric's proposed audience, and how this could have influenced his use of animals.

[9] Accessible at http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk
[10] Biggs 1990.

Section 2.3 gives an impression of what views on animals existed in the sources used by Ælfric. It examines the general views of animals which existed in the early medieval period. It aims to give an overview and analysis of the animal imagery used by classical, patristic and medieval authors, in order to show to what views of animals Ælfric had been exposed. The animals in Ælfric's works are discussed in more detail in the following two chapters, with the help of many examples from his work. These chapters 3 and 4 deal with the search for Ælfric's approach to animals, by providing a commentary on the domesticated and wild animals respectively. Chapter 5 is a detailed summary and examination of the information discussed in the previous two chapters.

For Ælfric's two series of *Catholic Homilies*, the texts used throughout the dissertation are the EETS editions by Clemoes (the first series) and Godden (the second series and the commentary on both series). These are abbreviated as *CH*1 and *CH*2, and the commentary is referred to as *CH*3. I have used a two-volume reprint of Skeat's EETS editions (OS 76, 82, 94 and 114) for Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, hereafter abbreviated as *LS*1 and *LS*2. Also consulted are the additional Ælfrician homilies edited by Pope (EETS 259 and 260), abbreviated as Pope1 and Pope2. The translations from Old English and Latin are my own, unless indicated otherwise. For biblical quotations in the English language, I have used the Douay-Rheims translation.[11] Although this translation is based on the Clementine Vulgate, and is therefore not identical to the Bible as it would have been known to Ælfric and his contemporaries, it is the modern English translation which most closely follows the text of the medieval Bible(s).

1.3 State of Research

Much has been written about the works of Ælfric. In fact, the first 'modern' edition ever made of an Old English text consisted of a homily by Ælfric (and passages from his letters), which appeared in 1566. Matthew Parker's edition, called *A Testimonie of Antiquitie*, was to support contemporary theological opinion on the Eucharist. Ælfric's texts were used to show the longevity, and therefore presumably the authority, of certain views on the Eucharist in England.

[11] As recommended by Marsden (Marsden 2004).

A little later, scholars would refer to Ælfric's Bible translations in order to provide support for the then controversial project of translating the Bible into English. A case in point is Fox's edition of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, published in 1571.

Godden states, perhaps controversially, that for the Old English period, the work of publishing simple editions that merely make a text available to the public is over. Most Old English texts have been edited more or less satisfactorily. However, what needs to be done is to provide context for these Old English texts:[12]

> What remains is, firstly to further the understanding of the texts. [...] But the primary editorial contribution to Old English scholarship is likely to be a more historical one, providing material for a fuller understanding of Anglo-Saxon culture as a whole. If editors can establish when and where a work was composed and what form it had; **what texts were known to the Anglo-Saxon writers, in what form, and how they were adapted; how a text was revised, used, adapted, and disseminated**; and finally, what kind of language was used by the author and how it was changed by readers and copyists, we will be moving a long way towards an **understanding of Anglo-Saxon literary and intellectual activity.** [my emphasis]

Although the satisfactoriness of existing Old English editions is a point open to debate (the edition of *LS*, for example, could perhaps benefit from a more modern approach), the point about the need to improve the understanding of Old English texts and their contexts is a valid one. Building on previous editions and source studies of Ælfric's works, this dissertation will examine animal imagery within the context of transmission processes.

The study of animal imagery and views of animals in the Middle Ages has recently gained some popularity. Critics often examine animals as part of the more general concept of nature. Neville,[13] for example, discusses nature in Old English poetry, and animals also occur in studies on Anglo-Saxon laws and

[12] Godden 1977, p. 29.
[13] Neville 1999.

medicine. Animals are referred to in wisdom texts, such as the gnomic texts.[14] There are several shorter studies and articles about animals in the Old English period, but a full-length detailed study does not yet exist. Previous scholarship has tended to concentrate either on the etymology of animal names or on animals as a literary motif in poetic texts only. The use of animals in prose texts has been neglected almost entirely. It is noted by Hollis that the "study of the OE magico-medical literature has tended to be topic-based rather than text-based, and has, very properly, always drawn on the published research of specialists in medicine, botany, social history, archaeology, palaeopathology, folklore, anthropology and other fields"[15]. This is also valid for the study of animals. As a result of being topic-based, material on animals in Anglo-Saxon England is widely spread among the different academic disciplines. This makes it more complicated to obtain a good overview of what has been done in the field, but an attempt is made below.

The medieval study of animals is not always strictly scientific. Magic and science, as well as reality and fantasy, are often hard to distinguish in medieval writing. The supernatural is important for the study of natural history, because it is often mixed into the 'serious' science. Even Pliny, who often showed a sceptical view of magic, included the supernatural in his work and did not always refute it.[16] So, although, strictly speaking, magic and magical creatures may not be part of natural history in the modern sense of the word, they certainly are a part of the Anglo-Saxon natural history tradition, which can be seen in a work such as the *Liber Monstrorum*. Another example of Anglo-Saxon interest in monsters is of course the *Beowulf*-manuscript (Cotton Vitellius A.xv). This manuscript contains (among other texts) *Beowulf*, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* and *Wonders of the East*: all three are good sources for monster lore and have attracted some scholarly attention.[17] Animals as part of this mixture of science and magic can be found in the charms and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*,[18] which describes various recipes and remedies with animal ingredients.

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[14] For an edition, see Cavill 1999.
[15] Hollis and Wright 1992, p. 4.
[16] Thorndike 1923, p. 62-63.
[17] See for example Orchard 1995.
[18] De Vriend 1984.

An important work which takes science and magic into account is Thorndike's *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*.[19] This early twentieth-century work is very inclusive, but only the first volume is relevant to the Anglo-Saxon period. Thorndike aims to provide a complete overview of the early history of science and includes a lot of information on sources the Anglo-Saxons could have known. Thorndike exhaustively analyses many authors and their works from the classical period to the later Middle Ages. The author connects the history of science closely to magic and the supernatural: "My idea is that magic and experimental science have been connected in their development; that magicians were perhaps the first to experiment; and that the history of both magic and experimental science can be better understood by studying them together".[20] Thorndike also pays some attention to Anglo-Saxon science in chapter 31, but concentrates on medicine only. Thorndike's work, although limited in these ways, nevertheless provides invaluable information on classical and early medieval authors on natural history who were known to the Anglo-Saxons.

The linguistic field has been covered in numerous articles and books. Unfortunately, fauna has not received the same amount of attention as flora.[21] An early work is a list of Old English names for mammals by Jordan.[22] Its major concern is to provide an etymology for nearly every mammal mentioned in the Old English corpus. Jordan divides the animals into different biological classes (such as rodents, carnivorous animals, etc.), but does not include elaborate information as to the contexts in which animal names are used. Rather, his interest is purely etymological. Nevertheless, comparing his work to the more recent Old English *Thesaurus*,[23] it is clear that his list is exhaustive and therefore useful for finding Old English sources for mammals.

More recently, Kitson has written a similar work on birds.[24] Although earlier attempts at the subject were made by Whitman[25] and Swaen,[26] a complete

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[19] Thorndike 1923.
[20] Thorndike 1923, p.2.
[21] See for example the Anglo-Saxon Plant-Name Survey, online at http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLL/EngLang/ihsl/projects/plants.htm
[22] Jordan 1903.
[23] Roberts and Kay 1995.
[24] Kitson 1997 and 1998.
[25] Whitman 1898.
[26] Swaen 1907.

ornithological list like Bierbaumer's botanical work (see below) did not previously exist. Kitson, like Jordan, collects Old English bird-names for etymological studies. He finds that, in contrast to Old English plant-names (which have mostly been derived from Latin names), most bird-names have a Germanic background, perhaps "implying greater awareness by ordinary speakers of varieties of birds than of plants".[27] According to Kitson, the main sources for ornithology are the Latin-Old English glossaries. These glossaries pose a problem for our interpretation of the bird-names in places, as they contain little information on the birds themselves, and the Old English equivalent of a Latin bird-name may not always refer to the same species.

Scholarship on animals as a literary motif has been more prolific. An example of criticism in this category is the work done on the theme of the Beasts of Battle in Old English poetry. On a relatively small topic like this alone, many articles have been written concerning the meaning, use and originality of these animals.[28] As noted above, the various monsters in Old English literature (particularly in *Beowulf*), have received much scholarly attention too. A recent study is the above-mentioned work by Orchard, in which he considers the "motivation and background to the compilation of the Beowulf-manuscript"; in particular he addresses "the question of the precise role and meaning both of the ancient monsters who stalk through the sources and of the heroes who battle against them".[29] He agrees with Kenneth Sisam that the basis for the composition of the *Beowulf* manuscript may have been an interest in monsters and the monstrous.[30] Four out of the five texts are connected to this topic: *The Passion of Saint Christopher*, *The Wonders of the East*, *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, and *Beowulf*. In his discussion of the monsters, Orchard also draws on the monsters in the *Grettis Saga* and in the *Liber Monstrorum*. He pinpoints the different sources for the various monsters (biblical, classical as well as Germanic) and illustrates the use of the monsters in the various texts. By comparing the sources of four texts (*Wonders of the East*, *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, *Beowulf* and *Liber Monstrorum*), Orchard tries to find links between them. Apart from finding that the Anglo-Saxon authors shared many of their

[27] Kitson 1997, p. 482.
[28] See, among others: Magoun 1955, Griffith 1993, Honegger 1998.
[29] Orchard 1995, p. vii.
[30] Sisam 1953.

sources (mainly Isidore, Pliny, Augustine, and Vergil), he also shows that the texts refer to each other in certain cases. The *Liber Monstrorum*, for example, uses *Wonders of the East* and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle.*

Another work concerning nature in poetry, mentioned above, is Neville's *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry.* Neville describes the world of nature in philosophical rather than scientific terms. In her work, she shows how nature in Old English poetry can serve as a literary device to convey information about philosophical issues such as the state of humanity and individuality. She also tries to show that the Anglo-Saxon view of nature is very different from our present-day views. According to her, "a single, particularly Anglo-Saxon cosmological scheme or world view, an Anglo-Saxon 'natural world'" did not exist.[31] By examining different poems thematically, discussing themes such as humanity, society, individualism, God, and knowledge, she concludes that representations of the natural world had a supportive function to express deeper meaning:[32] they have a 'thematic' rather than a 'decorative' function.[33]

A work which is more specifically concerned with animals is that by Salisbury.[34] In her book, Salisbury discusses general medieval views on animals, using literary and also archaeological evidence. Salisbury tries to show that the medieval view of animals changed over the years, from the view that animals are different from humans, to the view that mankind and animals have a lot in common. This, in my opinion, is not always completely relevant to the Anglo-Saxon view of animals, in which the borders between men and animals or monsters are crossed at times, for example in the blending of man and beast in Grendel in *Beowulf.*[35] However it is certainly relevant to, for example, the Augustinian view of animals.[36] As with Thorndike's work, this book is not geared towards Anglo-Saxon history only. Because it is not about a specific period or place, it remains fairly unspecific, and contains relatively few references to Anglo-Saxon material. It is, however, useful among other things for

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[31] Neville, p. 17.
[32] Id. p. 202.
[33] Id. p. 204.
[34] Salisbury 1993.
[35] E.g. O'Brien O'Keeffe 1981.
[36] See Chapter 3.

a comparison of different medieval laws dealing with animals and for an overview of the church's stance on animals.

A study which argues, contrary to Salisbury's work, that medieval views of animals remained fairly consistent through the ages (with the exception that the reintroduction of Aristotle's works spurred an interest in zoology from the 12th century), is Raymond van Uytven's *De Papegaai van de Paus: Mens en Dier in de Middeleeuwen* [The Pope's Parrot: Human and animal in the Middle Ages]. Van Uytven notices a continuity in views on animals from ca. 500 to 1500, stating that the views on animals as found in classical authors, the Bible and the church fathers were consistently thought to be important, and these views coloured the medieval vision of nature and the hierarchy within it. Although the reintroduction of Aristotle changed the outlook on the physical aspects of animals somewhat, the general views remain the same. He considers the sixteenth century to be the end of this stable period: a growing population pushes wild animals away from human habitats; exotic animals are imported from faraway countries; more and wider travel marginalizes monsters that were thought to exist in these places; protestant exegesis replaces the traditional explanations of animals; renaissance rationalism is on the rise. Van Uytven considers animals throughout the Middle Ages in the context of a number of themes: humans behaving like animals; animals behaving like humans; animals as helpers; animals as prey; animals as food; dangerous animals; animals as spectacle and symbols. His book covers both the early and later medieval periods, uses historical as well as literary sources, and also contains numerous illustrations of animals as they are depicted in medieval manuscripts.

A more practical side of animals is discussed in Ann Hagen's book *A Second Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food & Drink: Production & Distribution.* She discusses animals as a source of food and labour, taking into account historical and archaeological records, but also some literary sources. Although the focus on animals in this work obviously emphasises the animals' practical value, some attention is also paid to the symbolical value of animals, for example in the case of taboo foods.

Much research on medieval animals is also carried out in France, a good example of which is the collection of essays edited by Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, *L'Animal Exemplaire au Moyen Âge: Ve – Xve Siècles.*

This book is an excellent starting point especially for studies into the symbolic uses of animals.

During the final stages of this project, Emily Thornbury's essay, "Ælfric's Zoology," on the topic of this dissertation, was advertised as about to be printed in *Neophilologus*. An early version of this work appeared online,[37] and, although of necessity smaller in scope, appears to support some of this work's conclusions: Thornbury also stresses Ælfric's active interest in animals, and points out his strategic use of them in his works.

[37] Consulted on http://www.springerlink.com, December 2007.

2. Background: Sources and Transmission

In this chapter, I discuss which external sources containing information on animals were available to and used by the Ælfric. Although the Anglo-Saxons undoubtedly possessed a native knowledge and vision of nature,[38] and, more specifically, animals, there is no surviving written, fully developed native tradition of natural history. The closest Old English equivalent of this are the collections of gnomic statements in poetic works like the *Rune Poem* and the *Gifts of Men*, and the monster lore in *Beowulf*: these may have been a native way of collecting information about nature, very different in nature from a work like Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. Some glossaries also mention lists of animals in Old English, such as Ælfric's *Glossary* and the list of fish in the *Colloquy*,[39] but these follow Latin examples.

The few Old English texts that have a more specific interest in animals, or rather in fabulous creatures, such as the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, the *Wonders of the East*, and the *Physiologus*, and even many of the riddles about animals, all largely draw on continental traditions. Anglo-Latin manuscripts containing texts about natural history copy continental authors: usually a specific work, or a part of it, is copied. Even if the text is written by an Anglo-Saxon author such as Ælfric or Bede, it is heavily dependent on the continental sources. It is clear then that it is important to consider the influence, directly or via others, of authors such as Pliny, Augustine and Isidore.

I will first look at the availability of natural history works in Anglo-Saxon times in general, and then at the sources that Ælfric used specifically and describe the existing medieval views on animals.

2.1 Examples Transmission of Natural History in Anglo-Saxon England

Trying to establish the sources the Anglo-Saxons used can obviously be problematic, since we cannot always ascertain if a work was known or used, because not every manuscript survives. There is no doubt about the availability

[38] For examples of the Anglo-Saxon sense of nature, see Neville 1999.
[39] For an edition, see J. Zupitza, *Aelfrics Grammatik und Glossar: Text und Varianten* (Berlin, repr. 1966). The list of fish was probably added by Ælfric Bata. See Lendinara 1999 and Porter 1996.

of the Bible and Augustine's writings, but other works were probably known much better through indirect sources. An example in case may be Pliny. English-owned or made manuscripts of Pliny's *Natural History* do not survive in great numbers. According to Gneuss, there are four surviving copies,[40] of which the single complete version only arrived in England in the eleventh century. However, Pliny's work was definitely known indirectly through other authors like Isidore and Orosius, or the author of *Bald's Leechbook*, in which Pliny is mentioned as a source for a recipe against baldness.[41]

Another problem that occurs when a Latin manuscript with continental origins does survive, is that it is not always certain if the manuscript was known in England before the Norman period. Many of the manuscripts containing works on natural history arrived in England quite late, and were therefore not necessarily part of pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon knowledge. As Rella also notes,[42] it is often difficult to ascertain whether a ninth- or tenth-century continental manuscript found in English monastic libraries did indeed reach England before the Norman Conquest. We can tell that some manuscripts were definitely available because they were glossed in Old English. On the whole, however, we cannot assume that knowledge from early continental manuscripts owned by English institutions was necessarily available before 1066, since no extensive library catalogues from before the twelfth century survive.

The only direct evidence about which books were owned in Anglo-Saxon libraries or small private collections comes from a few booklists (totalling around thirteen), wills and letters, which have been studied by Lapidge.[43] Although these booklists and wills provide us with some hints about the Anglo-Saxon library, it is at times hard to establish which book was which on the list. The descriptions of the books in these lists are usually very short and at times even cryptic. Books concerned with the liturgy make up the bulk of the average booklist, but Lapidge did find evidence in an eighth-century list that Lactantius and Pliny were known. A tenth-century list mentions a *Liber Bestiarum*, which was probably a copy of the *Physiologus* (of which a truncated Old English version exists), and Isidore's *Etymologiae* is included on an eleventh-century list. Nevertheless, all in all these

[40] Gneuss 2001.
[41] Cockayne (vol. II), p. 154.
[42] Rella 1980, pp. 107-116.
[43] Lapidge 1985.

direct sources for Anglo-Saxon book collections are so scarce and brief, that we have to rely on other ways to find out about the Anglo-Saxon library.

A more rewarding way of ascertaining which works were known in England is through scanning the works of Anglo-Saxon authors for quotations from other sources. This is the aim of the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* project, which has started to compile a database of such quotations[44] and is still in process. In December 2007, over 1100 Anglo-Saxon texts, in Latin as well as Old English, had been scanned for quotes, and around a thousand different sources had already been found. Once finished, this database will probably show that the Anglo-Saxons owned or had access to many more manuscripts than the twelve hundred or so that have been found.

Looking at the results so far for natural history, the database has for example found 125 quotes from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, 32 from Pliny's *Natural History*, and 12 from Solinus's *Collectanea*. Book Twelve of the *Etymologiae*, which is about animals, is quoted in Orosius (about the asp), in Aelfric (the elephant), and in Wulfstan's Life of Saint Aethelwold (the eagle). Most of the quotations that have been found pertain to geography, rather than animals, but that may also be due to the types of texts that have been sourced already. Since Orosius has been sourced, Isidore and Pliny are listed more for quotations about geographical knowledge than for natural history. Nevertheless, we can deduce from quotations made by Anglo-Saxon authors, that at least a selection of Latin material on natural history would have been available to the Anglo-Saxons.

When and how did the Anglo-Saxons acquire scientific Latin texts? First of all, it has to be said that a great part of continental Latin learned material reached England relatively late. Although access to Latin authors had been available when Northumbria flourished, and knowledge brought in via the Augustine and the Irish missions, much of this material was subsequently lost due to wars and the Viking invasions, and had to be imported again from the continent.[45] The loss was probably quite substantial, as indicated by Alfred and by the lack of surviving manuscripts. Thus, shortly before the reign of King Alfred there was a relatively small corpus of Latin material in England. The situation improved somewhat with Alfred's educational reforms, but centres for

[44] The project description and the database can be found at http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/
[45] Rella 1980.

Latin learning were still small in number, and classical and late classical prose remained relatively rare in the Anglo-Saxon libraries.[46] During the tenth century, many scholars came in from the continent and Ireland, bringing Latin texts and knowledge of these texts with them. Alfred, for example, invited Fulco (Fulk) of Rheims, and more scholars arrived subsequently during the reigns of Edward the Elder and Aethelstan. In the course of the tenth century, original works in Latin appeared, indicating that knowledge of Latin was becoming more wide-spread.

Although it is often difficult to pinpoint a source for many of the Latin manuscripts, there seem to have been only a few centres of Latin scholarship. During the first few centuries, Canterbury and Northumbria were the dominant centres of learning. The school of Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian, established in Canterbury in the seventh century, was famous for its Latin (and Greek) learning. They taught a vast range of subjects, including medicine and astronomy. Natural history was probably on the curriculum as well, since their student Aldhelm shows knowledge of Isidore and the *Physiologus*. One of Aldhelm's students wrote the *Liber Monstrorum*, a text about fabulous creatures that also shows knowledge of Isidore.

Most manuscripts that can be traced with any certainty to a specific library come from only seven places: the cathedral libraries of Canterbury, Durham, Exeter, Salisbury, and Worcester and the monasteries St Augustine's at Canterbury and Bury St. Edmunds. Winchester was also important.[47] Parish libraries were probably not very extensive. The local clergy may have owned a basic library, but probably not more than that. Evidence for their book collections shows that they usually owned a few liturgical books and perhaps a few practical books, such as medical handbooks.[48] Private collections must have existed, mainly among the royalty. King Aldfrith of Northumbria owned books and corresponded about them; King Alfred certainly owned books; and records show instances of kings being presented with books or giving books away.[49] The evidence is too fragmentary, however, to be able to deduce the contents of these libraries.

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[46] Gneuss 1996.
[47] Ibid., p. 646.
[48] Ibid., p. 684.
[49] Ibid., p. 678.

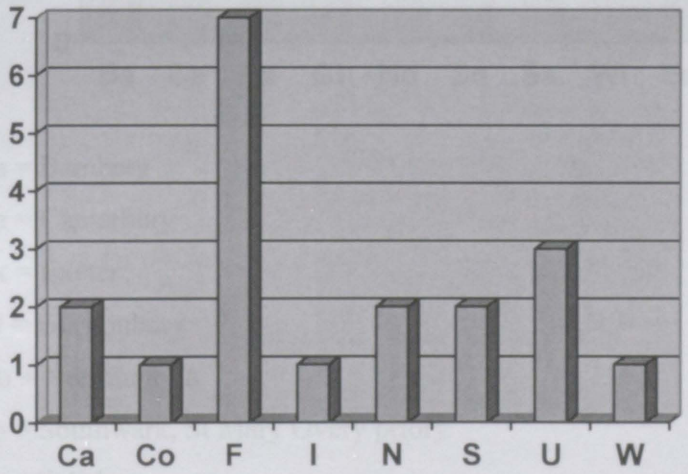
Judging by the evidence of the surviving manuscripts, most Anglo-Saxon libraries contained very little scientific material, and their emphasis is definitely not on natural history. The most wide-spread scientific texts are medical handbooks and computus material. Many libraries also possessed a selection of texts connected to the quadrivium, for example Boethius on arithmetic and music, and many texts on geometry and astronomy. For these topics, the Anglo-Saxons did not just rely on continental sources, but made their own contributions: Bede wrote about measuring and time; Abbo of Fleury, who taught in Ramsey at the end of the tenth century, was an important authority on astronomy. Among the scientific corpus, natural history apparently did not have a priority. However, this apparent lack of attention to natural history in general may indicate a special interest where natural history manuscripts do occur. The next section will therefore be concerned with the origins, as far as they can be established, of some of these manuscripts, and the contexts in which the texts survive.

Isidore's Etymologiae

Isidore's *Etymologiae* is one example of a Latin text that had been available in the eighth century, but was re-introduced during the tenth century. It was well-known in Anglo-Saxon England, but of course not read exclusively for the information on animals and plants. Some of the copies mentioned below contain only one or a few chapters from the *Etymologiae*. Natural history knowledge in Isidore served as a source of inspiration for example for some riddles (by Aldhelm, Tatwine, Eusebius or authors unknown) about nature, and for the *Liber Monstrorum*. Nineteen (partial) copies of Isidore's *Etymologiae* are listed in Gneuss,[50] and many of these reached England from the continent (mainly via France). Most manuscripts are fairly late: fifteen manuscripts date back to the tenth century or later. From the four early ones, two probably come from Northumbria, one from France and one from Ireland. St Augustine's in Canterbury owned most of the copies. By comparison, only four copies of Pliny survive.

[50] Gneuss 2001.

The following table illustrates the origins of the different manuscripts containing Isidore's *Etymologiae*, according to Gneuss. One manuscript that could come either from Brittany or England (Gneuss 784.5) has been counted among the French manuscripts. One should be cautious when interpreting this table, because not every manuscript's origin has been established with absolute certainty. Also, not every manuscript contains a full copy of the *Etymologiae*.



Ca = Canterbury

Co = Continent, unspecified

F = France

I = Ireland

N = Northumbria

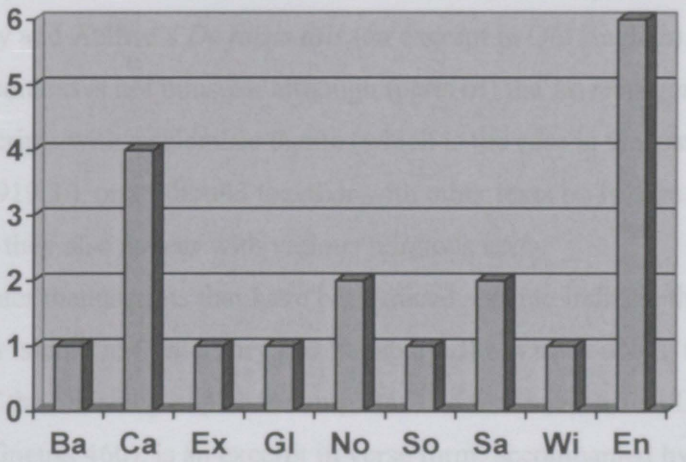
S = Salisbury

U = Unknown

W = Winchester (uncertain)

Figure 1: table

The next table shows where the manuscripts containing Isidore's *Etymologiae* were kept, again according to Gneuss. Here, too, not every place of provenance is absolutely certain.



Ba = Bamberg

Ca = Canterbury

Ex = Exeter

Gl = Glastonbury

No = Northumbria

So = Southwark, St Mary Overy priory

Sa = Salisbury

Wi = Winchester, Old Minster

En = England, unspecified

Figure two: table

Looking at both tables, it is hard to say anything for certain about which centres had a primary interest in Isidore, especially since so few places of origin have been agreed on. However, we can tell that whereas the bulk of the manuscripts were imported from France, most indigenous copies were made and kept in three centres: Canterbury (St. Augustine's), Salisbury and Northumbria. Interestingly, the early copies that survive seem to indicate that the Irish were the source of transmission. With one manuscript made in Ireland, and two made in Northumbria with its strong connections to Ireland, it could be argued that Isidore was first introduced by Irish monks. All three copies, however, are fragmentary, the Irish one being on the fly leaves of a manuscript.

The earliest complete version of Isidore is a ninth-century French manuscript, lat. 7585 of the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale (Gneuss number 889). It had arrived in England by the tenth century, where it was probably kept in St Augustine's,

Canterbury, and where other texts were added. It is accompanied by a treatise on the Trinity and Aelfric's *De falsis diis* (an excerpt in Old English).

This context is not unusual: although (parts of) the *Etymologiae* are included in manuscripts with a scientific theme (which is the case in Gneuss 185, 442.4, 498, and 919.3), or are bound together with other texts by Isidore (as in 188.8 and 460), they also appear with various religious texts.

The later manuscripts that have been traced seem to indicate that there was an interest in Isidore in Canterbury and Salisbury. It has to be noted, though, that neither of the Salisbury copies is complete. The first one, British Library Royal 5.E.xvi (Gneuss 460), is an excerpt in verse form, accompanied by other religious texts by Isidore and Pseudo-Augustine. The second one, BL Royal 15.C.xi, fols. 113-194 (Gneuss 497.2), is an excerpt from Book I (xxi), following eight comedies by Plautus. None of this indicates a special interest in natural history. Of the four copies of Isidore that survive from Canterbury, three are complete (Gneuss 469, 682, 889). They are all late: three arrived or were made in the tenth century (185, 682, 889), one in the eleventh century (469).

The incomplete copy, Cambridge Trinity College R.15.14 (939) (Gneuss 185), consists of a number of excerpts about geometry. It is part of a scientific manuscript on geometry and measuring, in which the main text is Pseudo-Boethius's *Geometria I.* Among the complete copies, the *Etymologiae* is the main work in BL Royal 6.C.i (Gneuss 469) and Oxford Queen's College 320 (Gneuss 682), occurring on its own in the former, and accompanied by a poem in the latter. Both manuscripts were most probably also made in Canterbury. The fourth and final copy, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 7585 (Gneuss 889), which has been described above, is accompanied by religious texts, but has Isidore as its main, first text. From the contexts in which the Canterbury copies of Isidore appear, again no special interest in science or even natural history can be deduced. However, since full copies of the *Etymologiae* were available, and since Canterbury had an extensive collection of scientific manuscripts this interest is still a possibility.

What about the other monasteries? Looking at the contexts in which copies of Isidore survive, there are three main categories:

1. the complete *Etymologiae* without any other works
2. (part of) the *Etymologiae* in combination with scientific works

3. (part of) the *Etymologiae* in combination with religious works

Although at first glance the second category might seem promising, there are no surviving manuscripts which suggest a prime interest in natural history. The main focus of the scientifically oriented manuscripts are computus, geography and medicine. In BL Sloane 475 (Gneuss 498.1), for example, book IV is the first text in a group of medical works (such as Galen, recipes, medical glosses, and a treatise on urine), prognostics, and calendar texts (Lunarium, Somniale Danielis, and Dies Aegyptiaci, among others). In BL Harley 5977, nos. 64 and 71(Gneuss 442.4), Isidore's Book I follows excerpts from Bede's *De arte metrica*. In BL Cotton Caligula A.xv (Gneuss 311), excerpts from Book I appear after Jerome's *De viris illustribus* and *Vita S. Pauli Eremitae*, but are accompanied by various other computus texts, with the focus on calendars. Oxford Trinity College 28 (Gneuss 690), a post-Conquest manuscript, joins Isidore to several religious texts, but the only book included is Book IV: again the focus is on weights and measurements. Most of the non-scientific works show the *Etymologiae* in a religious context, or with other work by Isidore.[51]

All this seems to point to the idea that the Anglo-Saxons who read Isidore for scientific purposes read him mainly because of his work on geometry, measurements, and medicine. As mentioned above, his insights on natural history were known and used, for example in the riddles. Of course, Isidore's chapters on natural history would have been accessible in the full copies of the *Etymologiae* that were circulating. Nevertheless, based on the evidence we have today, it is improbable that natural history compilations containing Isidore circulated in Anglo-Saxon England.

Period	Manuscript	Gneuss	Probable Origin	Comments
8th/9th century	Cambridge St. John's College Ii.12.29	154.5	France	Fragment
	BL Caligula A.xv fols. 93-130	311	France	I.xxi-xxvii

[51] An exception is the afore-mentioned combination with Plautus's comedies.

	Longleat House, Wiltshire, Library of the Marquess of Bath, NMR 10589	524.4	Ireland	Fragment on flyleaves
	Düsseldorf, Universitätsbibliothek Fragm. K 15 : 017 and K 19: Z8/7b	821	Northumbria	Fragment
	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 4871, fols. 161-168	885	Northumbria	Fragment
	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 7585	889	France	In England by 10th century
	Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, 26 (A.292)	919.3	France	In England by 10th century
10th century	Cambridge Trinity College B.15.33 (368)	176	S. England	V.xxxiii-IX.vii
	Cambridge Trinity College R.15.14 (939)	185	France	Excerpts
	Oxford Queen's College 320	682	Canterbury	
	Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Msc.Ph.1 (HJ.IV.16)	784.5	Brittany/England	II.xxix-xxxi
11th century	Cambridge Trinity College O.2.30 (1134) fols. 1-70	188.8	?	Excerpts in dialogue form
	BL Harley 5977, nos. 64 and 71	442.4	Continent	Excerpts. Very late.

	BL Royal 5.E.xvi	460	Salisbury	Excerpts in dialogue form.
	BL Royal 6.C.i	469	Canterbury	
	BL Royal 15.C.xi, fols. 113-194	497.2	Salisbury	Excerpt I.xxi
	BL Sloane 475, fols, 125-231	498.1	?	IV.v
	Oxford Bodleian library Bodley 239 (2244)	561	Normandy	Very late
	Oxford Trinity College 28	690	?	Excerpts from XVI.xxv-xxvi

Figure 3: list of manuscripts containing the *Etymologiae* by Isidore

Pliny's Natural History

Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* was far less common in Anglo-Saxon England than Isidore's *Etymologiae,* even though it was one of Isidore's sources. Only four copies survive to this day, and none contains the complete text. Even so, Pliny is referred to by several Anglo-Saxon authors, such as Bede in his *Commentarius in Genesim*, and the author of Bald's Leechbook. As mentioned above, the latter mentions Pliny by name (*Plinius se micla læce*)[52] as the source for a recipe against baldness that uses the ash of burnt bees. Despite the lack of surviving manuscripts, Pliny's ideas would have been known to the Anglo-Saxons not only through the work of Isidore, but also from Orosius's *History against the Pagans.*

The oldest surviving manuscript, Leiden Voss.Lat.F.4 fols. 4-33 (Gneuss 838) comes from Northumbria, and dates to the eighth century. It now only contains books ii to vi, (concerned with geography), but may just be incomplete. A ninth-century manuscript from Lotharingia, BL Harley 647 (Gneuss 423) contains excerpts from Pliny about astronomy, and was probably brought to

[52] Cockayne (vo. II), p. 154. Apparently, the recipe is not actually from Pliny (Cameron, p. 22).

England around 1000, possibly by Abbo of Fleury. The manuscript contains a compilation of various astronomical texts, such as Cicero's *Aratea* and Hyginus's *Astronomica* and a list of the names of stars.

A third manuscript is also concerned with astronomy, and could also have been imported by Abbo of Fleury or his followers. This manuscript, BL Harley 2506 (Gneuss 428.4), was written in the late tenth century in Fleury. It was in England by the eleventh century. The main work is Hyginus, followed by a large selection of astronomical texts, among which are excerpts from Pliny.[53]

Finally, an eleventh-century manuscript, BL Cotton Tiberius B.v fols. 2-73 and 77-88 (Gneuss 373), came from either Christ Church in Canterbury or from Winchester, and was kept in Battle.[54] Again, only excerpts from Pliny are included. The manuscript has an encyclopedic character: apart from various computus texts, it contains lists of popes, Roman emperors, Anglo-Saxon kings and other important people; Astronomical texts such as Cicero's *Aratea*, Priscian's *Periegesis*, a map of the world, and the Old English (and Latin) *Wonders of the East*.

Period	Manuscript	Gneuss	Probable origin	Comments
8th century	Leiden Voss.Lat.F.4 fols. 4-33	838	Northumbria	ii-vi
9th century	BL Harley 647	423	Lotharingia (France)	Excerpts
End 10th century	BL Harley 2506	428.4	Fleury (France)	Excerpts
Start 11th century	BL Cotton Tiberius B.v fols. 2-73 and 77-88	373	Canterbury/Winchester	Excerpts

Figure 4: manuscripts of Pliny's *Natural History*

[53] For a more detailed description of the last two MSS see Saxl and Meier 1953.
[54] For a more detailed description of this MS see McGurk 1983.

Solinus's Collectanea

Another source for Orosius, Solinus's *Collectanea*, only survives in two manuscripts, and both are quite late. Cambridge Clare College (no number, a pastedown, Gneuss 35) contains a fragment and dates back to the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, and was made in Bury St. Edmunds. The other one, BL Harley 3859 (Gneuss 439), from the same period, may have been made in France and is part of a collection of mostly wisdom literature. The first text in it is Vegetius's *Epitome rei militaris*, and is followed by Macrobius (*Saturnalia*), Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, the *Annales Cambriae*, Aethicus Ister's *Cosmographia* and Vitruvius's *De architectura*.

Physiologus

> Monge sindon geond middangeard unrimu cynn, þe we æþelu ne magon ryhte areccan ne rim witan; þæs wide sind geond <world> innan fugla ond deora foldhrerendra wornas widsceope, swa wæter bibugeð þisne beorhtan bosm, brim grymetende, sealtyþa geswing.[55]
>
> Many are the countless species throughout the world whose noble qualities we cannot rightly recount, whose numbers we cannot know; for as widely scattered are the multitudes of land-going birds and beasts throughout the world as the water which encircles this shining plain, the roaring ocean, the salt waves' surge. [56]

Thus begins the Old English *Physiologus*. However, despite the countless numbers of creatures that exist in the world according to this passage, this particular version of the *Physiologus* contains only three animals: the panther, the whale, and the partridge.[57] Although the *Physiologus* was an enormously popular work in the Middle Ages, only one other copy, in Latin, from Anglo-Saxon England survives.[58] This copy is fragmentary too, and also contains just three

[55] Dictionary of Old English Corpus on CD-ROM, 2000.
[56] Bradley 1982, p. 353.
[57] There is some controversy about the identity this bird, see for example Drout 2007, who argues it is probably a phoenix, and also in Honegger 1996.
[58] MS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 448.

animals. So, curiously, both copies that survive from the Old English period are fragmentary, containing only three animals. Why did the compilers choose to include only three animals from the extensive range available in the standard *Physiologus*? There has been some disagreement about the unity of these three poems, as some critics indeed believe them to be a fragment of the *Physiologus*, whereas others argue that the three animals were deliberately selected. Perhaps, as Bradley suggests, these particular animals were picked to illustrate three themes which fit together.[59] Perhaps the scribe simply chose three animals that occurred successively in his copy of the *Physiologus*.[60] A late eleventh-century Latin manuscript from South England, possibly Worcester (Cambridge Corpus Christi 448, Gneuss 114), also only contains, as mentioned above, three animals, but here, they are the lion, unicorn and panther. This manuscript, unlike the Exeter book, is encyclopaedic in character. Other texts in it include Prosper's *Epigrammata*, Isidore's *Synonyma*, a note on the languages of the world, and a few Latin poems.

Although no full copies of the *Physiologus* from England are extant today, they did probably circulate. Looking at other works, it is highly likely that other versions of the work were known in Anglo-Saxon England, because other animals from it were used by Anglo-Saxon authors: "Some redaction of the *Physiologus* was known in early Anglo-Saxon England, for it was used by Aldhelm and the anonymous author of the *Liber monstrorum*; in the Late Anglo-Saxon period a redaction of the *Physiologus* was used by the author of the Old English poems 'Panther', 'Whale', and 'Partridge' in the Exeter Book – possibly the redaction known as 'Redaction B'[...]".[61] It is therefore possible that Ælfric knew a version of the *Physiologus*. However, the Exeter version of the *Physiologus* is not reflected in his work (see under whale).

[59] According to Bradley, the animals illustrate "the nature of God, [...] the nature of the devil, and [...] man's choice between the two": p. 353.
[60] Versio B of the Physiologus is followed, in which the panther, whale and partridge indeed occur consecutively.
[61] Lapidge 1985, p. 55.

2.2 Transmission of Sources in Ælfric

As a product of the monastic revival, Ælfric was part of a movement with high standards in intellectual and artistic as well as religious life,[62] despite the fact that times were difficult, both politically and economically. These high standards clearly show in his work, which encompasses many different topics, is sophisticated in style, and based on a wide variety of sources. Ælfric was well-versed in both Old English learned material left by the earlier Alfredian revival and in the Latin works (re)imported from the continent in his own time.[63] This familiarity with a great variety of sources shows clearly in his work.

Despite some recent criticism of over-reliance on source study within Anglo-Saxon studies,[64] it is important to consider Ælfric's sources here. Ælfric, as we will see, clearly knows and uses the work of many authors and is generally respectful of these authors. It is therefore highly significant if he chooses to disagree with (or elaborate on) one. Ælfric himself is very much aware of this process, as indicated by his introductions: for example, he chooses to agree with Augustine's dismissal of an episode in the Life of St Thomas and only includes the episode at the request of his patrons:

> Dubitabam diu transferre anglice passionem *sancti* thome ap*osto*li ex quibusdam causis et maxime eo q*uo*d augustinus magnus abnegat de illo pincerno (sic) cuius manum niger canis in conuiuium portare debere*t* .[65]
>
> [I hesitated a long time to translate the Passion of St Thomas the apostle into English, for various reasons; and mainly because the great Augustine denies the story about that cup-bearer whose hand a black dog is said to have carried to a feast.]

In the *Acta Thomae*, a Gnostic work, it is described that a person who slaps St Thomas at a banquet is punished by animals: his offending hand is bitten off by a lion, snapped up by a black dog and carried through the hall. Ælfric still writes

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[62] Clemoes 1966, p. 179.
[63] Rella 1980.
[64] See e.g. Frantzen 1990, but a more nuanced view in Lees 1991.
[65] *LS2*, p. 398, ll. 1-4

the translation, but the episode with the dog is omitted. So, although Ælfric at times takes liberties with the phrasing of ideas and adds his own explanations and notes, he does take care not to rely heavily on apocryphal texts.

So, which sources does Ælfric use? Much research has already been carried out on the various sources used by Ælfric, identifying many sources for *CH* as well as *LS*.[66] This is not the place to give an exhaustive account of these sources, but I will mention the ones that are most pertinent to the animal lore that Ælfric knew and used. First of all, Ælfric relied on Bede, and more specifically on his *Commentary on Genesis*, *De Temporibus*, *De Temporibus Ratione* and *De Natura Rerum*. The Bible is also of great importance. Ælfric not only translated parts of the Vulgate, but he also regularly paraphrases it, and he elaborates on it freely in his *LS* and *CH*. The Bible is a rich source of animal lore, which mentions more than 120 different species. For much of the homiletic material, the Vulgate is Ælfric's main authority.

Another work that is significant for knowledge of animals is Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Ælfric knew this work either through Bede, or very possibly also directly, as Cross demonstrates.[67] Ælfric mentions Isidore in his *Sigewulfi Interrogationes* and in *De Veteri et Novo Testamento*. He was probably also familiar with both Basil's and Ambrose's *Hexameron*, which he used as an inspiration for his own *Exameron Anglice*, although this work is not a direct translation of either version.[68] Ælfric also uses Ambrose for information on the elephant in *LS*, the Exameron Anglice, and his *Sermo in Natale Unius Confessoris*.[69]

The main sources for *CH*, as listed by Ælfric (and confirmed by modern scholars) were Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Bede, Smaragdus and Haymo, and there are many other sources for his works, which Ælfric does not necessarily indicate. For *LS*, Ælfric also made use of Bede, Ambrosius, Augustine, Jerome, Oswald, Terentian, and Abbo of Fleury. In certain saints' lives, there is also evidence that Ælfric used material from local traditions as a source, for example

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[66] Notably by Förster 1894; Ott 1892; Loomis 1931; Smetana 1959 and 1961; Zettel 1982 and more recently, the Fontes Anglo-Saxonici project. See also *CH*3.
[67] Cross 1965, p. 369.
[68] Crawford 1968, p. 26.
[69] Cross 1965, pp. 368-69 and p. 372.

in the life of Swithun. The most important sources for animal lore that Ælfric knew and used included the following:

1. The Bible, or more precisely, the Vulgate. Ælfric did not only translate parts of the Vulgate, he was also so familiar with it that he could and did paraphrase it and elaborate on it freely in his *LS* and *CH*. The Bible is a rich source of animal lore, and mentions of more than 120 species. For much of the homiletic material, the Vulgate is Ælfric's main authority. His work shows an extensive knowledge of the Vulgate, to such an extent that he is able to paraphrase it with a high degree of confidence.
2. Bede, and more specifically his *Commentary on Genesis*, *De Temporibus*, *De Temporibus Ratione* and *De Natura Rerum*.
3. Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Ælfric knew this work either through Bede, or very possibly also directly, as Cross demonstrates. Ælfric mentions Isidore in his *Sigewulfi Interrogationes* and in *De Veteri et Novo Testamento*.
4. Basil's and Ambrose's *Hexameron*. Although it has been argued that Ælfric based his own *Exameron Anglice* on Basil's *Hexameron*, there is hardly any textual evidence for this, and it is certainly not a translation.[70] Ælfric was definitely aware of Basil's *Hexameron*, as he mentions it in his prologue to Basil's *Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem*. Ælfric's *Exameron Anglice* uses elements from Basil and Ambrose, and the translation he used for Basil was probably the one by Eusthatius Afer, a version also used by Bede.[71]

It is important to keep in mind that many of these sources were not necessarily read directly by Ælfric, but had already been collected and quoted by authors before him, for example by Paul the Deacon and Haymo of Auxerre, two authors on whom Ælfric bases many of his homilies in *CH*. Förster pointed out the similarities between CH and the Homiliary of Paul the Deacon, which was

[70] Crawford 1968, p. 26.
[71] Crawford 1968, p. 26.

further explored in great detail by Smetana.[72] Likewise, most of *LS* is based on the Cotton Corpus Legendary, which itself is based on a variety of sources.[73]

Most examples of animals mentioned in *CH* and *LS* are from the Bible, which is hardly surprising considering the nature of the first two texts. Yet, Ælfric clearly knows other sources for animal lore as well, including Ambrose, Basil, and Isidore. Ælfric could have had direct access to works on natural history in the light of his environment, since copies of these works were mostly owned by monasteries. As Ælfric worked and lived in Winchester, Cerne Abbey and Eynsham, he may well have had access to a considerable corpus of Latin texts on natural history (see 2.1 above).

The second most important source for Ælfric after the Bible is Bede. Bede wrote the first Anglo-Saxon historical martyrology and must in turn have had access to many manuscripts containing saints' lives; manuscripts that were sent over from the continent from the seventh century onwards.[74] Bede uses saints' lives in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and has written a life of St Cuthbert and a work entitled *Lives of the Abbots*. Although Ælfric often uses Bede, there are marked differences in style and content: Ælfric, as mentioned above, clearly addresses a lay audience in its own language, whereas Bede of course writes in Latin. In *LS*, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is the main source for the early saints (Æthelthryth and Oswald), and he follows it closely. The sequence of events can be different, and in some cases, a moral is added for homiletic purposes. Only in a few cases does Ælfric change a story radically, a case in point being the life of St Edmund, mentioned above.

Transmission Process

The transmission process of medieval works is often complicated. Texts from a great variety of sources are remembered literally or as a paraphrase, are often re-contextualized, re-imagined, and commented on. This is not to say that the resulting new text is completely dependent on the sources. As Swan remarks: "Anglo-Saxon manuscript culture does not prioritise an authorial original, but

[72] Förster 1894, p. 58; Smetana 1959, p. 163 ff.
[73] Suggested by Zettel 1982, p.11 ff.
[74] Woolf 1966, p. 37.

rather remakes a text and transmits its authorship to a new writer or scribe each time it is copied."[75]

However, by examining the influences on Anglo-Saxon authors such as Ælfric, and their selection and use of sources, we do learn what they considered worthy for transmission. Changes in and additions to source material are relevant and reveal the author's world view. The relationship between source, text and cultural history is important for the meaning of a text. The sources are not fact: if an author differs from the source, it is probably not a mistake. Oral transmission can in fact also play a large role in this process, as demonstrated by Carruthers (among others): medieval authors made great use of memorization, recalling texts literally (*memoria ad verba*) as well as the gist of works (*memoria ad res*).[76]

Oral transmission almost certainly played a part in Ælfric's works, which he also acknowledges in his introductions: his works were meant to be heard as well as read, and probably relied on a combination of read and heard sources. Reading was not a private act, instead much was read out loud for an audience of listeners. Moreover, most of the works considered here are homilies, meant to be preached. So, the chain of transmission of Ælfric's works includes composition, oral delivery, copies made, oral delivery from copies, written re-copyings, and the recasting of those several versions (despite the author's objections to this: see below). As Swan summarises:

> For example, a writer such as Ælfric may compose a homily using new, 'original' material as well as material exactly replicating or echoing a range of sources and influences. This homily will then 'work in the world' in a variety of ways: by being read aloud to a congregation who will retain some of its content and, especially when they have heard it more than once, begin to store it in their memories along with other, thematically-related material, and perhaps by being recopied by a scribe for use in another location. This recopying will almost certainly introduce changes to the Ælfrician text, at least at an unconscious level through

[75] Swan 1998, pp. 206-207.
[76] See Carruthers 1990 for a thorough explanation on how the medieval memorization of texts could have worked.

> scribal error, and possibly at a conscious level through the insertion of extra material from another source, or the alteration of Ælfric's phraseology or vocabulary.[77]

Ælfric, as he himself explains in his preface to the first series of homilies and in the preface to *LS*, does not merely copy his sources slavishly. He often makes a selection from an available source, rather then repeating it in full, and his translations treat the sources texts freely as well. Sources were clearly important in the Ælfric's mind (cf. his frequently recurring phrase 'we rædað on bocum'[78]). Seeing himself as a teacher, Ælfric abbreviates, explains, and simplifies his sources mainly for didactic reasons. He combines sources freely, a good example being his *Exameron Anglice*, which uses elements from the *Hexameron* by Basil (using the translation by Eustatius Afer), the *Hexameron* by Ambrose (which, being based on Basil's *Hexameron*, is not always distinguishable from it, especially since Ælfric translates so freely), Bede's *Commentary on Genesis*, *De Temporibus*, *De Temporis Ratione* and *De Natura Rerum*, and Isidore (either directly or via Bede).[79] It is clear, based on his use of source material, that Ælfric had a sound intellectual background, which was solid enough to allow him to deviate from the original texts. Ælfric rarely translates authorities slavishly:

> [...] dass sich Ælfric, im vergleich zu anderen übersetzungen, z.b. denen könig Ælfred's und den Blickling homilien, auch wo er einer vorlage folgt, seine volle selbständigkeit und freiheit bewahrt hat; ja, nich selten nur den stoff herüber nimmt, die einkleidung der gedanken aber selbst liefert.[80]

> [that Ælfric, in comparison with other translations, e.g. King Alfred's and the Blickling homilies, retains his full independence and freedom, even when he follows an example; indeed, more often than not he only adopts the topic, but produces the phrasing of the thoughts himself.]

