

# Public penance in Anglo-Saxon England

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In a sermon for Ash Wednesday, after general exhortations to prayer, church-going, and almsgiving during Lent, Wulfstan discusses what is to be done with those guilty of ‘high’ sins:

And sume men syndon eac þe nyde sculan of cyricgemanan þas halgan tid ascadene mid rihte weorðan for healican synnan, ealswa adam wearð of engla gemanan þa ða he forworðe þa myclan myrhðe þe he on wunode ær ðam þe he syngode . . . Leofan men, on Wodnesdæg, þe byð *caput ieiunii*, bisceopas ascadað on manegum stowan ut of cyrican for heora agenan þearfe þa ðe healice on openlican synnan hy sylfe forgyltan. And eft on Ðunresdæg ær Eastran hy geinniað into cyrican þa ðe geornlice þæt Lencten heora synna betað, swa swa hym man wissað; þonne *absolutionem* bisceopas ofer hy rædað 7 for hi þingiað 7 mid þam heora synna þurh Godes mildheortnesse myclum gelyhtað. And þæt is þearflíc gewuna, ac we his ne gýmað swa wel swa we scoldan on ðisse þeode, 7 hit wære mycel þearf þæt hit man georne on gewunan hæfde.<sup>1</sup>

The central element of this penitential practice is the formal expulsion from the church on Ash Wednesday and the episcopal absolution on Maundy Thursday. The practice described by Wulfstan stems from the Roman system of canonical, or ‘public’, penance, and *ordines* for public penance are extant in several Anglo-Saxon liturgical texts. However, discussion of public penance in Anglo-Saxon England is problematic, in no small part due to the conclusions set forth by many historians downplaying its role in