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[77] Swan 1998, p. 210.
[78] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, p. 317, ll. 5-11
[79] Crawford 1968, p. 29.
[80] Förster 1894, p. 59.

Or, as Reinsma summarizes : "Unlike Alfred, or the author of the Blickling homilies, Ælfric is no 'dogged translator', following his Latin texts line for line; his adaptations show considerable independence from his sources, a good deal of versatility, and a good deal of familiarity, as well, with the exegetical tradition, enabling him to supplement his sources throughout the homilies."[81] For various reasons, Ælfric abbreviates, explains, and simplifies his sources. It should therefore be interesting to see which animals Ælfric refers to and how he refers to them.

Transmission forward

Despite the many references made to different authorities, the new text itself is also important. There was no taboo on incorporating work of other authorities, but this did not stop authors from worrying that their own work might be copied: Ælfric included instructions with *CH* telling future copiers not to change them, but to transmit them as they were. Clearly, he was concerned with the integrity of his own text. However, the instructions for transmission were not always obeyed, as shortly afterward various composites of Ælfric's homilies and other material were created. Some of his homilies occur in isolation, and sometimes only fragments of them are used. Selection and use by later readers makes the texts gain more meaning: such works as were copied were apparently relevant to a new audience.

Ælfric's works were already extensively copied and circulated during his own lifetime, and this continued long after his death. His texts, and especially his homilies, were used as sources by others such as Wulfstan and Byrhtferth of Ramsey as well as several anonymous writers. He is not usually referred to as a source, except in a colophon in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178 which refers to him as 'Ælfric abbas', and by Ælfric Bata, who names Ælfric as the source of the *Colloquy*. [82]

Copies of the *CH*, which were composed at Cerne Abbas, were sent to Archbishop Sigeric at Canterbury, from where most dissemination must have taken place. In the 11th century, Christ Church Canterbury, Rochester, New Minster at Winchester, Worcester, and Exeter all had copies. A copy was also

[81] Reinsma 1987, p. 202.

[82] See Godden 1978 for an analysis of Ælfric's influence on other works.

given to Ealdorman Æthelweard. Subsequently, fragments or selections occur in some 30 other manuscripts, dating from the end of the tenth century to the early thirteenth century.[83] *LS*, too, occurs in some anonymous composite works, and selections can be found in about 17 different manuscripts.

2.3 Ælfric's Audience and Purpose

Most of Ælfric's vernacular prose consists of sermons in the vernacular, for a lay audience or a mixture of lay people and monks. This preaching in the vernacular was a custom which started to flourish during the Benedictine Reform, although Latin sermons and saints' lives continued to be written.[84] In both series of *CH*, Ælfric starts with a Latin preface[85], addressed to archbishop Sigeric, and then adds an introduction in Old English (which was probably added later), in which Ælfric provides reasons for why he used Old English instead of Latin. In the Latin preface, Ælfric tells Sigeric the homilies are for simple people, who do not understand Latin:

> [...] ob ędificationem simplicium qui hanc norunt tantummodo locutionem. Siue legendo. siue audiendo. Ideoque nec obscura posuimus uerba. sed simplicem anglicam quo facilius possit ad cor peruenire legentium. uel audientium ad utilitatem animarum suarum. quia alia lingua nesciunt erudiri. quam in qua nati sunt; [86]
>
> [because of the education of the simple, who do not know this speech, either through reading or through listening; neither do we for the same reason use obscure words, but simple English, through which it can come easier to the heart of the readers or listeners, for the sake of their souls, because they do not know how to be instructed in another language than the one to which they were born]

The Latin preface to the second series quotes similar reasons for the use of Old English. In the Old English introduction to the first series of homilies, Ælfric

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[83] Information dissemination from Biggs 1990, p. 16.
[84] Other examples of this new custom are the *Blickling Homilies* .
[85] See Wilcox 1994 for a discussion of all Ælfric's prefaces.
[86] *CH*1, Praefatio, p. 173, ll. 7-11.

claims he wants to improve on errors that occur in other English books,[87] and to enlighten unlearned men (who may have read these errors), especially because the end of the world was thought to be approaching:

> Þa bearn me on mode ic truwige þurh godes gife. þæt ic ðas boc of ledenum gereorde to engliscre spræce awende. na þurh gebylde mycelre lare. ac for ðan ðe ic geseah 7 gehyrde mycel gedwyld on manegum engliscum bocum. ðe ungelærede menn ðurh heora bilewitnysse to micclum wisdome tealdon. 7 me ofhreow þæt hi ne cuþon ne næfdon þa godspellican lare on heora gewritum. buton ðam mannum anum ðe þæt leden cuðon [...] For ðisum antimbre ic gedyrstlæhte on gode truwiende þæt ic ðas gesetnysse undergann. 7 eac for ðam ðe menn behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan þe is geendung þyssere worulde.[88]
>
> [Then it occurred to my mind, I trust through God's grace, that I would translate this book from the Latin language into the English speech; not through confidence of great learning, but because I have seen and heard of much heresy in many English books, which unlearned men, through their simplicity, have considered to be great wisdom; and I felt sorry that they did not know or did not have the evangelical knowledge in their writings, except for those men alone who knew Latin [...] For this cause I presumed, trusting in God, that I would undertake this task, and also because men have need of good knowledge, most of all at this time, which is the ending of this world.]

The explanation in the second introduction in Old English is much shorter than the first, simply stating:

> Ic ælfric munuc awende þas boc of ledenum bocum to engliscum gereorde þam mannum to rædenne þe þæt leden ne cunnon;[89]

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[87] He specifically excludes Alfred's translations. See Clemoes 1966, p. 184 for examples of English writing Ælfric did not approve of.
[88] *CH*1, Praefatio, p. 174, ll. 48-59.
[89] *CH*2, Praefatio, p. 1, ll. 29-31.

[I, Ælfric the monk, translated this book from Latin books into the English language, for those men to read who do not know Latin.]

While Ælfric's *CH* were addressed to Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, and apparently encouraged by him, other works were commissioned by Bishop Wulfsige of Sherborne, *ealdorman* Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær; Wulfstan (Archbishop of York); and Æthelwold II, Bishop of Winchester. Others were not so much commissioned by as addressed to people like the laymen Sigefyrth, Sigeweard, and Wulfgeat, and also to the monks of Ælfric's abbey in Eynsham. So, the primary audience of Ælfric's works consisted of laymen as well as clergymen who did not know enough Latin to understand sermons in that language.

The introductions to *LS* are arranged similarly to those in *CH*, with a Latin preface, and an Old English introduction addressed to Æthelweard, a lay patron. The saints' lives may have been intended for use in Æthelweard's household, which means that they, even more than *CH*, were written for a lay audience. In *LS*, Ælfric makes it clear that the saints in this work were saints known to monks, not necessarily to the common people. With his lay audience in mind, Ælfric makes sure that *LS* does not contain unsuitable material. Ælfric confirms that this is the case in several of his prefaces, stating that he leaves details out and tries to adhere to a simple style: "[Ælfric] explains how he has left on one side the Vitae Patrum 'as they contain many subtle points which it is not fitting for the laity to know'. This accounts for the fact that he does not include versions of the lives of any of the desert fathers, not even of Evagrius's translation of the *Life of St Anthony* by Athanasius or of St Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*."[90] Ælfric therefore does not draw much on the *Vitae Patrum*, or on apocryphal texts like the *Visio Pauli*.

Ælfric is writing for an English-speaking audience, and he adds material that is of specific interest to an English audience. Ælfric describes a number of English saints, such as Edmund, Æthelthryth, Swythun, Cuthberht and Oswald, and shows a sense of pride when he stresses the fact that the Anglo-Saxons have many saints:

[90] Woolf 1966, p. 59.

Nis angel-cynn bedæled drihtnes halgena
Þonne on engla-lande licgaþ swilce halgan
swylce þæs halga cyning is and cuþberht se eadiga
and sancta æþeldryð on elig . and eac hire swustor
ansunde on lichaman geleafan to trymminge .
Synd eac fela oðre on angel-cynne halgan
þe fela wundra wyrcað . swa swa hit wide is cuð
þam ælmihtigan to lofe . þe hi on gelyfdon[91]

[The English people are not deprived of the Lord's saints, since in England lie such saints as this holy king is, and the blessed Cuthbert, and Saint Æthelthryth in Ely, and also her sister, incorrupt in body, for the confirmation of the faith. There are also many other saints among the English people, who work many miracles, as is widely known, to the praise of the Almighty in whom they believed]

Concern for the reputation of local saints may have been a reason for Ælfric to deviate from his sources. The *Life of St Edmund*, although mainly based on Abbo's Latin life, differs dramatically from it in that Ælfric turns Edmund into a peaceful martyr rather than a heroic fighter. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as well as Asser's *Life of Alfred*, Edmund dies fighting the Danes, but Ælfric writes that he refuses to fight, thus adding to his saintliness.
In any case, it is obvious from Ælfric's own statements, his use of Old English, the explanations he includes, and the selection of English saints and topics that he had a local audience in mind.

So, for *CH* and *LS*, the intended audience and purpose are roughly similar: both works are meant for a relatively uneducated, mostly lay audience, and Ælfric assumes the role of a responsible teacher, determined to teach those who cannot study Latin texts. The relevance of this to the use of animal imagery in his works can be seen in another example: Ælfric's continuous concern for his audience not only shows in *LS* and *CH*, but also in his *Exameron Anglice*. In this

[91] *LS2*, XXXII. St. Edmund, King and Martyr, pp. 332-34, ll. 259-66.

work, which is considerably shorter than either Basil's or Ambrose's *Hexameron* by which it is inspired, Ælfric still manages to include some information of his own. When discussing the creation of birds on the fifth day, Ælfric mentions a few types of birds and how every type of bird is adapted to its own way of living. Birds can have long or short necks, cloven or webbed feet according to its environment and chosen food. Ælfric then continues to explain that not every type of bird lives in England:

> Nis na eal fugolcynn on Engla ðeode
> ne on nanum earde ne byð naht eaðe eall fugolcynn [...][92]
>
> [Not every species of bird exists in England, and in no land scarcely is there every species of bird [...]]

A similar note is attached to the land animals, who arrive on the sixth day:

> and ða reðan leon, ðe her on lande ne beoð,
> and ða swiftan tigres and ða syllican pardes,
> and ða egeslican beran and ða ormætan ylpas,
> ða ðe on Engla ðeode acennede ne beoð
> and fela oðre cynn ðe ge ealle ne cunnon.[93]
>
> [and the fierce lions, which do not exist here in this land,
> and the swift tigers, and the wonderful panthers,
> and the terrible bears and the enormous elephants, which are not brought forth in England, and many other kinds, all of which you do not know][94]

Again, as in the first passage, Ælfric is considering his English audience and makes it clear that many species of animals are not known in England, but he does not offer any further descriptions. This concern about his audience's natural history knowledge is also visible in the famous passage mentioned before in the *LS*, where Ælfric does describe the animal concerned, the elephant, thereby providing his audience with much additional information.

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[92] Crawford 1968, p. 53.
[93] Crawford 1968, p. 54.
[94] Strangely, Crawford (1968, p. 54) leaves out the tigers in his translation.

As we can see from these examples, Ælfric's notion of his audience is important when he considers what additional information to provide on animals. Interestingly, many other animals that should by right be exotic to a medieval Anglo-Saxon audience, such as the lion or the camel, are not illustrated any further: apparently, they were so firmly entrenched in the audience's mental menagerie that they did not warrant an extra explanation.

2.4 Medieval Views on Animals

As we will also see in the next two chapters, Ælfric's views on animals were influenced by many Christian thinkers, and this section gives a short overview of the different perspectives on animals from authors who were important to Ælfric.[95]

More kinds of animals existed in Ælfric's time or were more common than they are today, such as the aurochs (until about 1000 AD), and bears. Although bears survived in the Provence until the thirteenth century, they were already disappearing from England in Bede's time. Beavers lived in northern Europe throughout the Middle Ages, and in the south until the thirteenth century. Buffaloes roamed Southern France, and the Carolingians used camels imported by Arabs in the eighth century, and these camels lasted in Aragon and Aquitaine until the tenth century.[96] Medieval Europeans were not only used to a greater variety of animals, but the wild animals also lived in closer proximity to the people than what we are used to today as more people lived in rural than in urban settings. Until about 1300, when the population in Europe grew, keeping cattle was more important for food production than growing produce, and even afterwards people depended on cattle in times of famine and pestilence, so people also kept animals in great numbers. Animals were a part of every-day life for most people within a rural society. They were a source of food and other products (such as wool and dairy), protection, mobility, labour, companionship, but also still of danger.

This closeness of humans and animals led not only to a practical view of the latter (animals as a source of labour, food or other products, as companions, or as

[95] For an introduction to medieval views of animals, cf. Berlioz 1999 and Van Uytven 2003.
[96] Van Uytven 2003, p. 16.

possessions), but also to the use of animals as symbols: vehicles for people on which to project their ideas and images. Early Christian philosophers wrestled with questions concerning animals, creatures which were, like everything and everyone else, created by God. Was everything in Creation equal, or was the universe anthropocentric? Or was there perhaps a mixture: humans and animals were equals in some respects, but not in others? If that was so, in which aspects could humans and animals be compared? Different schools of thought already existed in the various cultures which influenced early Christian thinkers.[97] Patristic views were influenced by three traditions:

1. Stoic thought, which sees all of nature as part of the landscape, available for use by humans.
2. (Neo-)Platonic thought, which sees everything in nature as stemming from the same divine principle.
3. Jewish thought, which portrays animals as fellow creatures, which can be agents of God.

In the Greco-Roman world, different viewpoints were present: the Stoics denied that animals possessed reason, whereas the Platonists saw *ratio* more on a continuum. In the Judaic world view, animals were agents of the divine rather than independent. Christian thought showed a tension between 1 and 2, and the third view shows up in many saints' lives. Whereas certain theologians showed some Stoic tendencies, regarding animals as fundamentally different from humans, it was also clear to them that all life was created by the same god.

Salisbury points out the two conflicting ideas in early medieval Christian thought that arose from this tension: one school of people which thought it was inappropriate to study animals in great detail, because humans matter more, and another view in which animal behaviour can be considered a guide or warning to humans. She notes that two possible sources for Ælfric's *Exameron* have two different approaches to animals. For example, whereas Ambrose used animals metaphorically, urging people to learn from them, Basil did not go that far, but still considered them useful for showing the greatness and complexity of the Creation. Another authority, Augustine, condoned the study of animals, because

[97] See Tilley 2004 for a detailed discussion.

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analogies using animals also occur in the Bible.[98] Ambrose thought humans could not know themselves without knowing the nature of other living creatures.[99] There appear to be two seemingly contradictory streams of thought: the idea that humans were created in the image of God, and therefore are superior to animals, and the idea that there is a 'community of living beings', of which both humans and animals are a part, and that there is a kinship between humans and animals.[100]

So, despite some hesitations, on the whole the medieval view was that animals were of great significance in medieval Christian philosophy, because they allowed humans to learn about God's plan, and about their own human nature. In fact, the Bible itself urged the reader to learn from nature: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell" (Job 12:7-8). This exhortation was used, also by Ælfric,[101] to prove that humans should be able to deduce God's existence and plan from nature. Every creature was perceived to have a deeper meaning: they referred to a higher reality. So, people had to read the 'book of nature' to get closer to the creator, and to learn about human nature.

Generally, it was believed that humans were superior to animals and ruled over them, as confirmed by the Bible, in which God appointed Adam master over the animals. However, whereas humans did not need animals in Paradise, after the Fall they were dependent on these animals for clothes, labour and food. This dependence on animals introduced doubt: were humans really superior to animals, and in what ways? Were animals similar to humans, or different, and in which respects? Similarities between people and animals were of course noted, and human physiology treated alongside animals in encyclopedias. The main differences were thought to lie in intelligence and in the soul. Ambrose as well as Augustine argued the difference was that humans had souls, reason, and free will, a point that Ælfric makes too.

Although many intellectual traditions deny that animals are intelligent in the same way as humans, at the same time they look at animals for models of

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[98] Salisbury 1994, p.112-113.
[99] Van Uytven 2003, p. 10.
[100] For an elaborate discussion, see Pastoureau in Berlioz 1999, p. 15ff.
[101] *LS*1, XI. Natale Quadraginta Militum, p. 258-259, ll. 336-343, see also Chapter 6.

intelligent behaviour. Some animals are admired for their ability to make intricate webs and nests. Other animals reach a high level of organisation. Ant society, for example, is praised in the Bible as a model of diligence, prudence and design:

> 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom:
> 7 Which, although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain,
> 8 Provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.[102]

How is it possible that animals reach levels of organisation without rationality?

The belief that animals lack a soul was wide-spread, but even this generally held belief was sometimes challenged: the Cathars, for example, were criticized in the later Middle Ages for arguing that animals had souls. Despite the apparent consensus over the limited critical faculties of animals, animal trials existed at different points in the Middle Ages, and although it was sometimes argued that it was not the animals which were on trial, but the devil working through them, the animals themselves were punished for their deeds.[103] The Bible is not always clear on these issues. In places, animals and humans are said to suffer the same fate, as in Ecc 3:18-19: "I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that God would prove them, and show them to be like beasts. Therefore the death of man, and of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal: as man dieth, so they also die: all things breathe alike, and man hath nothing more than beast: all things are subject to vanity." In the Vulgate, Ecc 3:21 asks "Who knoweth if the spirit of the children of Adam ascend upward, and if the spirit of the beasts descend downward?" Whereas the Vulgate (and the Hebrew) seems to ask a question about the direction of the spirits of men and beast, it has generally been interpreted (also by Ælfric) to mean that the spirits of humans and animals belong to the heavens and to earth respectively. This different interpretation lasted a long time beyond the Middle Ages. The King James version, for example, is: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" There was therefore a general concensus that humans were linked to heaven, and animals tied to earth.

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[102] Proverbs 6:6-8
[103] Van Uytven 2003, p. 24.

Despite some biblical allusions to the similarities in worth and fate between humans and animals, the prevailing point of view was that humans were superior to the beasts. Augustine, for examples, opines that although humans can be inferior to animals in a few, mostly physical aspects, they are in fact higher in rank. Critiquing the idea that demons are superior to humans because of their better bodies he explains:

> In that case many animals would be superior to human beings since they surpass us in the keenness of their senses, in facility and speed of movement, in muscular strength, and in vigorous longevity. Can any man equal the long sight of an eagle or a vulture? Or match a dog in sense of smell? Or rival the speed of a hare, a stag, or any of the birds? Or the strength of a lion or an elephant? Or the longevity of a serpent, who, they say, puts off old age when he puts off his skin, and thus has his youth restored? But just as we are superior to the beasts by reason of our powers of reason and intelligence, so our superiority to the demons should appear in a life of goodness and integrity.[104]

The main point of difference between human and animal in medieval philosophy is stressed here: animals lacked reason and an immortal soul, and it was for that reason that humans were granted dominion over them. After the Fall, however, this dominion did not always mean that humans could command animals, especially the wild beasts. Ambrose (in *De Paradiso*[105]) found that the distinction between wild and tame animals lies in the matter of who controls them: God controls the wild animals, and humans have power over the tame ones.

A hierarchy was not only seen between humans and animals, but also among the animals themselves, dividing them into different categories according to locomotion. This division, found in the Bible, but also in classical writers, categorised animals as either birds, fish, quadrupeds, and 'worms' (all things that appear to creep) and also assigns a different status to these groups. This

[104] *De Civitate Dei* 8.15, tr. Bettenson 2003, p. 321.
[105] Ed. and trans. Savage 1961.

difference in status is also visible in Ælfric, for example when he describes the division of the ark.[106]

The notion that animals were attuned more to the earth, and humans, because they had a soul, more to heaven, was also supposed to show in their physical characteristics and even in eating habits (see also Ælfric's take on this in Chapter 5). Ambrose states that:

> Only those who live for the pleasures of the stomach can be said to walk on their bellies, 'whose god is their belly and their glory is their shame', who eat of what is earthy, and who, weighed down with food, are bent over towards what is of earth." [107]

He names the snake as the prime example of this behaviour, which is of course linked to its role in Paradise. According to Ambrose, humans too were condemned to eat from the earth, but the difference with animals is that humans eat 'in sadness':[108] they regret having to eat like animals and are aware of their sin. This burden of eating 'in sadness' also entails that humans need to process what is harvested: it is not the earth and its fruit which are cursed, but the curse is that people have to work for food. That humans manage to produce edible bread eventually, is symbolic for our possible redemption, so there is hope in eating:

> When we eat the earth, it seems that we are in a sort of warfare. When we eat the herbs, there is a certain advance. When finally, we eat bread, then our life of trial has reached its terminus."[109]

A similar idea is expressed in one of Ambrose's other works, the *Hexameron*, which influenced Ælfric:

> In the first place, nature has designed that every species of cattle, beast, and fish has its belly extended, so that some crawl on their stomachs. You may observe that even those animals that need the support of legs are, by

[106] *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecosten, p. 484, ll. 262-269,
[107] *De Paradiso* 11.74, Savage p. 352.
[108] ibid. p. 354.
[109] ibid., p. 355.

> reason of their four-footed motion, part and parcel of the earth and thus lack freedom of action. They have, in fact, no ability to stand erect. They therefore seek their sustenance in the earth, solely pursuing the pleasures of the stomach toward which they incline.
> Take care not to bend over like cattle. See that you do not incline – not so much physically as they do, but morally. Have regard for the conformation of your body and assume in accordance with it the appearance of loftiness and strength. Leave to animals the sole privilege of feeding in a prone position. Why, contrary to your nature, do you bend over unduly in the act of eating? Why do you find delight in what is a violation of nature? Why do you feed on the things of the earth like cattle, intent on food both day and night?"[110]

Quoting Ps 31:9 ("Do not become like the horse and the mule who have no understanding"), Ambrose warns his audience not to give in to their appetite, because that would put them on the same level as animals. He also explains that the animals not only are irrational themselves, but also represent the irrational emotions of human beings.

> The beasts of the field and the birds of the air which were brought to Adam are our irrational senses, because beasts and animals represent the diverse emotions of the body, whether of the more violent kind or even of the more temperate. What else are we to consider the birds of the air if not as representations of our idle thoughts which, like winged creatures, flit around our souls and frequently lead us by their varied motions now in one direction, now in another?[111]

He then continues to warn his audience that a human's task is to 'have dominion' over these emotions and sensations. However, as we know, humans are not infallible. They are not always able to control their 'animal' characteristics, and the animals, even the tame ones which they are supposed to have the dominion over, can get out of control, and it is clear, for example from the laws, that they

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[110] *Hexameron* 3.10, Savage 1961, p. 233.
[111] *De Paradiso* 11.51, Savage 1961, p. 329.

did at times run wild. The lack of practical control over animals means that the animals' help for, and sparing of, saints in *LS* are all the more remarkable, and point to the saint's exceptional state of grace.

Despite the emphasis on the differences between humans and animals, animals are still anthropomorphized so that humans may learn from their apparent sins and virtues. The birds of the air are a model of trust for Christ's disciples; ants are admired for their industry; pigs condemned for enjoying the dirt. Although Christianity is not as strict with its taboos on eating certain animals as in the Jewish tradition, the distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean' animals is still recognized. Often, the distinction between clean and unclean is linked to virtuous and sinful people. Clement of Alexandria (2nd century AD), for example, compares ruminating, clean animals with people who are constantly studying scripture[112] Lactantius warns his readers to avoid pork in order to avoid sin: eating pork might encourage people to give into their appetites as pigs do.[113]

Many more examples of this moral use of animals occur in the *Physiologus*, which inspired the later bestiaries. This second-century text started as a comment on animals in the bible, but was expanded continually. The *Physiologus* drew on texts by classical writers such as such as Aristotle, Pliny, Oppian, Aelian and Solinus. In turn, the *Physiologus* was a source for Isidore (636 AD), whose *Etymologiae* were popular, and Hrabanus Maurus (856AD). The information on animals in medieval texts did not usually rely on direct observation until Albertus Magnus. Some of the classical authors referenced did make observations of their own, but those works too can be mixes of observation and literary hearsay. The animals in the Physiologus and bestiaries were used for a different goal: they had to "conform with preconceived allegories related to specific biblical texts."[114] The *Physiologus* is responsible for many familiar symbols such as the pelican, phoenix, unicorn, lion and whale. Animals were a particularly rich source for exegetes: the animals can both iconically represent human characteristics, or instead be used to set humans apart from the rest of Creation. The animals are close enough to humans to be recognizable to us, but different enough that they can be reduced to an abstract concept.

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[112] Stromata 1.18 ANF 2.555-56, qtd. Tilley 1994, p. 102
[113] Divine Institutes 4.1 ANF 7.119, qtd. Tilley 1994, p. 102.
[114] Flores 1996, p. ix.

In saints' lives as well as in exegetical texts, animals play an important role. Tilley notes that there are two types of animal roles in the saints' lives. Firstly, animals which assist a saint usually occur in the lives of the more ascetic saints (animals are frequent in Irish lives of hermits). The animals behave as if they were still in Paradise: "[...] the ascetics were trying to recreate Eden in this life and the animals were joining their effort."[115] The second type of animal-saint relations occurs more often in martyrs' stories: "In these stories animals give up their bestial nature at the same time the persecutors of the saints are being described with feral epithets. This is no return to Eden for the animals but a role reversal with evil human beings."[116] Both motifs are present in Ælfric and his sources. The birds bringing swine fat to St Cuthbert's cell, for example, represent the first type; the lion who defends St Daria from her cruel persecutors represents the second.[117]

There is often an exchange of services between the saint and the animal: Tilley mentions how a hyena brings Macarius a ram's skin after he heals her cub.[118] In Ælfric, Cuthbert's ravens bring him the fat in exchange for a place to stay. This mutually beneficient relationship between animal and saint has been a motif ever since the lives of the desert fathers, who were surrounded by fierce creatures, and yet were said to have a good relationship with them, to the point when we even find saints preaching to animals (and animals bowing to them).

As in older folktales, animals in saints' lives appear to recognize a person's innocence and respond with apparent rationality rather than according to their fierce nature. Nature assisting the saint is a common element even in some of the earliest saints' lives. Carthaginian martyrs' bodies are brought to shore by dolphins before they can be harmed. St Anahid was left in chains, smeared with honey, as prey for animals and insects. But a swarm of wasps form a protective layer around her until her friends collect her body.[119]

Even in modern days stories with animals are popular. The motif of the animal abducting a child is so common that it has a Stith-Thompson number: R13. It is an element present in the Life of Eustace (Placidus), which is also

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[115] Tilley 1994, p. 95.
[116] Tilley 1994, p. 101.
[117] For more detail, see Chapter 5 under Bird and Lion.
[118] Tilley 1994, p. 101.
[119] Tilley 1994, p. 93-94.

described by Ælfric, and still present in contemporary stories (for example, in the tales of children found raised by wolves). That we see them as fantastic folktales is clear from the disbelief following a real case, such as dingoes stealing a baby in Australia. Some of these stories, then, appeal to our love of sensation:

> These [saints' lives involving animals] are popular forms of literature that invite participation in the story, giving importance to one's own life. So, too, the tabloids. People read them for amusement, for titillation, to relieve the boredom of a humdrum life. Both are written to delight the reader and to confirm already held beliefs [...]. Both stress the ripe balance between the bizarre and the ordinary.[120]

The animals usually protect the innocent, such as saints, children, and beneficent adults. They attack evil people. Their actions even go against the animals' own natures: lions and wolves are suddenly gentle creatures.
More rarely, although animals are usually described assisting the saint, sometimes they appear to be distracting saints who reject the world. An example in Ælfric is St Benedict, who is nearly distracted by a throstle, but makes the bird go away with the sign of the cross.[121] In this way, animals can again be associated with human vices in a symbolic way.

As can be seen from the above, the use of animals in literature and philosophy around Ælfric's time already had a long and varied history. Animals, being at the same time similar to and different from humans, were a perfect vehicle for all kinds of projections: animal behaviour was used as an example (good or bad) for people; next to their practical use, animals carried symbolic meaning (transmitted in different traditions); animals were important as helpers of saints and punishers of their enemies; they are seen at times as agents of God and at other times as agents of the devil. It is therefore not surprising to see that Ælfric often used animals in homilies and saints' lives to show the workings of God and Creation, as will be seen in the following chapters.

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[120] Tilley 1994, p. 95.
[121] *CH2*, XI. Sancti Benedicti Abbatis, p. 93, ll. 45-49.

3. Commentary: Domesticated Animals in Ælfric

As mentioned above, *CH* and *LS* contain nearly 400 different instances where animals are used. Some of these are fairly short and uninformative, such as when a certain animal is mentioned as being used for transport or clothing; others are quite extensive, such as a lengthy discussion of the lamb as a sacrificial animal, in which its various body parts are assigned various meanings.[122] Animals can be positive, signifying good traits (the lion's strength, a dove's meekness), or providing help, usually to saints, and representing valuable possessions. An animal can be merely useful, when it is used for food, clothing or transport. However, an animal can also be dangerous (such as poisonous snakes), or signify bad traits (a pig's gluttony). The following two chapters examine the animals in *CH* and *LS* in detail, to see in which contexts Ælfric writes about animals, how they are portrayed, and some attention is paid to where Ælfric deviates from his sources and why.

From a biblical point of view, humans were given mastery over the animals, and this is mostly the medieval opinion: animals belong to humans. However, it is clear that some animals were easier to keep than others, a distinction expressed in Old English by using the term *nieten* primarily for domesticated animals, and *(wil-)deor* for wild animals. Domestication of dogs, wild oxen and pigs happened earliest in Western Europe, and the sheep and goats soon followed. The latter came into the North West from the Mediterranean and were already established by the classical period.[123] Tame animals held for their labour (transport, ploughing, hunting, killing vermin, guarding, etc.) or their products (meat, milk, wool, etc.). Therefore, they form a source of wealth. Anglo-Saxon society was mainly rural, so we must assume the audience's familiarity with most domestic animals mentioned by Ælfric, with the exception of some more exotic animals like the camel.

Isidore of Seville organized his *Etymologiae* roughly according to the division between tame and wild already established by Ambrose of Milan. His main categories are 'cattle' and 'beasts', but he added a category for animals he

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[122] *CH* 2, p.278ff.
[123] Salisbury 1994, p. 13.

considered ambiguous: fish, flying animals (mostly birds, but including bats), and a few small animals. The categories are not always mutually exclusive: the elephant (although listed by me under the wild animals) strictly speaking occurs in Ælfric as a tamed animal which is used as a mode of transport, but there are also wild elephants. Animals such as silk worms and bees are also ambiguous: they are obviously not tamed, but they are also kept by humans and perform a 'service' for them. Salisbury names another example of such ambiguous animals in the cat:[124] it hunts vermin, which is beneficial for humans, but no particular domestication was needed for this as the wild cat hunts in the same way. Here, the natural 'function' of the animal overlaps with human needs. To see if there is a distinction in treatment of wild and domesticated animals, they are separated below.

The discussion of the various tame animals in Ælfric below will treat the different animals separately. They are, in alphabetical order: asses, camels, cattle, dogs, goats, horses, pigs, and sheep. Of these animals, only the camel was not kept in Anglo-Saxon England; the other animals were all well-known to Ælfric's audience. The animals in Ælfric fulfil different roles in the narrative: they can be used symbolically, they can be described in a more practical way as either a possession or a natural phenomenon, and they can assist saints. A combination of these roles also occurs. In what follows, an attempt is made to differentiate these roles. Three main categories are used: practical aspects (the animal as a possession, or a decription of the animal's characterstics); symbolic usage (the animal as a moral example, or as a metaphor); and the animal as the helper (or occasionally the adversary) of saints.

Ass

Nowadays, the properties most often associated with the donkey are its stupidity and its stubbornness. There is no reference by Ælfric to headstrong donkeys, but occasionally the animal is described as stupid:

> Assa is stunt nyten 7 uncleane 7 toforan oðrum nytenum ungesceadwis[125]

[124] Salisbury 1994, p.14.
[125] *CH*1, XIV Dominica Palmarum, pp. 292, ll. 54-55.

[An ass is a foolish animal, and unclean, and irrational, compared with other animals]

Most of the time, however, a completely different aspect of the donkey is stressed. The animal was less expensive than a horse, more on a level with the ox,[126] and thus was often used by Ælfric as a symbol for humility. As only the elite could afford to own horses, the ass is seen as the more humble beast of burden. Although it was associated with Christ (see below) and therefore considered a fitting riding animal for the clergy, not all these clergymen were willing to humbly accept the donkey. Van Uytven mentions the reported dismay of Gregory the Great when presented with a horse and 5 asses: the horse was of low quality and he did not want to ride on an ass.[127] Asses and mules (the offspring of horse mares and donkey stallions) need less food and are hardier than horses, which also made them cheaper to keep. The animals were known to the Anglo-Saxons, but donkeys were much less frequent in northern Europe than in the south, which may explain their infrequent occurrence in the Anglo-Saxon laws.

Animals as a possession

As mentioned above, the ass was considered a less valuable possession than a horse. Nevertheless, it was extremely useful as a beast of burden, and is mentioned as such in the Bible quite frequently. Mules and asses were also known in Anglo-Saxon England.

Ælfric mentions the story of Job losing his livestock as a test from God.[128] The numbers of animals show Job's immense wealth: 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen and 500 asses. From these numbers, we can also deduce something about the relative value (or cost) of these animals in Biblical times. In any case, the wealth of Job must have seemed fabulous to a medieval farmer: "In the early tenth century in northern Scandinavia a farmer was

[126] See Ashburner 1912, p. 91 for an example from Byzantine law of around 800AD.
[127] Van Uytven 2003, p. 162.
[128] *CH2*, XXX. Dominica I in Mense Septembri, pp.260, ll. 9-12.

considered wealthy if he had 20 cows, 20 swine, 20 sheep and 600 reindeer,"[129] so the numbers mentioned for Job are enormous. We now know that large numbers in the Bible are not necessarily to be taken literally: any high number mentioned may just mean 'a lot,' although the audience may have taken the number at face value.

Symbolic use of animals

The use of the donkey as a symbol of humility probably follows from its low value compared to a horse: noblemen ride horses while peasants have donkeys. Therefore it is significant that Christ is described as being born near stable animals, and laid in the manger used by oxen and asses.[130] It is hard to imagine a humbler place for Christ to be born than in a stable. Christ's humble beginnings contrast with the great deeds he will perform.

In the same homily, Ælfric explains, echoing Bede,[131] that Mary is reminded of a prophecy of the nativity:

> Heo [Mary] gemunde þæt sum witega cwæð. se oxa oncneow his hlaford. 7 se assa his hlafordes binne: þa geseah heo þæt cild licgan on binne. þær se oxa 7 se assa gewunelice fodan secað; [132]
>
> [She remembered that a prophet had said "The ox knows his master, and the ass his master's crib." Then she saw the child lying in the crib, where the ox and the ass usually seek food.]

The prophecy in question is found in Isa 1:3: "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib". This may have been reinforced by a translation error in the Septuagint version of Hab 3:2, rendering the original Hebrew "In the midst of years thou shalt be known" as "In the midst of two animals thou shalt be known". Although the birth is a humble one, it does fulfil an important prophecy.

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[129] Salisbury 1994, p. 23.
[130] *CH*1, II. VIII Kalendas Ianuarii Nativitas Domini, pp. 190, ll. 18-20.
[131] Bede, Hom. I.7, see CH3, p.20.
[132] *CH*1, II. Nativitas Domini, p.197, ll.209-212.

Another example of the donkey as a humble animal occurs when Christ enters Jerusalem on an ass.[133] Despite Christ's importance, he does not insist on riding a costly horse. It is an act of humility that is also referred to in *LS* in the homily on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross:

> næs he mid purpuran ge-scryd . ne mid cynehelme geglenged . ne he on steda ne rad . þurh þis stænene gæt . ac on assan hricge he rad eadmodlice mannum to bysne . þæt hi modignysse onscunion.[134]

> [He was not clothed with purple, nor adorned with a royal crown, nor did he ride through this stone gate on a steed, but on the back of an ass he rode humbly, as an example to men, so that they would shun pride.]

Here, Christ's humility is given as an example to the emperor Eraclius: the emperor, no matter how high in status, should show meekness.

The scene of Christ entering Jerusalem is described in more detail in *CH*1.[135] When going to Jerusalem, Christ tells two disciples that they will find an ass and its wild foal tied up in the next town (Mt 21:1). They have to untie the two animals and bring them. In this analogy, as Ælfric explains in the same passage, the disciples stand for Christian teachers. The tame ass stands for the Jews, who are 'tamed' by the old law. The unruly foal stands for heathen people, who will be tamed when taught about Christianity:

> hu untigdon hi þone assan 7 þone folan? hi bodedon þam folce rihtne geleafan. 7 godes beboda. 7 eac mid miclum wundrum heora bodunge getrymdon; [...] Assa is stunt nyten 7 uncleane 7 toforan oðrum nytenum ungesceadwis; and byrðenstrang; [...] Dæra assena hlaford: axode, hwi hi untigdon his assan? Swa eac þa heafodmen gehwilces leodscipes. woldon þwyrlice wiðcweðan godes bodunge. [...] Cristes leorningcnihtas cwædon: se hlaford behofað þæra assena 7 sent hi eft ongean; [136]

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[133] *CH*2, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, pp. 138, ll. 23-25.
[134] *LS*2, XXVII. Exaltatio Sancte Crucis, p. 150, ll. 96-99.
[135] *CH*1, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, pp. 290-92, ll. 7-75.
[136] *CH*1, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, pp. 291-92, ll. 49-75.

[How did they untie the ass and the foal? They preached correct belief and God's commandments to the people, and also strengthened their preaching with many miracles. [...] An ass is a foolish beast, and unclean, and stupid, compared with other animals, and strong for burdens. [...] The master of the asses asked "Why did they untie his asses?" Likewise, the chief men of every nation would perversely oppose the preaching of God. Christ's disciples said: "The Lord needs the asses, and sends for them."]

Note the puzzling fact that Ælfric makes the ass male, whereas the gospels clearly mention a she-ass. The distinction between the ass and the foal is based on Bede through Haymo.[137] From the narrative, it appears that Christ is riding the foal rather than the ass.
An extra explanation of the meaning of the ass and its foal follows later in the same homily:

Ac þone wacan assan. he geceas him to byrðre: For ðan þe he tæhte symle: eaðmodnysse [...] Se nacoda assa bið mid reafum gesadelod. þonne se ydela mann bið mid wisra lareowa mynegungum. 7 gebysnungum to godes handa gefrætwad: 7 he þonne berð crist: [...] Ðæt folc ðe heora reaf wurpon under þæs assan fet *þæt* sind þa martyras þe for cristes geleafan sealdon heora agenne lichaman. to tintregum; [138]

[But the humble ass he chose as a mount for himself; because he always taught humility [...] The naked ass is saddled with garments when the idle man is adorned to the hand of God with the warnings and examples of wise teachers; and he then bears Christ [...] The people who threw their garments under the feet of the ass, are the martyrs, who for Christ's faith gave their own bodies to torments.]

The ass is further described as a stupid and unclean animal, but strong for burdens: likewise, according to Ælfric, the Jews and heathens who do not accept

[137] *CH*3, p. 113.
[138] *CH*1, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, pp. 293-94, ll. 87-124.

Christianity are foolish and will suffer under burdens. The ass is dressed by the disciples, because Christ will not ride it naked. The garments signify works of righteousness. Dressing up the 'naked' ass is compared to a simple man listening to the instructions and examples of wise teachers. Godden remarks that 'Ælfric's exposition is a fairly complex one, working at several levels of interpretation'.[139] He distinguishes 'an allegory of mankind's redemption, with the ass and foal standing, like the people who welcome Christ, for the Jews and the Gentiles' and a 'moral or tropological level, with the animals and the people representing man in his moral state, choosing to bear Christ or the devil, and casting his good works or life as garments before Christ'. From line 111 onward in the above passage, Ælfric compares the idea of kingship being either righteous or not to this image of the human as an ass bearing either God or the devil, good or evil.

The passages above both occur in the homily for Palm Sunday. The entry into Jerusalem is part of the liturgy of this day. By choosing this topic, Ælfric follows normal homiliary practice: Paul the Deacon and Haymo also discuss this subject. Ælfric draws upon all four gospels for setting the scene of the entry, and for the commentary he draws on both Bede and Pseudo-Chrysostom.[140]

Animals and saints

In the Passion of Saint Alban, reference is made to the story of Absalom and David. The mule is instrumental in punishing Absalom for his sins and his rebellion by running on when its master's hair gets tangled in a tree, leaving its master dangling:

> He rad ða on his mule mid mycelre fyrde þurh ænne heahne holt mid hetelicum geþance . þa ge-feng hine an treow be ðam fexe sona . forðan þe he wæs sidfæxede and he swa hangode . and se mul arn forð fram þam arleasan hlaforde . and dauides þegnas hine þurh-ðydon .[141]

> He [Absalom] then rode on his mule with a great army through a high wood with hostile intention; then a tree caught him by the hair immediately, because

[139] *CH3*, p. 110
[140] *CH3*, p.109.
[141] *LS1*, XIX. Passio Sancti Albani, Martyris, p. 428, ll. 218-23.

he was long-haired, and he hung thus, and the mule ran forward from the wicked lord, and David's thanes pierced him through.

As we will see with other animals, this type of punishment is a common motif in saints' lives for adversaries of the saint.

A similar situation occurs in the life of St Martin. Mules belonging to cruel soldiers who are trying to capture Martin (who himself is humbly riding an ass) are strangely afraid of the saint and tangle up their reins, which annoys the soldiers, who take their frustration out on Martin. The animals make up for their initial clumsiness when they stand immobilised as their masters want to leave:

þa scyddon þa mulas þe þ*æt* cræt tugon ðurh his to-cyme afyrhte . and to-mengdon þa ge-togu . þ*æt* hi teon ne mihton . Þa wurdon ða cempan wodlice astyrode . and ge-læhton martinum . and hine lange swungon . mid swipum . and mid stafu*m* . and he suwode æfre swilce he ne gefredde heora swingla nates-hwon . and hi þæs þe woddran wæron him to-geanes . and hetelicor beoton þone halgan wer . [...] Ða cempan þa woldon mid þam cræte forð . ac þa mulas ealle endemes astifodon to þære eorþan afæstnode . swylce hi ærene wæron . Hi beoton þa mid swipum . and mid saglum . þa mulas ealle endemes . ac hi æfre stodon on þa*m* ylcan stede swilce anlicnyssa . [142]

Then the mules which pulled the cart fled, afraid of his [Martin's] approach, and entangled the reins, so that they could not pull. Then the soldiers were madly stirred and seized Martin, and hit him a long time with whips and with staves; and he was silent all the time as if he did not feel their blows at all, and they were madder towards him because of that, and beat the holy man more violently. [...] Then the soldiers wanted to go on with the cart, but all the mules at the same time stiffened, fastened to the earth, as if they were made of brass. They beat them with whips and with clubs, all the mules together, but they kept standing on the same spot like statues.

[142] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 280, ll. 970-989.

St Martin's apparent power over animals gives the soldiers pause for thought, and through the miracle they recognise Martin's powers.

Camel

The camel was a prized possession in Biblical times, as it could carry heavy loads and last long in dry, warm climates. Its hair, however, is rough and not very pleasant to the touch. It is worn by John the Baptist, who is often portrayed in this garment, as a sign of humility (Mt 3:4; Mk 1:6). Camel hair is therefore often used for clothes by saints who would not indulge in the softness of other materials.

Animals as a possession

As with the ass, the camel is an asset. Job is described as owning 3,000 camels.[143] Although camels can be milked and shorn, their main purpose is transportation, and in this function they are mentioned in the Bible and by Ælfric quite often. King Polymius uses camels to transport riches,[144] and so does the Queen of Sheba.[145]

Although Ælfric talks of certain birds not existing in England, and desribes the elephant at great length, as it is an exotic animal for his audience, he does not provide a description of the equally foreign camel. Perhaps he considered the camel a less conspicuous animal than the elephant with its trunk, or assumed that his audience was more familiar with them through biblical references. More than the elephant, the camel may have been part of the 'mental menagerie' of medieval people in Europe.

Symbolic use of animals

The camel's hair is coarse and in Biblical times was woven into a rough cloth mostly for tents. Camel hair clothes are therefore for the poor or used by others to express humility. Wearing rough clothes can also be a form of penance for

[143] *CH2*, XXX. Dominical In Mense Septembri, p. 260, ll. 9-12.
[144] *CH1*, XXXI. Passio Sancti Bartholomei, p. 441, ll. 68-70.
[145] *CH2*, XL. In Dedicatione Ecclesiae, p. 340, ll. 150-151.

saints. Ælfric mentions that John the Baptist wears camel hair clothes for this reason:

> drihten on oþre stowe herede iohan|nem þone fulluhtere for þære teartnysse his reafes: for þan ðe he wæs mid oluendes hærum gescryd. waclice 7 stiþlice;[146]
>
> [The Lord in another place praised John the Baptist for the roughness of his garment, because he was clothed with camel hairs, humbly and roughly.]

Before John the Baptist, Zachary wore the same garments.[147] St Martin's monks are also described as wearing camel hair clothes:

> Heora forwel fela [Martin's monks] wæron mid waces olfendes hærum to lice gescrydde. and þær laðode softnys;[148]
>
> [Very many of them were clothed with humble camel hairs on their bodies, and softness was loathed there.]

This use of uncomfortable clothes as a method of penance is a common motif in saints' lives.

An interesting metaphorical use of the camel is found in *CH2*:

> Olfendas bæron ða deorwurðan lac mid ðære cwene into hierusalem. for ðan ðe ða hæðenan þe ær wæron gehoforode ðurh gytsunge. and atelice ðurh leahtras. bæron ðurh heora gecyrrednysse. and geleafan. ða gastlican lac to cristes handum;[149]

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[146] *CH1*, XXIII.Dominica II Post Pentecosten, p. 366, ll. 41-43, see also *CH2*, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p.19, ll. 19-20.
[147] *CH1*, XXV. Nativitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae, p. 380, ll. 43-44.
[148] *CH2*, XXXIV. Depositio Sancti Martini, p. 291, ll. 129-30.
[149] *CH2*, XL. In Dedicatione Ecclesiae, p. 341, ll. 195-199.

[Camels carried the precious gifts with the queen into Jerusalem; because the heathens, who were before humpbacked by greed, and [deformed] horribly by sins, carried, through their conversion and belief, the spiritual gifts to the hands of Christ.]

Here, the heathens (or, more precisely, Jewish heathens) are compared to a camel bearing riches, and are said to be hump-backed due to their greed. The hump is seen as deformity caused by sin, and can be taken away by converting to Christianity. This is a strange analogy, perhaps indicating that Ælfric and his sources believed that the camel's humps were caused by carrying goods.[150]
The source for this passage is given by Godden as Eusebius Gallicus, Homily 47.[151] The theme of Eusebius's homily (the birth of the church) is connected to Ælfric's here, which is the dedication of a church.

Although the Jews are painted in a bad light in this passage, Eusebius interprets the riches borne by the camels as positive: they are the positive things carried over from Jewish faith and ritual. Gold and spice are purity and incense, gems (*pretiosas gemmas*) are '*morum scilicet insignia et ornamenta virtutum*': tokens of good behaviour and the trappings of virtues.[152]
The whole paragraph (3) of Eusebius's homily compares the church to a passage about Sheba (I Kings 10:1; 2 Chr 9:1; cf. Mt 12:42 and Lk 11:31):

Venit, exhibens munera digna Christo: *aurum, et gemmas pretiosas* – et hoc *camelis portantibus*, id est: ex gentili populo uenientibus, qui prius fuerant uitiorum foeditate distorti, et malorum onere curui, ac peccatorum prauitate deformes.

[She came displaying the gifts fit for Christ: gold and precious gems – and with camels carrying this, that is: with it coming from the gentile people, who previously had been twisted by the foulness of their vices and bent over by the burden of their evils and misshapen by the perversity of their sins.]

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[150] See Hrabanus Maurus 7.8 De pecoribus et iumentis.
[151] *CH3*, p. 666. The homily is identified as Homily XLVII, In Natale Ecclesiae, I. (Eusebius 'Gallicanus' Collectio Homiliarum: de qua critice disservit Ioh. Leroy. Ed. Fr. Glorie. Turnhout: Brepols, 1971. Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina CI A. p. 553-563).
[152] CCLSL l. 51-3, p. 558.

In the following passage, the camel is a symbol for a great sin that is ignored in favour of chastising other people for small offenses. Ælfric refers to Mt 23:24, where Christ addresses the Pharisees' hypocrisy, but the explanation that Ælfric provides here is not present in the Bible:

> *Liquantes culicem et glutientes camelum:*
> Hy ahlyttriað þone stut of heora liðe mid seohhann,
> and hy ealne forswelgað þone olfend gehalne.
> Þæt is, þæt hy tælað mid teonfullum mode
> and mid modignysse, þe is gylta mæst,
> þa lytlan gyltas, swylce hy 'h'luttrion þone stut,
> and nellað þa micclan synna on hym sylfum gebetan,
> ac wyllað mid hospe huxlice tælan
> oðra manna misdæda, þonne hy maran sylfe habbað.[153]
>
> *[Straining out a gnat and devouring a camel:*
> They sieve the gnat out of their drink with a strainer,
> and they swallow the entire camel whole.
> That is, that they speak ill of the small sins with spiteful mind
> and with pride, which is the biggest sin, as if they strain out the fly,
> and do not want to to make amends for the great sins in themselves,
> but they want to speak ill of the bad deeds of other people insultingly,
> with scorn, when they themselves have (done) more.]

The camel is also used in a more positive manner in the following simile:

> He geheold cristes setl geond ðrittig geara fæc. and gelome ðingode for ðæs folces gyltum. bigende his cneowu on gebedum symle. swa þæt him weoxon. wearrige ylas. on olfendes gelicnysse. on his liðegum cneowum;[154]
>
> [He [James] held Christ's seat for a period of thirty years, and frequently

[153] Pope2, XIII. Dominica V Post Pentecosten, p. 504, ll. 163-171.
[154] *CH2*, XVII. Apostolorum Philippi et Iacobi, p. 171, ll. 70-73.

interceded for the people's sins, bending his knees in prayer continually, so that rough callosities grew on him, similar to a camel's, on his bending knees.]

James is described here as having knees like a camel's due to his frequent kneeling for prayer. The camel does have hardened patches of skin on its knees, which have the appearances of calluses. However, these patches do not actually grow there because of constant kneeling, since the camel has the pads from a very young age.

Animals and saints

No camels occur in connection with saints' lives, apart from several references to camel hair clothes (see above under *Animals as a Possession*).

Cattle

Cows, calves and oxen are often mentioned in the Bible. They were sacrificial animals, gave milk and meat, but were also used for the plough, especially oxen. In Anglo-Saxon times, too, oxen were very important for the ploughing (see for example in the *Colloquy*). Despite the use of these animals in sacrifice, another common association is with the golden calf. The golden calf was an idol made by Aaron, worshipped by the Hebrews (Ex 32:4, 8; Deut 9:16; Neh 9:18; Acts 7:41). Jeroboam also made two golden calves (1 Kings 12:28; 2 Kings 10:29). The calf can then be connected to devil worship. Indeed, some of the cows mentioned below are possessed by the devil. At the same time, however, the ox is a symbol of Luke the evangelist, and is also appreciated for its strength.

Different words are used for the various kinds of cattle, including names for the different individual animals (such as *cu* or *oxa*), names for cattle in general (*nieten* can have this meaning), or groups of cattle performing the same function. Pope claims *orfcynn* denotes animals used for labour, and that *orf* or *yrf* are animals which are eaten, although Bosworth and Toller does not support this.[155]

[155] Pope1, p. 223.

Job owned 500 teams of oxen before they were taken away.[156] Riches are counted not just in gold and silver, but also in cattle:

> Þa wurdon ðær getealde an hund ðæra hæðengylda þe ðæs temples gymdon. and nan man ne mihte heora æhta geriman. on golde and on seolfre. on orfe and on reafe; [157]
>
> [Then there were counted a hundred of the idolators who took care of the temple, and no one could enumerate their possessions in gold and in silver, in cattle and in clothing]

Solomon's court is huge and needs 32 oxen per day. A distinction is made between the fat oxen, probably kept and fattened in the stable for food, and the field oxen, a term for oxen kept in the field rather than in the stable and used in agriculture. Solomon's household needs twelve oxen, twenty field oxen, a hundred rams and fowl on a daily basis:

> Him becomon eac swa micele welan to handa. þæt his bigleofa wæs ælce dæg mid his hirede. þrittig mittan clænes melowes. and sixtig mittan oðres melowes; Twelf fætte oxan. and twentig feldoxan; Hunteontig weðera. buton huntoðe. and fugoloðe. and gemæstra fugela;[158]
>
> [Such great riches also came to his hand, that his sustenance for each day with his household was thirty measures of clean flour, and sixty measures of different flour, twelve fat oxen, and twenty field oxen, and a hundred rams, besides the produce of hunting and fowling and fattened birds]

[156] *CH2*, XXX. Dominica I In Mense Septembri, pp. 266-267, ll. 204-208.
[157] *CH2*, XXXIII. Passio Simonis et Iude, p. 281, ll. 56-59.
[158] *CH2*, XL. In Dedicatione Ecclesiae, p. 336, ll. 40-45.

Ælfric mentions twelve fat oxen, but the relevant bible passage in the Vulgate (3 Kings 4:23 (KJB: 1 Kings)) has ten. In Anglo-Saxon times, cattle were still valued highly, not just for dairy and hides, but as much if not more for labour.

Animals were also used in medicine, as in the following passage in which a sickness can apparently be healed with the wart from an ox's back:

> Þa lærde hi sum Iudeisc man þæt heo name ænne wernægel of sumes oxan hricge. and becnytte to anum hringe mid hire snode. and mid þam hi to nacedum lice begyrde;[159]
>
> [Then a Jewish man instructed her to take a wart from an ox's back, and tie it to a ring with her hairband, and with that to gird her naked body.]

Ælfric's source here, Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, XXII.8.365-85, 390-1,[160] refers to a kidney-stone. The word used by Ælfric is a *wernægel*, which is probably a wart (literally a man's nail, but it is hard to see how one could get that from an ox's back). Godden refers to Meaney's interpretation of the word, who describes it as a "'hard lump found on the back of cattle', produced by the larvae of the gadfly".[161] Godden further argues with Meaney that this may be a deliberate change by Ælfric, who may have preferred to use a type of amulet known locally. Meaney's interpretation of the word is *wærnægel*, a nail for protection. The narrative differs from Augustine in other minor details as well, such as the use of a hair band instead of a band of hair, and Ælfric also supplies the outcome of the healing.

Symbolic use of animals

In the following simile, the ox is compared to a person rebelling against God:

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[159] *CH2*, II. Natale Sancti Stephani, p. 14, ll. 80-83.
[160] *CH3*, p. 358.
[161] *CH3*, p. 359.

Gif se oxa spyrnð ongean þa gade: hit derað him sylfum; Swa eac hearmað ðe. þin gewinn togeanes me;[162]

[If the ox spurns against the goad, it hurts itself; likewise does your strife against me hurt you.]

Godden suggests Augustine, Serm. 382, par. 4, PL 39, 1686 as a possible source:

Durum est tibi contra stimulum calcitrare: quia non stimulum, sed pedes quibus calcitras, vulnerabis.[163]

[It is hard for you to resist the goad: because it is not the goad you will hurt, but the very feet with which you are resisting]

The relevant Bible passage ("It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 9:5)) is spoken by God to Saul to indicate that it is useless to fight against the divine will. Ælfric adds the specific simile of the ox here, and does not just mention the goad itself.

According to the old law, oxen, sheep and doves had to be sacrificed to God. They were sold in the temple by money-hungry priests until Jesus threw these salesmen out with the moneyers. In the following passage, Ælfric compares a bad teacher to one of these ox sellers if he or she preaches for earthly gains. The connection between the ox and earthly gains is perhaps connected to the idea of the golden calf:

Oxa teolað his hlaforde. 7 se lareow sylð oxan on godes cyrcan: gif he begæð his hlafordes teolunga þæt is. gif he bodað godspel his underþeoddum. for eorðlicum gestreonum. 7 na for godcundre lufe; Mid sceapum he mangað: gif he dysegra manna herunga cepð on arfæstum weorcum; Be swylcum cwæð se hælend. hi under|fengon edlean heora weorca. þæt is se hlisa ydelre herunge þe him gecweme wæs; Se lareow bið culfran cypa þe nele ða gyfe þe him god

[162] *CH*1, XXVII. Natale Sancte Pauli, pp. 402-403, ll. 78-80.
[163] *CH*3, p. 225

forgeaf buton his gegearnungum: oþrum mannum buton sceattum nyt don: swa swa crist sylf tæhte; Buton ceape ge underfengon þa gife. syllað hi oðrum buton ceape;[164]

[The ox labours for its lord, and the teacher [is like the one who] sells oxen in God's church, if he performs his Lord's labour, that is, if he preaches the gospel to his charges, for earthly treasures, and not for godly love. With sheep he trades, if he desires the praises of foolish men in virtuous works. About such things the Saviour said "They have received the reward of their works;" that is the fame of idle praise, which was pleasing to them. The teacher who does not want to make the gift, which God has granted him without earnings, useful to other men without payments, is [like] a seller of doves, as Christ himself taught: "Without price you have received the gift, give it to others without price."]

Following Mt 10: 8, the teacher should of course work for free.

The following passage comments on the marriage between Christ and the church. The oxen slain for the wedding stand for the patriarchs of the old law, who were allowed to kill their enemies, whereas the fowls mentioned are the New Testament teachers, who are 'fattened' with the grace of the Holy Ghost (see under Birds):

secgað ðam gelaðodon: efne ic gegearcode mine god ic ofsloh mine fearras. 7 mine gemæstan fugelas | 7 ealle mine þing ic gearcode cumað to þam gyftum. [...] ða fearras getacniað þa heahfæderas þære ealdan æ. þe moston þa beleafe þære ealdan .æ. on fearres wisan heora fynd ofslean; [...] Hwæt getacniað þa fearras buton fæderas þære ealdan æ; Hwæt wæron hi buton fearra gelican þa ða hi mid leafe þære ealdan æ heora fynd mid horne lichamlicere mihte potedon; [...] Hwæt is: mine fearras sind ofslegene. 7 mine gemæstan fugelas. buton swilce he cwæde. behealdað þæra ealdfædera drohtnunga. 7

[164] *CH*1, XXVIII. Dominica XI Post Pentecosten, pp. 415-16, ll. 166-175.

understandað þæra witegena gyddunge 7 þæra apostola bodunga ymbe mines bearnes menniscnysse. 7 cumað to þam gyftum.[165]

[Say to the invited: "Behold, I have prepared my goods, I have killed my oxen and my fattened birds, and have prepared all my things, come to the wedding." [...] The oxen signify the patriarchs of the old law, who then had to, by permission of the old law, kill their enemies in the manner of an ox. [...] What do the oxen signify but the fathers of the old law? What were they but the equivalent of oxen, when they, by permission of the old law, struck their enemies with the horn of bodily power? [...] What is: "My oxen and my fattened fowls are killed," but as if he had said, "Behold the lives of the patriarchs, and understand the saying of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles about my son's humanity, and come to the wedding"?]

This interpretation of the oxen and fowls is taken straight from Gregory's explanation for Mt 22:4 ("Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready"), but Ælfric stresses the lives of the fathers rather than their deaths.[166]

We have seen before that the Old Testament animal sacrifices are taken symbolically by Ælfric. In the old days, priests offered calves, lambs, rams, and bucks to God. The calf stands for Christ's passion, the lamb for his innocence, the ram for his authority, the buck for his 'fleshly nature'. Nowadays, people offer in a figurative sense: a lamb if they preserve their own innocence, a buck or a kid if they overcome feelings of lust, a dove if they are meek, a turtle-dove if they are chaste:

Þa ealdan sacerdas offrodon cealf. and æt ðam weofode snidon; Crist sylf wæs on ðam cealfe getacnod. for ðære mihte his ðrowunge; Hi offrodon lamb binnon ðam getelde. and he wæs eac on ðam getacnod. for his unscæððignysse; He wæs on rammes slege getacnod. for his ealdordome; He wæs on buccan slege getacnod. for gelicnysse synfulles flæsces. þæt he mid urum flæsclicum gecynde. ure synna adilegode. [...] We soðlice æfter

[165] *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecosten, pp. 477-78, ll. 52-80.
[166] *CH*3, p. 292.

ðeawlicum andgite cealf offriað gode to lace. gif we ures lichaman modignysse for his ege oferswiðað; Lamb we offriað on godes lace. gif we unscæððignysse on urum ðeawum symle healdað. and þa unsceadwislican styrunga on stæððignysse awendað; Buccan we offriað oððe ticcen. gif we ures lichaman galnysse oferswiðað; Culfran we offriað. gif we soðe bilewitnysse on urum mode healdað; Turtlan we offriað. gif we on clænnysse wuniað; [167]

[The old priests offered a calf, and killed it at the altar. Christ himself was signified in that calf, for the power of his passion. They offered a lamb within the tabernacle, and he was also signified in that, because of his innocence; he was signified in the killing of a ram, because of his authority; he was signified in the killing of a male goat, because of the similarity of sinful flesh, so that he eliminated our sins with our fleshly nature. [...] We truly offer, in a moral sense, a calf as a gift to God, if, for awe of him, we overcome the pride of our body. A lamb we offer as a gift to God, if we always keep innocence in our morals, and then turn irrational stirrings into steadiness. A male goat we offer, or a kid, if we overcome the lustfulness of our body. A dove we offer, if we keep true innocence in our mind. A turtle-dove we offer, if we live in purity.]

The old tradition of offering animals to God is no longer necessary: the symbolic significance of the sacrifice is what counts. The calf as a sacrifice reminds the believer of Christ's passion, but the spiritual act that is really required is giving up pride of the body. The source of this passage is probably Isidore's *In Leviticum,* c. 1.3, *Questiones,* PL 83, 321 CD:[168]

[...] offerimus vitulum, cum carnis superbiam vincimus [...]

[We offer a calf, when we conquer the pride of the flesh]

In the next passage, the five teams of oxen that are made ready for a feast (parable of the feast in Luke 14:16-24) symbolise the five senses of the body:

[167] *CH2*, XII. Dominica in Media Quadragesime, p. 120, ll. 347-364.
[168] *CH3*, p. 460.

Sum oðer cwæð; Ic bohte fif getymu oxena. and ic wille faran fandian ðæra; Ða fif getyma getacniað ða fif andgitu ures lichaman. þæt sind Gesihð. Hlyst. Swæcc. Stenc. Hrepung; [...] Þas andgitu sind rihtlice wiðmetene fif getymum oxena. for ðan ðe hi beoð getwyfylde on twam hadum. þæt is on werum. and on wifum;[169]

[Another said: "I have bought five teams of oxen, and I want to go and test them." The five teams signify the five senses of our body, which are sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch. [...] These senses are rightly compared to the five teams of oxen, because they are doubled in two sexes, that is, in men and in women.]

The excuse of the guest who does not want to come to the wedding in Lk 14:19 ("I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to try them") is like a believer making excuses for not doing his duty. Godden notes that the idea of the oxen symbolising the senses probably comes from Gregory, but Ælfric explains much more about the senses, possibly under the influence of Augustine.[170]

Animals and saints

The ox is usually gentle, but is also capable of killing a human, as in the following example from the life of St Martin. St Martin is told about the accident by the devil, but it is too late to save the victim. The animal is not portrayed as evil: the devil possessed it when it killed the man. In a different passage (see further below) the saint does reach a possessed cow on time and manages to heal it:

On sumne sæl co*m* se deofol . mid swyðlicre grimetunge . into þa*m* halgan were . and hæfde ænne oxan horn on hande . and cwæð to martine . Hwær is þin miht nu ða ænne man ic ofsloh of þinre hiwrædene nu . and wæs his swyðre hand swilce geblodegod [...] Wæs ða an hyr-man to wuda afaren . se læg ge-wundod be þam wege samcucu . and he þa sæde þa þa he his oxan

[169] *CH2*, XXIII. Dominica III Post Pentecosten, pp. 214-215, ll. 43-55.
[170] *CH3*, p. 553.

ræpte . þa scoc an his heofod . and mid þa*m* horne hine þyde . on þ*æt* geweald swiðe . and he þa sona ge-wat .[171]

[On one occasion the devil came to the holy man with a terrible grunting, and had one ox-horn in his hand, and said to Martin: "Where is your power now that I have killed a man from your household?" And his right hand was as if it was bloodied. [...] Then a certain servant had gone to the wood, who lay wounded by the way, half alive; and he then said that when he was yoking his oxen, one shook its head and struck him with its horn with very great force; and then he died soon.]

Feeding the oxen is not without danger either, as shown in the Life of St Cuthbert when a man falls from a tree when trying to feed his cattle:

Hit wearð ða gewidmærsod. swa swa se witega cwæð. þæt hire [Ælfflæd's] hyrdeman. ðurh holdrædene ða. sume ac astah. and his orf læswode. mid treowenum helme. and he hearde feoll. gewat of worulde. mid wuldre to gode. for ðære hylde. his hirdrædene;[172]

[It was then reported widely, as the prophet had said, that her herdsman, through loyal service, had climbed an oak and was feeding his cattle with the tree-top, and he fell severely, and departed from the world, with glory to God, because of his care for his herd.]

The function of this story is for Cuthbert to predict the herdsman's death to Ælfflæd. Ælfric emphasises the kindness of the herdsman to his cattle: "Only the VCM [Bede's metrical Life of St Cuthbert] mentions the song and explains why the man was climbing the tree; Ælfric identifies the tree as an oak, and twice emphasises that the man died in the service of his employer and cattle".[173]

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[171] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 284, ll. 1039-1055.
[172] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 90, ll. 300-303.
[173] *CH3*, p. 428.

Cows, bulls and oxen can assist the saint directly by refusing to co-operate in the killing of the saint, as happens in the life of St Lucy, where the oxen cannot tear her apart:

> þa wearð ge-ancsumod se arleasa pascasius . and het him gelangian þa leasan drymen to . þæt hi þæt godes mæden mid heora galdrum oferswyðdon . ac ðaþa him naht ne speow . þa het he spannan oxan to . ac hi ne mihton awecgan þæt mæden þagit swa .[174]
>
> [Then the wicked Paschasius was troubled, and had the false magicians brought to him, so that they would overpower the maiden of God with their enchantments. But when they did not succeed at all, he had oxen tied to [her], but they could not even shake the maiden thus.]

Despite the torturers' best efforts, the skin in which St Chrysanthus is wrapped does not turn hard, nor does Chrysanthus get too hot in it:

> Hi behyldon þa ardlice ænne oxan mid graman . and besywodon crisantum swa mid þære hyde to his nacodum lice . and ledon hine ongean þa sunnan.[175]
>
> [In anger they then quickly flayed an ox, and sewed up Chrysanthus thus, with the hide to his naked body, and placed him facing the sun.]

St Martin shows his power over evil spirits by driving one out of a mad cow:

> þa com þær færlice yrnan an þearle wod cu . and þa þe hyre fyligdon clypodon to þam halgan were þæt he hine warnian sceolde . for-þan-þe heo hnat yfele ælcne þe heo ge-mette . Heo com þa yrnende mid egeslicum eagum . ac se halga wer sona het hi ætstandan . and heo þær-rihte gehyrsumode his hæse and stod . Þa geseah se halga wer þæt þær sæt an deofol on þære cu hrycge . and cwæð to þam scuccan . Gewit þu wæl-hreowa aweg of þam nytene and þis unscæððige hryþer geswic to dreccenne . Se manfulla gast þa martine

[174] *LS1*, IX. De Sancta Lucia, Virgine, p. 216, ll. 103-107.
[175] *LS2*, XXXV. Passio Chrisanti et Dariae, pp. 386-387, ll. 158-163.

gehyrsumode . and ferde of ðære cy . and heo oncneow sona þæt heo alysed wæs . and læg aþenod ætforan his fotum . on-fangenre stilnysse . Þa het se halga wer þæt heo ge-wende to þære heorde . and heo swa bilewite swa scep . beah to þære dræfe.[176]

[Then suddenly an exceedingly mad cow came running there, and those who followed her called to the holy man that he should take heed, because she butted everyone she met badly. Then she came running with terrible eyes, but the holy man immediately ordered her to stand still, and she instantly obeyed his command and stood there. Then the holy man saw that a devil sat there on the cow's back, and said to the demon: "Depart, you cruel one, away from the animal, and stop troubling this innocent heifer." Then the evil spirit obeyed Martin, and went away from the cow, and she immediately knew that she was released, and lay stretched out before his feet, having received peace. Then the holy man ordered her to go back to the herd, and she, as innocent as a sheep, went over to the drove.]

The animals do not assist just saints, but also angels. In the following passage, a bull guards a place that is under the special protection of the archangel Michael. It cannot be hurt by arrows, and in fact the arrows fly back and kill the archer:

Hit gelamp þa þa seo ormæta micelnys his orfes on þære dune læswede | þæt sum modig fear wearð angencga. and þære heorde dræfe oferhogode; Hwæt se hlaford þa garganus gegadrode micel meniu his incnihta 7 þone fear gehwær on þam westene sohte. 7 æt nextan hine mette standan uppon þam cnolle þære healican dune æt anes scræfes ingange. 7 he þa mid graman wearð astyred. hwi se fear angencga his heorde forsawe. 7 gebende his bogan. 7 mid geættredre flan hine ofsceotan wolde: ac seo geættrode fla wende ongean swilce mid windes blæde aþrawen. 7 þone ðe hi sceat þærrihte ofsloh; [...] Ic secge þe þæt ic þa stowe þe se fear geealgode synderlice lufie. | 7 ic wolde mid þære gebicnunge geswutelian. þæt ic eom þære stowe hyrde.[177]

[176] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, pp. 268-269, ll. 775-787.
[177] *CH1*, XXXIV. Dedicatio Ecclesie S. Michahelis, pp. 465-466, ll. 9-31.

[It happened when the enormous multitude of his [Garganus's] cattle was grazing on the hill, that a certain proud bull was solitary and despised the herd's drove. Then the master Garganus gathered a great many of his servants, and sought the bull everywhere in the wasteland, and at last he met it standing on the knoll of the high hill, at the entrance of a cave; and he was then stirred with anger, because the solitary bull had scorned his herd, and bent his bow, and wanted to shoot it with a poisoned arrow; but the poisoned arrow turned back as if it was thrown by the wind's blast, and instantly killed the person who had shot it. [...] "I [Michael] say to you that I especially love the place which the bull defended, and I wanted to make clear with that sign that I am the guardian of that place;"]

On occasion, cattle are helping ordinary people. In the following passage, the Philistines employ cows to draw a cart in order to stave off pestilence:

Hwæt, þa Philistei þa fengon to þam ræde,
and geworhton fif hringas of heora fif burhgum,
and fif gyldene mys, and macodan þone wæn
mid ealre þære fare, and geforþodan þæt scrin.
Þa eodan þa iungan cy, geiucode to þam wæne,
to Israhela lande, hlowende swiðe
æfter heora cealfum, and ne gecyrdon swaþeah
of þan rihtan wege, swilce hi gewittige wæron.
And þa Philistei folgodan þam wæne
to Israhela lande, and forleton hit þar;
and se manncwealm geswac þa, and þæra musa gedrecednyss.[178]

[Indeed, the Philistines then accepted the counsel,
and made five rings from their five cities,
and five golden mice, and made the carriage
with all the freight, and sent the ark forth.

[178] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, p. 691-692, ll. 271-281.

Then the young cows went, yoked to the carriage,
to Israel, lowing vehemently
for their calves, and yet did not turn
from the right way, as if they were endowed with reason.
And the Philistines followed the carriage
to Israel, and left it there;
and the pestilence ceased then, and the affliction of the mice.]

Although the cows have been separated from their calves, they obey the people as if they know what their task is.

Dog

The dog occurs frequently in the Bible. Despite the dog's obvious usefulness for guarding herds (Job 30:1) and houses (Isa 56:10), and for the killing of vermin, for which it most likely has been used since pre-historical times, the canine is not always portrayed in a positive light. Whereas the dog's loyalty is stressed in later times, the dog of the scripture is generally considered to be unclean, fierce and greedy. Dogs are made out to be dirty and greedy. Half-wild dogs roaming the streets and the dog's function as a scavenger (1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24) probably contributed to this reputation.

Comparing a person a dog is therefore mostly negative: the Jews called heathens 'dogs', as Aelfric explains in *CH2*.[179] He states that in Christ's days, the people of Israel called unbelievers dogs, whereas nowadays, the people of Israel are themselves considered to be the heathen dogs. However, from the same passages one can also see another use of the dog as a term for a human being, one that expresses humility and lowliness.

Animals as a possession

Although the references to dogs show them as living near humans, they are not part of a list of possessions, unlike Job's animals for example, and there is little reference made by Ælfric to their function for humans.

[179] *CH2*, VIII. Dominica II In Quadragesima, pp. 69-70, ll. 86-108.

Natural history

Dogs, and other mammals, lick their wounds to clean them, as exemplified in *CH*1,[180] in which Ælfric refers to a dog licking Lazarus's wounds in Lk 16:21. This cleaning, combined with the fact that there are indeed healing enzymes in mammals' saliva, may have contributed to the belief that the licking of a dog can heal wounds. Ælfric derives this passage on the healing lick from Gregory (Hom.40 PL 76, 1302D)[181]. A difference in Æelfric is that he omits Gregory's statement that the dogs licking Lazarus also indicate the man's loneliness: only dogs will visit him. Godden further states: "Ælfric, who has not the same concern [for allegory as Gregory does], was perhaps wishing to suggest that the dogs were agents of divine mercy, or at least, in their natural affection, a sharp contrast to human cruelty". If the last interpretation is correct, this portrait of the dog is more positive than usual, showing the dog to be loyal. The belief in the healing lick was an enduring one: the French St Roch (ca. 1295-1327), for example, is often portrayed with a dog licking his plague sores. The dog also assisted St Roch by fetching food for him.

Symbolic use of animals

In *CH*2, Ælfric discusses Mk 7:25-30 as an example of how parents can save their children. In the passage, a woman asks Christ to help her daughter. He first rejects her, commenting that his teachings may be wasted on her, but relents when she gives a wise answer:

> Sum wif wæs ðe com to criste. and bæd for hire dehter þe læg on wodum dreame; Þa cwæð crist to hire þæt hit nære na rihtlic þæt man name his cildra hlaf. and wurpe hundum; Heo ða andwyrde; Gea leof drihten. and þeahhwæðere oft ða hwelpas gelæccað þa cruman þe feallað of þæs hlafordes beode; Ða andwyrde se hælend. and cwæð; Eala ðu wif. micel is ðin geleafa. Getimige ðe swa swa ðu wilt; Hire dohter wearð þærrihte gewittig;[182]

[180] *CH*1, XXIII. Dominica II Post Pentecosten, p. 367, ll. 59-61.
[181] *CH*3, p. 186.
[182] *CH*2, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p. 27, ll. 262-269.

There was a woman who came to Christ, and prayed for her daughter who lay in a mad dream. Then Christ said to her that it were not right that one should take his children's bread and cast it to the dogs. She answered, Yes, dear Lord, and, nevertheless, the whelps often lick the crumbs which fall from the lord's table. Then the saviour answered and said, Oh, you woman, great is your faith. It will happen to you as you wish. Her daughter immediately became sane.

The dog in this case stands for the woman as well as for unbelievers in general. She replies that even a small piece of knowledge taking root may be worth the effort. The dogs that eat the crumbs that fall of the master's table are like heathen nations turned to God. By using this analogy, the woman shows that she possesses belief, patience and humility. The dog as a symbol of the heathen then is given a twist: as the dog can pick up crumbs from a table, so the heathen can also learn good things. This explanation recurs elsewhere.[183]

In contrast to this positive image of the dog eating up the crumbs, there is also the more negative notion of the dog as an animal that eats its own vomit. This unpleasant habit served to remind people not to sin repeatedly:

> [...] for ðan þe ælc man bið, þe geandet his synna,
> and þæt ylce eft deð his Drihtne on teonan,
> þam hunde gelic, þe geet his spiweðan,
> and ðam swine gelic, þe hit besylað eft æfter his þweale,
> and bið his ende wyrse þonne his angin wære.[184]

> [because each person who confesses his sins,
> and does that same thing again as an insult to his Lord,
> is like the dog that eats its vomit,
> and like the pig that soils itself again after its bath,
> and his end will be worse than his beginning was.]

[183] E.g. in the aforementioned passage *CH2*, VIII. Dominica II In Quadragesima, pp. 69-70, ll. 86-108.
[184] Pope2, XIII. Dominica V Post Pentecosten, p. 507, ll. 230-234.

In another passage, Ælfric compares a teacher who will not evangelise to dogs that cannot bark. This of course implies that those teachers are as useless as mute guard dogs:

> *Canes muti non possunt latrare:*
> Hi synd þa dumban hunda[s], and hy ne magon beorcan.
> Þis cwæð se witega be Godes lareowum,
> þe noldan bodian and gebigan manncynn
> to Godes willan þa on þam timan þe hi wæron.[185]
>
> [*Mute dogs cannot bark:*
> They are mute dogs, and they cannot bark.
> The prophet said this about God's teachers,
> who did not want to preach and turn mankind
> to God's will then at the time when they lived.]

Animals and saints

In *CH*1,[186] Peter commands a dog (a *ryðde*, which is most likely a male dog) to attack Simon Magus, without hurting the man with his teeth. The dog rips off his clothes. In this passage, Ælfric gives a hagiographical and a more traditional explanation of the relevant Gospel text. Godden notes that this is a combination that may originate with Ælfric himself, as not many earlier homiliaries use this form. The source for the passion is not readily identifiable, due to the great variety and availability of sources. The Cotton-Corpus legendary, Ælfric's usual source for hagiographies, differs considerably as St Paul is not mentioned in the same text as St Peter, and the two are not martyred on the same day as is the case here. The source of this particular passage dealing with Simon Magus, however, does appear to have been the Cotton-Corpus legendary, but from a different saint's life (Nereus and Achilles), which includes "a letter purporting to be by

[185] Pope2, XVIII. Sermo De Die Iudicii, pp. 597-98, ll. 175-179.
[186] *CH*1, XXVI. Passio Petri et Pauli, p. 393, ll. 135-46.

one Marcellus, a former disciple of Simon Magus".[187] Ælfric almost literally translates the Latin text.

Further on in the same text,[188] Simon Magus tries to attack Peter in turn with magic dogs. The attack is not successful, as Peter wards them off with the blessed host. He then mocks Simon Magus, who had threatened to summon angels, by stating that Simon's angels must be dog-like if this is how they appear. Again, the text is translated quite literally from the same source.
Throwing a person's body to the dogs to be eaten is a cruel punishment doled out in another saints' life (that of Alexander, Eventius and Theodolus), in which Quirinus's body is to be thrown to the dogs:

> He het þa forceorfan his handa and his fet,
> and syþþan beheafdien, and swa hundum worpan.[189]
>
> [He then ordered his hands and his feet to be cut off,
> and afterwards they should decapitate him, and then to throw [him] to the dogs.]

The mutilation of the body by an animal is clearly meant as an extra punishment here, even though the saint is already dead.

Goat

The goat is mentioned only a few times by Ælfric, and only in *CH*.

Animals as a possession

Goats are used as sacrificial animals in the Bible, and Ælfric describes this several times, for instance in the Life of St Andrew, where St Andrew dos not offer oxen or bucks, but the lamb, without killing it. That is, he makes a spiritual offering instead:

> dæighwomlice ic offrige mine lac þam ælmihtigan gode. se þe ana is soð god: na hlowendra fearra flæsc; oððe buccena blod: ac ic ofrie dæighwomlice on

[187] *CH*3, p. 210.
[188] *CH*1, XXVI. Passio Petri et Pauli, p. 395, ll. 189-95.
[189] Pope2, XXIII. SS. Alexandri, Eventii, et Theodoli, p. 745, ll. 193-194 (the text is considered a prelude to *CH*2, XX. In Letania Maiore, Feria Tertia).

weofode þære halgan rode | þæt ungewemmede lamb: 7 hit þurhwunað ansund 7 cucu. syððan eall folc his flæsc 7 his blod drincð; [...] þonne geopenige ic þe hu þæt lamb on his rice þurhwunað. ansund 7 unawemmed siððan hit geoffrod bið. 7 his flæsc geeten. 7 his blod gedruncen;[190]

[Daily, I offer my gift to the Almighty God, who alone is the true God. Not flesh of lowing oxen, nor blood of rams, but I offer daily on the altar of the holy cross the undefiled lamb, and it continues sound and alive, after all the people [eat and] drink its flesh and its blood. [...] [Andrew now explains how this is possible] then will I disclose to you how the lamb continues sound and undefiled in its kingdom, after it is offered, and its flesh eaten, and its blood drunk.]

The source follows the Latin *Passio Andreae*. In this passage, the offering of goats and oxen is contrasted with the symbolic offering of the lamb, but it is not made clear here whether the goat itself had a specific meaning as a sacrifice.[191] Although a *bucca* can also be a male deer, the context suggests that here it is a male goat. Goats, sheep and oxen were common sacrificial animals, whereas deer were not.

Symbolic use of animals

The goat can be a symbol for heathens:

[...] þonne sitt he on dom-setle his mægenðrymnysse. and beoð gegaderode ætforan him ealle ðeoda. and he toscæt hi on twa. swa swa scephyrde toscæt scep fram gatum; Þonne gelogað he ða scep on his swiðran hand. and ða gæt on his wynstran;[192]

[[...] then he [the Lord] will sit on the judgement seat of his majesty, and all nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them into two, as a

[190] *CH1*, XXXVIII. Natale Sancti Andreei, pp. 514-515, ll. 213-229.
[191] But see below under symbolic uses of the goat.
[192] *CH2*, VII. Dominica I in Quadragesima, p. 64, ll. 133-137.

shepherd separates sheep from goats. Then will he place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.]

With reference to Mt 25:33, Ælfric describes how God will divide the nations at the end of the world, like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep signify the righteous, the goats the sinful. At the Second Coming, Christ will separate the faithful from the faithless, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats.

The goat as a sacrificial animal has a deeper meaning: it stands for Christ's 'fleshly' nature because the male goat is also associated with the sin of lust. In this passage, Ælfric argues that nowadays people perform the spiritual equivalent of the actual offering if they overcome their own feelings of lust.

He wæs on buccan slege getacnod. for gelicnysse synfulles flæsces. þæt he mid urum flæsclicum gecynde. ure synna adilegode. [...] Buccan we offriað oððe ticcen. gif we ures lichaman galnysse oferswiðað;[193]

[He [Christ] was signified in the killing of a male goat, because of the similarity to sinful flesh, so that he eliminates our sins with our fleshly nature. [...] We offer a male goat, or a kid, if we overcome the lustfulness of our body.]

Godden gives only Isidore's *In Leviticum* as a source,[194] but the idea of the male goat as a symbol of lasciviousness also occurs in the *Etymologiae* and in Hrabanus Maurus's *De Universo*. The latter also explains more about the goat as a symbol of sin. In Isidore, who derives his description partly from Suetonius, the male goat is described as follows:

> The he-goat (*hircus*) is is a lascivious animal, butting and always eager to mate; his eyes look side-ways on account of wantonness, whence he has taken his name, for according to Suetonius (*Prata*, fr. 171), *hirqui* are the corners of the eyes. His nature is so ardent that his blood by itself

[193] *CH2*, XII. Dominica in Media Quadragesime, p. 120, ll. 352-364.
[194] *CH3*, p. 460.

dissolves adamantine stone, which can be overpowered by neither fire nor iron[195]

Hrabanus Maurus has a similar passage, but expands it:

> Hircus lascivum animal et petulcum et fervens semper ad coitum, cuius oculi ob libidinem in transversum aspiciunt, unde et nomen traxit. Nam hirci sunt oculorum anguli secundum Suetonium cuius natura adeo calidissima est, ut adamantem lapidem quem nec ignis nec ferrum domari ualet, solus huius cruor dissoluat. Nam hyrcus qui in lege pro peccatis offerebatur peccatorum, ostendit personam qui fuso sanguine, hoc est poenitentiae lacrimis soluit duritiam peccatorum. Unde in Psalmo: Ad dominum dicit ecclesia, offeram tibi boues cum hyrcus. Hyrci peccatores siue gentiles. In Danihele: Ecce autem hyrcus caprarum ueniebat ab aquilone. Duo hyrci uterque populus Iudeorum scilicet et gentium extra duce pecccati venientes. In Levitico: Alii autem duos hyrcos Christum et Barraban intellexerunt. Boues ut supra diximus intelleguntur predicatores qui pectora humana feliciter exarantes, eorum sensibus caelestis uerbi semina fructuosa condebant. Hyrci vero intelleguntur qui diabolicis pravitatibus studentes hispidis vitiis uestiuntur. Hyrcus enim dictum est quasi hirsutus sed et eos cum bubus offert ecclesia quando conuersi Christo domino confitentur. Hircus enim fuit latro ille qui pendebat in cruce, sed mox factus est bos, quando ad confessionem ueritatis respiciens peruenit, dixit enim, Memento mei domine cum veneris in regnum tuum.[196]

> [The goat is a wanton animal and apt to butt and always hot for intercourse, its eyes look turned away because of lust, and from there the name is derived. Because goats have slanted eyes according to Suetonius, its nature is so exceedingly hot that only its blood dissolves the diamond, which neither fire nor iron are able to destroy. Because the goat that is

[195] Barney 2006, p. 247-248.
[196] In: De Universo, Liber VII, Caput VIII. Patrologia Latina Database, http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk, June 2007.

offered by law for the sins of sinners, denotes a person who dissolved the hardness of the sinners in his poured-out blood, that is by the tears of penitence. Therefore it is said in the Psalm: The church says to the Lord "I will offer to you cattle with goats. The goats are sinners or gentiles." In Daniel: But behold the hyrcus type of goats used to come from the North. Each of the (types of) goats are, of course, the people of the Jews and those arising out of the leader of the tribes. In Leviticus: But others have understood the two goats to be Christ and Barrabas. As we have said above, the cattle are understood to be proclaimers of the lord who, ploughing up men's hearts fruitfully, were setting the seeds of the word of heaven in men's thoughts. But the goats are understood to be those who are clothed in rough vices, devoting themselves to devilish depravities. For the goat is described as hairy, but even the church presents them as oxen, when they are acknowledged as having turned to the Lord Christ. For the goat was that thief who was hanging on the cross, but was turned soon into a cow, when it arrived at the confession of the truth while looking back. For it said "Remember me, lord, when you have come to your kingdom"]

Animals and saints

No interactions between goats and saints occur.

Horse

The horse was a valuable possession in biblical times as well as in Ælfric's time. The horses of the Bible are often war horses (Job 39:19-25, Ex 14:9; Josh 11:4; 2 Sam 15:1), but they can also be the means of transport of angels (see below), and one horse takes the prophet Elijah up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11).

Animals as a possession

As mentioned under Ass, the horse was only affordable to the elite. This inspires several comments about humility: the humble person uses an ass for transport instead. So, choosing not to ride a horse can be an act of humility:

> Ne het crist him to lædan modigne stedan: Mid gyldenum gerædum gefrætwodne; Ac þone wacan assan. he geceas him to byrðre: For ðan þe he tæhte symle: eaðmodnysse[197]
>
> [Christ did not command [them] to bring him a proud steed, adorned with golden trappings, but he chose the humble ass as his mount; because he always taught humility]

Likewise, in *LS*. the emperor Eraclius is urged to show meekness by this same example:

> næs he mid purpuran ge-scryd . ne mid cynehelme geglenged . ne he on steda ne rad . þurh þis stænene gæt . ac on assan hricge he rad eadmodlice mannum to bysne . þæt hi modignysse onscunion .[198]
>
> [He was not clothed with purple, nor adorned with a royal crown, nor did he ride on a steed through this stone gate, but he rode humbly on the back of an ass, as an example to men, so that they shun pride.]

This means of course that the horse is not only depicted here as a valuable possession, but that there are symbolic undertones to riding or owning a horse. If shunning a horse in favour of a donkey can denote humility, riding or owning a horse could be a sign of pride, as is hinted at with emperor Eraclius, who rides to Jerusalem on horseback. In *LS*2, it is stated that "sæt se casere on kynelicum horse swa him gecwemast wæs" [the emperor [Eraclius] sat on a royal horse as was most pleasing to him],[199] suggesting that for him it was indeed a form of pride to ride it.

However, the act of riding a horse does not seem to be portrayed negatively very often, so I have included these examples as an indicator of the material value of the horse rather than examples of symbolic meaning of horses. There are many examples of people riding horses without any negative

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[197] *CH*1, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, p. 293, ll. 86-88.
[198] *LS*2, XVII. Exaltatio Sancte Crucis, p. 150, ll. 96-99.
[199] *LS*2, XVII. Exaltatio Sancte Crucis, p. 148, ll. 85-86.

connotation, such as in *LS*, where it is explained that the horse is often a means of transportation for angels. Judas Machabeus, for example, is assisted by five angels on horses:

> Hwæt ða færlice comon fif englas of heofonum . ridende on horsum mid gyldendum gerædum .[200]
>
> [Then suddenly five angels came from the heavens, riding on horses with golden trappings.]

Another example is:

> Gif hwa nu wundrige hu hit gewurþan mihte þæt englas sceoldon ridan on gerædedum horsum . þonne wite he to soþan þæt us secgað gehwær ða halgan godes bec þe ne magon beon lease . þæt englas oft comon cuðlice to mannum swilce on horse ridende . swa swa we her rehton .[201]
>
> [If anyone now wonders how it might happen that angels should ride on dressed [with trappings] horses, then let him know truly that the holy books of God say to us everywhere, [books] which cannot be false, that angels certainly often came to men as if [they were] riding on a horse, just like we explained here.]

Rather than denoting pride, in this case the horse can hint more generally at the high status of the rider. However, if the angels ride horses, so do the devils:

> Ða geseah se munuc mycelne (getru)man,
> swylce ridendra manna mid swyþe reþum anginne,
> (::::::::::::::)ansynes mid eall-sweartum lichaman,
> 7 þa hors wær(on ::::::::::::) bæron þa deofla[202]

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[200] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, p. 98, ll. 490-91.
[201] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, p. 100, ll. 508-13.
[202] Pope2, XXVII. Visions of Departing Souls, p. 778, ll. 90-93

[Then the monk saw a large troop,
as if of riding men with extremely fierce behaviour,
.....of face with an all-black body,
and the horses were ..... they carried the devils]

It would have been interesting to know what is lost from the gaps. Perhaps the horses were black like their riders, but this is uncertain.

Although most references to horses simply mention horses being ridden, they can be put to stranger uses, as in the case of King Cosdrue, who tries to play God. To this purpose, he has horses running around his house through secret tunnels, so that he can perform 'thunder':

> He swanc þa git swiðor wolde geswutelian his mihte . and het delfan þa eorðan digellice mid cræfte . swa þæt hors urnon embe þæt hus gelome þurh þa digelan dica dynigende mid fotum wolde þunor wyrcan gewit-leas swa-ðeah.[203]

> [He [King Cosdrue] then worked even more to show his power, and ordered the earth to be dug up secretly with craft, so that horses ran around the house frequently, through the secret trenches, dinning with their feet, [because] he wanted to fabricate thunder, nevertheless he was witless.]

Symbolic use of animals

As mentioned above, riding a horse can be symbolic of the rider's pride.

Animals and saints

In saints' lives, the horse often shows intelligence and helps the saint by finding food or trampling on the enemies of the saint. Cuthbert's horse finds food for him:

> [...] gecyrde he to sumes hyrdes cytan. þe stod weste on ðam westene ðe he oferferde. and getigde his hors ðærbinnon; Ða mid ðam þe he his gebedu sang.

[203] *LS2*, XXVII. Exaltatio Sancte Crucis, p. 146, ll. 36-40.

ða tær þæt hors þæt ðæc of ðære cytan hrofe. and þær feoll adune swilce of ðam hrofe wearm hlaf mid his syflinge; He ða geðancode gode þære sande. and mid þære hine sylfne gereordode;[204]

[he turned to a shepherd's cottage, which stood deserted in the wasteland through which he was travelling, and tied up his horse inside. Then while he was singing his prayers, the horse tore the thatch from the roof of the cottage, and there fell down, as if from the roof, a warm loaf with its side-dish;[205] he then thanked God for the supply, and fed himself with it.]

One of St Agatha's enemies is killed by two horses co-operating with each other:

Hine gelæhte an hors . þa ða he læg on ðam scipe . hetelice mid toðum and hefde him upp . Þa spearn oðer hors to . and asprencde hine ofer bord . and næs his fule lic afundan æfre siððan .[206]

[As he lay in the ship, a horse grabbed him savagely with its teeth, and lifted him up; then another horse kicked at him and flung him overboard, and his foul body was never found afterwards.]

However, the horse can also be instrumental in the death of a saint, for example in the martyring of St Hippolytus:

Soðlice ualerianus het beheafdian on ypolitus gesihðe ealle ys hiwan. 7 hine sylfne het tigan be þam fotum to ungetemedra horsa swuran. 7 swa teon geond þornas 7 bremelas 7 he ða mid þam tige his gast ageaf. on þam þreotteoþan dæge | þises monðes; [207]

[Truly, Valerianus ordered, in Hippolytus' sight, all the members of his household to be beheaded, and himself [i.e. Hippolytus] he ordered to be tied by the feet to the necks of untamed horses, and so to be dragged through

[204] *CH*2, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 82, ll. 52-58.
[205] *syfling*: something which is eaten with bread, perhaps relish, fish or soup.
[206] *LS*1, VIII. Natale Sancte Agathe, Virginis, p. 208, ll. 211-214.
[207] *CH*1, XXIX. Passio Sancti Laurentii, p. 427, ll. 261-64.

thorns and brambles, and he then gave up his ghost because of that dragging on the thirteenth day of this month]

The horse can also show the saint's miraculous powers, as in the Life of St Oswald, whose place of death cures a horse from what appears to be colic:

> Sum wegfarende man ferde wið þone feld . þa wearð his hors gesicclod . and sona þær feol . wealwigende geond ða eorðan wodum gelicost . mid þa*m* þe hit swa wealweode geond þone widgillan feld . þa becom hit embe lang þær se cyningc oswold on þam gefeohte feoll swa swa we ær foresædan . and hit sona aras . swa hit hrepode . þa stowe . hal eallum limum . and se hlaford þæs fægnode . Se ridda þa ferde forð on his weg þider he gemynt hæfde .[208]

> [A certain wayfaring man went towards the field, when his horse became sick, and immediately fell there, rolling over the earth, most like a mad creature. While it was rolling like that over the wide field, it arrived at last [at the spot] where king Oswald fell in the battle, as we have said before; and it rose up as soon as it touched the place, whole in all limbs, and the master rejoiced at that; the rider then went forth on his way to where he had intended [to go].]

In the life of St Macarus, the saint is the only one who recognizes a girl for what she is. Although everyone perceives her as a horse after the girl has been bewitched, he sees through the illusion:

> Þæt mæden wæs swa forbroden swylce heo an myre wære,
> 7 eallum þam þuhte þe hire on locodan,
> swylce heo myre wære, na mennisces gecyndes.
> [...] Þa magas hym cwædon to, Þeos myre þe þu gesy[h]st
> wæs ure dohtor, arwurðe mæden,
> ac awyrgede drymenn awendon hy to myran.
> [...] and heo nan þing on hyre næfð horses gecyndes[209]

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[208] *LS*2, XXVI. Natale Sancti Oswaldi Regis et Martyris, p. 138, ll. 204-13.
[209] Pope2, XXIX. Saul and the Witch of Endor, p. 791, ll. 15-28, which is an addition to *LS*1, XVII. De Aguriis.

[The girl was transformed as if she were a mare,
and it seemed to all who looked at her,
as if she were a mare, not of human shape.
[...] The family members then said to him [Macarus],
This mare that you see was our daughter, an honourable girl,
but accursed magicians turned her into a mare.
[...] and she has nothing in her of the nature of a horse]

The people with weaker faith than the saint see the girl as the horse the magician is supposed to have changed her into: the magic has no real power.

Pig

The pig was an unclean animal according to the Old Testament, and therefore is usually used as a symbol for sinful people. It was viewed as a lowly and dirty animal: even if one tried to clean it, it would just get dirty again (2 Pet 2:22), just like a certain type of sinners. Hence also the proverbs such as 'a gold ring in a pig's snout' (Prov 11:22), and 'do not throw pearls before swine' (Mt 7:6). Such luxuries would be wasted on a pig. The pig's wild relative, the boar, is noted for its fierceness (Ps 80:13).

Animals as a possession

The pig's fat is used by Saint Cuthbert. Ravens threaten to eat Cuthbert's crops, but when he asks them to leave they obey. Two other ravens which have made a nest using Cuthbert's thatch are also sent away, but allowed back when they asked. In return they bring Cuthbert some pig's fat for his shoes:

Eft ða siððan oðre twegen swearte hremmas siðlice comon. and his hus tæron. mid heardum bile. and to neste bæron. heora briddum to hleowðe; Þas eac se eadiga. / mid ealle afligde. of ðam eðele. mid anum worde; Ac an ðæra fugela. eft fleogende com. ymbe ðry dagas. þearle dreorig. fleah to his foton. friðes biddende. þæt he on ðam lande. lybban moste. symle unscæððig. and his gefera samod; Hwæt ða se halga. him þæs geuðe. and hi lustbære. þæt land

gesohten. and brohton ðam lareowe. lac to medes. swines rysl his scon to gedreoge. and hi ðær siððan. unscæððige wunedon;[210]

[After that two other swart ravens came travelling, and tore [the thatch from] his house with hard bills, and carried [it] to their nest, as shelter for their young. The blessed one also drove these with all [the others] from the land with a word. But one of those birds came flying back after three days, exceedingly sad, flew to his feet, asking for a truce, that he might live in that land, alway harmless, and his mate with him. Then the holy man granted them this; and they joyfully sought that land, and brought to the teacher a gift as a reward, pig's fat to soften his shoes; and they lived there harmless ever since.]

Symbolic use of animals

Augustine, in his work *Contra Faustum Manicheum* (Book VI, 7)[211], explains that although the animal may be viewed as unclean and be used as a negative symbol, it is the humans who behave like pigs that are at fault. The pig by its nature is good, as it was created in this way by God:

> [...]The apostle speaks of the natures of the things, while the Old Testament calls some animals unclean, not in their nature, but symbolically, on account of the prefigurative character of that dispensation. For instance, a pig and a lamb are both clean in their nature, for every creature of God is good; but symbolically, a lamb is clean, and a pig unclean. So the words wise and fool are both clean in their nature, as words composed of letters but fool may be called symbolically unclean, because it means an unclean thing. Perhaps a pig is the same among symbols as a fool is among real things. The animal, and the four letters which compose the word, may mean the same thing. No doubt the animal is pronounced unclean by the law, because it does not chew the cud; which is not a fault but its nature. But the men of whom this animal is a symbol are unclean, not by nature, but from their own fault; because, though they gladly hear the words of wisdom, they never reflect on them

[210] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, pp. 86-87, ll. 190-200.
[211] Ed. Schaff 1887.

afterwards. For to recall, in quiet repose, some useful instruction from the stomach of memory to the mouth of reflection, is a kind of spiritual rumination. The animals above mentioned are a symbol of those people who do not do this. And the prohibition of the flesh of these animals is a warning against this fault.[212]

Pigs are also the chosen vessel for devils, because of their looks and habits:

Ne dorston ða deoflu. ða ða hi adræfde wæron into ðam swynum. gif he him ne sealde leafe. ne into nanum men. for ðan ðe se metoda drihten. ure gecynd hæfde. on him sylfum genumen; Ða swyn hi gecuron. for ðam sweartum hiwe. and for ðære fulnysse. fenlices adelan; Se man ðe hæfð swynes ðeawas. and wyle hine aðwean. mid wope fram synnym. and eft hine befylan. fullice mid leahtrum. swa swa swyn deð. ðe cyrð to meoxe. æfter his ðweale. þeawleas nyten. / þonne bið he betæht þam atelicum deoflum. for his fulum dædum. þe he fyrnlice geedlæhð. Se ðe oft gegremað. god þurh leahtrum. and æfre geedlæhð. his yfelan dæda. he bið swyne gelic. and forscyldgod wið god; [213]

[The devils did not dare to enter into the pigs, when they were driven out, if he had not given them leave, nor into any man, because the Lord Creator had taken our nature on himself. They chose the pigs because of the black hue, and because of the foulness of the fenlike mud. The man who has a pig's habits, and wants to wash himself with weeping from sins, and afterwards defile himself foully with sins, like a pig does, [a pig] which returns to the dunghill after its washing, an ill-behaved animal; he will then be delivered to the hateful devils for his foul deeds, which he wickedly repeats. He who often angers God through sins, and always repeats his evil deeds, is similar to a pig, and utterly guilty with God.]

Devils do not dare to enter into the swine after being driven out (see 2 Pet 2:22). The swine were chosen for their black colour, which is a sign of evil, and for their fondness of mud: a swine will bathe and then roll into the mud again, like a

[212] Schaff, p. 171.
[213] *CH2*, XXIII. Dominica III Post Pentecosten, p. 219, ll. 182-194.

man who sins repeatedly.[214] Another instance of the pig's habit of rolling in the dirt, a deed that is compared to sinning repeatedly occurs in the following passage:

> [...] for ðan þe ælc man bið, þe geandet his synna,
> and þæt ylce eft deð his Drihtne on teonan,
> þam hunde gelic, þe geet his spiweðan,
> and ðam swine gelic, þe hit besylað eft æfter his þweale,
> and bið his ende wyrse þonne his angin wære.[215]

> [because each person who confesses his sins,
> and does that same thing again as an insult to his Lord,
> is like the dog that eats its vomit,
> and like the pig that soils itself again after its bath,
> and his end will be worse than his beginning was.]

The pig's habit of living in the dirt is compared to a woman living in sin:

> Sum swiðe welig wif wæs . swylce on wudewan hade ac heo lyfde sceand-lice . swa swa swin on meoxe . and mid healicum synnum hi sylfe fordyde .[216]

> [A certain very wealthy woman was living as if in widowhood, but she lived shamefully, like a pig on a dunghill, and destroyed herself with heinous sins;]

The pig is consistently associated with dirt and therefore with sin: its outside appearance reflects the inside.

Animals and saints

No interaction occurs between pigs and saints.

Sheep

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[214] See also Pope2, XVII. Dominica XII Post Octavas Pentecosten, p. 577, ll. 235-41 and pp. 578-79, ll. 2256-271 for the same story.
[215] Pope2, XIII. Dominica V Post Pentecosten, p. 507, ll. 230-234.
[216] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 80, ll. 527-29.

In biblical times, sheep were the single-most important livestock in the Near East, of which the wool, milk and (clean) meat were used. It should come as no surprise then that the Bible refers to sheep on numerous occasions. Abraham, Abel, Lot, Isaac and Job are all referred to as having sheep.

Sheep and lambs were also sacrificial animals, hence the expression 'like sheep for the slaughter' (Ps 44:22; Jer 11:19 and 12:3; Rom 8:36; Acts 8:32), or 'like a lamb to the slaughter' (Isa 53:7). Sheep and, more specifically, lambs, stand for innocence, gentleness and harmlessness. When Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son to God, a lamb eventually took Isaac's place (Gen 22:1-18). The planned sacrifice of his beloved child, the only son he had with Sarah, foreshadows the sacrifice of the Son of God.

Christ is often named the Lamb of God, because of this sacrifice and because of his innocence. The Old Testament describes how the Jews in Egypt protected themselves by slaughtering a lamb and applying its blood to their doors: another hint at the sacrifice to come. The symbolism of using a lamb as a sacrifice is explained by Ælfric (see below).

Often, sheep denote the believers, led by Christ, God or Christian teachers as their shepherd. Time and again the congregation of believers is referred to as a flock (Ps 95:7, Jn 10:2-16, Jn 21:16). Christians who stray from the faith are the 'lost sheep' of the flock. The sheep as well as the believers have to be guided and tended by the shepherd (teacher), as well as protected against 'wolves'. Wolves are the natural enemies of sheep, and stand for any danger that faces the believers, thus the regular references to sheep menaced by wolves. Isaiah predicted that the wolf and the lamb would dwell and feed together (Isa 11:6 and 65:25), thereby promising a time of peace, presumably after Christ's coming.

It is striking that sheep occur far less often in *LS* than in the *CH*: there are only five passages, and none of them have great emphasis on the sheep. The sheep as a symbol for the believer is apparently more useful in homilies than in legends, perhaps because the first genre focuses more on the preacher's audience, who were supposed to identify themselves with the sheep.

Animals as a possession

Sheep are easier to keep than oxen, as they need less additional feeding and can graze anywhere. Salisbury mentions that eleventh-century England had twenty times more sheep than oxen.[217] Dairy products came mostly from sheep, even though about ten sheep were needed to equal the produce of one milk cow.[218]

Keeping sheep then would have been a familiar practice to Ælfric's audience, and he uses the image frequently. An example is the sheep that are part of Job's possessions. God destroys them by sending lightning to test Job's faith. The sheep burn to death, and so do all the shepherds except for one who survives to tell the news.[219]

Sheep are not just used for human consumption, but also to feed the lions that are supposed to devour Daniel:

> Hi ða hine awurpon into anum seaðe on þam wæron seofon leon þam man sealde dæighwomlice. twa hryþeru 7 twa sceap. ac him wæs þa oftogen ælces fodan six dagas þæt hi þone godes man abitan sceoldon;[220]
>
> [They then threw him [Daniel] into a pit, in which there were seven lions, to which were given two heifers and two sheep daily, but then all food was taken away from them for six days, so that they would devour the man of God.]

Symbolic use of animals

The sheep and the lamb are frequently used as symbols. The qualities associated with the animal are meekness and innocence. The lamb is usually a symbol for Christ, and then also conveys the notion of sacrifice. The sheep occur most often as a symbol for the followers of Christ, who are described as his flock: interestingly, Christ then becomes the Shepherd rather than the Lamb. Occasionally, the shepherd denotes a Christian teacher rather than Christ himself.

a. Sheep/lamb as a symbol for innocence

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[217] Salisbury 1994, p. 24.
[218] Salisbury 1994, p. 58.
[219] *CH*1, Praefatio, p. 176, ll. 100-102.
[220] *CH*1, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 504, ll. 206-209.

Although Christ is often referred to in passing as the Lamb of God,[221] this common image is also explained in more detail. The following passage shows us two qualities of Christ, represented by two different animals: Christ is both lamb and lion, embodying their qualities of innocence and strength. The lamb is also referred to as a sacrificial animal, denoting Christ's sacrifice:

> loca nu efne her gæð godes lamb se þe ætbret middaneardes synna; [...] He is lamb gehaten for þære unscæððignysse lambes gecyndes. 7 wæs unscyldig for ure alysednysse. his fæder liflic onsægednys. on lambes wisan geoffrod; he is leo geciged. of iudan mæigðe. dauides wyrtruma: for þan ðe he ðurh his godcundlican strencðe þone micclan deofol mid sige his þrowunge oferswiðde;[222]
>
> [[John:] "Look now, behold here goes the Lamb of God, who will remove the sins of the world." [...] He [Christ] is called lamb, because of the innocence of the lamb's nature; and was offered guiltless, for our redemption, a living sacrifice to his Father, in the manner of a lamb. He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, because he overcame the great devil through his divine strength with the victory of his passion.]

The symbolism of the sheep or lamb is not just reserved for Christ. Ananias of Damascus does not only turn a 'wolf' into a 'sheep' by baptizing Saul (Acts 9:10-18), but his name signifies that he himself has the gentleness of a sheep:

> Annanias is gereht on ebreiscum gereorde scep; ðæt bylewite scep ða gefullode þone arleasan saulum: 7 worhte hine arfæstne paulum; He gefullode þone wulf. 7 geworhte to lambe; He awende his naman mid þeawum. 7 wæs þa soðfæst bydel godes gelaðunge. se þe ær mid reþre ehtnysse hi geswencte; [223]
>
> [Ananias means 'sheep' in the Hebrew language. The innocent sheep then

[221] See for example *CH2*, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p. 21, ll. 64-65.
[222] *CH1*, XXV. Nativitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae, p. 384, ll. 137-148.
[223] *CH1*, XVII. Natale Sancte Pauli, p. 403, ll. 90-94.

baptised the wicked Saul, and made him the pious Paul. He baptised the wolf and made [it] a lamb. He changed his name together with his behaviour and was then a reliable herald of God's church, he who had before oppressed it with fierce persecution.]

Ælfric's sources are Augustine, Serm. 279, par. 2, PL 38, 1276 and Ps-Augustine, Serm. 204, par. 3, PL 39, 2124:

> Venit ergo Ananias, baptizavit Saulum et fecit Paulum. Baptivazit lupum et fecit agnum: et coepimus habere praedicatorem, quem habuimus persecutorem.'[224]
>
> [Therefore Ananias came, baptised Saul and made (him) Paul. He baptised a wolf and made a lamb: and we begin to have as a eulogist, whom we had as a persecutor.]

However, Godden notes that Ælfric is milder on Saul than his sources, portraying Saul as a misguided defender of the old law.[225]

b. Sheep as the followers of Christ (and wolves as their enemies)

A common simile is to describe the followers of Christ as sheep, with Christ or Christian teachers as their shepherd and the wolf as their enemy:

> þam lareowe gedafenað þæt he symle wacol sy ofer godes eowede. þæt se ungesewenlica wulf godes scep ne tostence.[226]
>
> [It suits the teacher that he should always be watchful over God's flock, so that the invisible wolf does not scatter God's sheep.]

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[224] *CH3*, p. 225.
[225] *CH3*, p. 224.
[226] *CH1*, II. Nativitas Domini, pp. 193-194, ll. 109-111.

The sheep are the Christians, being taught by their priests. The invisible wolf represents dangers that can make them stray from their faith.

Another sermon refers repeatedly to good Christians as sheep, and their enemies as wolves.[227] Hired shepherds (teachers) are not very effective: they will leave their flock when it is in real danger, because they are not so attached to it. The best teachers therefore are the ones who teach out of zeal and love. Jesus loved his flock so much that he gave up his life for it. This passage also explains that Christ will gather all the people into one flock, with one shepherd.

Another example is of the Christians as sheep, this time with Peter as their shepherd, who leaves his 'sheep' to God when he dies:

> He wæs þa biddende his drihten mid þysum wordum; Hælend min ic þe betæce þine scep þe ðu me befæstest: ne beoð hi hyrdelease þonne hi þe habbað[228]
>
> [He [Peter] was then praying his Lord with these words: "My Saviour, I will commit your sheep to you, [the sheep] which you entrusted to me: they will not be without a shepherd when they have you."]

Although Peter is the shepherd of his people when he is alive, in the end it is God who is the eternal shepherd of the people.

c. Lost and sick sheep

Christ asks his audience if they would search for one lost sheep if they had a hundred. Again, the sheep are the faithful Christians; the lost sheep is a Christian who strays from the faith. Christ then explains that God would search out the one lost sheep, and rejoice when it was found. Similarly, God 'lost' Adam, but brought him back:

> Ða sæde se hælend ðam Iudeiscum bocerum ðis bigspel; Hwilc eower hæfð hunteontig sceapa? 7 gif he forlyst an ðæra sceapa. La hu. ne forlæt he ða

[227] *CH*1, XVII. Dominica II Post Pasca, pp. 313-316, ll. 4-87.
[228] *CH*1, XXVI. Passio Petri et Pauli, pp. 397-398, ll. 269-271.

nigon 7 hundnigontig on westene. 7 gæð secende þæt an ðæt him losode? Gif he hit ðonne gemet he hit berð on his eaxlum to ðære eowede blissigende; Þonne he ham cymð he gelaðað his frynd. 7 nehgaburas him to. 7 cwyð; Blissiað mid me. for ðon ðe ic gemette min scep ðe me losede; Ic secge eow þæt mare bliss bið on heofonum be anum synfullum men gif he his synna mid dædbote behreowsað. ðonne him sy be nigon 7 hundnigontig rihtwisra ðe ne behofiað nanre dædbote; [...]
Hundfeald getel is fulfremed. 7 se ælmihtiga hæfde hundteontig sceapa þa ða engla werod 7 mancynn wæron his æhta: ac him losode an sceap þa ða se frumsceapena man adam syngiende forleas neorxenawanges bigwiste; ða forlet se ælmihtiga godes sunu eall engla werod on heofonum; 7 ferde to eorþan. 7 sohte þæt | an sceap þe him ætwunden wæs; ða þa he hit gemette he hit bær on his exlum to þære eowde. blissigende; ða þa he underfeng ure mennisce gecynd. 7 ure synna abær: þa wæs þæt dweliende sceap ongean fered on his halgum exlum; Ðæra sceapa hlaford com ham afundenum sceape: for þan ðe crist æfter þære þrowunge þe he mancynn mid alysde. aras of deaðe. 7 astah to heofonum blissiende; [...] He cwæð blissiað mid me. for þan ðe ic gemette min forlorene sceap; Ne cwæð he blissiað mid þam sceape: ac mid me: for þan ðe ure alysednys soðlice is his bliss:[229]

[Then the Saviour said to the Jewish scribes this parable: Which of you has a hundred sheep? And if he loses one of the sheep, well then, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and goes seeking the one that he lost? If he finds it then, he carries it on his shoulders to the rejoicing flock. Then he comes home and invites his friends and neighbours to him and says: "Rejoice with me, because I have found the sheep which I lost; I tell you that there is more joy in heaven about one sinful man if he repents his sins with penance than there is about ninety-nine more virtuous [people] who do not need penance at all. [...]
A hundredfold number is perfect, and the Almighty had an hundred sheep, when the host of angels and mankind were his possessions: but he lost one sheep, when the first-created man Adam while sinning lost the food of

[229] *CH*1, XXIV. Dominica IIII Post Pentecosten, pp. 371-372, ll. 6-43.

Paradise. Then the Almighty Son of God left all the host of angels in heaven, and went to earth, and sought that one sheep which had escaped from him. When he had found it, he carried it on his shoulders to the rejoicing flock. When he assumed our human nature, and bore our sins, then the wandering sheep was brought back on his holy shoulders. The sheep's master came home, having found his sheep; because Christ, after the passion, with which he redeemed mankind, arose from death, and ascended to heaven, rejoicing. [...] He said "Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep." He did not say "Rejoice with the sheep" but "with me", because our redemption is truly his joy;]

The sick sheep have to be separated from the rest of the flock:

Swa sceal don se gastlica sacerd. he sceal gerihtlæcan godes folc 7 ðone ascyrian. 7 amansumian fram cristenum mannum þe swa hreoflig bið on manfullum þeawum þæt he oðre mid his yfelnysse besmit; Be þam cwæð se apostol paulus; Afyrsiað ðone yfelan fram eow: þy læs þe an wanhal scep ealle þa eowde besmite;[230]

[Thus should the spiritual priest do: he should correct God's people, and separate and excommunicate from Christian men him who is so leprous in evil behaviour that he infects others with his wickedness; about which the apostle Paul said: "Remove the evil [one] from you, lest one weak sheep infect all the flock."]

One unsound sheep can infect the flock, just like one evil man can influence other Christians. The ill sheep has to be removed from the herd. Likewise, the evil man should be avoided.

d. Sheep as sacrificial animals

[230] *CH*1, VIII. Dominica III Post Epiphania Domini, p. 244, ll. 79-83.

In the Bible, lambs are sacrificed when a child is born, to symbolise the child's innocence and goodness,[231] but Ælfric stresses that the spiritual meaning of this ritual has replaced the actual sacrifice in his time. In the same passage, Ælfric describes that lambs used to be sacrificed when a child was born, to symbolise the child's innocence and goodness:

> Hit wæs swa geset on ðære ealdan .æ. þurh godes hæse: þæt ða þe mihton þurhteon sceoldon bringan anes geares lamb mid heora cilde gode to lace. 7 ane culufran: oððe ane turtlan; Gyf þonne hwylc wif to ðam unspedig wære þæt heo þas ðing begytan ne mihte: þonne sceolde heo bringan twegen culfran briddas. oððe twa
> turtlan; Þas læssan lac þæt synt þa fugelas: þe wæron wanspedigra manna lac wæron for criste geoffrode;[...]
> Lamb getacnað unsceððinesse: 7 þa maran goodnysse; Gif we ðonne swa earme beoð þæt we ne magan þa maran godnesse gode offrian þonne sceole we him bringan twa turtlan oððe twegen culfran briddas. þæt is twyfealdlic onbryrdnes. eges 7 lufe; [...]
> Lytel wæs an lamb oððe twa turtlan gode to bringenne: ac he ne sceawað na þæs mannes lac: swa swiðe swa he sceawað his heortan. [...][232]

> [It was so decreed in the old law, through God's command, that those who could accomplish it, should bring a lamb of one year with their child, as a gift to God, and one dove or a turtle-dove. If then any woman was so poor that she should not get these things, then she should bring two young doves, or two turtle-doves. These smaller gifts, that is, the birds, which were the gifts of poorer people, were offered for Christ. [...]
>
> A lamb signifies innocence and the greater goodness; If we are then so poor that we cannot offer to God the greater goodness, then should we bring him two turtle-doves or two young doves; that is, a twofold inspiration of awe and love [...]

[231] See for example *CH*1, IX. In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae, pp. 251-253, ll. 75-121.
[232] *CH*1, IX. In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae, pp. 251-52, ll. 75-94.

Little was one lamb, or two turtle-doves to bring to God; but he does not look at the man's gift as much as he looks at his heart. [...]

The offering of a lamb by the Jews in Egypt to save their firstborns already hints at the future sacrifice of Christ. The stain they had to make on their doors with the lambs' blood is interpreted here as a sign of the cross (a tau):

God bebead moyse on egypta lande. þæt he 7 eall israhela folc sceoldon offrian æt ælcum hiwisce gode an lamb. | anes geares 7 mearcian mid þam blode rodetacen on heora gedyrum and oferslegum þa on ðære nihte ferde godes engel and acwealde on ælcum huse þæs egyptiscan folces þæt frumcennede cild 7 þæt | leofoste; [...] Ðæt geoffrode lamb getacnode cristes slege. se þe unscæðði wæs his fæder geoffrod for ure alysednysse; [...] for þi eallswa þæt lamb getacnode cristes þrowunge: swa eac seo ealde æ getacnode godspelbodunge under godes gyfe;[233]

[God instructed Moses in Egypt, that he and all the people of Israel should offer, for every household, a lamb of one year to God, and mark the sign of the cross on their door-posts and lintels with blood, when in that night God's angel went and killed in every house of the Egyptian people the first-born child and the dearest. [...] The offered lamb signified the killing of Christ, who, innocent, was offered to his father for our redemption. [...] because just as the lamb signified the passion of Christ, so also did the old law signify the preaching of the gospel under the grace of God.]

Again, as we saw above in a different homily, the lambs the Jews had to slaughter to protect themselves are said to refer to the passion of Christ (the Lamb of God):

Iohannes cwæð be criste þæt he wære godes lamb. se ðe ætbrude middaneardes synna; God sette on ðære ealdan .æ. and het niman anes geares

[233] *CH*1, XXII. In Die Sancto Pentecosten, pp. 354-55, ll. 5-33.

lamb æt ælcum hiwisce. and sniðan on eastertide. and wyrcan mid þæs lambes blode rodetacn on heora gedyrum. and on oferslegum. and brædan þæt lamb and hit swa ðicgan. gif ðær hwæt læfde forbærnan. and hi wæron ða þurh þæt gebletsode and gescylde wið deofol; Þis nis nu alyfed nanum men to donne. for ðan ðe þæs lambes slege getacnode cristes slege; He ne wiðerode ongean. ne ne feaht þe swiðor þe lamb deð. ac geðafode swiðe geðyldelice þæt he wære geoffrod for ealles middaneardes synnum; For ði buton he ðrowode for us. ne mihte ure nan cuman to godes rice.[234]

[John said about Christ that he was God's lamb, he who would remove the sins of the world. God decreed in the old law and ordered a lamb of one year to be taken from every household, and [for it to be] killed at Easter, and to make with the lamb's blood the sign of the cross on their door-posts and on the lintels, and roast the lamb, and eat it thus; to burn it if there was anything left. And they were then blessed through that, and shielded against the devil. This is not allowed now for any man to do, because the killing of the lamb signified the killing of Christ. He did not resist, nor fight more than a lamb does, but consented very patiently that he would be sacrificed for the sins of all the world. Because unless he suffered for us, none of us could come to God's kingdom.]

Animals and saints

A lamb assists St Clement when he needs to find water. The lamb is a symbol for Christ, and the assistance of the animal shows the saint's holiness:

ða þa ðis gebed gefylled wæs þa beheold se biscop on ælce healfe 7 geseah ða on þa swiþran healfe an hwit lamb standan þe bicnode mid his swiþran fet swilce he þa wæteræddran geswutelian wolde; ða undergeat clemens þæs lambes gebicnunge; 7 cwæð. geopeniað ðas eorþan on þissere stowe þær ðær þæt lamb togebicnode;[235]

[234] *CH2*, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p. 21, ll. 78-90.
[235] *CH1*, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 499, ll. 72-77.

[When this prayer was ended, the bishop watched on each side, and then saw on the right side a white lamb standing, which beckoned with its right foot, as if it wanted to show the water-source. Then Clement understood the lamb's beckoning, and said: "Open the earth in this place where the lamb beckoned."]

The use of the sheep here is unusual, as it is the only instance of a sheep as an actor in a saint's life.

4. Commentary: Wild Animals in Ælfric

Although, from a medieval Christian point of view, humans were given mastery over the animals, it is obvious that not every animal is subdued very easily. The animals referred to as *(wil-)deor* rather than *nieten* in Old English, can occasionally be hostile to humans and are not always useful to them: in these ways, they are unlike most of the animals in the previous chapter. However, wild animals fulfill a function in the world as well. As we will see below, wild animals are also thought to illustrate God's plan for creation. They can punish sinners, or, by contrast, go against their natural instincts and protect or assist innocent people.

The discussion of the various wild animals in Ælfric below will treat the different animals separately. They are, in alphabetical order: bears, birds, deer, elephants, fish, foxes, frogs, hares, hedgehogs, insects, lions, wolves and *wyrmas*.

Bear

The bear in Ælfric's works occurs most often in saints' lives, where it is usually paired with lions to kill the saints in Roman arenas. Upon meeting the saints, however, they do not attack but instead protect and occasionally venerate them. The main illustrated feature of the bear is its ferocious strength and its aggression. For such an animal to turn tame is a great miracle. Defeating one, as David does (see 1 Kings (1 Sam) 17:36-37and *LS*1[236]) is a brave deed.
In the Bible, bears are often paired with lions as a common 'set' of wild animals (see, beside the example of David, Amos 5:19). The female bear's dangerousness when robbed of her cubs is proverbial: the comparison of a protective mother-bear with a person's ferocious behaviour occurs in several places (see for example 2 Kings 17:8, where the description pertains to David, Hos 13:8, and Prov 17:12).

Symbolic use of animals

[236] *LS*1, XVIII. Sermo Excerptus De Libro Regum, pp. 384-385, ll. 15-17.

The bear occurs several times as part of a plague, sent by God. The wild animals can represent the sins of the people, while at the same time embodying the punishment for those sins. In *CH*1, for example, bears and wolves ravage the city of Vienna:

> We rædað on | bocum þæt þeos gehealdsumnyss wurde aræred on ðone timan þe gelamp on anre byrig þe uigenna is gecweden micel eorðstyrung. 7 feollon cyrcan 7 hus. 7 comon wilde beran 7 wulfas 7 abiton þæs folces micelne dæl: 7 þæs cynges botl wearð mid heofenlicum fyre forbærnd; þa bead se biscop mamertus þreora daga fæsten. 7 seo gedreccednys. þa geswac. 7 se gewuna þæs fæstenes þurhwunað gehwær on geleaffulre. gelaþunge.[237]
>
> [We read in books that this observance [the litany] was created at the time when there happened in a city, which is called Vienna, a great earthquake, and churches and houses fell, and wild bears and wolves came and devoured a great part of the people, and the king's castle was burnt with heavenly fire. Then the bishop Mamertus decreed a fast of three days, and the affliction then ceased; and the custom of the fast continues everywhere in the faithful church.]

The process of fasting helps rid Vienna of bears and wolves running rampage in the city as part of many other natural disasters. That the type of animal sent as a plague is connected to the sins or sinners in question, is made more explicit in *CH*2:

> Moyses ðurh godes mihte awende eal heora wæter to readum blode. and he afylde eal heora land mid froggon. and siððan mid gnættum. eft mid hundes lusum ða flugon into heora muðe and heora næsðyrlum. and se ælmihtiga ðone modigan cyning mid þam eaðelicum gesceaftum swa geswencte. se ðe mihte hine mid wildum berum and leonum gewyldan. gif he swa wolde.[238]

[237] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, p. 317, ll. 5-11.
[238] *CH*2, XII. Dominica in Media Quadragesime, pp. 111-112, ll. 57-62.

[Moses, through God's power, turned all their water to red blood, and he filled all their land with frogs, and then with gnats, afterwards with dog-lice, which flew into their mouths and their nostrils. And the Almighty tormented the proud king with the insignificant creatures, he [the Almighty] who could have subdued him with wild bears and lions, if he had wished so.]

It is explicitly stated here that the plague in Egypt could have included large animals like the bear. However, smaller creatures are more appropriate to sting a proud leader, showing that he is in fact quite vulnerable, even to small animals, despite his pride and arrogance.

Animals and saints

In *LS*1, there are several instances of bears acting in a friendly manner towards saints. Bears and lions bow to St Julian and lick his feet, instead of killing him as the emperor planned:

Þa geseah se arleasa aidlian his smeagunge . and wolde þagyt cunnian anes cynnes wite . þurh reþe deor . þa þa his reðnyss ne mihte . þurh manna dæda . gedon swa he wolde . He het þa gelædan leon . and beran manega and mycele . to þam halgum martyrum . ac þa reðan deor . ne dorston hi reppan . ac bigdon heora hæfda to ðære halgena fotum . and heora liða liccodon . mid liðra tungan.[239]

[Then the wicked one [Martianus] saw his effort becoming useless, and yet wanted to try one [other] kind of torture, through wild animals, when his cruelty could not, through deeds of men, do as he wanted. He then ordered lions and bears, many and large, to be brought in to the holy martyrs, but the wild animals did not dare to touch them, but bowed their heads to the saints' feet, and licked their limbs with gentle tongues.]

[239] *LS*1, IV. Passio Sancti Iuliani et Sponse Eius Basilisse, pp. 112-114, ll. 399-407.

Not only do they spare the saint, but they also show affection to him. Another instance occurs in *LS*2, where the Christian kings Abdon and Sennes are miraculously spared:

> and het lætan him to . twegen leon . and feower beran . binnan þam huse . þa urnon þa deor egeslice grymetende . to þære halgena fotum . swylce hi frydes bædon . and noldon awæg gan . ac hi weredon hi swyðor . swa þæt nan man ne dorste for ðæra deora ware þam halgum genealecan . oððe into ðam huse gan .[240]

> [and ordered two lions and four bears to be let loose upon them within the house. Then the beasts ran, roaring terribly, to the saints' feet, as if they asked for protection, and did not want to go away; but rather defended them, so that no man dared, because of the beasts' defense, approach the saints or go into the house.]

Although they appear to be acting ferociously at the start, running roaring towards the saints, the animals actually turn out to be meek and seem to be intelligent: they are praying and protecting the saints.

Bird

Birds form one of the three categories of animals mentioned in the Bible, to distinguish them from the water animals and the land animals, and so often occur in Ælfric in summaries of the Creation.[241] Ælfric also mentions several specific kinds of birds, such as the dove, the kite and the stork. The first of these, the dove, is mentioned in the Bible more often than any other bird (over fifty times), and is used regularly as an emblem for the Holy Ghost. The dove stands for meekness and peacefulness. It was also a semi-domesticated animal in Biblical times, and was used in sacrifices.

Whereas birds like the dove and the turtle dove are deemed to have positive qualities, other birds, such as the kite, can denote sinfulness. The

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[240] *LS*2, XXIV. Natalis Sanctorum Abdon et Sennes, p. 56, ll. 51-57.
[241] See for example *CH*1, I. De Initio Creaturae, pp. 181-182, ll. 83-114.

distinction is mostly based on eating habits (doves eat seeds, birds of prey eat animals), on their being perceived as peaceful or violent respectively, and also on colour (white doves are good, black ravens can be evil). Since the different types of birds can signify different things, they will be dealt with separately. Some of the birds below may be domesticated, such as chickens, or semi-domesticated, such as doves: this is then indicated.

Birds: General

Birds are often described as a separate category of creatures, rather than being grouped under the general label of animals:

> God gesceop ða. Nytenu. and fixas. and fugelas. and ealle eorðlice wæstmas.[242]
>
> [God created the animals, and fish, and birds, and all earthly fruits]

Having been created on the fifth day, the birds, along with the fish, belong to the element of water; the other animals to earth. The birds receive the power to fly, the fish can swim:

> He cwæð eft. | 7 het ða eorðan þæt heo sceolde forðlædan cuce nytenu. 7 he ða gesceop of ðære eorðan eall nytencynn. 7 deorcynn. ealle ða ðe on feower fotum gað; Ealswa eft of wætere he gesceop fixas 7 fugelas. 7 sealde ðam fixum sund. 7 ðam fugelum fliht. ac he ne sealde nanum nytene ne nanum fisce nane sawle.[243]
>
> [He spoke again, and commanded the earth that she should bring forth living animals, and he then created from the earth all the kinds of animals and beasts, all those which go on four feet. Just so he then created fish and birds from water, and gave the ability to swim to the fish, and flight to the birds; but he did not give a soul to any animal, nor to any fish.]

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[242] *CH*2, XII. Dominica In Media Quadragesime, p. 118, ll. 296-297.
[243] *CH*1, I. De Initio Creaturae, p. 182, ll. 104-109.

When Noah gathers all the animals in the ark, the birds are still a distinct category:

> Ic gegaderie into ðe of deorcynne 7 of fugelcynne simle gemacan. þæt hi eft to fostre beon; [244]
>
> [I [God speaking to Noah] will gather unto you mates of animal-kind and of bird-kind constantly, so that they will be for foster afterwards.]

It is explained in another homily that the birds share their space on the ark with the clean, gentler animals, indicating that despite the existence of birds of prey (see below), birds were generally seen as harmless.[245] Although the birds have been grouped here under the wild animals, some birds were kept by humans. Ælfric mentions fowl (chickens and roosters), which were kept for eggs and meat, and doves (mostly in a biblical context, in which they are kept as sacrificial animals).

Natural History

Ælfric gives more information for certain kinds of birds (see below) than for birds in general, but in a passage on the resurrection of the body he does describe how many birds migrate before winter in a passage on the resurrection of the body:

> Hwær | beoð þas fleogan 7 fela fugolcynne. þe nan man ne gesihð naht eaðe on wintra. 7 fela wildeora þe eallne winter slapað 7 eft beoð æteowde ansunde. 7 cuce. æfter swa langsumum slæpe þurh ðone lyfiendan god; [246]
>
> [Where are the flies and the many kinds of birds, which nobody spots at all easily in winter, and many wild animals that sleep all winter and afterwards

[244] *CH*1, I. De Initio Creaturae, p. 185, ll. 187-189.
[245] *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecostn, p. 484, ll. 262-269.
[246] *CH*1, Homily XVI (Appendix B.2), p. 533, ll. 5-8.

are revealed unharmed and alive after such long-lasting sleep through the living god;]

Ælfric explains that the migration of birds and the hibernation of other animals, both of whom return alive in Spring, should also be taken symbolically, as a sign that God will bring people back to life after their death.
Ælfric also describes how birds reproduce:

fugelas ne tymað swa swa oðre nytenu: Ac ærest | hit bið æg. 7 seo modor syððan mid hihte bred þæt æg. to bridde;[247]

[birds do not reproduce like other animals, but first it is an egg, and the mother then with hope hatches the egg to a young bird.]

Symbolic use of animals
Birds are used symbolically in a number of different ways. In *CH*1, a passage also noted under Cattle, Ælfric explains a passage from the Bible (Mt 22:1-14) in which birds (presumably chickens, *altilia* denote domesticated, fattened birds), which are kept and fed by humans, denote the 'teachers' of the New Testament:

Secgað ðam gelaðedum: efne ic gearcode mine god. ic ofsloh mine fearras 7 gemæste fugelas. 7 ealle mine þing eow gear|code cumað to þam gyftum. [...] ða gemæstan fugelas getacniað þa halgan lareowas þære niwan gecyðnysse; ða sind gemæste mid gife þæs halgan gastes to þan swiðe þæt hi wilniað þæs upplican færeldes mid fiþerum gastlicere drohtnunge. [...]
Hwæt is: mine fearras sind ofslegene. 7 mine gemæstan fugelas. buton swilce he cwæde. behealdað þæra ealdfædera drohtnunga. 7 understandað þæra witegena gyddunge 7 þæra apostola bodunga ymbe mines bearnes menniscnysse. 7 cumað to þam gyftum.[248]

[Say to those who are invited: "Behold, I have prepared my goods, I have

[247] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, p. 321, ll. 109-111.
[248] *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecosten, pp. 476-478, ll. 8-80.

killed my oxen and my fattened birds, and have prepared all my things for you: come to the wedding." [...]
The fattened birds signify the holy teachers of the New Testament. Those are fattened with the grace of the Holy Ghost so much, that they desire the heavenly journey with wings of spiritual life. [...]
What is: "My oxen and my fattened fowls are killed," but as though he had said, "Behold the lives of the patriarchs, and understand the saying of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles about my son's humanity, and come to the wedding"?]

Ælfric takes this explanation from Gregory,[249] but draws his own conclusion about what one should learn from it. Godden notes that he emphasises the importance of considering the lives and words of the fathers, prophets and apostles rather than their deaths, as is suggested by Gregory ("Ac si apertius dicatur: Patrum praecendentium mortes aspicite, et remedia vitae vestrae cogitate").

Although we will see below that birds are often associated with bringing food to holy people, they can also appear to be themselves sent as food by God, only to turn out to be a test. When the Jewish people are hungry in the desert when travelling with Moses, it seems as if their prayers are heard:

> God sende him ða sona, mid swyðlicum winde,
> micel fleogende fugelcyn feorran ofer sæ;
> þa flugon endemes into þære fyrde,
> swa þæt ælc man gefeng on eallum þam folce
> swa micel swa he wolde and he gewyldan mihte[250]
>
> [God at once sent them then, with a strong wind,
> a large flock of birds from far over sea;
> they flew one and all into the host,
> so that each person among all those people caught
> as much as he wanted and could handle]

[249] Hom. 38, PL 76, 1284AB, according to *CH3* p. 292.
[250] Pope2, XX. De Populo Israhel, p. 645, ll. 94-98.

However, the people who were so greedy as to have caught the birds are severely punished, as they were not supposed to complain about their situation.
This ties in with the well-known admonition to be more like the bird and trust God to provide:

> He cwæð; Behealdað þas fleogendan fugelas ðe ne sawað ne ne ripað. ac eower heofonlica fæder hi afet; Gif ða wacan fugelas þe nu todæg beoð. and beoð tomerigen to nahte awende. habbað butan care bigleofan ðurh heora scyppendes foresceawunge. hu miccle swiðor wile God foresceawian urne bigleofan we ðe sind ece on urum sawlum. and eac beoð on lichaman unateorigendlice. æfter ðam gemænelicum æriste;[251]
>
> [He [God] said: "Behold the flying birds, which do not sow or reap, but your heavenly Father feeds them." If the humble birds, which live now today, and will tomorrow be turned to nothing, have sustenance without care, through their creator's providence, how much more will God provide our sustenance, we who are eternal in our souls, and [who] will also be undying in body after the universal resurrection?]

A bird does not sow or reap, but is still fed by God. Likewise, even though men are poor, they will be provided for by God. Referring to Mt 10:29, Ælfric notes that God watches even the humblest bird:

> He cwæd on his godspelle . þæt buton godes dihte . furðon an fugel ne befylð on deaðe . Wen is þæt he wille bewitan a his menn . ge on life . ge on deaðe . þonne se lytla fugel ne befylþ on grin butan godes willan .[252]
>
> [He said in his gospel that, without God's command, not even a bird falls in death. Supposedly, He will always watch over his people both in life and in death, when the little bird does not fall into a snare without God's will.]

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[251] *CH*2, XXXI. Dominica XVI Post Pentecosten, p. 269, ll. 50-56.
[252] *LS*1, XVII. De Auguriis, p. 376, ll. 185-189, but also referred to in *CH*1, XXXI. Passio Sancti Bartholomei, p. 448, ll. 247-248.

Therefore, good Christians need not worry if their God will provide for them.

The egg and the bird can stand for hope and the fulfilment of that hope. The following passage, which explains the question posed in Lk 11:11-13, "What father will give his child a stone, if he asks for bread? or a serpent, if he asks for a fish? or a scorpion, if he asks for an egg?":

> Þæt æg getacnað hiht: for ði þe fugelas ne tymað swa swa oðre nytenu: Ac ærest | hit bið æg. 7 seo modor syððan mid hihte bred þæt æg. to bridde; swa eac ure hiht: ne becom na gyt to ðam þe he hopað. ac is swilce he si æg; þonne he hæfð þæt him behaten is. he bið fugel;[253]
>
> [The egg signifies hope, because birds do not reproduce like other animals, but first it is an egg, and the mother then with hope hatches the egg to a young bird. Likewise, our expectation does not come yet to that which it hopes for, but is, as it were, an egg. When it has that which is promised to it, it is a bird.]

In this passage, the bird and egg symbolism is contrasted with that of the scorpion (see also under wyrm), which instead of hope offers a sting in its tail. Although many birds are associated with good, occasionally their capability of flight connects them to demons:

> Þæt sæd þe feoll be ðam wege mid twyfealdre dare losode. ða ða wegferende hit fortrædon. and fugelas tobæron; Se weg is seo fortredene heorte fram yflum geðohtum. þe ne genihtsumað to underfonne godes word. ne nænne wæstm to spryttanne. and for ði swa hwæt swa ðæs godan sædes on swylcum wege befylð. bið mid yfelum geðohtum oftreden. and ðurh deoflum gelæht; Deoflu sind fugelas gecigede. for ðan ðe hi fleoð geond þas lyft ungesewenlice. swa swa fugelas. doð gesewenlice;[254]
>
> [The seed that fell by the road was lost by a double injury, when the wayfaring ones trampled it, and [when] birds carried it away. The road is the

[253] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, pp. 321, ll. 109-113.
[254] *CH*2, VI. Dominica In Sexagesima, p. 54, ll. 64-72.

heart, trampled by evil thoughts, which are incapable of receiving God's word, nor of sprouting any fruit; and, therefore, whatsoever of the good seed falls on such a road, is trampled by evil thoughts, and seized by devils. Devils are called birds because they fly invisibly through this air, as birds do visibly.]

In this explanation of the parable of the sower, Ælfric[255] notes that God's words are like seed: they can be trampled or eaten up by birds. The trampling happens when people have evil thoughts, but the birds are represented by devils, which can fly like birds.

Animals and Saints

Birds which assist saints by finding and bringing them food were a well-known feature of saints' lives. The motif most likely goes back to the story of Elijah in the Bible, who was fed by ravens (3 Kings 17:4-6 (KJB 1 Kings)). Ælfric makes note of the motif in *CH*1 when discussing how anchorites survive:

> Sume hi leofodon be ofæte 7 wyrtum: sume be agenum geswince; Sumum þenodon englas. sumum fugelas oð þæt englas eft on eaþelicum forðsiþe hi to gode ferodon;[256]
>
> [Some of them lived on fruit and plants; some by their own labour; To some, angels attended, to some birds, until angels afterwards in an easy death carried them to God.]

More examples of birds feeding saints can be found below under the specific type of bird.

In saints' lives, many animals refusing to eat the saint's corpse, but birds form a notable exception in the Seven Sleepers (see below) and in the Life of St Vincent.[257] In the latter story, one raven has to guard the body against other birds, even though the fish do not touch it when it is thrown into the sea aftwards.

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[255] Using Bede's commentary on Luke (*CH*3, p. 391), either directly or via Smaragdus's *Collectiones in Evangelia et Epistolas*.
[256] *CH*1, XXXVI. Natale Omnium Sanctorum, p. 490, ll. 115-117.
[257] *LS*2, XXXVII. (Appendix) Passio Sancti Vincentii, pp. 440-442.

Dove

The dove is the bird which occurs most often in Ælfric's works.

Symbolic use of animals

The dove has a long tradition as a Christian symbol of gentleness and innocence, and as a representation both in literature and in the visual arts of the Holy Ghost. One of the many examples of the Holy Ghost taking the form of a dove occurs when the Holy Ghost visits Christ's baptism in the river Jordan in the following passage:

> Eft embe geara ymbrenum he wearð on his fulluhte on þisum dæge middanearde geswutelod: þa ða se halga gast on culfran hiwe uppon him gereste.[258]
>
> [Again, after a course of years, he [Christ] was at his baptism shown to the world on this day, when the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, rested upon him.]

Ælfric explains the dove's positive connotations from its perceived eating habits:

> Oðre lytle fugelas sind læssan þonne heo sy. and hwæðere hi ofsleað sum ðing. huru ðas fleogan. ne deð seo culfre na swa. ne leofað heo be nanum deaðe; Mare we mihton sprecan be ðære culfran gecynde. gif hit to langsum nære;[259]
>
> [Other little birds are smaller than it [the dove], and yet they kill something, especially these flies; the dove does not so, it lives by no death. We could speak more about the dove's nature, if it were not too longsome.]

[258] *CH*1, VII. Epiphania Domini, p. 233, ll. 40-42.
[259] *CH*2, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p. 24, ll. 185-188.

Godden notes that the passage was possibly inspired by Augustine's description of the dove in comparison with other birds, but Ælfric does not follow Augustine's text to the letter.[260]

It is interesting to see that Ælfric claims to be able to say more of the dove's nature, but feels that it will take too long: apparently, much more material on the dove is available, a fact also referred to in an earlier pasasge, related to the one above. In it, Ælfric explains the dove's characteristics as well and adds that he has read books on the nature of the dove:

> Se halga gast wæs æteowod ofer þam apostolon on fyres | hiwe. 7 ofer criste on his fulluhte on anre culfran anlicnysse; Hwi ofer criste on culfran hiwe? Hwi ofer cristes hirede on fyres glicnysse? On bocum is geredd be þam fugelcynne þæt his gecynd is swiðe bilewite unscæðði 7 gesibsum; [...]
> Ærest he wolde us mid lyðnysse styran þæt he syððan mihte on his dome us gehealdan; | for þi wæs se halga gast on culfran anlicnysse gesewen bufon criste. for þan ðe he wæs drohtniende on ðisre worulde mid bilewitnysse. 7 unscæððinysse. 7 gesibsumnysse; [...]
> On culfran anlicnysse. 7 on fyres hiwe wæs godes gast æteowod. for þan ðe he deð þæt ða beoð bylewite on unscæððignysse. 7 byrnende on godes willan þe he mid his gife gefylð;[261]

> [The Holy Ghost was revealed over the apostles in the form of fire, and over Christ at his baptism in the shape of a dove. Why over Christ in the form of a dove? Why over Christ's followers in the shape of fire? In books it is read about that kind of bird that its nature is very gentle, innocent, and peaceful. [...]
> He first wanted to steer us with gentleness, so that he might afterwards preserve us at his judgement. Therefore, the Holy Ghost was seen in the shape of a dove above Christ, because he was living in this world with gentleness, and innocence, and peacefulness. [...]

[260] *CH*3, p. 368.
[261] *CH*1, XXII. In Die Sancto Pentecosten, pp. 359-60, ll. 128-158.

In the shape of a dove and in the form of fire God's spirit was revealed; because he makes those who are gentle in innocence and burning in God's will, whom he fills with his grace.]

It is not clear which books Ælfric is referring to here, but there are several possibilities. As mentioned, Augustine's *Tractates* on John 6 could be a source, although it is not followed literally; another possible source is the Physiologus and bestiary tradition as suggested by Förster.[262]

It is clear from the passages quoted above why the Holy Ghost appears like a dove: it shows meekness, innocence and peacefulness. When used as a sacrifice, doves denote the same gentleness, innocence and a 'love of unity':

Culfran sint swiðe unceððige fugelas: 7 bilewite: 7 hi lufiað annysse 7 fleogað him flocmælum; Do eac swa se cristena mann. beo him unsceaðþig. 7 bylewite: 7 lufige annysse. 7 broðorrædene. betwux cristenum mannum: þonne geoffrað he gastlice Gode þa culfran-briddas; Ða turtlan getacniað clænnysse: hi sind swa geworhte. gif hyra oþer oþerne forlyst þonne ne secð seo cucu næfre. hire oðerne gemacan. Gif þonne se cristena man. swa deð for godes lufon: þonne geoffrað he ða turtlan. on ða betstan wisan; Þas twa fugelcyn: ne syngað na. swa swa oðere fugelas: ac hi geomeriað: for ðan þe hi getacniað haligra manna geomerunge on þisum life swa swa crist cwæð to his apostolum; Ge beoð geunrotsode on þisum life: ac eower unrotnys bið awend to æcere blisse.[263]

[Doves are highly innocent and gentle birds, and they love unity and fly in flocks. Let the Christian man also do so; let him be innocent, and gentle, and love unity and brotherhood between Christian men; then he offers the young pigeons to God spiritually. The turtle-doves signify purity: they are created so, that if one of them loses the other, the living one never seeks another mate for itself. If the Christian man then does so for love of God, then he offers the turtle-doves in the best manner. These two species of birds do not sing like other birds, but they moarn; because they signify the mourning of holy men in

[262] *CH3*, p. 179.
[263] *CH1*, IX. In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae, pp. 252-253, ll. 110-121.

this life, like Christ said to his apostles, "You will be sad in this life, but your sadness will be turned to eternal joy."]

This example also includes the turtle-dove: a subspecies of the dove especially noted by medieval commentators for its loyalty to just one mate. Ælfric bases his explanation of the dove and the turtle-dove on Bede and Haymo,[264] although there are differences: Ælfric "holds back from Bede's equation of the two birds with public and private prayer or Haymo's with the active and contemplative lives, preferring to take the turtle-dove more literally as a model of chastity (presumably in widowhood)."[265] The dove's distinctive murmuring sounds are understood as a moaning rather than a singing, reminding the observer of the moaning of holy men. Seen in this light, the turtle-dove's chastity could also refer to life-long chastity rather than only in widowhood. As illustrated elsewhere (see for example under Sheep), the animal sacrificed is to be understood in a spiritual way: the dove standing for the need to be innocent and gentle; the turtle doves denoting chastity.

The sincerity or simplicity of the dove, and its love of harmony, are seen as a positive examples for humans:

> *Estote prudentes sicut serpentes, et simplices sicut columbe:*
> Beoð swa snotere swa swa neddran syndon,
> and swa bylehwite swa swa culfran beoð.
> Seo næddre is eallra nytena snoterost,
> and se deofol þurh hy beswac þa frumsceapenan men
> [...]
> Culfre is swiðe bylewit, and eall butan geallan,
> and lufað annysse betwyx hyre geferum,
> and swiðe unhearmgeorn and unhetol oðrum.[266]

[*Be wise like snakes and simple like doves:*

[264] Bede Hom. I.18, and Haymo Hom. 14, see *CH3*, p. 72-73.
[265] *CH3*, p. 73.
[266] Pope2, XVI. Dominica X Post Pentecosten, pp. 556-557, ll. 227-251.

Be as wise as snakes are,
and as simple/sincere as doves are.
The snake is the wisest of all animals,
and through them the devil deceived the first humans.
[...]
A dove is very simple/sincere, and completely without bile (=mild-mannered),
and loves unity between her companions,
and very inoffensive and peaceable towards others.]

The biblical reference is to Mt 10:16, which also lists a rare good quality of the snake (see under Wyrmas).

Animals and Saints

The dove appears in the life of St Basil when the saint is baptised:

> Efne þa færlice . com fyr of heofonum . and an scinende culfre . scæt of þam fyre . into ðære ea . and astyrede þæt wæter . fleah siþþan upp . forðrihte to heofonum . and basilius eode . of þæm fant-baðe sona . and seo biscop hine be-wæfde . wundriende þæs tacnes .[267]
>
> [Then suddenly a fire came from the heavens, and a shining dove shot out of the fire into the river, and stirred the water, and afterward flew up straightway to the heavens, and Basil immediately went out of the baptismal water, and the bishop clothed him, wondering at the sign.]

As the dove is a form often taken by the Holy Ghost, the appearance of a dove out of the fire (another form in which the Holy Ghost appears) here probably signifies that the Holy Spirit witnesses and approves Basil's baptism, as a sign of Basil's holiness. The dove stirs the water, like a blessing. The dove is a recurring animal in St Basil's life. When Basil receives a host that is blessed by the Lord

[267] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 54, ll. 72-77.

himself, the attending bishop is amazed, breaks it into three portions and consumes one. Another part is put into a dove-shaped container:

> Þone oðerne dæl he dyde gehælden mid him to be-byrgenne . æfter his forð-siðe . þone ðryddan dæl he dyde on-sundor . and het him smiðian on smætum golde . anre culfran anlicnysse . and þa up-aheng . bufan þam altare . and þær on gedyde . þone ðryddan dæl . þæs deorwurðan husles . and seo culfra siþþan . simle hi astyrede . æt basilies messan þriwa mid þam husle .[268]

> [The second part he caused to be kept to be buried with him after his death; the third part he caused to be kept apart, and ordered it to be forged for him in pure gold in the shape of a dove, and then hung it up above the altar, and put therein the third part of the precious housel; and the dove afterwards always stirred herself at Basil's mass, thrice, with the housel.]

The dove miraculously moves everytime Basil holds mass: another sign that the Holy Ghost favours Basil.

Eagle

Symbolic Use of Animals

Despite being a bird a prey, the eagle is usually seen as a noble animal, and is well-known as a symbol for the evangelist John. This symbol comes from the interpretation of the vision of the prophet Ezekiel, which Ælfric describes as follows:

> Se witega Ezechiel awrat be ðam feower nytenum þe him æteowode wæron. þæt hi hæfdon eagan him on ælce healfe; An ðæra nytena wæs on menniscre ansyne him æteowod. / oðer on leon ansyne. þridde on cealfes. feorðe on earnes; Þas feower nytenu getacnodon ða feower godspelleras. Matheus. Marcus. Lucas. Iohannes. and eac ealle godes bydelas þe ða godspellican lare bodedon; Þa feower nytenu Lucas. Iohannes. and eac ealle godes bydelas þe

[268] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 58, ll. 123-131.

ða godspellican lare bodedon; Þa feower nytenu hæfdon eagan on ælce healfe heora lichaman. for ðan ðe godes gecorenan sceolon foresceawian heora dæda on ælce healfe. [269]

[The prophet Ezekiel wrote about the four animals which were revealed to him, that they had eyes on every side. One of those animals was revealed to him in a human appearance, the second in a lion's appearance, the third in a calf's, the fourth in an eagle's. These four animals signified the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and also all God's messengers who preached the evangelical lore. The four animals had eyes on every side of their bodies, because God's chosen should scrutinize their deeds on every side.]

This image of the four evangelists as four creatures is often seen not only in literature, but also in art. Ælfric also explains why the eagle has been chosen for John:

> [...] ærest þurh Ezechiel 7 eft on Apocaly(psi,) on earnes gelicnysse mid þam oðrum godspellerum, þæt he mihte scea(wia)n mid scearpum eagum on earnes gelicnysse be þæs Hælendes god(cundny)sse,
> swa swa se earn scewað þære sunnan leoman unateorig(::::::) ofer eallum nytenum.[270]

> [[...] first through Ezechiel and then in the Apocalypse, in the shape of an eagle with the other evangelists, so that he might see with sharp eyes, in the shape of an eagle, the divine nature of the Saviour,
> as the eagle sees the light of the sun with undimmed(::::) above all animals.]

The eagle is noted for its sharp vision, just like John was able to see not only the 'divine nature of the Saviour' mentioned here, but also the shape of things to come.

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[269] *CH2*, XXVIII. Dominica XII Post Pentecosten, p. 251, ll. 64-72.
[270] Pope1, I. Nativitas Domini, p. 197, ll. 12-16.

In the bestiary tradition, too, the eagle is associated with sharp vision. The eagle flies towards the sun when its eyes grow dim. The sun then burns off a layer from the eagle's eyes, and it can see again. The eagle then rejuvenates its body by dipping itself in water three times, thus linking the eagle to baptism.[271]

Eagles which gather around a carcass, an expression from Mt 24:28, are compared to holy men drawn to the Saviour, in this somewhat disturbing analogy:

> 'Hwider beoð hi genumene? And he hym cwæð to,
> Swa hwær swa þæt hold bið, þider gaderiað þa earnas.'
> Þa Sundorhalgan ahsodan þone Hælend þa þus:
> hwider þa goodan sceoldan gegripene beon,
> oððe hwider þa yfelan beon forlætene.
> Ða andwyrde he be þam goodum, and nolde be þam yfelum.
> Þa earnas getacniað þa geþungenan halgan;
> and swa swa earnas hi gegaderiað þær þær þæt hold bið,
> swa beoð þa halgan weras to þam Hælende gegadorade,
> þær þær he on menniscnysse mihtiglice rihsað[272]
>
> ['Whither are they taken? And he said to them,
> wherever the carcass is, there the eagles gather.'
> The Pharisees then asked the Saviour thus:
> whither the good had to be carried off,
> or whither the evil should be left.
> Then he answered about the good, and did not want to [answer] about the evil.
> The eagles signify the distinguished holy saints;
> and like eagles they gather where the carcass is,
> thus the holy men are gathered to the Saviour,
> there were he reigns mightily in human nature [i.e. as a human incarnation of God]]

[271] Also in Ps 102:5
[272] Pope2, XVIII. Sermo De Die Iudicii, p. 599, ll. 204-213.

The comparison of the Saviour with a carcass is unusual, but perhaps it is supposed to remind the reader of Job 39:27-30:

> *27* Will the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest in high places? *28* She abideth among the rocks, and dwelleth among cragged flints, and stony hills, where there is no access.
> *29* From thence she looketh for the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.
> *30* Her young ones shall suck up blood: and wheresoever the carcass shall be, she is immediately there.

This passage shows God painting the prowess of the eagle and other animals in a positive light, stating they do what they were created to do.

Apart from its sharp vision the eagle is also noted for its sharp claws. Nebuchadnezzar grows finger nails like those claws when he lives in the wild:

> and þu byst fram mannum aworpen. and ðin wununng bið mid wildeorum. and þu etst gærs swa swa oxa seofon gear. oð þæt ðu wite þæt se healica god gewylt manna ricu. and þæt he forgifð rice ðam ðe he wile; Witodlice on þære ylcan tide wæs þeos spræc gefylled ofer nabochodonosor. and he arn to wuda. and wunode mid wildeorum. leofode be gærse. swa swa nyten. oð þæt his feax weox swa swa wimmanna. and his næglas swa swa earnes clawa;[273]
>
> [and you [Nebuchadnezzar] will be cast out from men, and your habitation will be with wild beasts, and you will eat grass like an ox for seven years, until you know that the high God rules the people's kingdoms, and that he gives authority to whomsoever he wants; Verily, at that same time this speech was fulfilled over Nebuchadnezzar, and he ran to the wood, and lived with wild beasts, lived on grass, like an animal, until his hair grew like women's, and his nails like the claws of an eagle.]

This story, based on Dan 4:25-37 shows agains that living or eating like an animal is demeaning, comparable to the story of St Basil being fed grass (see

[273] *CH2*, XXVIII. Dominica XII Post Pentecosten, pp. 252-253, ll. 111-118.

Chapter 5). The fall of King Nebuchadnnezzar, who declines to remember the Lord, is to suffer for seven years, living like a beast. Nebuchadnezzar is often described as crawling on all fours, making animal noises, growing lots of hair, and eating animal food. Having to cross the border between human and animal behaviour is clearly seen as humiliating for people.[274] The same motif shows up time and again throughout the Middle Ages, for example in *El Cid* (ca. 1140), in which the Cid eats grass to humble himself in front of the king, in order to make peace with him.

Animals and Saints

As a noble animal, the eagle can be found assisting saints, for example when an eagle catches a fish for Cuthbert to eat, as the raven did for Elijah:

> Þa fleah sum earn ætforan him on siðe. and he his geferan befrinan ongann. hwa hi to ðam dæge afedan sceolde; Ða cwæð his gefera þæt he gefyrn smeade. hwær hi bigleofan biddan sceoldon. ða ða hi ða fare ferdon buton wiste; Cuðberhtus ða him togeanes cwæð; La hwæt se ælmihtiga god mæg foreaðe unc þurh ðisne earn. æt fore-/sceawian. se ðe giu ær Elian afedde. þurh ðone sweartan hremm. ær he to heofonan siðode; Hi ða ferdon forð siðigende. and efne se earn / on ðam ofre gesæt mid fisce geflogen. þone he ðærrihte gefeng;[275]
>
> [Then an eagle flew before him on his journey, and he began to ask his companion who should feed them that day. Then his companion said that he had long before pondered where they should ask for sustenance, as they had gone on the journey without food. Then Cuthberht said to him: "Lo, the almighty God can very easily provide food for us through this eagle, [God] who long ago fed Elijah through the black raven, before he journeyed to heaven." They then travelled on, and look, the eagle sat on the shore, having flown [there] with a fish which he had just caught.]

[274] See Sprunger 1993 for an elaborate discussion.
[275] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 84, ll. 99-108.

Cuthbert shows his respect for the eagle by leaving it part of the fish as a reward for its work. Perhaps the saint was reluctant to hunt for food: hunting was taboo (although not always strictly observed) for clergy. Wulfstan's *Canons of Edgar* state for example:

> And riht is þæt preost ne beo hunta ne hafecre ne tæflere ac plegge on his bocum swa his hade gebirað [...] Se canon segð gyf hwylc gehadod man on huntaþ fare, gyf hit bið clerec forga xii monað flæsc, deacon twa gear mæssepreost þreo, bisceop vii.[276]
>
> And it is right for a priest not to be a hunter or a falconer or a gambler, but he should occupy himself with his books as suits his station. [...] The canon says that if an ordained man goes hunting, if it is a cleric he must forgo meat for twelve months, a deacon two years, a priest two [years], a bishop seven [years].

Hagen notes that the clergy did have the rights to hunting on their estates, but employed others to hunt for them.[277]

Phoenix

Symbolic Use of Animals

Although the phoenix is seen nowadays as a mythological animal, it was not necessarily considered a fantasy in the Middle Ages. It was known in Anglo-Saxon England, as evidenced by the Old English poem The Phoenix in the Exeter Book, inspired by Lactantius's *De Ave Phoenice*.

Ælfric, who uses the phoenix in his *Grammar*, also mentions the unique bird in his homilies, for which he used Ambrose's *Hexameron* as a source.[278] The phoenix's life cycle is taken here, as it is commonly, as an analogy for the resurrection:

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[276] Fowler 1972, p. 15, qtd in Hagen 1995, p. 139-40.
[277] Hagen 1995, p. 140.
[278] See *CH3*, p.135.

Sum fugol is gehaten fenix on leden on arabiscre þeode æfre wuniende. swiðe ænlic fugol swa swa us sæcgað bec; Fif hund geara he lyfað. 7 lið him syððan dead on his agenum neste þe he him ær geworhte. of myrran. 7 of store. 7 of wyrtbræþum; Ðonne wehst an lytel wyrm of his flæsce eft. 7 wyrð þonne to fugole gefiðerhamod eall on ða ylcan wisan ðe se oðer ær wæs. 7 lyfað eallswa lange swa swa se oðer lyfode; He sylð us soðlice swutole bysne [þæt] we ealle sceolon on ðam endenextan dæge of deaðe arisan þurh ures drihtnes mihte. on ecum lichaman. 7 lybban æfre syððan. þonne he sawulleas fugol swa eft acucað þurh ðone ylcan drihten þe ealle ðing gescop; [279]

[A certain bird is called phoenix in Latin, [it is] ever living in the Arabian nation, a highly unique bird as books tell us. It lives five hundred years and afterwards lies dead in its own nest which it made itself before of myrrh, incense and fragrance. Then one little worm grows from its flesh afterwards and it is then furnished with wings all in the same manner that the other one was before, and lives just as long as the other lived. It gives us truly a clear example that we shall all arise from death on the final day into an eternal body through our lord's power, and live ever after, when it [the phoenix], a soul-less bird, thus revives again through the same lord who created all things.]

There are two versions of the legend of the phoenix: one in which the phoenix is burnt and reborn from the ashes, and one in which it first appears as a worm after the burning, which is the one used here, except that the phoenix is not described as burning. This means Isidore (Bk XII, vii.22) is not the source here, as his description leaves out the worm, but closer to the story as related by Ambrose in his *Hexameron*. This version also mentions that it is unsurprising that God will resurrect humans, if he does that for a bird.

Raven

Symbolic Use of Animals

[279] *CH*1, Homily XVI (Appendix B.2), p. 534, ll. 25-34.

The raven is often seen as evil. It is seen as careless: Ambrose noted it did not return to the ark., calling the raven a figure of sin (De Mysteriis 3.10-11). The bestiary tradition portrays ravens as animals which will not care for their young (at least until they grow black feathers, so they can be recognized as ravens), and notes their habit of picking out the eyes of corpses. The latter practice is not only gruesome, but compared to the devil who first goes after people's ability to judge correctly.

The raven's black colour can also hint at its dark nature:

> Se ðe facn lufað and smeað hu he mage him sylfum gestrynan and na gode. næfð he na culfran ðeawas. ac hæfð þæs blacan hremmes; [280]
>
> [He who loves treachery, and considers how he may gain for himself and not for God, he does not have the behaviour of a dove, but has the black raven's [behaviour].]

This passage compares the raven to the dove in unfavourable terms, as it eats other animals (see above).

Animals and Saints

The raven can be turned to good by the intervention of saints. Ravens threaten to eat St Cuthbert's crops, but he asks them to go away and they obey:

> Þa woldon hremmas. hine bereafian. æt his gedeorfum. gif hi dorston. ða cwæð se halga. to ðam heardnebbum. gif se ælmihtiga eow. ðises geuðe. brucað þæra wæstma. and me ne biddað; Gif he ðonne eow. ðises ne getiðode. gewitað aweg. wælhreowe fugelas. to eowrum eðele. of ðisum iglande; Hwæt ða hremmas ða. ricene flugon. ealle tosomne. ofer ðone sealtan brym. and se halga ða. his geswinces breac; [281]
>
> [Then ravens wanted to rob him [Cuthberht] at his labours, if they dared to. Then the saint said to the hard-nibbed ones: "If the Almighty has allowed you

[280] *CH2*, III. In Aepiphania Domini, p.24, ll. 182-184.
[281] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 86, ll. 184-190.

this, use the fruits, and do not ask me. If he then has not granted this to you, go away, bloodthirsty birds, to your native land, [away] from this island." The ravens instantly fled all together, over the salt sea, and the saint then enjoyed his labour.]

Two other ravens who had made a nest in Cuthbert's thatch were also sent away, but allowed back when they requested it. In return, they bring Cuthbert some swine's fat for his shoes, as noted before under Pig:

Eft ða siððan oðre twegen swearte hremmas siðlice comon. and his hus tæron mid heardum bile. and to neste bæron. heora briddum to hleowðe; Þas eac se eadiga. / mid ealle afligde. of ðam eðele mid anum worde; Ac an ðæra fugela. eft fleogende com. ymbe ðry dagas. þearle dreorig. fleah to his foton. friðes biddende. þæt he on ðam lande. lybban moste. symle unscæððig. and his gefera samod; Hwæt ða se halga. him þæs geuðe. and hi lustbære þæt land gesohton. and brohton ðam lareowe. lac to medes. swines rysl his scon to gedreoge. and hi ðær siððan unscæððige wunedon;[282]

[After that two other black ravens came travelling, and tore [the thatch of] his house with their hard bills, and carried it to their nest, as a shelter for their young ones. These also the blessed man drove from the place with a word: but one of those birds, flying back, came [back] after three days, exceedingly sad, and flew to his feet, earnestly praying that he might live in that land ever harmless, and his mate with him. Whereupon the holy man granted him this; and they joyfully sought that land, and brought to the teacher a gift as reward, swine's fat to soften his shoes; and they afterwards lived there harmlessly.]

The ravens again change their behaviour at Cuthbert's request. This scene does not occur in the anonymous Life, but was added by Bede, and may have been based on St Antony driving away wild asses from his plot of land.[283] In Bede's prose life, the following admonition is added after the bird brings the lard: "Let it not seem absurd to anyone to learn a lesson of virtue from birds, since Solomon

[282] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 86-87, ll. 190-200.
[283] Colgrave 1940, p. 350.

says: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise."'' [284] Although Ælfric speaks of ravens here (as do his sources), other medieval stories also talk of crows, jackdaws or rooks.[285]

A raven also collects food for St Benedict, and gets rid of a poisoned loaf of bread for him:

> Ða wæs sum wilde hrem gewunod þæt he dæghwomlice fleah fram wuda to mynstre. and gefette his bigleofan æt benedictes handum; He ða wearp ðam hremme þone geættrodan hlaf. and bebead him on godes naman þæt he ðone cwelmbæran hlaf aweg bære. and on swilcere stowe awurpe. ðær hine nan man findan ne mihte; Se fugol wearð gehyrsum his hæsum. and mid þam hlafe to wuda tengde. and syððan ymbe ðreora tida fæce. fette his bigleofan. swa his gewuna wæs;[286]
>
> [Then there was a wild raven accustomed to fly daily from the wood to the monastery, and fetch his food from the hands of Benedict. He [Benedict] then threw the poisoned bread to the raven, and commanded him in God's name to carry away the deadly loaf, and to throw it in such a place as where no one could find it. The bird was obedient to his commands, and hurried to the wood with the bread, and after a period of around three hours it fetched its food, as was its habit.]

Another raven loyally defends St Vincent's dead body, protecting it against other scavengers, at God's command:

> 'Awyrpað nu his lic on anu*m* widgillu*m* felda . fugelu*m* to æse . & fulu*m* hundu*m* to mete . & þa*m* wildeorum' . & his wælhreowan þegnas swa dydon . sona ge-feredan þ*æt* lic to þa*m* feldan middan . & hit þar awurpon wildeoru*m* to mete . Hit gelamp þa sona þur<h> godes fore-sceawunge þ*æt* an sweart hrem þær fleah sona to . & be-werode þ*æt* lic wið þa wildan fugelas & hi ealle afligde mid his fiðeru*m* aweg . & eac þa reðan deor mid his on-ræsum . Se

[284] Lapidge, in Bonner 1995, p. 225.
[285] Colgrave 1940, p. 327.
[286] *CH2*, XI. Sancti Benedicti, p. 96, ll. 144-152.

ælmihtiga god þe þe Eliam his witegan þurh þon*e* swaertan hræm asende hwilon mete . & hine þa afedde þur þæs fugelas þenunge swa swa on cyninga bocu*m* fulcuð is be þa*m* . þe ylca ge-heold nu þæs halgan weres lic þurh þæs hre*m*mes weardunge wið þa oðre fugelas .[287]

[[Captain Datianus speaking] 'Now throw his [Vincent's] body into a wide field, as food for birds, and as meat for foul dogs, and for the wild beasts,' and his cruel servants did so. Immediately, they carried the body to the middle of the field, and there threw it away, as meat for the wild beasts. It happened then soon, through God's providence, that a black raven soon flew there, and protected the body against the wild birds, and drove them all away with his wings, and also the wild beasts with his attacks. The almighty God, who once sent meat to Elias, his prophet, through the black raven, and fed him then through the bird's service, as [it] is well-known about that in the Book of Kings; the same one [God] now preserved the holy man's body, through the raven's protection against the other birds.]

Other Birds

Ælfric mentions several other birds by name. One of them is the *scealfor*, which is a diving bird, perhaps a cormorant.[288] In any case, it is a bird that dives into the water to snatch its prey, a practice which St Martin finds intolerable:

Ða geseah he swymman. scealfran on flode. and gelome doppetan. adune to grunde. ehtende ðearle. þære ea fixa; Þa cwæð se halga wer to his geferan; Þas fugelas habbað feonda gelicnysse. ðe gehwilce menn unwære beswicað. and grædelice gripað to grimre helle; Ða het martinus ða mæðleasan fugelas. ðæs fixnoðes geswican. and to westene siðian. and ða scealfran gewiton. aweg to holte. ealle endemes. and ða ea forleton. be martines hæse. þæs mæran weres;[289]

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[287] *LS2*, XXXVII. (Appendix) Passio Sancti Vincentii, p. 440, ll. 234-249.
[288] *scealfor* is used to translate *mergulus* (Lev 11:17). Also cf. Dutch *aalscholver*, a cormorant.
[289] *CH2*, XXXIV. Depositio Sancti Martini, p. 296, ll. 275-282.

[He then saw diver-birds swimming on the flood, and frequently plunging down to the bottom, cruelly pursuing the fish of the river. Then the holy man said to his companion: "These birds have a similarity to the enemies who deceive certain unwary men, and greedily snatch them to the grim hell." Then Martin ordered the speechless birds to desist from fishing, and to travel to the wilderness, and all the diver-birds went away to the forest together, and left the river at the command of Martin, that great man.]

The Hebrew root of the word for the plungeon (found in Lev 11:17 and Deut 14:17), or perhaps cormorant, means 'to cast down'.[290] The bird swoops down onto its unsuspecting prey with great speed, behaviour that St Martin here compares with devils catching unsuspecting humans. The speed and frequency with which the birds hunt seem to imply greed. This association of cormorants with greed is a continuing tradition. St Thomas Aquinas also accuses the bird of greed in the *Summa Theologica*, saying that "The cormorant, so constituted that it can stay a long time under water, denotes the glutton who plunges into the waters of pleasure."[291]

A more detailed description of the same scene occurs in *LS*, for which Ælfric wrote a more detailed life of St Martin:

He ferde ða þiderwerd mid sumum gebroðrum . þa geseah he scealfran swimmam on anum flode . and gelome doppetan adune to grunde ehtende þære fixa mid fræcra grædignysse . Þa cwæð se halga wer to his geferum þus . Þas fugelas habbað feonda gelicnysse þe syrwiað æfre embe ða unwaran . and grædiglice foð . and gefangene fordoð . and of þam ge-fangenum ge-fyllede ne beoð . Þa bebead martinus þam mæð-leasum scealfrum . þæt hi ge-swicon þæs fixnoðes . and siþedon to westene . and þa fugelas gewiton aweg sona to holte . ealle endemes . swa swa se arwurða het . Mid þære ylcan hæse he afligde þa scealfran . mid þære þe he deofla a-dræfde of mannum.[292]

[290] http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01517a.htm
[291] Online translation, http://www.newadvent.org/summa/210206.htm
[292] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, pp. 300-302, ll. 1313-1327.

[He [Martin] then went there with some brothers, when he saw diver-birds swimming on the flood, and frequently plunging down to the bottom, pursuing the fish with ravenous greed. Then the holy man spoke to his companions thus: "These birds have a similarity to enemies who always lay snares around the unwary, and catch [them] greedily, and destroy them when caught, and are not satisfied with what they caught." Then Martin asked the rapacious diver-birds to desist from fishing and to travel to the wilderness, and then the birds immediately went away to the forest, all together, just like the venerable man commanded. He put the diver-birds to flight with the same command with which he had driven out devils from men.]

It is explained in more detail here that the birds are condemned for their greed, and they are expelled the same way devils are expelled, linking them more clearly to devils who take away people's souls.
Another example of birds acting evilly are the rooks and ravens in The Seven Sleepers:

and ðær flugon sona to hrocas . and hremmas . and feala cynna fugelas . and þara haligra martyra eagan ut a-haccedon .[293]

[and rooks and ravens and birds of many kinds flew there immediately, and hacked out the eyes of the holy martyrs]

This time, the saints' bodies are indeed harmed, in contrast to the examples we have seen before of birds and other animals who do not touch a saint's body when they normally would scavenge human remains.

Throstles, or thrushes, are known for their song, and so could have distracted saints in their meditations, as happens in the Life of St Benedict. Although we have seen that black birds are not necessarily evil, the throstle's dark colour may indicate its sinfulness here:

[293] *LS*1, XXIII. De Septem Dormientibus, p. 492, ll. 76-78.

On sumum dæge þa ða he ana wæs. þa com him to se costnere; Witodlice an blac þrostle. flicorode ymbe his neb. swa gemahlice þæt he hi mid his handa gefon mihte gif he swa wolde. ac he hine bletsode mid þære halgan rode tacne. and se fugol sona aweg gewat;[294]

[On a certain day, when he [Benedict] was alone, the tempter came to him. Verily, a black throstle flickered around his face, so persistantly that he could have caught it with his hand, if he had wished so, but he blessed himself with the holy sign of the cross, and the bird immediately went away.]

The bird reminds the reader of the devil, as it tempts the saint to interfere. Although we have seen several instances of birds being compared to devils, they can also represent the soul. In the story of the Forty Soldiers, Ælfric refers to Ps 123:7, noting that the soldiers sing this line:

Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laquo uenantium . Et cetera . <þæt is on englisc;> Ure sawl is ahred of grine swa swa spearwa .[295]

[*'Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laquo venantium, et cetera.'* That is in English, "Our soul is set free from the snare just like a sparrow"]

Several birds are known for their sense of time. In a reference to Jer 8:7, Ælfric mentions the stork and the swallow, two migratory birds:

Be þære gymeleaste spræc se witega mid ceorigendre stemne þus cweþende: storc 7 swalewe heoldon þone timan | heora tocymes 7 þis folc ne oncneow godes dom;[296]

[About that negligence the prophet spoke with complaining voice, thus saying: "The stork and the swallow keep the time of their coming, and these people do not know God's judgement."]

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[294] *CH2*, XI. Sancti Benedicti, p. 93, ll. 45-49.
[295] *LS1*, XI. Natale Quadraginta Militum, pp. 252-254, ll. 250-251.
[296] *CH1*, XXVIII. Dominica XI Post Pentecosten, p. 412, ll. 64-66.

Strangely, Ælfric leaves out the kite and the turtle dove which occur in the Bible passage as well as in his source here (Gregory), even though he shows that he is familiar with those animals in other passages. Godden suggests that this may because Ælfric did not think those birds were migratory.[297] If this is true, it shows again that Ælfric did include his own observations of nature in his works. The rooster is known for a different kind of time-keeping, and announces the morning instead of a new season:

> Drihten eft andwyrde. anrædlice petre. þu me wiðsæcst ðriwa. on ðissere nihte. ær ðan ðe se hana. hafitigende crawe; [...] Þa genealæhton ma. hine meldigende. ac petrus wiðsoc. gyt ðriddan siðe. and se hana sona. hludswege sang;[298]
>
> [The Lord again answered Peter resolutely, "You will deny me three times in this night, before the flapping rooster will have crowed." [...] Then more [people] approached, identifying him, but Peter denied [him] yet a third time, and the rooster immediately sang loudly.]

The rooster awakes early, the implication being that Peter will deny Jesus very soon.

Deer

Deer and deer-like animals like gazelles are noted in the Bible for their beauty, swiftness and elegance (see e.g. 2 Kings 2:18 (2 Sam); Prov 5:19; Isa 35:6). In Anglo-Saxon art, and in later medieval tradition, the stag is usually taken to be a symbol of royalty. In the works of Ælfric, however, the animal occurs only once, in the Passion of St Eustace.

Animals and saints

Placidus (who is later renamed Eustace) is converted by the vision of Christ and the cross between a stag's antlers. He had followed the stag because it was so

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[297] *CH3*, p. 233.
[298] *CH2*, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, pp. 140-142, ll. 74-137.

much bigger and more beautiful than the other deer. Also of note is that the future saint's horse miraculously does not get tired:

> Placidas ða lange stod . and beheold þone heort . and wundrode his micelnysse . and ablan his æhtan . Hi*m* þa god geswutelode þ*æt* he him swilcne dom ne ondrede . ne his mægnes micelnysse ne wundrode . Witodlice betwux þæs heortes hornum glitenode gelicnys þære halgan cristes rode breohtre þonne sunnan leoma . and seo anlicnysse ures drihtnes hælendes cristes [...]
> Þa ða placidas þis gehyrde . þa wæs he afyrht mid þam mæstan ege . and feoll of his horse to eorðan .[299]

> [Then Placidas stood long and watched the hart, and wondered at its size, and ceased his pursuit. Then God revealed to him that he should not fear such majesty, nor wonder at the greatness of its might. Verily, between the hart's horns the shape of Christ's holy cross glittered, brighter than sunlight, and the shape of our Lord Saviour Christ; [it turns and speaks to him, telling him to follow Christ]
> When Placidas heard this, then he was afraid with the utmost awe, and fell off his horse to the earth.]

The motif is reminiscent of folk tales in which the hero is led on a quest by a special stag (in Arthurian tales, usually a large, white one). Eustace's faith is tested shortly after his conversion, when he seemingly loses his children and wife to wild animals. The vision of the stag was later borrowed for the legend of St Hubert.

Elephant

The elephant is mentioned only once by Ælfric, but he discusses the animal at great length for the benefit of his readers, who had in all probability never seen such an animal. The first elephant in England only arrived much later, as a gift from Louis IX to Henry III in 1254, when it was displayed in the Tower of

[299] *LS*2, XXX. Passio S. Eustachii Martyris, pp. 192-194, ll. 38-55.

London. In its native environment, the elephant was used for transporting people and goods, and was also used in war, as Ælfric describes in his chapter on the Maccabees. This did not just happen in the classical period (Hannibal) or in biblical times: Charlemagne also owned an elephant, a gift from the Saracen Harun al-Rashid, and took it to war. So, although the elephant was rare in Europe and probably unseen by Ælfric's audience, it was not altogether unknown.

Pliny described the elephant in great detail, and many of his assumptions about elephants survived for a long time. The idea that elephants have no knees (and thus cannot lie down), still used by John Donne[300] in 1612, is not one of those assumptions, but is wide-spread because it occurred in the *Physiologus*. The story about the knees is possibly a misunderstanding derived from Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* (Book 6.27), which contains a passage on elk that cannot lie down because they lack knees. The very next book mentions the elephant, which may have caused the confusion. In fact, the elephant is the only animal to possess four knees (one in each leg) rather than two. The elephant's leg may have appeared to have none, because even though it seems to have flat feet, it actually walks on its toes.

Despite its use in war, the elephant is generally seen as a peaceful animal (hence the need for mulberries to embolden it in Ælfric's description) and of great wisdom. In the *Physiologus*, the elephant is described as a chaste animal that needs the help of mandrake roots to mate, as it has no sexual desire of its own. The elephant and its mate serve there to remind the reader of Adam and Eve before the Fall, when sexual desire played no role, and to stress the importance of chastity.

Description of Animals

Ælfric's passage on the elephant is worth quoting in full here, as it contains quite an elaborate description of the animal:

> Hwæt ða eupator antioches sunu gegaderode his fyrde fyrran and nean . and sende hund-teontig þusenda gangendra manna . and twentig þusenda gehorsedra manna . and þrittig ylpas ealle getemode . and to wige gewenode

[300] "Nature's great masterpiece, an elephant [...] Yet nature hath given him no knees to bend" Donne, p. 189.

mid wundorlicum cræfte . Fif hund gehorsedra manna ferdon mid ælcum ylpe . and on ælcum ylpe wæs an wig-hus getimbrod . and on ælcum wig-huse wæron þrittig manna feohtende <mid cræfte> . and mid ge-cneordnysse farende Sumu*m* menn wile þincan syllic þis to gehyrenne . forþan þe ylpas ne comon næfre on engla lande . Ylp is ormæte nyten mare þonne sum hus . eall mid banum befangen binnan þam felle butan æt ðam nauelan and he næfre ne lið . Feower and twentig monða gæð seo modor mid folan . and þreo hund geara hi libbað gif hi alefede ne beoð . and hi man mæg wenian wundorlice to ge-feohte . Hwæl is ealra fixa mæst . and ylp is eallra nytena mæst . ac swa-þeah mannes gescead hi mæg gewyldan . Þa hæðenan ða ferdon to ðam gefeohte swyðe . and mid mor-beriu*m* gebyldon þa ylpas . forðan þe mor-berian him is metta leofost . Þær wæs swyðe egeslic here þæra hæðenra manna . ac swa-ðeah iudas heom eode to mid wige . and ofsloh þær sona six hund wera . and an his geferena eleazarus hatte arn to anum ylpe þe ðær <ænlicost> wæs . wende þ*æt* se cyning wære on ðam wig-huse ðe he bær . he arn mid atogenu*m* swurde betwux þam eorode middan . and sloh æfre on twa healfa þ*æt* hi sweltende feollon oð þ*æt* he to þam ylpe com . and eode him on under . stang ða hine æt ðam nauelan þ*æt* hi lagon ðær begen . heora egðer oðres slaga . [301]

[Well then, Eupator, Antiochus' son, gathered his army far and near, and sent a hundred thousand marching men, and twenty thousand mounted men, and thirty elephants, all tamed, and trained for war with wonderful craft. Five hundred mounted men went with each elephant, and on each elephant was a war-house built, and in each war-house were thirty men, fighting with craft and going with diligence. To some people it will seem strange to hear this, because elephants have never come to England. An elephant is an enormous animal, larger than a house, all surrounded with bones, within the skin, except at the navel, and it never lies down. Twenty-four months the mother goes with foal; and they live three hundred years if they are not injured; and people can train them wonderfully for battle.

[301] *LS*2, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, pp. 102-104, ll. 554-587.

> The whale is the largest of all fish, and the elephant is the largest of all animals, but nevertheless man's skill can tame them. The heathens then went to the battle swiftly, and with mulberries emboldened the elephants, because mulberries are their favourite food. There was a very terrible army of the heathen men, but nevertheless Judas went against them in battle, and quickly killed six hundred men; and one of his comrades [who was] called Eleazar, ran to an elephant that was the most splendid one there, [and] thought that the king was in the war-house that it carried. He ran with drawn sword through the middle of the army, and killed constantly on both sides, so that they fell dying, until he came to the elephant, and went under it, then stabbed it at the navel, so that they both lay there, each one the other's killer.]

Ælfric bases his passage fairly accurately on passages in the two books of the Maccabees in the Vulgate; he uses both, although he abbreviates the story. Ælfric describes how elephants are used and killed in battle.[302] Then he adds extra information, presumably especially for his Anglo-Saxon audience who have never seen an elephant in their country. Taking a brief detour from the overall narrative, Ælfric emphasizes the size of the elephant and its supposedly bony skin, which makes it impossible for it to lie down, although he does not mention that elephants were thought to have no knees.

For this extra information Ælfric may have used several sources.[303] In the *Exameron Anglice*, there is a similar passage on the elephant.[304] Ælfric bases himself on Ambrose with regard to the fact that the elephant can be tamed, but continues to quote Isidore verbatim on the elephant's maximum age of 300 years and its gestation period. Cross shows how parts of the description can come from both Isidore and Ambrose, both of whom compare the elephant to a mountain and hint at its soft belly, as Ælfric does in the *Exameron Anglice* and *LS*. Glorie adds Solinus[305] as a source for the elephant's inability to lie down, but, as Cross argues, all the information could have been gathered from Ambrose and Isidore. Cross also notes that Ælfric does not refer to Pliny's statement that an elephant's

[302] I Mcc 6:1-7.4 and 2 Mcc 9:1-11.
[303] Cf. Cross 1965, p. 376-372.
[304] Crawford 1968, p.55.
[305] Collectanea 25.2, 4, 3, 5.

legs do in fact bend. This information is apparently ignored by, or is unknown to, Ælfric.

Perhaps also remarkable, then, is the lack of moralizing in the passage. Ælfric refrains from a moral commentary on the elephant even though Pliny attributes many human qualities to the elephant, whom he "ranks next to man in intelligence, and whom he represents as worshiping the stars, learning difficult tricks, and as having a sense of justice, feeling of mercy, and so on."[306] Neither does he refer to Rabanus Maurus, although Ælfric probably knew his commentary on both books of the Maccabees, in which he describes Eleazar's courageous action as an example of his devotion. Again, Ælfric does not comment, even though he discussed Judas's merits in his *Letter to Sigeweard.* The story of the Maccabees was apparently of importance to Ælfric. Not only did he discuss it in the *Letter of Sigeweard*, but Skeat also notices that the homily is written "with more than usual care", as it has been expanded by Ælfric, and that the alliteration is "well marked".[307] It also is one of the longest texts in *LS*, running to 811 lines. This extra attention which Ælfric has paid to the Maccabees may explain why such a long reference to the elephant is included here, which is quite unique to this homily.

Although there is a reference to the elephants eating mulberries, the elephant is not used symbolically here: there is no link to morality. This makes the passage rather unusual in comparison with other animal references by Ælfric: Ælfric has clearly taken the time here to educate his readers about this exotic animal, something he does not do for the supposedly equally exotic camel.

Fish and Other Sea Animals

Fish in the Middle Ages were defined by their habitat rather than the way they bear their young. Thus, whales, seals and porpoises were seen as fish and seal and are therefore included here as well as real fish. The distinction between fish and other animals is made quite clearly by Ælfric himself:

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[306] Thorndike 1923, p. 74.
[307] *LS2*, p. 449.

Nis seo orþung þe we ut blawaþ . and in ateoð oþþe ure sawul ac is seo lyft þe ealle lichamlice þing on lybbað . butan fixum anum þe on flodum lybbað .[308]

[It is not the breath that we blow out and draw in, or our soul, but it is the air, in which all physical things live, except only fish that live in the waters.]

Water creatures, then, according to Ælfric, are different from other animals in that they were thought to breathe water rather than air.

Fish

The fish was a very early symbol of Christianity, as the Greek word for fish can be taken as an acronym for Christ. The word ἰχθύς then stands for Iēsous Christos Theou Huios Sōtēr (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour). The fish as a symbol of Christianity also refers to the scenes in Mt 14:15-21, Lk 9:12-17 and Jn 6:4-13, in which Jesus feeds the masses with fish and bread, and to the metaphor used for Christ's disciples stating that they would be 'fishers of men' (Mt. 4:19; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10).

Symbolic Use of Animals

Ælfric describes the fish as a symbol for Christian faith in this parable (from Lk 11:10-13), which uses several animals (see also under Bird and Wyrm):

He cwæð þa oðer bispel: hwilc fæder wile syllan his cylde stan. gif hit him hlafes bitt? oððe nædran: gif hit fisces bitt? oððe þone wyrm þrowend gif hit æges bit; God is ure fæder þurh his mildheortnysse; And se fisc getacnað: geleafan.; [...] Se fisc getacnað geleafan, for ðon þe his gecynd is. swa hyne swiðor þa yþa wealcað swa he strengra bið. 7 swiðor batað; Swa eac se geleaffulla mann. swa he swiðor bið geswenct for his geleafan: Swa se geleafa strengra bið. þær ðær he æltewe bið; gif he abryð on ðære ehtnysse. he ne bið þonne geleafa ac bið hiwung; [...] Seo næddre is geset on ðam godspelle ongean þam fisce: On nædran hiwe beswac se deoful. adam; 7 æfre he winð nu ongean urum geleafan: Ac seo gescyldnys. is æt urum fæder gelang; [...]

[308] *LS*1, I. Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, p. 22, ll. 214-216.

Nu ge gleawe menn nellað syllan eowrum cildum: Næddran for fisce: Nele eac ure heofonlica fæder us syllan. þæs deofles geleafleste gif we hine biddað þæt he us sylle soðne geleafan; And þu nelt syllan þinum bearne þrowend for æge. Nele eac god us syllan orwennysse for hihte;[309]

[He [Christ] then said another parable. "What father will give his child a stone, if it asks for a loaf? Or a snake, if it asks for a fish? Or a scorpion, if it asks for an egg?" God is our gather through his mercy, and the fish signifies faith [...]
The fish signifies faith, because its nature is such that the more the waves toss it, the stronger it is, and the more vigorously it strikes. Likewise, the faithful man, the more he is afflicted for his faith, the stronger will his faith be, wherever it is sound. If it fails under persecution, it is then not faith, but is dissimulation. [...]
The snake is placed in the gospel in opposition to the fish. In a snake's shape the devil deceived Adam; and he is now always striving against our faith: but the protection is dependent on our Father. [...]
Now you, prudent men, do not want to give your children a snake for a fish, nor also does your Heavenly Father want to give us the devil's unbelief, if we pray him to give us true faith.]

Godden remarks that Augustine and Bede both mention that the fish which survives the wild sea is like faith, but that "it is Haymo who offers the curious piece of natural history that the fish thrives on it (Hom. 92, PL 118, 533CD): Per piscem fides intellegitur, quia sicut piscis quo amplius fluctibus tunditur, eo magis crescit, sic fides quo amplius persecutiones patitur, eo magis proficit."[310] [By the fish is understood faith, because like the fish grows stronger when it is pounded by the waves more widely, so faith progresses more when it suffers more persecutions]. Ælfric also includes this idea: the fish is stronger the more resistance it meets.

The fish that is requested stands for faith. Its opposite here, the snake, is of course the devil trying to drive Christians away from faith. The description of the

[309] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, pp. 320-322, ll. 97-149.
[310] *CH*3, p. 150.

fish swimming up against the stream means people should try harder to be virtuous in difficult times. Godden notes that the idea that fish get stronger in a wild sea comes from Haymo.[311]

Instead of faith, fish can also denote the faithful. A well-known example is the image of the apostle Peter who becomes a fisher of people rather than of fish:

> Þa cwæð se Hælend þus to þam halgan Petre:
> Ne ondræd þu ðe nan ðing for ðissere dæde.
> Þu fehst men heonan forð, swa swa þu fixas fenge.[312]
>
> [Then the Saviour spoke thus to the holy Peter:
> Do not fear anything because of this deed.
> You will catch people from now on, like you caught fish.]

This image of the fish as people is extended in the same homily, when fish caught on one side of the boat signify something different than fish on the other side:

> Tuwa het se Hælend her on ðissum life
> mid nette fixian, and hy fengon sona
> heora net full fixa, for micelre getacnunge:
> æne ær his þrowunge, be ðam þe we nu secgað,
> and oðre siðe eft, æfter his æriste.
> [...]
> Æt ðam oðram cyrre, æfter his þrowunge,
> he het awurpan þæt net on ða swiðran healfe,
> and hy manega fixas [and] swiðe micelle gefengon[313]
>
> [The Saviour ordered to fish with a net

[311] *CH3*, p. 150.
[312] Pope2, XIV. Dominica VI Post Pentecosten, p. 517, ll. 36-38.
[313] Pope2, XIV. Dominica VI Post Pentecosten, p. 522-523, ll. 147-168.

twice here in this life, and they at once caught
their nets full of fish, with great significance:
once before his passion/suffering, about which we speak now,
and again at another time, after his resurrection.
[...]
At the other time, after his passion,
he ordered to cast out the net on the righthand side,
and they caught many and very big fish.]

On the left side of the ship are the evil people; on the right side the good people, corresponding with the superstition that the left side is unlucky and the right side lucky. Ælfric explains that the fish that break out of the nets are people who do evil:

'Þa sloh þæt net swa full sona þæra fisca
þæt hit hwæthwega bærst.' [314]

['Then [he threw] the net so that at once [it was] so full of fish
that it burst a little']

Ælfric then brings up as an example of evil people the Englishmen who collaborate with the Danes, tying this biblical image to his own time. The fishing on both sides of the boat is explained in more detail in *CH2*:

On ðam æftran fixnoðe wurdon gelæhte micele and manega fixas. and þæt net swa ðeah aðolode. for ðan ðe nan man ne ætberst ut of ðære toweardan gelaðunge. siððon he to godes rice becymð. [...] Þæt getel ðæra fixa. hæfð maran getacnunge. ðonne ge understandan magon; Hi gemetton fyr. and fisc onuppon. and hlaf onem. ða ða hi to lande comon; Se gebrædda fisc. and se hlaf hæfdon ane getacnunge; Se fisc getacnode þone hælend. þe wæs on ðære earfoðnysse his ðrowunge gebræd; [...] We rædað on oðre stowe. þæt crist æte æfter his æriste gebrædne fisc. and hunies beobread; Hwæt getacnode se

[314] Pope2, XIV. Dominica VI Post Pentecosten, p. 521, ll. 126-127.

gebrædda fisc. buton ðone geðrowadan crist; [...] He wæs us geworden on his ðrowunge gebræd fisc. and on æriste hunies beobread;[315]

[In the second fishing large and many fish were caught, and the net nevertheless endured, because no one will burst out from the future church, after he comes to God's kingdom. [...] The number of the fish has a greater meaning than you can understand. They found fire, and a fish upon it, and a loaf close by, when they came to land. The roasted fish and the loaf had one meaning. The fish signified the saviour, who was roasted in the hardship of his passion; [...] We read in another place, that Christ ate roasted fish and honey-comb after his resurrection. What did the roasted fish signify but the suffering Christ? [...] For us in his passion he became a roasted fish, and at his resurrection a honey-comb.]

In this passage, fishing is a metaphor for finding new believers. The fish, or believers, have to be caught at the right side of the boat, meaning they should be of good character. When Peter catches fish, he and his companions broil it and eat it with bread: the fish stands for Jesus, who 'broiled' in his passion. Another important occurrence of fish in the Bible is the feeding of the masses by Christ. Ælfric comments on this in two different place, first of all in *CH*1:

Ða genam se hælend þa fif hlafas. 7 bletsode: 7 tobræc 7 todælde betwux þæm sittendum; Swa gelice eac þa fixas todælde. 7 hi ealle genoh hæfdon; [...] Ða cwæð andreas þ*æt* an cnapa þær bære fif berene hlafas 7 twegen fixas; [...] Ða twegen fixas getacnodon. sealmsang. 7 ðæra witigena cwydas: an ðære gecydde. 7 bodode cristes tocyme mid sealmsange: 7 oðer mid witegunge; Nu sind þa twa gesetnyssa þ*æt* is sealmsang. 7 witegung. swilce hi syflinge wæron to ðam fif berenum hlafum: þ*æt* is, to ðam fif æ.licum bocum;[316]

[Then the saviour took the five loaves, and blessed and broke them, and divided them among those sitting; Likewise also he divided the fish, and they all had enough. [...] Then Andrew said that a boy there carried five barley

[315] *CH*2, XVI. Alius Sermo De Die Paschae, pp. 166-167, ll. 163-199.
[316] *CH*1, XII. Dominica In Media Quadragessima, pp. 275-279, ll. 18-106.

loaves and two fish. [...] The two fish signified psalm-singing and the sayings of the prophets. One of those announced and proclaimed Christ's coming with psalm-singing, and the other with prophecy. Now, there are two decrees, that is psalm-singing and prophecy, as if they were side-dishes[317] to the five barley loaves, that is, to the five legal books.]

The food distributed by Christ have a symbolic meaning. The two fish stand for the Psalms and the sayings of the prophets, the five breads for the five books of Jewish law, the Torah. This is slightly different from Ælfric's interpretation in *CH2*:

On oðre stowe we rædað þæt se hælend gereordode mid fif berenum hlafum. and mid twam fixum fif ðusend manna. and ðær wæron to lafe ðære crumena twelf wylian fulle; Æt ðisum gereorde wæron seofon hlafas. and feawa fixa; Her wæron gereordode feower ðusend manna. and seofan spyrtan afyllede mid þam bricum; [...] Þa fixas on ðisum gereorde. getacnodon ða lareowas ðe ða larlican bec awriton. be dihte þæs halgan gastes.[318]

[In another place we read that Jesus fed five thousand men with five barley loaves and with two fish, and [that] there were twelve baskets full left of the crumbs. At this meal there were seven loaves and a few fish. [...] The fish in this meal signified the teachers who wrote the instructive books, by direction of the Holy Ghost.]

Here, the fish stand for the writers of the books of law, a minor difference from before, when they stood for the books written. Finally, the fish going after the bait can be seen as greedy:

þa getimode þam reðan deofle. swa swa deð þam grædian fisce. þe gesihð *þæt* æs. 7 ne gesihð þone angel. þe on ðæm æse sticað: bið þonne grædig þæs æses. 7 forswylcð þone angel forð mid þam æse;[319]

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[317] *Syfling*: something which is eaten with bread, perhaps relish, fish or soup
[318] *CH2*, XXV. Dominica VIII Post Pentecosten, pp. 230-233, ll. 19-113.
[319] *CH1*, XIV. Dominica Palmarum, p. 296, ll. 171-174.

[Then it happened to the fierce devil as it does to the greedy fish, which sees the bait, and does not see the hook which sticks in the bait; then [it] is greedy for the bait and swallows the hook with the bait.]

Here, the devil overlooks the divinity of the (also) human Christ, like a fish that overlooks the hook in the bait. The fish that falls for the bait is considered to have been trapped because of its greed.

Saints and Animals

Just as Christ ensured that Peter and his companions could catch fish again (literally as well as metaphorically) after a bad spell, St Martin is also able to do so. St Martin miraculously changes the luck of the local fishermen:

On easter-dag*um* he wolde etan fisc gif he hæfde . þa on sumu*m* easter-dæge axode he þone profost hwæðer he fisc hæfde to þam freols-dæge . and he to andsware cwæð . þæ*t* hi ealle ne mihton ne fisceras . ne he sylf gefon ænne sprot . Ða cwæð se halga wer . wurp ut nu þin net . and þe fixnoð becymð . and he cunnode þæs sona . Wearp þa ut his net . and þær wearð on-innan an ormæte leax . and he hine up-ateah bær ham to mynstre . and þa*m* halgan gearcode .[320]

[On Easter-days he wanted to eat fish if he had it. Then on a certain Easter-day, he asked the provost whether he had fish for the feast; and he said in answer that they all could not, neither the fishermen nor himself, catch a single sprat. Then said the holy man: "Cast out your net then, and a catch of fish will come to you." And he tried it immediately, cast out his net, and there was within [it] an enormous salmon; and he drew it up, carried it home to the monastery and prepared it for the holy one.]

Fish also leave St Vincent's body in peace (see under Birds), or are provided as food for saints (see under Eagle). The fish assisting the holy person can also be

[320] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 298, ll. 1267-1276.

found in the Bible. Ælfric describes how Peter finds money for toll in a fish he catches:

> Đe læs þe we hi æswician: ga to þære sæ 7 wurp ut þinne angel. 7 þone fisc þe hine hraðost forswylhð geopena his muð. þonne findst þu ðæron ænne gyldenne wecg nim þone 7 syle to tolle for me. 7 for þe; [321]
>
> [Lest we should fail them, go to the sea, and cast out your hook, and open the mouth of the fish which first swallows it, then you will find therein a gold piece; take that and give it as toll for me and for you.]

Whale

Ælfric describes the whale quite rightly as the largest sea animal in existence, comparing it to the elephant, which he considers the greatest land animal:

> Hwæl is ealra fixa mæst . and ylp is eallra nytena mæst . [322]
>
> [The whale is the largest of all fish, and the elephant is the largest of all animals.]

The whale is considered to be dangerous.[323] Despite its ferocious nature, though, the whale can also act for good on God's command, as it does when it saves Jonah:

> Nu cweð se trahtnere þæt nan wildedeor. ne on fiþerfotum ne on creopendum nis to wiðmetenne yfelum wife; [...]
> Se witega ionas wæs gehealdan unformolten on þæs hweles innoðe þreo niht: 7 seo swicole dalila þone strangan samson mid olæcunge bepæhte. 7 bescornum feaxe his feondum belæwde; Eornostlice nis nan wyrmcynn. ne wildeora cyn. on yfelnysse gelic yfelum wife; [324]

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[321] *CH*1, XXXIV. Dedicatio Ecclesie S. Michahelis, pp. 470-471, ll. 163-166.
[322] *LS*2, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, pp. 104, l. 572.
[323] Cf. its description in the Old English Physiologus.
[324] *CH*1, XXXII. Decollatio Sancti Iohannis Babtiste, pp. 456-457, ll. 172-188.

[Now says the expositor that no wild beast, neither among the four-footed[325] nor the creeping, is to be compared to an evil woman. [...]
The prophet Jonah was kept unconsumed in the stomach of the whale for three nights, and the treacherous Delilah deceived the strong Samson with flattery, and, his hair being shorn, betrayed him to his enemies. Really, there is no kind of serpent nor of any wild beast resembling an evil woman in evilness.]

Ælfric claims that no wild animal (not just the whale, see also under lion and wyrm) is as bad as an evil woman. Jonah survived by being swallowed by a whale, wheras Samson was deceived by Delilah, proving that wild animals can show more mercy. The scene of Jonah in the whale is also described in the following passage:

god þa gegearcode ænne hwæl. 7 he forswealh þone witegan 7 abær hyne to þam lande. þe he to sceolde 7 hine þær ut aspaw; [326]

[God then prepared a whale, and it swallowed the prophet, and carried him to the land to which he should go, and there [it] spat him out.]

As in the later saints' lives, the animal, ferocious under normal circumstances, acts according to God's will to preserve the life of the holy person.

Seal

Saints and Animals

A possible example of Ælfric observing nature personally occurs in the Life of St Cuthbert in *CH*[327], and this time Ælfric is very likely to have observed the animals in question personally. Ælfric specifies that the sea animals that dry the saint's feet are seals, a fact not mentioned in his sources. In fact, Bede calls them otters. The animals dry St Cuthbert's feet after he has prayed standing in the sea:

[325] I have translated 'four-footed' rather than 'feather-footed', as it occurs here in opposition to 'creeping.'
[326] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, p. 318, ll. 28-29.
[327] On Cuthbert, see Bonner 1995.

> Efne ða comon twegen seolas of sælicum grunde, and hi mid heora flyse his fet drygdon, and mid heora blæde his leoma beðedon, and siððan mid gebeacne his bletsunge bædon, licgende æt his foton on fealwum ceosle. Þa cuðberhtus ða sælican nytenu on sund asende. mid soðre bletsunge, and on merigenlicere tide mynster gesohte.[328]
>
> [Well, then two seals came from the sea-bed, and they dried his feet with their fur, and warmed his limbs with their breath, and afterwards asked his blessing with a sign, lying at his feet on the fallow sand. Then Cuthbert sent the marine animals to the sea with a sincere blessing, and sought the monastery at morning tide.]

The sea animals keep the saint warm and even ask for a blessing. Despite Ælfric's reference to seals, this touching image usually involves otters, both in Bede and in visual depictions of the saint. Ælfric's life goes back to three sources: an anonymous prose life, which in turn inspired two works by Bede (metrical and prose).[329] Lapidge states that "Ælfric's version corresponds most frequently in phrasing to Bede's metrical life, but there are also details unique to each of the other versions. He presumably consulted all four (there is no evidence of a conflated version prior to him) and it is often hard to be precise about which version was the 'source' for particular passages."[330] Bede's metrical version mentions two sea animals that are not defined any further. This reflects the earlier anonymous life which does not name the animals either. The earlier *Anonymous Life* states:

> Dum autem de mare ascendens, et in arenosis locis litoris flectens genua orabat, venerunt statim post vestigia eius **duo pusilla animalia maritima** humiliter proni in terram, lambentes pedes eius, volutantes tergebant pellibus suis, et calefacientes odoribus suis. Post servitium autem et ministerio impleto accepta ab eo benedictione, ad cognatas undas maris recesserunt. [emphasis mine]

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[328] *CH2*, X. Depositio S. Cuthberhti Episcopi, p. 83, ll. 81-87.
[329] Blokhuis 1996, p. 107-138.
[330] See *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/

> [Then coming up out of the sea, he prayed, bending his knees on the sandy part of the shore, and immediately there followed in his footsteps two little sea animals, humbly prostrating themselves on the earth; and, licking his feet, they rolled upon them, wiping them with their skins and warming them with their breath. After this service and ministry had been fulfilled and his blessing had been received, they departed to their haunts in the waves of the sea] [331]

Bede's prose version on the other hand is very clear about the fact that they are otters:

> Quod dum ageret, venere continuo duo de profundo maris **quadrupedia quae vulgo lutraeae vocantur**. Haec ante illum strata in arna, anhelitu suo pedes eius fovere coeperunt, ac villo satagebant extergere. Completoque ministerio, percepta ab eo bendictione patrias sunt relapsa sub undas. (emphasis mine)
>
> [While he was doing this, there came forth from the depths of the sea two four-footed creatures which are commonly called otters. These, prostrate before him on the sand, began to warm his feet with their breath and sought to dry him with their fur, and when they had finished their ministrations they received his blessing and slipped away into their native waters.][332]

Colgrave notes that Cuthbert is known for his friendliness towards animals in both the Egyptian and the Irish tradition:

> In the "Irish" life a story is told of a seal which rescued a psalter which Cuthbert had dropped into the sea. [...] In the V.A. and V.P. we learn how Cuthbert was provided with food by his horse, how the sea animals at Coldingham ministered to him, how an eagle provided him with food,

[331] Colgrave 1940, p. 80-81.
[332] Colgrave 1940, p. 189-191.

> how the birds departed from his crops at his command and how the ravens brought him lard for his boots. And in every case Cuthbert's attitude towards the animals and birds is uniformly kind and thoughtful."[333]

Colgrave does not explain the difference between Ælfric's and Bede's version, but notes that the otter is a more probable candidate, as it occurs in many Irish lives. "Probably the story was originally told of otters, for the otter in Ireland was supposed to have magical properties, and several stories are told of their friendliness to the saints in the Irish lives. An otter used to bring St Coemgen a salmon every day to supply his monastery, while on another occasion, when the same saint dropped a psalter into a lake, an otter dived for it and brought it up unharmed."[334]

Why then does Aelfric, who is generally a conscientious translator, change otters into seals? Is it a mistake? Is the meaning of Latin *lutra* unclear? Does he know of other saints' lives with otters, and confuse them with this one? Lapidge notes that there is one version of Bede's metrical life that mentions pregnant seals:

> What shall I say of the seals, weighed down with the burden of pregnancy, who did not dare to drop the offspring of their womb unless the saint has blessed them beforehand with his holy right hand? The seals' watery homeland also served the saint with its waves.[335]

However, this particular manuscript was probably an early redaction, which was later corrected, and is not the one used by Ælfric. Did Ælfric, then, think that Bede was confused about the otter? Rather than any of the theories offered, I think a possible explanation is the above-mentioned real life observation. Although the otter probably occurred more frequently in medieval England than it does nowadays, it did not make its habitat in the sea. European otters are not sea animals. Thus Cuthbert can hardly have sighted them while

[333] Colgrave 1940, p. 320.
[334] Colgrave 1940, p. 319.
[335] Lapidge in Bonner 1995, p. 80.

praying in the sea near Lindisfarne. Seals, however, abound around the Farne Islands. Even today, the area is home to Britain's largest colony of Atlantic grey seals. Ælfric, who may well have visited Lindisfarne, may have been aware of this and adjusted the text accordingly.

Fox

Although the Biblical fox can be a plague (destroying vineyards, for example in S. of S. 2:15), the fox is often portrayed in medieval texts as an animal of great cunning. It seems that Ælfric is using this different portrayal of the fox in *LS*.

Symbolic Use of Animals

Ælfric refers to a passage that occurs in both Mt 8:20 and Lk 9:58, in which Christ sends away a hopeful follower with the words that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but that he himself has nowhere to rest his head. In Matthew, this scene takes place after the healing of the masses and the sending of them away. A scribe comes up to Christ and offers to follow him. In Luke on the other hand, the passage comes after Christ was refused entry into a Samaritan village. James and John propose to pray for punishment, but Christ rebukes them. In both passages, however, the phrase is followed by the scene of a man who wishes to follow Christ, but still has to bury his dead father. Christ tells that person to let the dead bury the dead.

Ælfric uses the statement in *LS* to indicate that Christ sees through the would-be follower:

> Ða cwæð se hælend him to . Foxas habbað holu . and fugelas habbað nest . and ic næbbe wununge hwider ic min heafod ahyldan mæge . Crist sceawode his heortan and geseah his prættas . forðan þe he mid soðfæstnysse ne sohte þone hælend . ac foxunga wæron wunigende on him . and up-ahefednys swilce healice fugelas .[336]

> [Then the saviour said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, and I do not have a dwelling, where I can lay down my head." Christ looked into his

[336] *LS*1, XVI. Sermo De Memoria Sanctorum, pp. 348, ll. 157-163.

heart, and he saw his tricks, because he did not seek the saviour with sincerity, but foxlike wiles were dwelling in him, and haughtiness, like lofty birds;]

Christ's reference to the fox and the bird then hints that the man is wily like a fox and proud like a bird, and therefore not a suitable follower. In *CH*1, Ælfric surprisingly omits the fox, instead using the more general 'deor':

Ne teah crist him na to on þisum life land. ne welan swa swa he be him sylfum cwæð: deor habbað hola 7 fugelas habbað nest: hwær hi restað 7 ic næbbe hwider ic ahylde min heafod; [337]

[Christ did not gain for himself in this life either land or riches, as he said about himself: "The animals have holes, and the birds have nests, where they rest, and I have nowhere where I lay down my head."]

In this passage, Ælfric emphasises that Christ was telling the man that he was poor, hinting that following him may be more troublesome the man expects. It is interesting that in the passage in which Ælfric neglects to mention the fox specifically, he also neglects to point out the would-be follower's cunningness.

Frog

Frogs occur only once in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, as part of a plague sent to Pharaoh (see under Bear and Insects). The Bible mentions frogs only as vermin (Ex 8:1-15; Ps 78:45; Ps 105:30) and as unclean animals (Rev 16:13).

Hare

The hare was a native animal in Anglo-Saxon England, unlike the rabbit which was introduced later by the Normans.[338] It was seen in the Bible as an unclean animal, a fact on which Ælfric comments:

Hara wæs ða unclæne forðan ðe he [nis] clifer-fete . [339]

[337] *CH*1, X. Dominica In Quinquagessima, p. 263, ll. 145-147.
[338] Wilson, p. 31.

[A hare was then unclean, because it is not cloven-footed]

This passage discusses the old laws about clean and unclean animals for food. The animals that were fit to eat chewed the cud and had cloven feet: the chewing stands for meditating on faith (something good Christians should do), the two parts of the feet for the Old and New Testament. Ælfric then states, however, that the old laws no longer apply. Texts available in Anglo-Saxon England, such as the *Penitential of Theodore*, list hare as suitable for food.[340]

Saints and Animals

St Martin pities a hare and lets it escape by commanding the hounds to stop chasing it, thereby showing both his mercy and his power:

> Martin*us* eac hwilon gemette sumne huntan . þa drifan heora hundas swyðe ænne haran. geond þone bradan feld . and he bigde gelome þohte mid þa*m* bigu*m* æt-berstan þam deaðe . Ða of-hreow þa*m* halgan þæs haran frecednyss . and þa*m* hundum be-bead þ*æt* hi ablunnon þæs rynes . and þone haran for-leton mid fleame æt-berstan . Þa hundas ða stodon æt þa*m* forman worde swilce heora fet wæron gefæstnode to þære eorþan . and se hara ge-sund þam hundum æteode .[341]
>
> [Martin also once met a hunter; their hounds then drove a hare fanatically over the broad field, and it turned frequently, thinking with that turning to get away fom death. Then the saint took pity on the hare's danger, and commanded the hounds to stop running, and to let the hare escape by flight. Then the hounds stood at the first word, as if their feet were fastened to the earth, and the hare escaped safely from the hounds.]

The doubling movements described here are indeed typical of the hare, which uses it to distract its predators.

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[339] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, p. 72, l. 79.
[340] Hagen 1995, p. 132.
[341] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 284, ll. 1056-1065.

Hedgehog (Porcupine)

The hedgehog or porcupine is used by Ælfric as a simile in two saints' lives. St Sebastian is compared to a hedgehog because he is shot with arrows that stick out from his body like a hedgehog's bristles. St Edmund is also shot at, and then compared to St Sebastian. The sheer number of arrows or javelins used to make the saint resemble a porcupine indicates the extreme violence of the saints' attackers, be they the Roman emperor and his men or the Vikings. St Sebastian's ordeal is described by Ælfric as follows:

> Þa læddan þa cempan þone cristes þegn . and setton hine to myrcelse . swa swa se manfulla het . and heora flan hi*m* on afæstnodon . foran . and hindan . swa þicce on ælce healfe hwylce iles byrsta . and for-leton hine swa licgan for deadne .[342]
>
> [Then the soldiers led away Christ's servant [St Sebastian], and positioned him as a mark, just like the wicked man [Diocletian] commanded, and fastened their arrows on him front and back, as thickly on every side as a hedgehog's bristles, and thus left him lying for dead.]

Whereas St Sebastian is covered in arrows, like a hedgehog is covered in bristles, St Edmund's fate is slightly different:

> Hi scuton þa mid gafelucu*m* swilce him to gamenes to . (sic) oð þ*æt* he eall wæs besæt mid heora scotungum swilce igles byrsta . swa swa sebastian*us* wæs .[343]
>
> [They then shot [him] with javelins as if for their amusement, until he was all beset with their shots, as with a hedgehog's bristles, just like Sebastian was.]

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[342] *LS*1, V. Passio Sancti Sebastiani Martyris, p. 144, ll. 425-429.
[343] *LS*2, XXXII. Passio Sancti Eadmundi Regis, pp. 322-323, ll. 116-118.

The shooting of Edmund is reminiscent of St Sebastian's fate, but Edmund is shot at with javelins (*gafeluc* means spear or javelin) rather than the arrows that are traditional for St Sebastian.[344]

Insects (and other small animals)

In medieval literature, insects are usually considered a pest, causing harm to human beings. Maggots (the larvae of the fly, see under *wyrmas*) eat the bodies of the sick and dying; lice, gnats and fleas are a nuisance; grasshoppers eat crops. The exception to this is the bee, which was considered to be a useful animal, and was thought to be industrious and chaste. Humans have kept bees since prehistoric times, and bees were used in Anglo-Saxon England for various products such as honey, mead, and candles (from the wax).

Natural History

Ælfric says that insects such as bees, wasps and hornets were thought to grow spontaneously from rotting meat, which is an understandable mistake as the tiny eggs are of course hard to see. It was speculated by Ælfric and his sources that different cadavers produced different kinds of insects:

> [...] ac us secgað lareowas
> þæt of fearres flæsce, fule stincendum,
> beoð beon acende, þæt hi cuce swa fleoð,
> 7 of assan flæsce cumað (wæpsas)
> (7) of h(orses flæsce) cumað eac hyrnetta,
> 7 on ælcum wæstme, gyf hit miswent on geare
> cumað (:::)drige wurmas, swa swa we gesawon oft. [345]

> [[...] but teachers say to us
> that bees are born from the meat of an ox, stinking foully,
> so that they fly alive thus,
> and wasps come from the meat of an ass
> and hornets also come from horse meat,

[344] Note however that the word *flan* used there can also denote a javelin, barb or dart.
[345] Pope1, I. Nativitas Domini, p. 208, ll. 268-274.

and in all fruit, if it decays in a year
... worms come, as we have often seen.]

This idea about the generation of insects out of decaying material was widespread, and can be traced back among others to Isidore's *Etymologiae*, which mentions the 'fact' in two different places. First of all, Isidore describes the mutation of one creature into another as a natural phenomenon in Book XI:[346]

> [Indeed, many creatures naturally undergo mutation and, when they decay, are transformed into different species – for instance bees, out of the rotted flesh of calves, or beetles from horses, locusts from mules, scorpions from crabs. Thus Ovid (Met. 15.369): If you take its curved arms from a crab on the shore a scorpion will emerge and threaten with its hooked tail.]

Bees are said to emerge from calves here, but Ælfric more closely follows Isidore's next passage about the same mutation process in Book XII:[347]

> [Many people know from experience that bees are born from the carcasses of oxen, for the flesh of slaughtered calves is beaten to create these bees, so that worms are created [from] the putrid gore, and the worms then become bees. Specifically, the ones called 'bees' originate from oxen, just as hornets come from horses, drones from mules, and wasps from asses.]

The source of this belief goes back much further than Isidore. Virgil, for example, a source known to Isidore, also describes in his *Georgica* how rotting corpses of slaughtered bulls can bring forth bees, and how this can be of help to bee-keepers whose bees have swarmed. He describes this as a method used in Egypt, where the bees are different and have shorter life-spans than the long-lived, ether-breathing bees elsewhere. Virgil himself is following a long tradition that seems to have arisen in the Hellenistic period:

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[346] Bk XI.iv.3, Barney 2006, p. 246.
[347] Bk XII.viii.2, Barney 2006, p. 269.

> Diese [Methode] ist seit der ersten 'alexandrischen' Epoche des Hellenismus in Ägypten verbreitet und als dichterischer und agronomischer Topos reich bezeugt (s. Philitas frg. 22 P, Callimach. frg. 383, 4 Pf., Theocr. Syrinx 3, Archelaus bei Varro rust. 3, 16,4, Nic. alex. 446f., ther. 741 mit Schol., Eumelos bei Eusebius chron. 760 a. Chr. [...], Ps. Democr. frg. 80f. Wellmann, Mago bei Colum. 9,14, 6; schließlich im Gefolge Vergils auch Ovid, Plinius maior, Isidor u.v.a.). Die ältesten literarischen Bezeugungen und zugleich eine teilweise Erklärung für die Entstehung des Mythos sind Erzählungen von Bienenschwärmen, die sich in ausgedörrten hohlen Schädeln niedergelassen haben. [348]
>
> [This method has spread since the first 'alexandrian'epoch of Hellenism in Egypt, and is well-illustrated as a poetic and agricultural topos (cf. Philitas frg. 22 P, Callimach. frg. 383, 4 Pf., Theocr. Syrinx 3, Archelaos in Varro rust. 3, 16,4, Nic. alex. 446f., ther. 741 with Schol., Eumelos in Eusebius chron. 760 a. Chr. [...], Ps. Democr. frg. 80f. Wellmann, Mago in Colum. 9,14, 6; and finally, following Vergil, also in Ovid, Pliny the Elder, Isidore, and many others). The oldest literary references and at the same time a partial explanation for the rise of the myth are the stories of bee swarms, which had settled in dried out hollow skulls.]

As Erren points out in his commentary, every-day observation of the apparent development of insects and worms in rotting material would have been enough to affirm the belief in spontaneous generation of animals. For yet another literary example of the association of insects with dead animals, Ælfric was probably also aware of Judg 14:8, in which Samson finds a swarm of bees with honey in the body of a dead lion.

By pointing out the spontaneous generation of animals, Ælfric also plays down the achievement of Egyptian magicians who seem to create gnats out of thin air:

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[348] Erren 2003, p. 896-897.

> This excursion into the miracles wrought by nature without human interference seems to be intended to put the Egyptian magicians in their place as masters of a limited and purely natural magic. In homily IV.142, Ælfric says that the magicians were trying to make *gnættas* when they were thwarted by the finger of God. [...] Hence the miraculous generation of bees, wasps, and hornets out of decaying flesh (as reported by Isidore) and of worms out of spoiled fruit has an obvious relevance. Behind Ælfric's abrupt comment may well be the long discussion of the Egyptian magicians in Augustine's De Trinitate, lib. II, cap. Vii-ix. In chapter viii Augustine says, *Solus Deus creat etiam illa quae magicis artibus transformantur* (Migne, PL XLII. 875), and in chapter ix we read,[349]
>
> Hoc est videre, quam multi hominess noverunt, ex quibus herbis, aut carnibus, aut quarumcumque reru quibuslibet succis aut humoribus, ... quae animalia nasci soleant: quorum se quis tam demensaudeat dicere creatorem? Quid ergo mirum, si quemadmodum potest nosse quilibet nequissimus homo, unde illi vel ille vermes muscaeque nascantur; ita mali angeli pro subtilitate sui sensus in occultioribus elementorum seminibus norunt, unde ranae serpentesque nascantur, et haec per certas et notas temperationem opportunitates occultis motibus adhibendo faciunt creari, non creant? (Ibid. 878)"

So, even a lowly gnat cannot be created by anyone but God alone, while magicians have no chance to achieve this:

> [...] woldon wyrcan gnættas, ac God him forwyrnde;[350]
>
> [[magicians in Egypt] wanted to create gnats, but God prevented them (from doing that).]

[349] Pope1, p. 224.
[350] Pope1, IV. Dominica III In Quadragesima, p. 272, l. 142.

Ælfric notes that insects are less plentiful in winter, but appear again later (see also under Birds):

> Hwær beoð þas fleogan 7 fela fugolcynne. þe nan man ne gesihð naht eaðe on wintra. 7 fela wildeora þe eallne winter slapað 7 eft beoð æteowde ansunde. 7 cuce. æfter swa langsumum slæpe þurh ðone lyfiendan god; [351]
>
> [Where are the flies and the many kinds of birds, which nobody spots easily in winter, and many wild animals that sleep all winter and afterwards are revealed unharmed and alive after such long-lasting sleep through the living God;]

This characteristic is also used symbolically, as people can learn from it that God will be able to revive them after death: if God does that for an insignificant animal, surely humans will be saved too.

The destructive habits of moths are referred to in a passage, echoeing Mt 6:20, about distributing alms:

> dælan nu ælmyssan, and don beforan us,
> þæt we habban hy eft be hundfealdum us sylfum,
> þær þær nan þeof ne mæg ne ne mot hy forstelen,
> ne nan moððe ne mæg ne nan om hym derian,
> ac hy andsunde þær us beoð gehealdenne.[352]
>
> [now let us distribute alms, and do it before us,
> so that we will have them for ourselves later by a hundred-fold,
> there where no thief can or may steal them,
> nor any moth or rust harm them,
> but they will be kept safe for us there.]

Instead of hoarding possessions somewhere where moths may damage them, people should give them away, and will be repaid in heaven.

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[351] *CH*1, Homily XVI (Appendix B.2), p. 533, ll. 5-8.
[352] Pope2, XVI. Dominica X Post Pentecosten, p. 553, ll. 158-162.

Symbolic Use of Animal

As well as being a symbol of diligence and eloquence,[353] the bee can also represent chastity, as bees were believed to be parthenogenic. As such, a bee is sometimes used as a symbol for Mary, although the idea of the bees' chastity is much older.[354] Biologically speaking, there is some truth in this symbolism, as the only bee to propagate in a hive is the queen bee (the drones who mate with her die); the other bees do not reproduce. However, in the classical and medieval period, authors like Virgil and Isidore (Bk XII, viii.1 and 3) thought that the largest bee in the hive must be male, and thus refer to it as a king. In book 4 of the Georgica, for example, Virgil mentions mentions that bees do not have sex. He describes how bees carry the brood in their mouths and that the brood is born from leaves and herbs. Whether they knew about the function of the queen bee or not, people in the Middle Ages still observed that bees as a general rule do not seem to mate; thus Ælfric states:

> Sindon þeahhwæðere sume gesceafta þe tymað buton hæmede. and bið ægðer ge seo moder mæden. ge seo dohtor þæt sind beon; Hi tymað heora team mid clænnysse; Of ðam hunige hi bredað heora brod. and beoð acennede þa geongan mid mægðhade. and ða yldran wuniað on mægðhade; [355]
>
> [There are, nevertheless, some creatures which reproduce without intercourse, and both the mother and the daughter are virgins, such as bees; They produce their offspring with purity; From the honey they breed their brood, and the young ones are brought forth with virginity, and the older ones continue in virginity.]

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[353] St. Ambrose of Milan has a beehive as his symbol. Ambrose's head was covered with a swarm of bees as a child as a sign of his future eloquence. The true and righteous words and judgments of the Lord are said to be sweeter than honey (Ps 19:10; Ps 119:103; Ezek 3:1-3; Rev 10:9-11). The pleasant words of humans are also compared to the health-giving honeycomb (Prov. 16:24). A sweet-talking person's lips "drip as the honeycomb," even if they are the deceitful words of a harlot (Song 4:11; Prov. 5:3).

[354] See e.g. Theophrastus (c. plant. 2, 17, 9).

[355] *CH2*, I. De Natale Domini, p. 5, ll. 86-90.

Godden notes that sources for the description of the virginal bee are plentiful, but that Ælfric's description is still unusually detailed and does not seem to follow one particular source.[356] The peculiar idea that bees bring forth their young from their own honey could perhaps be derived from Virgil, who describes bees eating their own honey, right before his description of the generation of bees from rotting flesh, another idea we have seen in Ælfric's work. Perhaps, however, it was simply because for an observer the cells which contain the larvae are hard to distinguish from cells with honey.[357]

The gnat can signify a small sin that pales in comparison to a major ill deed, represented by the camel (see there as well) in the following passage:

> *Liquantes culicem et glutientes camelum:*
> Hy ahlyttriað þone stut of heora liðe mid seohhann,
> and hy ealne forswelgað þone olfend gehalne.
> Þæt is, þæt hy tælað mid teonfullum mode
> and mid modignysse, þe is gylta mæst,
> þa lytlan gyltas, swylce hy 'h'luttrion þone stut,
> and nellað þa micclan synna on hym sylfum gebetan,
> ac wyllað mid hospe huxlice tælan
> oðra manna misdæda, þonne hy maran sylfe habbað.[358]
>
> [*Straining out a gnat and devouring a camel:*
> They sieve the gnat out of their drink with a strainer,
> and they swallow the complete camel whole.
> That is, that they speak ill of the small sins with spiteful mind
> and with pride, which is the biggest sin, as if they strain out the fly,
> and do not want to to make amends for the great sins in themselves,
> but they want to speak ill of the bad deeds of other people insultingly,
> with scorn, when they themselves have (done) more.]

[356] *CH*3, p. 349.
[357] Anglo-Saxon monks sometimes kept bees: see Keynes 1993, p. 267.
[358] Pope2, XIII. Dominica V Post Pentecosten, p. 504, ll. 163-171.

Ælfric's source according to Pope is Jerome's *In Matth.* vii. 3-5, where he is commenting on Mt 23:24.[359] Jerome's words echo the Vetus Latina instead of his own Vulgate, which has the phrasing 'excolantes culicem, camelum autem glutientes'.

It is common to see the insect representing the small and insignificant, such as when normal people seem like mere grasshoppers to giants:

> þær synd micele burga and mærlice geweallode,
> and þær we gesawon eac swylce entas,
> Enaches cynnes þæs ealdan entes;
> we synd wið hi geðuhte swylce oðre gærstapan.[360]
>
> [There are large and impressively walled castles,
> and there we also saw such giants,
> of Enoch's kin, the old giant;
> it seemed to them we are just like other grass-hoppers.]

No matter how small an insect can be, it can still be a nuisance. Ælfric points out the irony in the fact that these tiny animals can hurt Adam after the Fall, whereas before he was safe even from dragons:

> Eft, þa þa he agylt hæfde, and Godes bebod tobræc,
> þa forleas he þa gesælþa, and on geswincum leofode,
> swa þæt hine [biton lys] bealdlice and flean,
> þone þe ær ne dorste se draca furþon hreppan.[361]
>
> [Afterwards, when he [Adam] had sinned, and he broke God's command,
> then he lost those blessings, and lived in hardship,
> so that lice and fleas bit him boldly,
> whom before even the dragon did not dare to touch.]

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[359] Pope 2, p. 504, footnote.
[360] Pope2, XX. De Populo Israhel, p. 648, ll. 161-164.
[361] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, p. 679, ll. 45-48.

This same irony appears in the plagues that punish Pharaoh: Ælfric decribes how, although God could have chosen large animals such as bears (see there) to threaten the land, instead Egypt is overcome by tiny creatures, which is considered a fitting punishment for Pharaoh's pride:

> Swa wæs iu Pharao, þe wann ongean God,
> se Egip(ti)sca cyning, swa swa us cydde Moyses,
> þæt God hyne gewylde mid gnættum (7) fleogum
> [...]
> Þa mæðleasan hundes lys þe him on þone muð flugon
> ne þæra (:::)ena meniu þe his mete besæton,
> ne þæra gærstapa þe gnogon (::::::::)
> [...]
> Eaðe mihtig God, gyf he swa wolde,
> sendan (:::::::) breman cyninge,
> dracan eac 7 næddran, 7 hine swa (:::::)
> (:::::::::) sceafta sceoldon gewyldan
> his modignysse[362]

> [Thus formerly there was Pharaoh, the Egyptian king,
> who strove against God, as Moses told us,
> so that God subdued him with gnats and flies
> [...]
> The rapacious dog-lice which flew into his mouth
> nor the multitude of .... which sat on his food,
> nor of the grass-hoppers which gnawed (::::)
> [...]
> Mighty God could easily, if he had wanted that,
> have sent (::::) the famous king
> dragons and snakes too, and thus him (::::::)
> (::::) creatures should subdue
> his pride.]

[362] Pope1, I. Nativitas Domini, pp. 206-207, ll. 228-244.

As to the kinds of insects that form the plague of Egypt, Pope notes:

> According to the Vulgate the third and fourth plagues of Egypt (Ex. Viii. 16-24) consisted of some kind of stinging insect called *sciniphes* (*ciniphes*, *cinifex*) and various kinds of flies, *muscae*. The Authorized Version has lice and flies respectively, but this was not the interpretation in Ælfric's time. Bede's commentary on *Exodus* interprets *cinifex* as a small winged insect that stings, and adds, by way of supplement to the *muscae* of the fourth plague, the *cinomia* or dog-fly, saying: 'Septuaginta Interpretes cinomiam, id est, muscam caninam posuerunt.' (Migne, PL XCI. 302.) In fact the Septuagint has κυνομυιαν, and Bede took his information directly from Isidore's *Quaestiones in Vet. Test.*, *In Exod. viii* (Migne, PL LXXXIII. 292 sq.). [363]

Ælfric's *gnættum* and *fleogum* could reflect directly to the Vulgate's *sciniphes* and *muscae*, and the *hundes lys* are similar to the *cinomiae* of the Septuagint. Isidore notes in his *Etymologies*[364] that "*Sciniphes* are very tiny flies, very troublesome with their stinging. The proud populace of Egypt was struck down by these flies in the third plague (see Ex 8:16-18)." Barney suggests that *sciniphes* may mean gnat or mosquito, although Isidore also uses the term *culex* for a gnat or mosquito which sucks blood from humans. This passage about the irony of insect plague vexing the proud Pharaoh is also described by Ælfric in *CH2*[365] (see also under bear).

Lion

Symbolic Use of Animals

The lion is both admired and feared for its strength (see for example Judg 14:18, Hos 11:10, Jer 49:19). Christ is compared to a lion to underline his strength, and is named the lion of the tribe of Judah:

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[363] Pope2, p. 223-224.
[364] Bk XII.viii.14, Barney 2006, p. 270.
[365] *CH2*, XII. Dominica In Media Quadragesime, p. 111-112, ll. 57-62.

he is leo geciged. of iudan mæigðe. dauides wyrtruma: for þan ðe he ðurh his godcundlican strencðe þone micclan deofol mid sige his þrowunge oferswiðde;[366]

[He [Christ] is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, because he overcame the great devil through his divine strength with the victory of his passion.]

Christ is referred to as lamb as well as a lion in the same passage, to indicate he possesses innocence as well as strength. The pairing of lamb and lion is also reminiscent of Isa 11:6, in which lamb, sheep, and calf live peacefully with wolf and lion. Godden names Augustine's Tractates on John, 13.5 and 46.3 as a possible influence, "where reference is made to Christ being called lion, lamb and word."[367]

At the same time, cruel emperors are compared to roaring lions to underline their ferociousness, not simply their strength. The devil is also on occasion compared to a lion:

He cwæð þæt he ferde geond þas eorðan. for ðan ðe he færð swa swa petrus se apostol cwæð; Beoð syfre and wacole. for ðan ðe se deofol eower wiðerwinna. færð onbutan swa swa grymetende leo. secende hwæne he abite. wiðstandað þam. strange on geleafan; [368]

[He [the devil] said that he travelled over the earth, because he walks, like Peter the apostle said: "Be temperate and watchful, because the devil, your adversary, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he devours; withstand him strong in faith."]

[366] *CH*1, XXV. Nativitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae, p. 384, ll. 146-148.
[367] *CH*3, p. 206.
[368] *CH*2, XXX. Dominica I In Mense Septembri, p. 261, ll. 33-37.

The lion therefore inspires both admiration and fear (Amos 3:8). The regular comparison of rulers with lions (see below, but also Prov 20:2, Rev 5:5, Ezek 19:3) already shows the lion in its role as the king of the animals.
The lion is also a symbol for the evangelist Mark, as explained also by Ælfric:

> Se witega Ezechiel awrat be ðam feower nytenum þe him æteowode wæron. þæt hi hæfdon eagan him on ælce healfe; An ðæra nytena wæs on menniscre ansyne him æteowod. / oðer on leon ansyne. þridde on cealfes. feorðe on earnes; Þas feower nytenu getacnodon ða feower godspelleras. Matheus. Marcus. Lucas. Iohannes. and eac ealle godes bydelas þe ða godspellican lare bodedon; Þa feower nytenu Lucas. Iohannes. and eac ealle godes bydelas þe ða godspellican lare bodedon; Þa feower nytenu hæfdon eagan on ælce healfe heora lichaman. for ðan ðe godes gecorenan sceolon foresceawian heora dæda on ælce healfe.[369]
>
> [The prophet Ezekiel wrote about the four animals which were revealed to him, that they had eyes on every side. One of those animals was revealed to him in a human appearance, the second in a lion's appearance, the third in a calf's, the fourth in an eagle's. These four animals signified the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and also all God's messengers who preached the evangelical lore. The four animals had eyes on every side of their bodies, because God's chosen should scrutinize their deeds on every side.]

Ælfric explains in *LS* that Mark is referred to as a lion because he "cried with a loud sound, even as the lion roars greedily in the desert [referring to Isa 40:3], '*Vox clamantis in deserto, parate viam domini, rectas facite semitas eius;* A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye God's ways, make His paths straight.'"[370]

Saints and Animals

The lion often occurs in the lives of early Christian martyrs from the Roman period. The animals were used in circuses to end the life of Christians (and

[369] *CH2*, XXVIII. Dominica XII Post Pentecosten, p. 251, ll. 64-72.
[370] *LS1*, XV. Passio Sancti Marci, Euangeliste, pp. 332-335, ll. 180-214.

criminals) in front of an audience. The scenes with saints in the lions' pit underline the cruelty of the heathen Romans and the holiness of the saints when the lions refuse to attack. They also draw a nice parallel with the biblical story of Daniel in the lions' den.

Although lions did not occur in England, the lion does not seem to warrant a description by Ælfric, comparable to what he gives for the elephant. The lion is ubiquitous in literature and the visual arts of Western Europe, so perhaps Ælfric felt his audience was already sufficiently familiar with the idea of the lion.

Saints are frequently spared by lions that otherwise would have eaten a defenseless human. These stories find an early example in the figure of David in the lions' den, to which Ælfric refers quite frequently, for example in *CH*:

> Hi ða hine awurpon into anum seaðe on þam wæron seofon leon þam man sealde dæighwomlice. twa hryþeru 7 twa sceap. ac him wæs þa oftogen ælces fodan six dagas þæt hi þone godes man abitan sceoldon;[371]
>
> [They then threw him [Daniel] into a pit, in which there were seven lions, to which were given two heifers and two sheep daily, but then all food was taken away from them for six days, so that they would devour the man of God.]

Daniel is thrown in a pit with seven lions, but they do not hurt him, even though the lions were formerly fed with two oxen and two sheep per day and have now fasted for days. Despite the fact that they must be hungry, they spare Daniel. Similarly, other saints are spared by lions. They even lick St Julian and the other martyrs who are with him:

> Þa geseah se arleasa aidlian his smeagunge . and wolde þagyt cunnian anes cynnes wite . þurh reþe deor . þa þa his reðnyss ne mihte . þurh manna dæda . gedon swa he wolde . He het þa gelædan leon . and beran manega and mycele . to þam halgum martyrum . ac þa reðan deor . ne dorston hi reppan . ac bigdon heora hæfda to ðære halgena fotum . and heora liða liccodon . mid

[371] *CH*1, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 504, ll. 206-209.

liðra tungan .[372]

[Then the wicked one [Martianus] saw his effort becoming useless, and yet wanted to try one [other] kind of torture, through wild animals, when his cruelty could not, through deeds of men, do as he wanted. He then ordered lions and bears, many and large, to be brought in to the holy martyrs, but the wild animals did not dare to touch them, but bowed their heads to the saints' feet, and licked their limbs with gentle tongues.]

The lions that are supposed to devour Sts Abdon and Sennes even pray with them and protect them:

and se dema het beswingan þa halgan hetelice swyðe . mið leadenu*m* swipum . and lædde hi syððan to ðam wæfer-huse . þær ða deor wunodon . beran . and leon . þe hi abitan sceoldon . and het lætan him to . twegen leon . and feower beran . binnan þam huse . þa urnon þa deor egeslice grymetende . to þære halgena fotu*m* . swylce hi frydes bædon . and noldon awæg gan . ac hi weredon hi swyðor . swa þ*æt* nan man ne dorste for ðæra deora ware þam halgum genealecan . oððe into ðam huse gan .[373]

[And the judge ordered to scourge the holy ones very furiously with leaden whips, and he led them afterwards to the amphitheatre where the beasts lived, bears and lions, who were to devour them; and ordered two lions and four bears to be let loose upon them within the house. Then the beasts ran, roaring terribly, to the saints' feet, as if they asked for protection, and did not want to go away; but rather defended them, so that no man dared, because of the beasts' defense, approach the saints or go into the house.]

In the life of St Eustace, a lion does not only spare his child, but also refuses to attack him.[374] The lion that was supposed to devour St Daria is a special case. Not only does it spare and obey Daria; it brings heathens to Daria's cell for

[372] *LS*1, IV. Passio Sancti Iuliani et Sponse Eius Basilisse, pp. 112-114, ll. 399-407.
[373] *LS*2, XXIV. Natalis Sanctorum Abdon et Sennes, p. 56, ll. 46-57.
[374] *LS*2, XXX. Passio S. Eustachii, Martyris.

conversion, and its unusual behaviour inspires people to convert to Christianity. When her persecutors finally decide to burn Daria, the animal is safe from the flames, just like the saint herself:

> Daria þa cwæð to þam ofdræddan men . Efne þeos reþe leo arwurðað nu god . and þu gesceadwisa man þe sylfne for-dest . and þu fægnast earmincg on þinre fulan galnysse . þurh þa ðu scealt weopan and wite þrowian . Þa gesohte he hi and sæde mid fyrhte . Læt me gan gesund ut and ic syððan bodige mannum þon*e* hælend þe þu mærsast and wurðast . [...]
> Þa forhtode seo leo for þam fyre þearle ac daria cwæð to þam deore þus . Ne beo þu afyrht þis fyr þe ne derað ne þu ne bist ofslagen ær-þan-þe þu sylf acwele . gang þe nu orsorh aweg . and god ahret . þone þe ðu wurðodest mid þinum weorcu*m* to-dæg . Þa eode seo leo alotenum heafde to-middes þæs folces freolice aweg . and þa þe heo ær gefeng wurdon gefullode siððan hi on-cneowan crist þurh ða leon .[375]
>
> [Then Daria said to the terrified man: "Look, this fierce lioness now honours God, and you, an intelligent man, destroy yourself, and you rejoice, poor wretch, in your foul lust through which you shall weep and suffer torment." Then he sought her out and said with fear "Let me go out safe, and afterwards I will preach to men [about] the Saviour, whom you magnify and worship." [...]
> Then the lioness feared severely because of the fire, but Daria spoke to the beast thus "Do not be afraid, this fire will not hurt you, nor will you be killed before you die of your own accord; go away now without care, and God will save [you], [God] whom you have glorified with your works today." Then the lioness went away freely, with bowed head, through the middle of the people; and those whom she had caught before were baptised after they had acknowledged Christ through the lioness.]

Mouse

[375] *LS*2, XXXV. Passio Chrisanti et Dariae, pp. 392-394, ll.269-306.

The mouse is a pest when it occurs in great numbers. They can destroy crops, as Ælfric describes in the following passage on the Philistines, who are punished for having captured the ark of the covenant:

> Him comon eac mys to, manega geond þæt land,
> and heora æceras aweston, and þone eard fordydon.[376]
>
> [Mice also came to them, many throughout the land,
> and destroyed their fields, and brought the land to ruin.]

The Philistines are instructed on how to end the bad events that are happening to them, and one of the things they should do is to make five golden mice, presumably to symbolically end the plague of mice:

> Foð nu togædere of eower fif burgum,
> and wyrcað Gode to lace fif gyldene hringas
> and fif gyldene mys, þæt se grama geswice,
> for þam þe eow eallum wæs an wite gemæne.[377]
>
> [Now join together from your five castles,
> and make five golden rings as a gift to God
> and five golden mice, so that the anger ceases,
> because one punishment was common to you all.]

In the same homily (*De Falsis Diis*), Ælfric describes that mice have settled in the statue of Serapis, a god of Alexandria, showing that no divinity is present inside the statue:

> Þar wearð þa micel gamen þæt feala musa scutan
> of þære anlicnysse, þa hire o[f] wæs þæt heafod,
> floccmælum yrnende geond þa widgillan flor,
> þæt men mihton tocnawan þæt þar wæs musa wunung,

[376] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, p. 690, ll. 240-241.
[377] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, p. 690-691, ll. 255-258.

and nan godcundnyss, [ne] godes geleafa.[378]

[There was then a great merriment that a lot of mice shot
out of the idol, when the head came off it,
running in flocks around the spacious floor,
so that the people could perceive that there was the dwelling place of
mice, and no divinity, nor faith in god.]

The reasoning here is somewhat unfair: it is unsure whether the people who believed in Serapis thought the statue and the god were one and the same. However, the mice living in the statue's head symbolize the insignificance of the god, and the mice shooting away from the statue provide a comical moment from the perspective of those who doubt the god.

Wolf

The wolf was much more common in medieval Europe than it is nowadays. Wolves, although they eat mostly carrion, also hunt in packs, and are often perceived as a threat to shepherds' flocks. The native Anglo-Saxon tradition saw the wolf as one of the beasts of battle, preying on the bodies of the slain: the presence of the wolf is ominous and reminds the reader of death.
It is no surprise then that Ælfric and others often refer to wolves as a symbol of evil and danger. The most common imagery used is to present Christians as sheep and their enemies as wolves (for more examples of wolves see therefore also under sheep).

Symbolic Use of Animals

Wolves occur in Ælfric as wild animals that are dangerous to humans. They are part of a plague of wild beasts in Vienna (see under bear), and they can kill people. Nero is referred to twice as having been torn apart by wolves, after he has fled to the woods:

[378] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, p. 706, ll. 551-555.

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þa asprang þæt word þæt he swa lange on cyle 7 on hungre dwelode, oð ðæt hine wulfas totæron;[379]

[Then the rumour sprang up that he [Nero] lived so long in cold and hunger, until wolves tore him to pieces.]

This seems to be a fitting punishment to the person who commanded Peter and Paul to be beheaded.

In the wolf-sheep imagery, in which Christ is the shepherd, and the sheep the faithful, the wolf can be the devil:

Crist tihð to mihtum symle and deofol to mandædum,
ac we sceolon gehyrsumian urum Hælende symle,
þe is ure hyrde, na þam hetelan wulfe,
þe þæs anes cepð, hu he us tostencge,
mid mislicum leahtrum fram ðam mildan Hælende. [380]

[Christ always draws to virtues and the devil to evil deeds,
but we should always obey our Saviour,
who is our shepherd, not the hateful wolf,
who is intent on that one thing, how he drives us apart,
with various sins from the mild Saviour.]

Like the wolf, the devil drives people away from the herd and from the shepherd. Another instance of the wolf as the devil occurs in the following passage from a homily which consists of an elaborate description of Christians and their enemies as sheep and wolves. Here, Christian teachers are the shepherds:

ælc biscop 7 ælc lareow is to hyrde geset godes folce: þ*æt* hi sceolon þ*æt* folc wið þam wulfe gescyldan; Se wulf is deoful: þe syrwð ymbe godes gelaðunge:

[379] *CH*1, XXVI. Passio Petri et Pauli, p. 398, ll. 285-287, and see also *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecosten, p. 479, ll. 100-101.
[380] Pope1, IV. Dominica III In Quadragesima, p. 275, ll. 204-208.

7 cepð hu he mage cristenra manna saula mid leahtrum fordon þonne sceal se hyrde þæt is se biscop oððe oðer lareow wiðstandan þam reðan wulfe: Mid lare 7 mid gebedum;[381]

[Every bishop and every teacher is placed as a shepherd to God's people, so that they shall shield the people against the wolf. The wolf is the devil, who lays traps around God's church, and waits how he can destroy the souls of Christian people with sins; then shall the shepherd, that is, the bishop or another teacher, withstand the fierce wolf, with instruction and with prayers.]

Ælfric then goes on to explain that hired shepherds are not as effective as shepherds who own their flock. Similarly, teachers have to be invested honestly in Christian doctrine before they are effective teachers. As dishonest teachers can be difficult to recognise, people have to keep a careful eye on them and consider their actions in the face of sin:

Nast ðu hwa bið hyra: hwa hyrde ær ðam ðe se wulf cume: ac se wulf geswutolað mid hwylcum mode he gymde þæra sceapa; Se wulf cymð to ðam sceapam. 7 sume he abit sume he tostencð; þonne se reða deoful: tihð þa cristenan men sume to forlire: sume he ontendt to gitsunge: Sume he arærð to modignysse: 7 sume he þurh graman totwæmð: 7 mid mislicum costnungum gastlice ofslyhð; Ac se hyra ne bið naðor ne mid ware ne mid lufe astyred: ac flyhð for ðan þe he smeað ymbe ða woruldlican hyðða 7 læt to gymeleaste þære sceapa lyre[382]

[You do not know who is a hireling, who a shepherd, before the wolf comes; but the wolf reveals with which attitude he watches the sheep. The wolf comes to the sheep, and some he devours, some he scatters, when the fierce devil incites Christian people, some to adultery, some he urges to covetousness, some he lifts up to pride, some he divides through anger, and kills spiritually with various temptations. But the hireling is

[381] *CH*1, XVII. Dominica II Post Pasca, p. 314, ll. 23-27.
[382] *CH*1, XVII. Dominica II Post Pasca, p. 314, ll. 41-39.

not stirred by care or love, but flees, because he considers worldly gains, and ignores the loss of the sheep.]

Not only is the devil portrayed as a wolf, but any powerful person who abuses his or her power is like a wolf:

> Wulf bið eac se unrihtwisa rica. þe bereafað þa cristenan. 7 þa eaðmodan mid his riccetere ofsit[383]
>
> [[Similar to] A wolf is also the unrighteous rich man, who robs Christians, and oppresses the humble with his power.]

Animals and Saints

St Edmund is slain by the Danes who are themselves portrayed as wolf-like:

> And se fore-sæda hinguar færlice swa swa wulf on lande bestalcode . and þa leode sloh weras and wif . and þa ungewittigan cild . and to bysmore tucode þa bilewitan cristenan .[384]
>
> [And the aforesaid Hingwar [a Dane] suddenly, like a wolf, stalked over the land and slew the people, men and women, and unknowing children, and in disgrace tormented the innocent Christians.]

But then, taking into account the fearsome reputation of the wolf, it comes as a great surprise and miracle that it is a wolf which guards St Edmund's head:

> Wæs eac micel wundor þæt an wulf wearð asend þurh godes wissunge to bewerigenne þæt heafod wið þa oþre deor . ofer dæg . and niht . [...] Þa læg se græga wulf þe bewiste þæt heafod . And mid his twam forum hæfde þæt heafod beclypped . grædig . and hungrig . and for gode ne dorste þæs heafdes abyrian . [ac] heold hit wið deor . Þa wurdon hi ofwundrode þæs wulfes hyrd-rædenne . and þæt halige heafod ham

[383] CH1, XVII. Dominica II Post Pasca, p. 315, ll. 55-56.
[384] *LS2*, XXXII. Passio Sancti Eadmundi Regis, p. 316, ll. 39-42.

feredon mid him . þancigende þam ælmihtigan ealra his wundra . ac se wulf folgode forð mid þam heafde . oþþæt hi to tune comon . swylce he tam wære . and gewende eft siþþan to wuda ongean .[385]

[There was also a great wonder, that a wolf was sent, through God's guidance, to guard the head against the other animals by day and night. [...]
There lay the grey wolf who protected the head, and with its two feet [it] had embraced the head, greedy and hungry, and because of God [it] did not dare to taste the head, but kept it against [other] animals. Then they were amazed by the wolf's guardianship, and took the holy head home with them, thanking the almighty for all his wonders; but the wolf followed on with the head until they came to town, as if it was tame, and then turned back again to the wood.]

Of note is that there is still a hint here that the wolf is 'greedy and hungry', creating a little doubt in the mind of the reader whether the wolf is wild or not. The wolf in this legend behaves differently from some other cases in which wild animals spare saints: it is clearly God's command which the animal obeys; there is no sense that the wolf does it through its own will.

Wyrmas, Snakes and Dragons

As it is not always clear from the context which animal is meant by the Old English *wyrm*, the different possibilities (worm, maggot, snake/serpent, dragon and scorpion (*wyrm þrowend*) are all presented together below. When another word is used for the animal in question (e.g. *draca* for dragon, *nædre* for snake), they are listed under that name here as well.

The serpent is associated and often even identified with the devil. The devil tempted Eve in the shape of a serpent (Gen 3:13), and for this the species was cursed to crawl on the earth and despised by humans (Gen 3:14). Satan is named the serpent as well as the great dragon (Rev 12:9; 20:2). Snakes, and

[385] *LS2*, XXXII. Passio Sancti Eadmundi Regis, pp. 324-326, ll. 145-163.

especially venomous types such as the asp and the viper, are considered dangerous, evil and cunning. It is not surprising then that the snake features in Ælfric's works largely as a fierce animal, often sent as a punishment by God.

Although the serpent is generally associated with the devil, a major exception is the brazen serpent made by Moses to protect his people (Num. 21:4-9). When the people of Israel were attacked by venomous snakes, Moses made a brazen serpent and held it up high. The people who looked up to that symbol were protected against the venom.

The people in the desert are usually taken to be sinners; the serpent held up high is a type for Christ who is lifted up; the t-shaped pole points at the future cross on which Christ will be raised; the cure for snakebites achieved by looking at the serpent is the protection people gain if they look at Christ for salvation, i.e. sinners have to believe in Christ to be saved. That the brazen serpent is a biblical figure for Christ is confirmed in the New Testament (Jn 3:14).

The bestiary, too, lists a good characteristic of snakes in the shedding of the old skin: it signifies humans who are eager to change their (evil) ways. These contradictions in the interpretation of serpents were noted already by Augustine in De Doctrina Christiana (3.25.36), warning the reader that the animal cannot be interpreted as wholly evil despite its association with the temptation.

Dragon (draca)

Symbolic Use of Animals

The dragon is seen as the cruelest of all serpents,[386] and therefore occurs mostly as a manifestation of the devil, or as a companion of the devil:

> Þa com eac se deofol . and hæfde ænne dracan on handa . and swurd on oðre . [387]

> [Then came the devil as well, and he had a dragon in one hand and a sword in the other]

[386] *CH*1, XXXII. Decollati Sancti Iohannis Babtiste, pp. 456-457, ll. 172-188.
[387] *LS*1, XI. Natale Quadragina Militum, p. 246, ll. 134-135.

The devil appears as a dragon to a sinful man on his deathbed:

> for ðam ðe we rædað on bocum þæt se reða feond come
> swilce egeslic draca to anum licgendum cnihte,
> wolde his sawle habban for his synnum to helle,
> ac ðær common munecas to on ðæs mannes forðsiðe,
> and geornlice bædon for þam geongan cnihte,
> oððæt hi swa afligdon þone feondlican dracan,
> and se cniht gewyrpte, and wunode on life,
> oððæt he his synna gebette, and eft syððan gewat,
> ac he ne geseah ðone dracan ða, for ðan ðe he oferswiðed wæs. [388]

> [because we read in books that the fierce enemy came
> as a terrible dragon to a certain man as he was lying,
> and (it) wanted to take his soul to hell because of his sins,
> but monks arrived there at the man's deathbed,
> and prayed eagerly for the young man,
> until they thus expelled the fiendish dragon,
> and the man recovered, and stayed alive,
> until he made amends for his sins, and died later,
> but he did not see the dragon then, because it had been overcome.]

The dragon can only show itself because of the man's sins, and the monks' prayers make it leave.
Dragons and other serpents also live in hell to punish the sinners there. Stacteus's perverted brothers are warned about what is in store for them:

> Eow wæs heofonan rice gearu. 7 scinende gebytlu. mid wistum afyllede. 7 mid ecum leohte: þa ge forluron þurh unwærscipe: 7 ge begeaton eow ðeosterfulle wununga mid dracan afyllede. [389]

> [For you the kingdom of heaven was ready, and shining structures filled with

[388] Pope1, XI. In Octavis Pentecosten Dicendus, p. 423, ll. 168-176.
[389] *CH*1, IV. Assumptio Sancti Iohannis Apostoli, p. 211, ll. 148-150.

banquets, and with eternal light: these you have lost through folly; and you have got for yourselves dark dwellings filled with dragons.]

These hellish serpents live forever and have fiery teeth:

wyrmas toslitað heora lichaman. mid fyrenum toþum: swa swa crist on his godspelle cwæð; Đær næfre heora wyrm ne swylt: ne heora fyr ne bið adwæsced;[390]

[Serpents shall tear their [the sinners'] bodies with fiery teeth, as Chist said in his gospel: "There their serpent will never die, nor will their fire be extinguished."]

Holy people, on the other hand, can kill serpents with their bare hands:

Đa gesceafta þe sind þwyrlice geþuhte; hi sind to wrace gesceapene yfeldædum; Oft halige menn wunedon on westene betwux reþum wulfum 7 leonum; betwux eallum deorcynne 7 wurmcynne. 7 him nan ðing derian ne mihte; ac hi totæron þa hyrnedan næddran mid heora nacedum handum; 7 þa micclan dracan eaðelice acwealdon, buton ælcere dare þurh godes mihte. [391]

[The creatures that are thought monstrous, they have been created for punishment of evil deeds. Holy men often lived in a desert among fierce wolves and lions, among all kinds of beasts and serpents, and nothing could harm them; but they tore the horned snakes with their naked hands, and the great dragons they killed easily, without any harm, through God's might.]

In the following passage, the dragon is the devil posing as a false god. Daniel has to slay a dragon which is associated with Baal and worshipped as a god by the Babylonians:

Þa wæs on þære byrig gewunod an draca,

[390] *CH*1, VIII. Dominica III Post Epiphania Domini , p. 248, ll. 187-190.
[391] *CH*1, VI. Octabas et Circumcisio Domini, p. 230, ll. 177-182.

and þa Babiloniscan bæron him mete,
and hine for god wurðodan, þeah þe he wyrm wære.
[...]
ic ofslea þisne dracan buton swurde and stafe.
Ða cwæð Cyrus se cyning þæt he cunnian moste
gif he butan wæpnum mihte þone wurm acwellan.
Danihel þa worhte þam dracan þas lac:
[...]
and seað hi swiðe, and sealde þam dracan.
Ða tobærst he sona swa he abat þæs metes,
and Danihel cwæð þa to þæs dracan biggengum
[...]
he acwealde þone dracan
and urne Bel he towearp, and his biggengan he ofsloh[392]

[Then there was established in that castle a certain dragon,
and the Babylonians brought him food,
and worshipped him as a god, although he was a serpent.
[...]
I [Daniel] will slay this dragon without a sword and a staff.
Then Cyrus the king said that he had to discover
if he could kill the serpent without weapons.
Daniel then made these gifts for the dragon:
[...]
and boiled them thoroughly, and gave them to the dragon.
Then he burst asunder as soon as he devoured the food,
and Daniel then spoke to the dragon's worshippers
[...]
he killed the dragon
and he destroyed our Bel, and he slew his worshippers]

[392] Pope2, XXI. De Falsis Diis, pp. 700-701, ll. 432-455.

In a boast reminiscent of Beowulf's before his fight with Grendel, Daniel promises to slay the dragon without weapons. However, Daniel uses trickery rather than force to kill the beast. He feeds it a dangerous mix of pitch, lard and bristles, which makes the insides of the dragon burst, thus killing it. Ælfric also briefly refers to Daniel's feat in *CH*1, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 504, ll. 202-204. Snakes and snake-like creatures were indeed worshipped in several religions in the near east, and the dragon Tiamat was a spirit of chaos and the sea in Babylonian lore.

The apostle Philip manages to save the Scythians from a dragon whose breath makes them ill:

> Ða gelæhton hine þa hæðenan. and gelæddon to heora deofolgylde þær ðær wæs an ormæte draca. se ofsloh ðærrihte ðæs hæþengildan sunu. se ðe bær þa storcyllan to ðære offrunge; Se draca ofsloh eac twegen gerefan ðære ylcan scire. on þæra hæftnedum wæs se apostol philippus gehæfd; Witodlice ðurh ðæs dracan blæd. eal seo menigu micclum wearð wæs se apostol philippus gehæfd; Witodlice ðurh ðæs dracan blæd. eal seo menigu micclum wearð geuntrumod;[...]
> Ða ferde se reða draca ardlice aweig. and nahwar siððan ne æteowode; Se apostol philippus arærde ða of deaðe on godes naman þa ðry deadan. þe se draca acwealde. and ealle ða menigu gehælde. þe ðurh þæs dracan blæd geuntrumod wæs;[393]
>
> [Then the heathens seized him [Philip], and led [him] to their idol, where there was an enormous dragon, which immediately killed the idolator's son, he who carried the censer to the offering. The dragon also killed two officials of the same shire, in whose custody the apostle Philip was held. Verily, through the dragon's breath all the crowd was made very ill.[...]
> Then the fierce dragon went hastily away, and appeared nowhere since. The apostle Philip then raised from death, in God's name, the three dead whom the dragon had killed, and healed all the crowd, which had been made ill through the dragon's breath.]

[393] *CH*2, XVII. Apostolorum Phillipi et Iacobi, pp. 169-170, ll. 4-25.

Philip banishes a dragon by having the heathens destroy their idols and by commanding the beast to leave in Christ's name. This convinces the heathens to convert to Christ. Matthew accomplishes a similar feat, by banishing two dragons after lulling them to sleep.[394]

Small worms

Some of the wyrmas referred to by Ælfric are probably not any kind of serpent, but rather small worms, maggots or other tiny animals. Herod, for example, is eaten by small worms:

> and he ðærrihte mid wyrmum fornumen. gewat of life;[395]
>
> [and he [Herod], immediately consumed by worms, departed from life.]

That these *wyrmas* are probably maggots rather than snakes follows from another passage about Heroed, in which they are mentioned by name:

> Wæterseocnys hine ofereode beneoþon ðam gyrdle. to þam swiðe þæt his gesceapu maðan weollon. 7 stincende attor singallice of ðam toswollenum fotum fleow;[396]
>
> [Dropsy afflicted him, beneath the girdle, to that degree that his genitals swarmed with maggots, and stinking venom continually flowed from his swollen feet.]

The consumption of Herod's body by worms provides a stark contrast with saints' bodies, which, as we have seen, are generally left alone by the animals and remain incorrupt after death. That Herod is afflicted 'below the belt' makes his situation even more shameful.

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[394] *CH*2, XXXII. Natale Sancti Mathei, pp. 275-276, ll. 106-110.
[395] *CH*2, XXIV. Sancti Petri Apostoli, p. 222, ll. 40-41.
[396] *CH*1, V. Natale Innocentium Infantum, p. 221, ll. 132-134.

A similar fate befalls Antiochus in Ælfric's account of the Maccabees:

> Him weollon þa wurmas of ðam [gewitnodan] lichaman .[397]
>
> [Then worms crawled out of the afflicted body.]

Martianus, St Julian's opponent, is also consumed by maggots or perhaps tapeworm:

> Þa fleah martian*us* for nean adyd . and he wearð fornumen . æfter feawum dagum . swa þæt wurmas crupon cuce of his lice . and se arleasa ge-wat mid wite to helle.[398]
>
> [Then Martianus fled, very nearly killed, and he was consumed after a few days, so that worms crept alive out of his body, and the wicked one departed with torture to hell.]

That this should happen to Martianus is fitting, as before this he locked saints in a cellar with maggot-infested corpses:

> Þa halgan wurdon gebrohte on blindum cwearterne syððan be martianes hæse þær manna lic lagon . þe wæran ær acwealde on ðam cwearterne gefyrn . þa weollon eall maðon . and egeslice stuncon. [399]
>
> [The saints were then brought into a blind prison, since by Martinius's command, there lay men's bodies, [men] who were long before killed in the prison, which swarmed all with maggots, and stank horribly.]

Being consumed on this earth by small worms and in hell by eternal serpents is a punishment for sinners: the former is a warning of what will happen in the afterlife.

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[397] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, p. 102, l. 544.
[398] *LS1*, IV. Passio Sancti Iuliani et Sponse Eius Basilisse, p. 114, ll. 428-431.
[399] *LS1*, IV. Passio Sancti Iuliani et Sponse Eius Basilisse, p. 102, ll. 209-212.

Job gets a taste of this punishment as a test of his faith:

> Ðeah þe iobes ansyn wære atelice toswollen. and his lic eal maðan weolle. swa þeah is awriten þæt se ælmihtiga underfeng his ansyne. þa þa he for his freondum gebæd; [400]

> [Though Job's face was horribly swollen, and his whole body swarmed with maggots, nevertheless it is written that the Almighty accepted his face, when he prayed for his friends.]

Job is tested not only by having all his possessions taken away from him, but also by disease, and by maggots infesting his body. He keeps his faith however, and his health and possessions are restored to him.

Scorpion (wyrm þrowend)

Symbolic use of animals

Ælfric mentions the scorpion only once, in his explanation of Luke 11:12 (see also under Bird and Fish). He sees the scorpion as a symbol of despair, the exact opposite of the egg, which is a symbol of hope:

> He [Christ] cwæð þa oðer bispel: hwilc fæder wile syllan his cylde stan. gif hit him hlafes bitt? oððe nædran: gif hit fisces bitt? oððe þone wyrm þrowend gif hit æges bit; [...]
> Se wyrm þrowend: þe is geset ongean *þæt* æig: is ættren. 7 slihð mid þam tægle to deaðe; þa ðing þe we geseoð on þisum life: ða sind ateorgendlice; þa ðe we ne geseoð 7 us synd behatene: hi sind ece: strece þærto þinne hiht: 7 Andbida. oð *þæt* ðu hi hæbbe: Ne loca ðu underbæc; ondræd þe þone þrowend. þe geætrað mid þam tægle; Se mann locað underbæc. þe geortruað godes mildheortnysse: þonne bið his hiht geætrod mid þæs þrowendes tægle. Ac we sceolon ægðer ge on earfoðnyssum. ge on gelimpe | 7 on ungelimpe. cweðan swa swa se witega cwæð; Ic herige minne drihten on ælcne timan; getimie us tela. on lichaman. getymie us untela. symle we sceolon þæs gode

[400] *CH2*, XXX. Dominica I in Mense Septembri, p. 266, ll. 193-196.

þancian. 7 his naman bletsian; þonne bið ure hiht gehealdan wið þæs wyrmes slege;[401]

[He then said another parable. "What father wants to give his child a stone, if it asks for a loaf? Or a snake, if it asks for a fish? Or a scorpion, if it asks for an egg?" [...]
The scorpion, which is set in opposition to the egg, is venomous, and stings with its tail to death. Those things which we see in this life: those are perishable; those [things] which we do not see and which are promised to us: they are eternal: stretch thereto your hope, and wait until you have them. Do not look back; dread the scorpion which poisons with the tail. That man looks back who doubts God's mercy; then his hope is poisoned by the scorpion's tail. But we should both in difficulties, and in fortune and misfortune, say like the prophet said: I will praise my Lord at every time; let good happen to us in body, let bad [happen] to us, we should always thank God for it, and bless his name; then our hope will be protected from the scorpion's sting.]

The scorpion carries its deadly venom in its tail, teaching people that they should not look back in despair, lest they lose all hope.

Silkworm (side wurm)

Natural History and Symbolic Use of Animals

Interestingly, Ælfric talks at length about the silkworm, describing both its characteristics and its symbolic value as a token of the resurrection:

> Eac swilce þas wurmas þe wyrcað þas sidan wide geond þas woruld to ælcum godewebbe; hi wyrcað þa sidan mid wundorlicum cræfte onbutan hlafmæssan. 7 licgað þonne deade to duste adruwode. 7 man deþ hi on pochum. hehð upon wagum ofer eallne þone winter oð ðæt lencten cume. 7 liðe gewideru. þonne deþ man [þæt] dust on leadenum dihsum 7 sett ongean þa sunnan. 7 hi swa acuciað. ælc dust to wyrme swa swa hi ær wæron. 7 beoð ealle hwite swa swa we oft gesawon. 7 hi man ðonne afett

[401] *CH*1, XVIII. In Letania Maiore, pp. 320-322, ll. 97-136.

oð ðæt hi full weaxene beon 7 hyra weorc wyrcan 7 wurðað eft deade. 7 hi ælce geare swa æfre acuciað of heora ealdum duste þurh ðone ælmihtigan drihten þe hi swa ær gesceop to þam syllicum cræfte. to pællum. 7 to purpurum swa swa hit cuð is wide; Nu is full swutol bysen on ðisum syllicum wyrmum þe of ðam duste acuciað. [þæt] ure drihten mæg of deaðe us aræran of þam duste to life we ðe beoð þonne ece æfter urum æriste. þonne he þa wacan wurmas ðe wurðað eft to duste swa eaðelice geedcucað to þam ænlican cræfte; [402]

[Also, these worms that make silk materials widely around the world for each fine cloth; they make silk with wondrous skill around Lammas-day, and then lie dead, dried up to dust. And they are put in pouches, and hung upon walls during the whole winter until spring comes and mild weather. Then people put the dust in leaden dishes and set them in the sun, and they thus come back to life, each (bit of) dust to a worm such as they were before. And they are all white as we often saw. And then they are fed until they are fully grown and and do their work and die again afterwards. And each year they always revive from their old dust through the almighty lord who created them before for that strange craft, for rich fabric and purple cloth, as it is widely known. Now there is a fully clear example in these strange worms that revive from dust: that our lord can raise us from death, from dust to life, we who will then be eternal after our resurrection, when he so easily revives the humble worms who become dust again for that unique craft.]

The silkworm as an analogy for the resurrection also occurs in the *Hexaemeron* of St Basil (PG 29, 185-6) and that of St Ambrose (*Hexameron*, 5.23.77), both works which would have been known to Ælfric, however: Basil's "account of the silkworm is not at all like his; it is the series of mutations that Basil emphasizes, not the apparent death. Ambrose cites the silkworm and the phoenix as analogies in the same chapter, but the details of the former are again not close. No adequately close parallels to Ælfric's account have so far appeared, and it may

[402] *CH*1, Homily XVI (appendix B.2), pp. 533-534, ll. 8-24.

be, as Pope suggested, that he was drawing on personal observation of silkworms on a visit to Italy."[403] Godden also notes similarities between this passage and Ælfric's account of having witnessed the midnight sun in *De Temporibus Anni*: tentative evidence for personal observation.[404]

Whether Ælfric saw silk worms or not, it looks as though Ælfric himself incorporated different images of the resurrection here, and that the combination of the imagery of the silkworm, nature reviving after winter, and the hibernation of animals is his own.

Snakes (næddran)

Symbolic Use of Animals

Perhaps surprisingly, the symbolic value of the snake is not always negative. The snake is seen as an intelligent animal (and therefore fit to be chosen to seduce Adam and Eve, according to the following passage), who renews itself, and knows how to protect itself:

> *Estote prudentes sicut serpentes, et simplices sicut columbe:*
> Beoð swa snotere swa swa neddran syndon,
> and swa bylehwite swa swa culfran beoð.
> Seo næddre is eallra nytena snoterost,
> and se deofol þurh hy beswac þa frumsceapenan men
> [...]
> Seo næddre awurpð ælce geare hire ealdan haman,
> and bið þonne befangen mid eall-niwum felle;
> uton we swa don, awurpan ure synna,
> and þa yfelan þeawas, and leornian þa godan
> [...]
> Seo næddre wyle eac bewerian hire heafod,
> and hy ealle bewindan on em[b]hwyrfte þæs heafdes,
> þæt man huru þæs heafdes hentan ne mæge.

[403] *CH3*, p. 134-135.
[404] *CH3*, p. xxxi.

Swa we sceolon eac don, gif we snotere beoð[405]

[*Be wise like snakes and simple like doves:*
Be as wise as snakes are,
and as simple/sincere as doves are.
The snake is the wisest of all animals,
and through them the devil deceived the first humans.
[...]
The snake throws off its old covering each year,
and is then covered with all-new skin;
let us do so, let us throw off our sins,
and the evil habits, and learn the good
[...]
The snake also wants to protect its head,
and they all wrap themselves around the head,
so that at least the head cannot be touched.
We should do like that too, if we are wise.]

The snake can be a dangerous animal for humans. The Jews in the desert are attacked by venomous snakes:

Moyses se heretoga on þam micclum westene
worhte be Godes hæse ane ærene næddran,
þa þa þæt folc wæs fram ðam næddrum tosliten,
and he þa up arærde þa ærenan næddran
swilce to tacne, and hi besawon þærto
þe ðær toslitene wæron, and heom sona wæs bet.
Seo ærene næddre, þe buton attre wæs,
getacnode Cristes deaþ, þe unsynnig þrowode,
up ahafen on rode; and we to him beseoð
mid fullum geleafan, þæt we fram urum synnum
þurh hine beon alysde, and lif habban mid him

[405] Pope2, XVI. Dominica X Post Pentecosten, p. 556-557, ll. 227-243.

a on ecnysse, swa swa he us behet; [406]

[Moses the general in the great desert
made a brass serpent at God's command,
when the people were torn apart by snakes,
and he then lifted up the brass serpent
as a sign, and they then looked at it,
they who were wounded there, and at once were better.
The brass serpent, which had no poison,
signified Christ's death, (Christ) who suffered without sin,
lifted up on a cross; and we look to him
with full faith, so that we will be set free from our sins
through him, and will have life with him always
in eternity, just as he promised us.]

The people are healed by looking at and trusting in the brass serpent Moses made, which is a venomless animal and which Ælfric explains here as a sign for Christ. Here, the real snakes are dangerous while the symbolic snake has positive connotations. Simon the magician makes a mockery of Moses's brass serpent by using evil magic, but is punished for it later:

Symon se dry worhte ða ærene næddran styriende. swilce heo cucu wære. 7 dyde þæt ða anlicnyssa þæra hæþenra hlihende wæron. 7 styrigende. 7 he sylf wearþ færlice uppon þære lyfte gesewen; [407]

[Simon the magician then made a brass snake, moving it as if it were alive, and made the images of the heathens laugh and stir; and he himself was suddenly seen up in the air.]

Despite some positive traits and Moses' serpent, the snake is firmly associated with the devil, and especially the devil as a tempter. When St Chrysanthus's

[406] Pope1, XII. Dominica I Post Pentecosten, p. 489, ll. 227-238, but see also XX. De Populo Israhel in Pope2.
[407] *CH*1, XXVI. Passio Petri et Pauli, p. 394, ll. 165-167.

father sends girls to his room in an attempt to make him give up his chaste lifestyle, the saint compares the girls to snakes:

> He sende him eac gelome sanda . and estas . ac se cniht forseah þa sanda . and drencas . and þa mædena onscunode . swa swa man deþ næddran . He læg on gebedu*m* . and forbeah heora cossas . and bæd þone hælend þ*æt* he ge-heolde his clænnysse . swa swa he heold Iosepes on ægipta lande . He andette eac gode mid eallum mode and cw*æ*ð . Ic bidde þe drihte*n* þ*æt* þu do þæs næddran þ*æt* hi ealle slapon on minre gesihðe nu . [408]
>
> [He sent him also frequently food and delicacies, but the young man despised the food and drinks, and shunned the young girls like one does snakes. He lay in prayers and evaded their kisses, and asked the saviour that he would preserve his chastity, just like he preserved Joseph's in Egypt. He also confessed to God with all his heart, and said: 'I pray to you, lord, that you will make all those snakes fall asleep now in my sight.']

The saint is afraid he will be tempted by the women, whom he compares to snakes. Perhaps the saint is thinking of the temptation of Adam and Eve by the snake: the snake tempted the woman, the woman the man, but now the women themselves have become the snake.

The w*yrmas* are seen by Ælfric as lower in rank than any other animals. In a description of the ark, he lists the wild animals and creeping worms as living on the bottom of the ship. On the second floor are the birds and clean animals, and on the third floor Noah and his family. The ark is wide at the bottom and narrow above, just as, according to Ælfric's criticism, the church includes a great many people who are interested in material affairs, and only a few truly spiritual people:

> On ðære nyþemestan bytminge wunedon þa reþan deor 7 creopende wyrmas. On oðre fleringe wunedon fugelas. 7 clæne nytenu On þære þriddan fleringe wunede noe mid his wife 7 his þry suna mid heora þrim wifum; On þære

[408] *LS2*, XXXV. Passio Chrisanti et Dariae, p. 380, ll. 56-64.

bytminge wæs se arc rum þær ða reþan deor wunodon: 7 wiðufan genyrewed þer þæra manna wunung wæs: for þan ðe seo halige gelaðung on flæsclicum mannum is swiðe brad. 7 on gastlicum nearo;[409]

[In the lowermost bottom, the fierce beasts and creeping worms lived. On the second deck, birds and clean animals. On the third deck, Noah lived with his wife and his three sons with their three wives. On the bottom, the ark was spacious, where the fierce animals lived; and narrowed up where the dwelling of men was; because the holy church is very broad in fleshly men, and in spiritual [men] narrow.]

In this passage, there is a distinct hierarchy on board the ark. The *wyrmas*, which could be either worms or snakes here, are at the bottom, as are other fierce animals. The evil are placed below, with the humans (capable of good) situated above. According to Godden[410], the source for this homily (Gregory, Hom. 38, PL 76), only describes two floors. Ælfric mentions three, which is in line with the Vulgate (Gen 6:16), and divides the animals differently from Gregory. Godden suggests Ælfric may be combining information from Gregory, the Vulgate and Alcuin's *Interrogationes et Responsiones*. The latter work puts the wild animals and reptiles lowest, then tamed animals in the middle, and the humans on top.

Saints and Animals

Saints and other holy people, such as the apostles, are usually described as immune to the poison of snakes. The apostle Paul, for example, is not harmed by snakes:

Eft Æt sumum sæle hine gelæhte an næddre be þam fingre: ac he ascoc hi into byrnendum fyre: 7 he þæs attres nan þing ne gefredde;[411]

[409] *CH*1, XXXV. Dominica XXI Post Pentecosten, p. 484, ll. 262-269.
[410] *CH*3, p. 297.
[411] *CH*1, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 505, ll. 251-252.

[Again at some time a snake seized him [Paul] by the finger, but he shook it into burning fire, and he felt nothing of the poison.]

Saints can also heal others from snakebites. St Martin cures a boy from the venom:

Þa wæs ðær an cnapa geættrod þurh næddran swiðe toswollen. þurh ðæs wyrmes slege. unwene his lifes. ac he wearð ahred þurh martines hrepunge fram ðam reðan attre; [412]

[Then a boy was poisoned there by an adder, highly swollen through the worm's strike, despairing for his life, but he was rescued through Martin's touch from the cruel poison.]

Ælfric describes this miracle in more detail in *LS*:

Eft þæs on mergen þa martin*us* fundode . þa wearð an cnapa of þæs þegenes hiwrædene . þurh næddran geslit nealice adyd . swa *þæt* þæt attor smeh geond ealne þone lichaman . and wæs eall to-blawen . on anre bytte gelicnysse . Se hlaford þa euantius gelæhte þone cnapan . and bær to martine micclum truwigende *þæt* him un-acumendlic nære þone cnapan to gehælenne . Se halga wer þa sona sette his hand on þone cnapan . and hrepode eall his lima . and æfter þam sette his finger on þa wunda . þe se wurm toslat . [413]

[After this in the morning, as Martin intended to go, a certain boy of the thane's household was nearly killed by a snake-bite, so that the poison spread through the whole body, and it was all blown up [swollen] in the shape of a bottle. Then the lord, Evantius, took the boy and carried him to Martin, trusting very much that it would not be impossible for him to heal the boy. The holy man then immediately placed his hand on the boy, and touched all

[412] *CH2*, XXXIV. Depositio Sancti Martini, p. 295, ll. 245-248.
[413] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 278, ll. 949-959.

his limbs, and after that placed his fingers on the wound which the serpent had bitten.]

In the same saints's life, Ælfric also describes how St Martin can command a water snake:

> Se halga martinus mid his munecu*m* stod hwilon on þære ea ofre . and efne þær swam an næddre wið heora . Ða cwæð se halga wer . Ic ðe beode on godes naman þ*æt* ðu buge ongean . and se yfela wurm sona be his worde gecyrde to þam oþrum staðe . and hi ealle þæs wundrodon .[414]
>
> [The holy Martin once stood with his monks on the river-shore, and a snake then swam them there. Then said the holy man: 'I command you in God's name to turn back." And at his words the evil serpent instantly turned to the other bank, and they all marvelled at that.]

St Martin then complains quite humourously that despite his ability to get his message across to snakes, people will not listen to him.
The apostles Simon and Jude are also able to command snakes. When sorcerers summon serpents, the apostles set the creatures onto their creators. They do spare the sorcerers by making the snakes retract their poison:

> Þa drymen ða wurdon geyrsode. and gemacodon þurh heora scincræft þæt him comon to creopende fela næddran; Ða cwædon hi ealle to ðam cyninge; La leof hat clypigan ða godes apostolas; Hi wurdon ða hrædlice gecigde. and gemetton ðæra drymanna basingas mid næddrum afyllede; Þa apostoli ða heton ða næddran on cristes naman. þæt hi scoldon ða drymen toslitan. and hi ðærrihte ongunnon to ceowenne heora lichaman swa þæt hi ðotorodon swilce oðre wulfas; Ða cwæð se cyning xerxes. to ðam apostolum; Lætað hi abitan oð deað; Hi andwyrdon; We sind asende to gecigenne mancynn fram deaðe to life. na to scufenne fram life to deaðe; Þa cwædon ða apostoli to ðam næddrum; On cristes naman gewitað to eowere wununge. and ateoð þæt atter

[414] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 296, ll. 1259-1264.

ut of ðisum dryum. þæt ge him on aguton; Ða ongunnon ealle ða næddran to ceowenne heora flæsc. and heora blod sucan. þæt hi þæt attor ut atugon.[415]

[The sorcerers then were angered, and through their magic caused that many snakes came creeping to them. They then all said to the king: "Oh lord, command the apostles of God to be called." They were then quickly summoned, and found the sorcerers' cloaks filled with snakes. The apostles then commanded the serpents in Christ's name, that they should bite at the sorcerers, and they immediately began to chew their bodies, so that they howled like wolves. Then king Xerxes said to the apostles: "Let them be bitten to death." They answered: "We are sent to summon mankind from death to life, not to push from life to death." Then the apostles said to the snakes: "In Christ's name, go away to your habitation, and draw the poison out of these sorcerers, [the poison] which you have poured into them." Then all the snakes began to chew their flesh and suck their blood, so that they drew out the poison.]

St Benedict does not command a snake, but predicts its whereabouts:

He underfeng ða lac mid ðancunge. and cwæð to ðam cnapan; Min bearn. beo ðe wærr þæt ðu ne drince of ðam wine þe ðu be wege hyddest. ac ahyld hit wærlice. þonne gesihst ðu hwæt ðæroninnan sticað; He gecyrde ða mid sceame. and ahylde þæt win wærlice. and ðær gewende ut of ðam fæte an fah næddre;[416]

[He [Benedict] received the gift with thanks, and said to the boy: "My child, be cautious not to drink of the wine which you have hidden by the road, but tilt it carefully; then you will see what sticks within it." He then returned with shame, and tilted the wine carefully, and there a variegated snake turned out of the vessel.]

[415] *CH2*, XXXIII. Passio Simonis et Iude, pp. 283-284, ll. 118-141 .
[416] *CH2*, XI. Sancti Benedicti, p. 100, ll. 276-282.

Benedict mysteriously knows that a snake has hidden inside a wine flask that a boy has stolen in secret, and he uses this knowledge to protect the boy from being bitten.

5. Discussion: Ælfric's Use of Animals

In *LS* and *CH*, natural history is not of course Ælfric's primary topic. However, animals are seen to be of great importance as they allow humans to learn about God's plan, and about their own human nature. In the medieval Christian world view, humans have to consider animals in order to learn about God and about themselves, and are exhorted to do so by authors such as Ambrose and Augustine. Ambrose uses animals metaphorically, urging people to learn from them. Basil does not go so far as that, but still considers animals useful for showing the greatness and complexity of Creation. As described above, Augustine also condones the study of animals, as analogies using animals also occur in the Bible.[417] The Bible itself urges the reader to learn from nature. Ælfric himself stresses this point in *LS*:

> God gesceop ða hæþenan þeah þe hi hine ne cunnon. ac hi ne beoð swa-þeah butan witum eft. forþan þe hi eaðelice mihton þone ælmihtigan under-gitan ðurh ða gesceafta. þe hi ge-seoð on worulde. Heofen and eorðe and oþre gesceafta. sunne. and mona. mærsiað heora scyppend. and men magon tocnawan. þæt se is mære god ana ælmihtig þe hi ealle gesceop.[418]
>
> [God created the heathens, though they do not know him, but nevertheless they will not be without punishments hereafter, because they could easily understand the almighty through the created things which they see in the world. Heaven and earth, and other created things, sun and moon, magnify their creator, and people can recognise that he is the great God alone almighty, who created them all.]

Even heathens who have no knowledge of the gospel have no excuse for not believing in God, as they should be able to deduce God's existence from nature. Animals are therefore often used in homilies and saints' lives, and in other didactic works.

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[417] See also Salisbury 1994, p. 112-113.
[418] *LS*1, XI. Natale Quadraginta Militum, p. 258, ll. 336-343.

Animals are not entirely dissimilar to humans, but neither are they exactly the same. Although both are created to live on the same earth, and both are part of God's Creation, each has a different role to play. Yet the paths of humans and animals often cross. Human identity is often defined by comparing and contrasting humans with animals. The main distinguishing factor between animals and humans in medieval Christian thought (such as Ambrose's and Augustine's) is the soul: because animals lack a soul, their lives end at death. Since there is no afterlife for animals, good and evil do not matter to them. Ælfric often refers to animals as soulless beings, but interestingly gives a different opinion in *LS*:

> Uþwytan sæcgað. þæt þære sawle gecynd is ðryfeald. An dæl is on hire gewylnigend-lic. oðer yrsigend-lic. þrydde sceadwislic. Twægen þissera dæla habbað deor and nytenu mid us. þæt is gewylnunge and yrre. Se man ana hæfð gescead. and ræd. and andgit.[419]
>
> [Philosophers say that the soul's nature is threefold. One part in it is capable of desire, the second of anger, the third of reason. Two of these parts, beasts and animals have [in common] with us, that is, desire and anger; the human alone has reason and speech and intelligence.]

Ælfric is suggesting here that animals possess parts of a soul, rather than none at all: the parts capable of desire and anger, but not of reason. Humans do possess a full soul and are therefore capable of reason. This, however, is more in line with classical philosophy than Christian thinking. As a more typical example of this process of comparison between animals and humans, the essential differences between angels, humans, animals and inanimate objects are explained in the following passage from the *CH*:

> Stanas sind gesceafta: ac hi nabbað nan lif. ne hi naht ne gefredað; Gærs 7 treowa lybbað buton felnysse: hi ne lybbað na þurh sawle. ac þurh heora grennysse; Nytenu lybbað. 7 habbað felnysse buton gesceade; Hi

[419] *LS*1, I. Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, p. 16, ll. 96-99.

> nabbað nan gescead: for þan ðe hi sind sawullease; Englas lybbað. 7 gefredað. 7 tosceadað; Nu hæfð se man ealra gesceafta sum þing; him is gemæne mid stanum þæt he beo wunigende; him is gemæne mid treowum þæt he lybbe: mid nytenum þæt he gefrede: mid englum þæt he understande;[420]
>
> [Stones are created things, but they have no life, nor do they feel anything. Grass and trees live without feeling: they live not through a soul, but through their greenness. Animals live and have feeling without reason; they have no reason, because they are soulless. Angels live, and feel, and reason. Now, man has something of all creatures. He has in common with the stones that he exists; he has in common with the trees that he lives; with the animals that he feels; with angels that he understands.]

The differences are not limited to mental faculties like emotion and reason, but are also believed to be expressed in the physical qualities of animals and humans, thus stressing the idea already mentioned that one can learn about God's providence by examining the natural world. Ælfric mentions in *CH* that there is a specific reason why humans walk upright and animals walk on all fours:

> Men he gescop mid gaste 7 mid lichaman; Nytenu. 7 deor: fixas. 7 fugelas: he gesceop on flæsce buton sawle; Mannum he sealde uprihtne gang: þa nytenu he let gan alotene; Mannum he forgeaf hlaf to bigleofan. 7 þam nytenum gærs[421]
>
> [Men he [God] created with a spirit and with a body. Animals and beasts, fish and birds he created in flesh without a soul. To men he gave an upright gait; the animals he let go bent down. To men he gave bread for food, and to the animals grass.]

[420] *CH*1, XXI. In Ascensione Domini, p. 349, ll. 123-130.
[421] *CH*1, XX. Feria IIII De Fide Catholica, p. 335, ll. 13-16.

This idea that animals, fish and birds were created without a soul and hence the bodies of animals face downwards, whereas humans have an upright posture, is made even more explicit in *LS*:

> Ða gesceafta þe þæs an scyppend gesceop synden mænig-fealde. and mislices hiwes. and ungelice farað. Sume sindon ungesewenlice gastas. butan lichoman swa swa synd ænglas on heofonum. Sume syndan creopende on eorðan. mid eallu*m* lichoman. swa swa wurmas doð. Sume gað on twa*m* fotum. sume on feower fotu*m*. Sume fleoð mid fyðeru*m*. sume on flodum swimmað. and hi ealle swa-þæh alotene beoð to þære eorðan weard. and þider wilniað. oððe þæs þe him lyst. oððe þæs þe hi beþurfon. ac se man ana gæð uprihte. þæt getacnað. þæt he sceall ma þæncan upp. þonn*e* nyðer. þelæs þe þæt mod sy neoðer. þonne se lichoma and he sceal smeagen embe þæt æce lif. þe he to gesceapen wæs. swiðor þonne embe þa eorðlican þing. swa swa his wæstm him gebicnað. [422]
>
> [The creatures whom this one creator created are manifold, and of various form, and move differently. Some are invisible spirits without a body, as are the angels in heaven. Some are creeping on the earth with their whole body, as worms do; some go on two feet, some on four feet. Some fly with wings, some swim in the waters, and nevertheless they are all bent down towards the earth, and they desire towards there, either because it pleases them or because they needed to; but man alone goes upright, which signifies that he should think more upward than downward, lest the mind be lower than the body; and he shall reflect on the eternal life for which he was created, rather than on the earthly things, just like his stature indicates to him.]

Humans, who should aim for spirituality, walk upright, whereas animals, which are more earthly, are stooped more towards the ground. This is very different from a later medieval explanation by Albertus Magnus, who proposes a more

[422] *LS*1, I. Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, p. 14, ll. 49-61.

physical reason for this phenomenon: he maintains that animal heads are heavier, and that animals' bodies are not able to generate enough heat to walk upright.[423]

Animals in general, as presented by Ælfric, are considered to be different from and usually inferior to people, mainly because they have no soul:

> And he worhte ða þone man mid his handum, and him on ableow sawle; For ði is se man betera, gif he gode geðihð, þonne ealle ða nytenu sindon. forðan ðe hi ealle gewurðað to nahte, and se man is ece on anum dæle þæt is on ðære sawle; Heo ne geendað næfre.[424]
>
> [And he [God] then made man with his hands, and blew a soul in him; therefore the man is better, if he thrives in good,[425] than all the animals are, because they will all come to nothing, and the man is in one part eternal, that is in the soul; It [the soul] will never end.]

This concept is consistent with medieval thought in general: both Augustine and Ambrose, for example, point out the lack of a soul and of rationality in animals. Ælfric explains himself more clearly later, stating, as we saw above, that stones have no life or sense but merely exist; plants have only life; animals have life and feelings; angels have life and reason; and humans have a small part of everything, existence, life, feelings and reason.

A human, then, is superior to plants as well as to animals. This perceived superiority of humans can also be a disadvantage, because a man who does evil will suffer the consequences, whereas an animal will simply die. So humans have a reason and a duty to do good. Neither does the lack of a soul mean that animals are bad. Rather, they serve God in their own way, by doing what they were designed to do:

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[423] Salisbury 1994, p. 4
[424] *CH*1, I. De Initio Creaturae, p.182, ll. 112-115.
[425] Or perhaps 'achieves favour with God', as suggested by Godden, *CH*3, p. 776.

> Ealle gesceafta. Sunne. 7 mona 7 ealle tunglan. land. 7 sæ. 7 nytenu. ealle hi þeowiað hyra scyppende; for ðon þe hi farað æfter godes dihte;[426]
>
> [All created things, sun, and moon, and all stars, land, and sea, and animals, they all serve their creator; because they behave after God's direction]

Humans, who aim for spirituality, go upright, animals, who are more earthly, are stooped more towards the ground. Food, too, reflects the division between animals and humans: humans eat bread, cattle grass. This explains why in the next passage it is so shameful to Basil that he is offered only grass to eat. The saint is offered grass by passing soldiers, because they are not happy with the barley loaves they received from Basil, referring to them as 'horse food':

> Ða het se arleasa onfon þæra hlafa . and syllan þam godes menn . gærs to-geanes . and cwæð mid hospe . horse mete is bere . þæt he us forgeaf . underfo he gærs . [427]
>
> [Then the wicked man ordered [his soldiers] to receive the loaves, and to give to the man of God grass in return, and said with scorn: "Barley is horse food, which he gave us; let him receive grass."]

Apart from the discourtesy of offering something inedible to a person who has been so generous as to share his food, there is an extra insult intended by associating Basil with an irrational, soulless animal:

> Þa underfæng se halga þa handfulle and cwæð
> We budon þe casere þes þe we sylfa brucað
> And þu sealdest us to-geanes þæt þæt ðe unge-sceadwyse nytena
> Habbað him to big-leofan gebysmriende us.[428]

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[426] *CH*1, XI. Dominica I In Quadrigessima, p. 269, ll. 102-104.
[427] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 62, ll. 214-217.
[428] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 62-64, ll. 218-221.

> [Then the saint received the handful and said: "We offered you, emperor, of that which we ourselves eat, and you gave us in return that which irrational animals have for food, mocking us."]

The distinction between animals and humans is important to Ælfric, and he comes back to it in *LS*. Here, he mentions that all things can be divided into three: transitory things, such as animals, eternal things that began sometime, such as humans, and eternal things that always were, such as God.[429]

The concept that animals are transitory, the reasons why humans walk upright, the fact that humans have feelings in common with animals, the rationality of humans distinguishing them from animals: all these concepts can be traced back to Boethius, a source used by Ælfric, probably in Alfred's translation. The last idea is also present in Alcuin's *De animae ratione*, which Ælfric used as a source for the greater part of the sermon on the nativity of Christ in *LS*,[430] and a similar idea was also used by Alfred.[431] All these ideas were common in the Middle Ages, contributing to the idea that humans were superior to animals.[432] Although an animal could act evilly, they were not usually considered to be as bad as a willingly sinful person. In fact, even the wildest beast is said to be better than an evil (or, God forbid, a loquacious) woman:

> Hwæt is betwux fiþerfotum reþre þonne leo? Oðde hwæt is wælhreowre betwux nædercynne þonne draca? Ac se wisa salomon cwæð þæt selre wære to wunienne. mid leon. 7 dracan. þonne mid yfelan wife 7 oferspecum;[433]
>
> [What among the four-footed is fiercer than a lion? Or what is more cruel among the serpent-kind than a dragon? But the wise Solomon said that it

[429] *LS*1, I. Nativitas Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, p. 12-13.
[430] Godden, M. R., 'The Sources of Lives 1 (Nativity of Christ) ', 2002 *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register* http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/, accessed February 2004.
[431] Examples: see for men going upright and animals downward in Alfred's prose as well as the metrical Boethius: Griffiths, p. 148-149; for the same idea in Ambrose's *Hexameron*, see Savage p. 233.
[432] Cf. Salisbury 1994, p. 5
[433] *CH*1, XXXII. Decollatio Sancti Iohannis Babtiste, p. 456, ll. 173-176.

would be better to dwell with a lion and a dragon than with an evil and too talkative woman.]

Ælfric has many examples: John had lived in the desert with dangerous wild animals and survived, but it was a woman who wanted his head. Daniel slept in the lion's den, but was betrayed by Jezabel. It seems only fitting then, that Jezabel, who behaves worse than an animal, should be devoured by ferocious dogs. Jonah survived being swallowed by a whale, but in contrast a strong person like Samson could be undone by a woman.

Clearly then, an animal can in some respects be superior to humans. Some animals have an inborn sense to do the right thing, such as the stork and swallow who know how to "keep the time of their coming", whereas some people never seem to know what will happen:

> Be þære gymeleaste spræc se witega mid ceorigendre stemne þus cweþende; storc 7 swalewe heoldon þone timan | heora tocymes 7 þis folc ne oncneow godes dom; [434]

> [About that negligence the prophet spoke mourning voice, thus saying: "The stork and the swallow keep the time of their coming, and this people does not know God's judgement."]

Other animals are naturally chaste, such as the bee,[435] or innocent, like a lamb.[436] Although generally believed to be driven by instinct, an animal can forget its usual aggression when confronted by a saint, guarding him/her or helping the saint to find food or drink. The animals are guided by God: without his knowledge, none of them dies, without his permission, none of them is led by evil spirits, and God provides for them:

> He cwæð; Behealdað þas fleogendan fugelas ðe ne sawað ne ne ripað. ac eower heofonlica fæder hi afet; Gif ða wacan fugelas þe nu to-dæg beoð.

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[434] *CH*1, XXVIII. Dominica XI Post Pentecosten, p. 412, ll. 64-66.
[435] *CH*2, I. De Natale Domini, p. 5, ll. 86-90.
[436] E.g. *CH*1, IX. In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae, p. 251, ll. 85-86.

and beoð tomerigen to nahte awende. habbað butan care bigleofan ðurh heora scyppendes foresceawunge. hu miccle swiðor wile God foresceawian urne bigleofan, we ðe sind ece on urum sawlum. and eac beoð on lichaman unateorigendlice. æfter ðam gemænlicum æriste; [437]

[He said: "Behold the flying birds, which do not sow or reap, but your heavenly father feeds them." If the humble birds, which live now today, and will tomorrow be turned to nothing, have sustenance without care, through their creator's providence, how much more will God provide our sustenance, we who are eternal in our souls, and [who] will also be undying in body after the universal resurrection?]

So, by analogy, if the birds are provided for without any active contribution, humans will be provided for even better, and eternally, if they work to lead a good life.

From the examples mentioned above, it is clear that the animals used by Ælfric in *CH* and *LS*, do not necessarily all fall into the same categories. In the preceding chapters, the animals were considered in more detailed contexts by examining their specific functions in Ælfric's work. The largest group of animals represented in his work contains those animals that are used in exegesis. Animals from this category set an example of either good or bad behaviour, or their function is to explain difficult situations. The next largest category is the animal which is seen as either a friend or an enemy of humans. These animals are most likely to occur in saints' lives, where they usually assist the saint or slay his enemies. A third, and rather smaller category, is animal lore which is used without much moral purpose, perhaps primarily to inform the audience.

Animals as Moral Examples

Animals are often used as a symbol or emblem of a certain quality, for example the lion as a sign of courage, and the dove as a token of meekness. Humans can look to certain animals for examples of how to live their lives. Although animals as moral examples become highly popular from around the twelfth century, when

[437] *CH2*, XXXI. Dominica XVI Post Pentecosten, p. 269, ll. 50-56.

bestiaries and fables become frequent, they are not a new phenomenon. Salisbury argues otherwise: "From the twelfth century on, animals were no longer just property and food, but also human exemplars. Of course, this new symbolic emphasis of animals did not displace the previous concrete day-to-day relationship people had with their real animals. That relationship always remained central to the medieval economy; the symbolism was a newly added dimension."[438] Looking at Ælfric's use of animals, this metaphorical use of animals had clearly already been introduced to Britain much earlier than the twelfth century, and leans heavily on Christian and Classical traditions. Anglo-Saxon people were no strangers to this "tendency to humanize animals, ascribing to them conscious motives, habits, and ruses, or even moral standards and religious veneration."[439]

Most examples in Ælfric are based on the Bible. To many medieval authors, the "natural world was an allegorical text in which God had cryptically concealed certain signs and symbols whose underlying meaning could be recovered or deciphered only with reference to the holy Scriptures".[440] As in the quotation from Job mentioned at the start of this chapter, humans are supposed to study nature to be able to understand creation, and thereby to come a step closer to understanding God. Ælfric describes this himself in *LS*:

> God gesceop ða hæþenan þeah þe hi hine ne cunnon . ac hi ne beoð swa-þeah butan witum eft . forþan þe hi eaðelice mihton þone ælmihtigan under-gitan ðurh ða gesceafta . þe hi ge-seoð on worulde . Heofen and eorðe and oþre gesceafta . sunne . and mona . mærsiað heora scyppend . and men magon tocnawan . þæt se is mære god ana ælmihtig þe hi ealle gesceop .[441]
>
> [God created the heathens, though they do not know him, but nevertheless they will not be without punishments hereafter, because they could easily understand the almighty through the created things which they see in the world. Heaven and earth, and other created things, sun and moon,

[438] Salisbury 1994, p. 105.
[439] Thorndike 1923, p. 74.
[440] Salter 2001, p. 43.
[441] *LS*1, XI. Natale Quadragina Militum, p. 258, ll. 336-343.

magnify their creator, and people can recognise that he is the great God alone almighty, who created them all.]

Therefore, because nature is a mirror of the Almighty, even heathens who have not heard of Christianity have no excuse not to be religious. They can be expected to observe God's greatness in the natural world.

In this system, every animal that exists has a function in creation, and can have a deeper meaning. Some of these deeper meanings are commonly known; others are more obscure. Thus, whenever Ælfric refers to a lamb, he expects his readers to think immediately of the lamb as an emblem of Christ, a symbol illustrating his meekness and innocence. However, a more difficult, less obvious example has to be explained in great detail, such as the meaning of the different parts of the lamb's body as it is eaten. The lamb itself, as a sacrifice, betokens the later sacrifice of Christ. The lamb is to be roasted in a fire: the Holy Ghost came to the disciples in the form of fire requiring them to spread knowledge. The roasting signifies this event. The lamb's head is to be eaten, signifying the reception of the belief in Christ's divinity. The legs signify his humanity, and the feet that Christ is beginning and end. Eating the lamb's inner parts symbolizes the acceptance of Christ's commands. Nothing is allowed to be left over, because everyone has to consider all words of God carefully and completely. The lamb's bones may not be broken, just as Christ's legs were not broken by the Romans when he was crucified.[442] These symbolic references are obviously more complicated than the simple statement that a lion signifies strength.

The animal can be treated more or less like an object, as in the previous example of the lamb that is roasted and eaten. More commonly, the animal represents either a good or a bad trait. Animals are not only said to have human traits, but the reverse occurs too, for example when a person is said to be wily like a fox and haughty like a bird:

> Ða cwæð se hælend him to . Foxas habbað holu . and fugelas habbað nest . and ic næbbe wununge hwider ic min heafod ahyldan mæge . Crist sceawode his heortan and geseah his prættas . forðan þe he mid

[442] *CH2*, XV. In Die Pascae, pp. 157-59, ll. 255-320.

soðfæstnysse ne sohte þone hælend . ac foxunga wæron wunigende on him . and up-ahefednys swilce healice fugelas[443]

[Then the saviour said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, and I do not have a dwelling, where I can lay down my head." Christ looked into his heart, and he saw his tricks, because he did not seek the saviour with sincerity, but foxlike wiles were dwelling in him, and haughtiness, like lofty birds;]

An example of a good trait can be found in *CH*, in the sermon on the *Nativitas Domini*:

Sindon þeah-hwæðere sume gesceafta þe tymað buton hæmede, and bið ægðer ge seo modor mæden ge seo dohtor; þæt sind beon: hi tymað heora team mid clænnysse, of ðam hunige hi bredað heora brod, and beoð acennede þa geongan mid mægðhade, and ða yldran wuniað on mægðhade.[444]

[There are, nevertheless, some creatures which reproduce without intercourse, and both the mother and the daughter are virgins, such as bees; They produce their offspring with purity; From the honey they breed their brood, and the young ones are brought forth with virginity, and the older ones continue in virginity.]

The bee is used here as an emblem of virginity. Ælfric explains that although humans, except for Mary, have to procreate by means of sexual intercourse, bees are creatures who remain virgin and yet give birth. This biologically erroneous notion[445] is a common one and occurs in Rufinus's *De Symbolo*[446], and also in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, *De Mirabilibus* and the liturgy for Easter. Ælfric continues to compare the uniqueness of Mary's virginal state to the situation in the church: the church, or the Christian people, are "consecrated to one maiden",

[443] *LS*1, XVI. Sermo De Memoria Sanctorum, p. 348, ll. 157-163.
[444] *CH*2, I. De Natale Domini, p. 5, ll. 86-90.
[445] Although it is of course true that a majority of the bee population does not propagate.
[446] Rufinus is given as an analogy in the Fontes database.

dedicated only to God.[447] Animals were valued because they "reflected, partook of, and pointed towards the goodness of God, their Creator".[448]
An example used by Ælfric of an animal with bad connotations is the pig:

> Sum swiðe welig wif wæs . swylce on wudewan hade ac heo lyfde sceand-lice . swa swa swin on meoxe . and mid healicum synnum hi sylfe fordyde;[449]
>
> [A certain very wealthy woman was living as if in widowhood, but she lived shamefully, like a pig on a dunghill, and destroyed herself with heinous sins;]

The pig is associated with uncleanness, not just because it was unclean to eat, but also because it likes dirt, and stands for greed and gluttony, of which the woman in the example is guilty. Although many animals are gluttonous, since "nytenu ætað swa ær swa hi hit habbað" [beasts eat as soon as they have it][450], and know no moderation, pigs are especially singled out for their greed. Pigs are therefore a logical target for the demons to be cast into in the story of the Gadarene swine (Mt 8: 28-32, Mk 5: 1-13, Lk 8: 26-33), where Christ casts demons into a herd of swine, who then run off a cliff:

> Þa wæs ðær gehende . an heord swina . and hi sona bædon þæt hi moston faran into ðam swynum . and drihten geðafode þa ðam deoflum þæt . Hi ða into þam swynum . and hi ealle aweddan . and urnon to þære sæ . and sona adruncon . Ne mæg se deofol mannum derian butan godes ðafunge . ne heora ðincg amyrran . þonne he ne moste faran furðon on þa swin . butan him geðafode þæs se hælend[451]
>
> [Then there was nearby a herd of swine, and they [the demons] asked that they would be allowed to go into the swine, and then the lord granted that

[447] Thorpe, p. 11.
[448] Salter 2001, p. 148.
[449] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 80, ll. 527-529.
[450] *LS*1, XVI. Sermo De Memoria Sanctorum, p. 358, l. 317.
[451] *LS*1, XVII. De Auguriis, p. 376-378, ll. 191-198.

to the devils. Then they [went] into the swine, and they all went mad, and ran to the sea, and soon drowned. The devil cannot hurt men wihout God's permission, nor destroy their things, when he could not even go into the swine, unless the saviour permitted him that.]

The pigs' faults, their love of mud and dark colour, are explained in great detail in *CH*:

> Ne dorston ða deoflu, ðaða hi adræfde wæron, into ðam swynum, gif he him ne sealde leafe, ne into nanum men, forðan ðe se Metoda Drihten ure gecynd hæfde on him sylfum genumen. Ða swyn hi gecuron for ðam sweartum hiwe, and for ðære fulnysse fenlices adelan. Se man ðe hæfð swynes ðeawas, and wyle hine aðwean mid wope fram synnym, and eft hine befylan fullice mid leahtrum, swa swa swyn deð, ðe cyrð to meoxe æfter his ðweale, þeawleas nyten, þonne bið he betæht þam atelicum deoflum, for his fulum dædum, þe he fyrnlice ge-edlæhð. Se ðe oft gegremað God þurh leahtrum, and æfre ge-edlæhð his yfelan dæda, he bið swyne gelic, and forscyldgod wið God.[452]
>
> [The devils did not dare to enter into the pigs, when they were driven out, if he had not given them leave, nor into any man, because the Lord Creator had taken our nature on himself. They chose the pigs because of the black hue, and because of the foulness of the fenlike mud. The man who has a pig's habits, and wants to wash himself with weeping from sins, and afterwards defile himself foully with sins, like a pig does, [a pig] which returns to the dunghill after its washing, an ill-behaved animal; he will then be delivered to the hateful devils for his foul deeds, which he wickedly repeats. He who often angers God through sins, and always repeats his evil deeds, is similar to a pig, and utterly guilty with God.]

A human should not, like a pig, make himself dirty again after being cleansed: he should not sin again after repenting of one sin. No matter how despicable the pig is in this example, it should be noticed that not even a pig may be entered by evil spirits without permission from God. Animals, good or bad, obey God alone.

[452] *CH2*, XXIII. Alia Narratio De Euangelii Textu, p. 219, ll. 182-194.

Some animals may be praised for one trait, but despised for another. The dog, although deserving praise for being very loyal, has a nasty habit:

> Se man þe æfter his dæd-bote his manfullan dæda ge-edniwað . se gegremað god . swa þ*æt* he bið þam hunde gelic þe spywð and eft ytt þ*æt* þ*æt* he aer aspaw[453]
>
> [The man who after his penance renews his wicked deeds, he angers God, so that he is like the dog who vomits, and again eats that which he before vomited out.]

This is a rather distasteful warning for humans not to repeat their sins.

Animals can also be used as a sign from God, to stress a person's holiness or confirm a good course of action. The traditional symbol for the Holy Ghost, the dove, appears when Basil is being baptized:

> Efne þa færlice . com fyr of heofonum . and an scinende culfre . scæt of þam fyre . into ðære ea . and astyrede þæt wæter . fleah siþþan upp . forðrihte to heofonum . and basilius eode . of þæm fant-baðe sona . and seo biscop hine be-wæfde . wundriende þæs tacnes[454]
>
> [Then suddenly a fire came from the heavens, and a shining dove shot out of the fire into the river, and stirred the water, and afterward flew up straightway to the heavens, and Basil immediately went out of the baptismal water, and the bishop clothed him, wondering at the sign.]

This symbol continues to play a part in Basil's life, when Basil puts the blessed eucharist into a container in the shape of a dove:

> Þone oðerne dæl he dyde gehælden mid him to be-byrgenne . æft*er* his forð-siðe . þone ðryddan dæl he dyde on-sundor . and het him smiðian on smætu*m* golde . anre culfran anlicnysse . and þa up-aheng . bufan þ*am*

[453] *LS*1, XII. In Caput Jejunii, p. 272, ll. 162-164.
[454] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 54, ll. 72-77.

altare . and þær on gedyde . þone ðryddan dæl . þæs deorwurðan husles . and seo culfra siþþan . simle hi astyrede . æt basilies messan þriwa mid þam husle[455]

[The second part he caused to be kept to be buried with him after his death; the third part he caused to be kept apart, and ordered it to be forged for him in pure gold in the shape of a dove, and then hung it up above the altar, and put therein the third part of the precious eucharist; and the dove afterwards always stirred herself at Basil's mass, thrice, with the eucharist.]

The golden dove miraculously comes alive at mass, another sign that God approves of Basil's works. God does not only appear as a dove, but also as a stag, when he guides the heathen Placidas (later known as Eustace) on his way to becoming a Christian:

Se heort þa witodlice astah on anne heahne clud . and þær gestod . Placidas ða lange stod . and beheold þone heort . and wundrode his micelnysse . and ablan his æhtan . Hi*m* þa god geswutelode þ*æt* he him swilcne dom ne ondrede . ne his mægnes micelnysse ne wundrode . Witodlice betwux þæs heortes hornum glitenode gelicnys þære halgan cristes rode breohtre þonne sunnan leoma . and seo anlicnysse ures drihtnes hælendes cristes [...] Þa ða placidas þis gehyrde . þa wæs he afyrht mid þam mæstan ege . and feoll of his horse to eorðan .[456]

[Then indeed the hart climbed a high rock and stood there. Then Placidas stood long and watched the hart, and wondered at its size, and ceased his pursuit. Then God revealed to him that he should not fear such majesty, nor wonder at the greatness of its might. Verily, between the hart's horns the shape of Christ's holy cross glittered, brighter than sunlight, and the shape of our Lord Saviour Christ; [it turns and speaks to him, telling him to follow Christ]

[455] *LS*1, III. Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi, p. 58, ll. 123-131.
[456] *LS*2, XXX. Passio S. Eustachii Martyris, p. 192-194, ll. 37-55.

When Placidas heard this, then he was afraid with the utmost awe, and fell off his horse to the earth.]

The animal is thus an instrument of God, not only for teaching mankind, but also as a direct vehicle of his messages.

Animals occur in *CH* and *LS* as the helpers or protectors of saints. Animals are sent by God to feed saints or prophets, for example in the case of Elijah in *LS*, where birds feed him ("and se witega helias gewende of þam lande . and god hine afedde þurh fugela ðenunga" [and the prophet Elijah departed out of that land, and God fed him by the ministrations of birds] [457]), or St Cuthbert who lets an animal search food for him:

> Cuðberhtus ða him [his companions] togeanes cwæð, La hwæt se ælmihtiga god mæg foreaðe unc þurh ðisne earn. æt fore-sceawian, se ðe giu ær Elian afedde. þurh ðone sweartan hremm, ær he to heofonan siðode[458]
>
> [Then Cuthberht said to him: "Lo, the almighty God can very easily provide food for us through this eagle, [God] who long ago fed Elijah through the black raven, before he journeyed to heaven."]

Sometimes the animals lead a saint to food or water:

> ða þa ðis gebed gefylled wæs þa beheold se biscop on ælce healfe 7 geseah ða on þa swiþran healfe an hwit lamb standan þe bicnode mid his swiðran fet swilce he þa wæteræddran geswutelian wolde; ða undergeat clemens þæs lambes gebicnunge; 7 cwæð. geopeniað ðas eorþan on þissere stowe þær ðær þæt lamb togebicnode;[459]
>
> [When this prayer was ended, the bishop watched on each side, and then saw on the right side a white lamb standing, which beckoned with its right

[457] *LS*1, XVIII. Sermo Excerptus De Libro Regum, p. 386, ll. 58-59.
[458] *CH*2, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 84, ll. 103-106.
[459] *CH*1, XXXVII. Natale Sancti Clementis, p. 499, ll. 72-77.

foot, as if it wanted to show the water-source. Then Clement understood the lamb's beckoning, and said: "Open the earth in this place where the lamb beckoned."]

They can also protect saints from their enemies, such as the lions in Daniel's den who do not hurt him:

> Eal swa eft danihel se deorwurða witega . for his anfealdnysse and anrædum geleafan wearð tua aworpen . þurh ða wodan chaldeiscan into [ðara] leona seaðum . ac hi leofodon be hungre seofon niht metelease . and ne mihton him derian[460]
>
> [Likewise again Daniel, the valued prophet, for his simplicity and constant faith, was twice thrown by the furious Chaldeans into the lions' pit, but they lived in hunger seven nights without, and could not hurt him]

Saints are able to keep wild animals at distance, or to tame them. They are usually not harmed by them. The unnatural or miraculous behaviour of animals around a saint can signify his or her importance and holiness. The saint's power over animals is a traditional hagiographical motif, found from St Edmund to, perhaps most famously, St Francis. This power does not merely serve as an aspect of the saint's miraculous powers, but is a sign of the saint's state of grace: "[...] the saint's remarkable purity and innocence enabled him to re-establish the state of peace and harmony that had originally been enjoyed by Adam, Eve, and the animals in the Garden of Eden before the Fall."[461]
So, the saint's remarkable abilities to handle wild animals show that he is in a pre-lapsarian state of grace, at a level with Adam and Eve in the Garden.[462] The animals either instinctively recognize the saint's status, or are directly commanded by God, for example when God protects Moses: "and ic eac afyrsige ða yfelan deor eow fram" [and I will also put the evil beasts far from you]. [463]

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[460] *LS*1, XVI. Sermo De Memoria Sanctorum, p. 342, ll. 78-82.
[461] Salter 2001, p. 148.
[462] See also Herzog 1992, p. 261ff.
[463] *LS*1, XIII. De Oratione Moysi, p. 294, l. 162.

The classical example of animals assisting the saint consists of the wild animals, usually lions and bears, which spare the saint who is thrown in the arena with them by Roman enemies.

> Þa on þam oðrum dæge . het decius se casere lætan leon and beran to þam geleaffullum cynegum . þæt hi hi abiton . buton hi bugon to his godum .[...] and lædde hi syððan to ðam wæfer-huse . þær ða deor wunodon . beran . and leon . þe hi abitan sceoldon . and het lætan him to . twegen leon . and feower beran . binnan þam huse . þa urnon þa deor egeslice grymetende . to þære halgena fotum . swylce hi frydes bædon . and noldon awæg gan . ac hi weredon hi swyðor . swa þæt nan man ne dorste for ðæra deora ware þam halgum genealecan . oððe into ðam huse gan[464]
>
> [Then on the second day the emperor Decius ordered men to let loose lions and bears against the faithful kings, so that they might devour them, unless they would bow to his gods [...] and he led them afterwards to the amphitheatre where the beasts lived, bears and lions, who were to devour them; and ordered two lions and four bears to be let loose upon them within the house. Then the beasts ran, roaring terribly, to the saints' feet, as if they asked for protection, and did not want to go away; but rather defended them, so that no man dared, because of the beasts' defense, approach the saints or go into the house.]

Not only do the animals here refuse to attack the saints Abdon and Sennes, they even protect them so that nobody can approach them.

Agatha trusts in her faith so much, that she warns her captors in advance of her power over animals: "Gif ðu mid wild-deorum me nu bætan wylt . hi beoð sona hand-tame . þurh þæs hælendes naman"[465] ["If thou wilt now bait me with wild beasts, they shall straightway be tamed to my hand through the name of Jesus"], and it is no empty threat. The animals do not only protect the saints, but they also revere them, as in the case of Eustace:

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[464] *LS2*, XXIV. Natalis Sanctorum Abdon et Semnes, p. 56, ll. 28-57.
[465] *LS1*, VIII. Natale Sancte Agathe, Virginis, p. 200, l. 85-86.

Þa geseah se casere þæt he hine þurh nan ðing awendan ne mihte fram crists geleafan . het ða hine gelædan mid his wife . and his cildum . into anum eorð-huse . and het ane strange leo lætan into him . þæt hio hi abitan sceolde . Þa arn seo leo . and gestod wið þone eadigan wer eustachium . and aleat mid þam heafde . and feoll to his fotum . and geeaðmedde hi to him . and aras eft and eode of þam huse . Eornostlice se casere geseah þas wundorlican wæfersyne . þæt se leo heora ne oðhran.[466]

[When the emperor saw that he could turn him away with anything from Christ's faith, then he commanded him to be led with his wife and his children into an earthen house, and ordered a strong lioness to be let in to them, that she should devour them. Then the lioness ran, and stood by the blessed man Eustace, and bowed down her head, and fell at his feet, and humbled herself to him, and arose again, and went out of the house. Earnestly the emperor saw this miraculous spectacle, that the lioness did not touch them.]

The wild animals will not only protect the saint, they will seek him out and do his bidding. An escaped lion runs to Daria in her prison cell:

and an leo utbærst ut of þære leona pearruce . and arn to darian þurh drihtnes sande . þær heo læg on gebedum . and alæt to eorðan astræhtum limum wið þæt geleaffulle mæden . Þa woldon ða hæðenan habban hi to bysmore . and nyston þæt se<o> leo læg inne mid hire .[467]

[And a lion burst out of the lion's enclosure, and ran to Daria, through the lord's sending, where she lay in prayers, and bowed down to the earth with limbs towards the faithful virgin. Then the heathens wanted to have her to disgrace [her], and did not know that the lioness lay inside with her.]

[466] *LS2*, XXX. Passio S. Eustachii, Martyris, p. 214, ll. 413-420.
[467] *LS2*, XXXV. Passio Chrisanti et Dariae, p. 392, ll. 253-258.

Daria is then able to command the lion, ordering it not to kill people. Through this miraculous act and her order, she is able to convert all the heathens that come to her cell. This enrages her captors so much, that they set fire to the place. But Daria's sway over animals is so great that she helps the lion overcome its natural fear of fire, and lets it go:

> Þa wearð se heah-ge-refa hearde gegremod . and het ontendan fyr ætforan þære dura þær daria inne wæs mid þam deore samod wolde hi for-bærnan butu ætgædere . Þa forhtode seo leo for þam fyre þearle ac daria cwæð to þam deore þus . Ne beo þu afyrht þis fyr þe ne derað ne þu ne bist ofslagen ær-þan-þe þu sylf acwele . gang þe nu orsorh aweg . and god ahret . þone þe ðu wurðodest mid þinum weorcum to-dæg . Þa eode seo leo alotenum heafde to-middes þæs folces freolice aweg . and þa þe heo ær gefeng wurdon gefullode siððan hi on-cneowan crist þurh ða leon[468]
>
> [Then the chief officer was severely angered , and ordered to light a fire before the door where Daria was inside, together with the animal, [as he] wanted to burn them both together. Then the lioness feared severely because of the fire, but Daria spoke to the beast thus "Do not be afraid, this fire will not hurt you, nor will you be killed before you die of your own accord; go away now without care, and God will save [you], [God] whom you have glorified with your works today." Then the lioness went away freely, with bowed head, through the middle of the people; and those whom she had caught before were baptised after they had acknowledged Christ through the lioness.]

Apparently, animals recognize saints instinctively, and spare them even after their death. The head of St Edmund, carelessly discarded by his heathen attackers, is guarded by a wolf until his people find it:

> Wæs eac micel wundor þæt an wulf wearð asend þurh godes wissunge to bewerigenne þæt heafod wið þa oþre deor . ofer dæg . and niht . Hi eodon

[468] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Chrisanti et Dariae, p. 394, ll. 293-306.

þa secende . and symle clypigende . swa swa hit gewunelic is þa*m* ðe on wuda gað oft . Hwær eart þu nu gefera? and him *and*wyrde þ*æt* heafod . Her . her . her . and swa gelome clypode *and*swarigende him eallu*m* . swa oft swa heora ænig clypode . oþþ*æt* hi ealle becomen þurh ða clypunga him to . Þa læg se græga wulf þe bewiste þ*æt* heafod . And mid his twa*m* forum hæfde þ*æt* heafod beclypped . grædig . and hungrig . and for gode ne dorste þæs heafdes abyrian . <ac> heold hit wið deor . Þa wurdon hi ofwundrode þæs wulfes hyrd-rædenne . and þ*æt* halige heafod ham feredon mid him . þancigende þam ælmihtigan ealra his wundra . ac se wulf folgode forð mid þam heafde . oþþ*æt* hi to tune comon . swylce he tam wære . and gewende eft siþþan to wuda ongean[469]

[There was also a great wonder, that a wolf was sent, through God's guidance, to guard the head against the other animals by day and night. They then went seeking and calling continuously, as is normal for those who often go through the wood: "Where are you now, companion?" And the head answered them "'Here, here, here." And so it called out continually, answering them all, as often as any of them called, until they all came to it through the calling. There lay the grey wolf who protected the head, and with its two feet [it] had embraced the head, greedy and hungry, and because of God [it] did not dare to taste the head, but kept it against [other] animals. Then they were amazed by the wolf's guardianship, and took the holy head home with them, thanking the almighty for all his wonders; but the wolf followed on with the head until they came to town, as if it was tame, and then turned back again to the wood.]

An exception occurs in the legend of the seven sleepers, when birds hack at the bodies of the dead martyrs:

and ðær flugon sona to hrocas . and hremmas . and feala cynna fugelas . and þara haligra martyra eagan ut a-haccedon[470]

[469] *LS*2, XXXII. Passio Sancti Eadmundi Regis, p. 324-26, ll. 145-163.
[470] *LS*1, XXIII. De Septem Dormientibus, p. 492, ll. 76-78.

[and rooks and ravens and birds of many kinds flew there immediately, and hacked out the eyes of the holy martyrs]

This, however, is the only instance in *CH* and *LS* where the saints' bodies are harmed by animals, and on another occasion, a raven protects a body:

> Hit gelamp þa sona þur<h> godes fore-sceawunge þ*æt* as sweart hrem þær fleah sona to . & be-werode þ*æt* lic wið þa wildan fugelas & hi ealle afligde mid his fiðer*um* aweg . & eac þa reðan deor mid his on-ræsum . Se ælmihtiga god þe þe Eliam his witegan þurh þon*e* swaertan hræm asende hwilon mete . & hine þa afedde þur þæs fugelas þenunge swa swa on cyninga bocu*m* fulcuð is be þa*m* . þe ylca ge-heold nu þæs halgan weres lic þurh þæs hr*em*mes weardunge wið þa oðre fugelas [471]

> [It happened then soon, through God's providence, that a black raven soon flew there, and protected the body against the wild birds, and drove them all away with his wings, and also the wild beasts with his attacks. The almighty God, who once sent meat to Elias, his prophet, through the black raven, and fed him then through the bird's service, as [it] is well-known about that in the Book of Kings; the same one [God] now preserved the holy man's body, through the raven's protection against the other birds.]

So animals that normally eat carrion, such as the wolf and the raven, preserve the saints' dead bodies, a scene that is an inversion of the Anglo-Saxon beasts of battle, which hover around the dead to eat them.

Saints hold remarkable power over animals. If the animals are harming them or their surroundings, they can send them away. But the saint can show mercy too: although Cuthbert has sent away the ravens that were eating his crop, he lets one pair that has already nested stay. The thankful birds give him a present in return:

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[471] *LS*2, XXXVII. (Appendix) Passio Sancti Vincentii, p. 440, ll. 239-249.

and hi lustbære þæt land gesohton, and brohton ðam lareowe lac to medes, swines rysl his scon to gedreoge; and hi ðær siððan unscæððige wunedon[472]

[and they[the ravens] joyfully sought that land, and brought to the teacher a gift as reward, swine's fat to soften his shoes; and they afterwards lived there harmlessly.]

St Martin, too, does not hesitate to chide animals that are not behaving as he wants them too:

He ferde ða þiderwerd mid sumum gebroðrum . þa geseah he scealfran swimmam on anu*m* flode . and gelome doppetan adune to grunde ehtende þære fixa mid fræcra grædignysse . Þa cwæð se halga wer to his geferum þus . Þas fugelas habbað feonda gelicnysse þe syrwiað æfre embe ða unwaran . and grædiglice foð . and gefangene fordoð . and of þam ge-fangenu*m* ge-fyllede ne beoð . Þa bebead martin*us* þam mæð-leasu*m* scealfrum . þ*æt* hi ge-swicon þæs fixnoðes . and siþedon to westene . and þa fugelas gewiton aweg sona to holte . ealle endemes . swa swa se arwurða het . Mid þære ylcan hæse he afligde þa scealfran . mid þære þe he deofla a-dræfde of mannum.[473]

[He [Martin] then went there with some brothers, when he saw diver-birds swimming on the flood, and frequently plunging down to the bottom, pursuing the fish with ravenous greed. Then the holy man spoke to his companions thus: "These birds have a similarity to enemies who always lay snares around the unwary, and catch [them] greedily, and destroy them when caught, and are not satisfied with what they caught." Then Martin asked the rapacious diver-birds to desist from fishing and to travel to the wilderness, and then the birds immediately went away to the forest, all together, just like the venerable man commanded. He put the

[472] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 87, ll. 197-200.
[473] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 300-302, ll. 1313-1327.

diver-birds to flight with the same command with which he had driven out devils from men.]

He does not treat the animals differently from human beings. As creatures of God, they also have to refrain from sins.

For this reason, St Martin is also helpful when a cow has to be exorcised, even if he is travelling:

> þa com þær færlice yrnan an þearle wod cu . and þa þe hyre fyligdon clypodon to þam halgan were þæt he hine warnian sceolde . for-þan-þe heo hnat yfele ælcne þe heo ge-mette . Heo com þa yrnende mid egeslicum eagum . ac se halga wer sona het hi ætstandan . and heo þær-rihte gehyrsumode his hæse and stod . Þa geseah se halga wer þæt þær sæt an deofol on þære cu hrycge . and cwæð to þam scuccan . Gewit þu wæl-hreowa aweg of þam nytene and þis unscæððige hryþer geswic to dreccenne . Se manfulla gast þa martine gehyrsumode . and ferde of ðære cy . and heo oncneow sona þæt heo alysed wæs . and læg aþenod ætforan his fotum . on-fangenre stilnysse . Þa het se halga wer þæt heo ge-wende to þære heorde . and heo swa bilewite swa scep . beah to þære dræfe[474]
>
> [Then suddenly an exceedingly mad cow came running there, and those who followed her called to the holy man that he should take heed, because she butted everyone she met badly. Then she came running with terrible eyes, but the holy man immediately ordered her to stand still, and she instantly obeyed his command and stood there. Then the holy man saw that a devil sat there on the cow's back, and said to the demon: "Depart, you cruel one, away from the animal, and stop troubling this innocent heifer." Then the evil spirit obeyed Martin, and went away from the cow, and she immediately knew that she was released, and lay stretched out before his feet, having received peace. Then the holy man ordered her to go back to the herd, and she, as innocent as a sheep, went over to the drove.]

[474] *LS2*, XXXI. Vita S. Martini Episcopi, p. 284, ll. 1039-1055.

Sometimes, animals spontaneously decide to do a service for a saint, as in the life of St Cuthbert:

> Efne ða comon twegen seolas of sælicum grunde, and hi mid heora flyse his fet drygdon, and mid heora blæde his leoma beðedon, and siððan mid gebeacne his bletsunge bædon, licgende æt his foton on fealwum ceosle. Þa cuðberhtus ða sælican nytenu on sund asende mid soðre bletsunge, and on merigenlicere tide mynster gesohte.[475]
>
> [Well, then two seals came from the sea-bed, and they dried his feet with their fur, and warmed his limbs with their breath, and afterwards asked his blessing with a sign, lying at his feet on the fallow sand. Then Cuthbert sent the marine animals to the sea with a sincere blessing, and sought the monastery at morning tide.]

The sea animals, specified as seals by Ælfric, keep the saint warm and even ask for a blessing.

Saints also have the ability to see things for what they truly are, including animals. A girl who has supposedly been turned into a mare, is led to St Macarius. Even though she appears as a horse to all onlookers, Macarius is not fooled by the illusion:

> Macharius þa cwæð to hire magum ðus . Ic ge-seo þis mæden on menniscu*m* gecynde . and heo nis na awend swa swa ge wenað þ*æt* heo sy . and heo nan þincg on hire næfð horses gecyndes . ac on eowru*m* gesihþu*m* hit is swa gehiwod þurh ðæs deofles dydrunge . and his drymenn leaslice . Macharius ða gebæd for þ*æt* mæden god . and mid ele gesmyrode . and mid ealle adræfde þas deofles gedwimor . þurh his drihtnes naman . swa þ*æt* hi ealle gesawon . þ*æt* heo ansund wæs[476]
>
> [Then Macarius said to her family members thus: "I see this girl in human nature, and she is not changed as you imagine she is, and she does not

[475] *CH2*, X. Depositio Sancti Cuthberhti, p. 83, ll. 81-87.
[476] *LS1*, XXI. Natale Sancti Swyðuni, Episcopi, p. 470-472, ll. 485-494.

have anything in her of a horse's nature, but in your sight it is so transformed through the devil's delusion, and his sorcerers deceitfully." Then Macarius prayed God for the girl, and anointed [her] with oil, and completely drove out the devil's illusion, through his lord's name, so that they all saw that she was healthy.]

It is not just ordinary animals that can accompany a saint. Occasionally, a saint seemingly creates life, such as Basil's miraculous golden dove mentioned above. Similarly, Moses makes a brazen snake with healing powers.[477] In both instances, however, God interferes directly: Basil's eucharist was blessed by the Lord, and Moses was commanded to construct the serpent. The creation of life is therefore strictly speaking not done by the holy person himself, but through their agency by divine command.

Animals assist the saints and, by the same token, they punish sinners, the enemies of God and the saints. Examples are plentiful, such as Jezabel, who is devoured by dogs, St Agatha's adversary, who is savaged by horses, and Herod, who is consumed by worms and maggots for his evil deeds. Good people can find themselves in the same predicament, for example in the case of Job when the devil is allowed to deprive him of everything and his body is crawling with vermin. However, this state is usually temporary and is to test the subject. Sinners can come to a nasty end, not only in legends and in the Bible, but in normal daily life. Ælfric mentions a local anecdote of a heretic, who does not observe Ash-Wednesday, and is attacked by dogs and killed by his own horse:

> And hit gelamp þæt se gedwola rad on ðære wucan ymbe sum ærende.
> Þa gestodon hine hundas hetelice swyðe
> And he hine werode oþþæt his sceaft
> Ætstod ætforan him, and þæt hors hine bær forð
> Swa þæt þæt spere him eode þurh ut, and he feoll cwelende.[478]
>
> [And it happened that the heretic rode in that week about some errand, when dogs attacked him very violently, and he defended himself until his

[477] *CH2*, XXVI. Dominica IX Post Pentecosten, p. 238
[478] *LS1*, XII. In Caput Jejunii, p. 264, ll. 51-55.

spear-shaft stood up before him, and the horse carried him forward so that the spear went right through him and he fell dying]

In a comparable passage, a man known to Bishop Aelfheah does not fast, and is killed by a boar.[479]

Although some deaths may seem accidental, they can in fact be caused by the victim's behaviour, using coincidences such as the victim's hair-length to work against them. Absalom had been planning to kill his father, but God prevented it using animals:

> He rad ða on his mule mid mycelre fyrde þurh ænne heahne holt mid hetelicum geþance . þa ge-feng hine an treow be ðam fexe sona . forðan þe he wæs sidfæxede and he swa hangode . and se mul arn forð fram þam arleasan hlaforde . and dauides þegnas hine þurh-ðydon[480]
>
> [He [Absalom] then went on his mule with a great army through a high forest, with violent intention. Then a tree caught him by the hair immediately, because he was long-haired, and so he hung, and the mule ran forward from the wicked lord, and David's thanes pierced him through.]

The task of punishment is not reserved for large animals. Tiny but annoying animals like lice, fleas, and worms or maggots occur regularly in *CH* and *LS*, and also in Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis*, where he describes how Adam and Eve are plagued by lice and fleas after the Fall. Gnats and lice are also part of the plague sent on the Egyptians by Moses:

> Moyses, ðurh Godes mihte, awende eal heora wæter to readum blode, and he afylde eal heora land mid froggon, and siððan mid gnættum, eft mid hundes lusum, ða flugon into heora muðe and heora næsðyrlum; and se Ælmihtiga ðone modigan cyning mid þam eaðelicum gesceaftum swa

[479] *LS*1, XII. In Caput Jejunii, p. 266.
[480] *LS*1, XIX. Passio Sancti Albani, Martyris, p. 428, ll. 218-223.

geswencte seðe mihte hine mid wildum berum and leonum gewyldan, gif he swa wolde[481]

[Moses, through God's power, turned all their water to red blood, and he filled all their land with frogs, and then with gnats, afterwards with dog-lice, which flew into their mouths and their nostrils. And the Almighty tormented the proud king with the insignificant creatures, he [the Almighty] who could have subdued him with wild bears and lions, if he had wished so.]

To be defeated by such small and seemingly insignificant animals is a fitting punishment for the proud Pharaoh. In the *Exameron Anglice*, Ælfric describes the situation after Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden as follows:

Hi mihton ða syððan	seocnysse ðrowian,
And hine byton lys	and lyftene gnættas
And eac swylce flean	and oðre gehwylce wyrmas,
And him wæron deregendlice	dracan and næddran
And ða reðan deor	mihton derian his cinne,
Ðe hine ealle ær	arwurðodon swyðe.[482]

[Since then they could suffer sickness, and lice and air-borne gnats bit them, and likewise fleas and all other kinds of worms. And dragons and snakes were hurtful to them, and the fierce beasts, which all honoured him greatly before, could injure his kin.]

These passages do not only illustrate how God can punish sinners, but also how powerless humans are in the face of nature: lowly, tiny insects are now able to pester the once powerful humans. Even the smallest animals are a threat since the Fall. They are used as a punishment, as when God's vengeance on Herod consists of a range of nasty symptoms, among which are worms, and they are also a reminder of death and decay.

[481] *CH2*, XII. Dominica In Media Quadragesime, p. 111-112, ll. 57-62.
[482] Crawford 1968, p. 68.

Saints, of course, do not have to fear these or even larger animals:

> Ða gesceafta þe sind þwyrlice geþuhte; hi sind to wrace gesceapene yfeldædum; Oft halige menn wunedon on westene betwux reþum wulfum 7 leonum; betwux eallum deorcynne 7 wurmcynne. 7 him nan ðing derian ne mihte; ac hi totæron þa hyrnedan næddran mid heora nacedum handum; 7 þa micclan dracan eaðelice acwealdon, buton ælcere dare þurh godes mihte;[483]
>
> [The creatures that are thought monstrous, they have been created for punishment of evil deeds. Holy men often lived in a desert among fierce wolves and lions, among all kinds of beasts and serpents, and nothing could harm them; but they tore the horned snakes with their naked hands, and the great dragons they killed easily, without any harm, through God's might.]

So hermits in an area as dangerous as the desert are not hurt by wild animals which are normally put there as a punishment for evil people.

Due to the nature of *CH* and *LS*, the amount of factual information (or information that was thought to be factual) about animals and their behaviour provided by Ælfric is rather small unless it provides some moral teaching or saintly background. Curiously, Ælfric does dedicate a large passage to one particular animal: the elephant, a passage which appears in Ælfric's homily on the Maccabees.[484] Ælfric bases his passage fairly accurately on passages in the two books of Maccabees in the Vulgate; he uses both, although he abbreviates the story. Ælfric describes how elephants are used and killed in battle.[485] Then he adds extra information, especially for his Anglo-Saxon audience who have never seen an elephant in their country. Taking a brief detour from the overall narrative, Ælfric emphasizes the size of the elephant and its supposedly bony skin, which makes it impossible for it to lie down, although he does not mention that elephants were thought to have no knees:

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[483] *CH*1, VI. Octabas et Circumcisio Domini, p. 230, ll. 177-182.
[484] *LS*2, XXV. Passio Machabeorum. p.102-5.
[485] I Macc 6.1-7.4 and 2 Macc 9.1-11.

Sumum menn wile þincan syllic þis to gehyrenne . forþan þe ylpas ne comon næfre on engla lande . Ylp is ormæte nyten mare þonne sum hus . eall mid banum befangen binnan þam felle butan æt ðam nauelan and he næfre ne lið .
Feower and twentig monða gæð seo modor mid folan . and þreo hund geara hi libbað gif hi alefede ne beoð . and hi man mæg wenian wundorlice to ge-feohte . Hwæl is ealra fixa mæst . and ylp is eallra nytena mæst . ac swa-þeah mannes gescead hi mæg gewyldan .[486]

[To some people it will seem strange to hear this, because elephants have never come to England. An elephant is an enormous animal, larger than a house, all surrounded with bones, within the skin, except at the navel, and it never lies down. Twenty-four months the mother goes with foal; and they live three hundred years if they are not injured; and people can train them wonderfully for battle. The whale is the largest of all fish, and the elephant is the largest of all animals, but nevertheless man's skill can tame them.]

For this extra information Ælfric may have used several sources.[487] In the *Exameron Anglice*, which contains a similar passage on the elephant,[488] Ælfric bases his information on Ambrose with regard to the fact that the elephant can be tamed, but continues to quote Isidore verbatim on the elephant's maximum age of 300 years and its gestation period. Cross shows how parts of the description can come from both Isidore and Ambrose, both of whom compare the elephant to a mountain and hint at its soft belly, as Ælfric does in the *Exameron Anglice* and *LS*. Glorie adds Solinus as a source for the elephant's inability to lie down, [489] but, as Cross argues, all the information could have been gathered from Ambrose and Isidore. Cross also notes that Ælfric does not refer to Pliny's statement that an elephant's legs do in fact bend. This information is apparently ignored by, or was unknown to, Ælfric.

[486] *LS2*, XXV. Passio Machabeorum, p. 104, ll. 564-573.
[487] Cf. Cross 1965, p. 376-372.
[488] Crawford 1968, p.55.
[489] Collectanea 25.2, 4, 3, 5.

Perhaps also remarkable, then, is the lack of moralizing in the passage. Ælfric refrains from a moral commentary on the elephant even though Pliny attributes many human qualities to the elephant, whom he "ranks next to man in intelligence, and whom he represents as worshiping the stars, learning difficult tricks, and as having a sense of justice, feeling of mercy, and so on."[490] Neither does he refer to Rabanus Maurus, although Ælfric probably knew his commentary on both books of the Maccabees, in which he describes Eleazar's courageous actions as an example of his devotion. Again, Ælfric does not comment, even though he discussed Judas's merits in his *Letter to Sigeweard.* The story of the Maccabees was probably of importance to Ælfric. He discusses it in the *Letter of Sigeweard*, and Skeat also notices that the homily is written "with more than usual care", that it has been expanded by Ælfric, and that the alliteration is "well marked".[491] It also is one of the longest texts in *LS*, running to 811 lines. This extra attention which Ælfric has paid to the Maccabees may explain why such a long reference to the elephant is included here, whereas there is no place for such passages in the shorter homilies and saints' lives.

As mentioned above, other animal lore is rare in *CH* and *LS*, although small bits of information do occur. With regard to using animals for medicine, Ælfric follows his sources. On the one hand, as when relating the story of Lazarus, Ælfric believes animals can cure humans, stating:

> Ac þa ða he wæs fram mannum forsewen þa genealæhton ða hundas. 7 his wunda geliccodon; Hundes liccung gehælð wunda;[492]
>
> [But when he was despised by people, the dogs approached and licked his wounds. The licking of a dog heals wounds.]

In Lk 16:20-21, to which Ælfric is referring here, there is no such aside: it is simply mentioned that dogs lick Lazarus's sores. Ælfric, however, explains this further by stating as a matter of fact that the licking of a dog cures wounds.

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[490] Thorndike 1923, p. 74.
[491] *LS*2, p. 449.
[492] *CH*1, XXIII. Dominica II Post Pentecosten, p. 367, ll. 59-61.

When referred to in the Scriptures, Ælfric indeed seems to believe that this type of medicine is effective. In the *Nativity of Saint Stephen*, he describes without a comment a Jewish man claiming to be able to cure a woman using the wart of an ox:

> Þa lærde his sum iudeisc man, þæt heo name ænne wernægel of sumes oxan hricge, and becnytte to anum hringe mid hire snode, and mid þam hi to nacedum lice begyrde.[493]
>
> [Then a Jewish man instructed her to take a wart from an ox's back, and tie it to a ring with her hairband, and with that to gird her naked body.]

In this case, Ælfric simply seems to follow his sources rather than to offer any explanation.
On other occasions he is more sceptical:

> Eall swa gelic se ðe gelyfð wiglungum oððe be fugelum. Oððe be fnorum. Oððe be horsum. Oððe be hundum. Ne bið he na cristen. Ac bið for-cuð wiðer-saca. [494]
>
> [Similarly, he who believes in auguries, either by birds, or by sneezes, or by horses or by dogs, he is no Christian, but is a bad enemy.]

Ælfric seems to regard the use of animals in medicine as science, and the use of animals in auguries as superstition.
So, we can see that animals can take on various roles in different contexts in the works of Ælfric.

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[493] *CH*2, II. Natale Sancti Stephani, p.14, ll. 80-83.
[494] *LS*1, XVII. De Auguriis, p. 370, ll. 88-91.

6. Conclusions

We have seen which animals Ælfric uses in his works, how he uses them and which sources he consulted. From the survey above, Ælfric's interest in animals becomes apparent in several ways: he often refers to them in all of his works, and when doing this he not only draws upon many different sources, but adds his own information and occasionally appears to be correcting his sources. Ælfric's use of animals is mainly informed by patristic traditions, and he does not seem to rely on a 'native' tradition of natural history. Still, it is clear in places that he is familiar with the local fauna: he shows an awareness that certain animals do not exist in England and knows the Old English translations of animal terms (as is also apparent in the *Colloquy*).

Ælfric, although he usually treats his source material with a great deal of respect, does adapt it to his purpose and keeps his audience in mind while doing this. His work does not merely entail literal translation, but shows personal emphases. Ælfric's personal 'touch' as shown in his references to animals consists either of expansions of the original, such as comments or explanations (either by himself or other authors such as Isidore), omissions of passages (usually to streamline the narrative), summaries of the narrative, and very occasionally an addition of his own. The main reasons for these changes and additions seem to be the didactic purpose of his homilies and the lay audience for which the texts are meant: often, animals and their behaviour are described and explained explicitly for people living in England.

Although animals were used for didactic purposes in many learned texts throughout the Middle Ages, the use of animals may have been particularly attractive to the unlearned audience Ælfric had in mind for his *CH* and *LS*. Using animals known to everyone makes difficult material tangible and perhaps more appealing. For this to work, exotic animals may be interesting, but familiarity is more important. This need for familiarity may be one of the reasons why Ælfric discusses the elephant in *LS* in such great detail, and why he adds remarks about strange animals in the *Exameron Anglice*. Although Ælfric usually uses those animals that are already in his source material, this is not always the case. From examples such as the seals in St Cuthbert, and the descriptions of the silk worms and the elephant, we can infer that Ælfric was interested in zoology, and possibly

knew additional texts about natural history or observed animals himself. Moreover, his practice of combining several different sources for his information on animals, shows he carefully researched the topic.

When Ælfric mentions animals, he usually has a specific purpose for them. Even when there are digressions on various traits of animals, Ælfric does not usually approach them as objects to be studied for science's sake, as a natural historian would do, but rather as objects to be used for moral purposes. *CH* and *LS* use animals frequently in this manner: the animals play an important role in the saints' lives, high-lighting the saints' holiness, and they usually help and defend the saint. Animals are also presented as an instrument of God, punishing sinners or giving signs to believers. Although they are considered to be irrational, they do recognize the power of God and on occasion behave like human Christians, revering saints and asking for blessings. In the homilies, too, the animals Ælfric uses can set good or bad examples for human beings, and he shows that they all serve their purpose in creation. In short, we have seen that even though the animals can be incidental to Ælfric's primary goal in his works, information on animals is nevertheless important to him in the light of his interest in the creation.

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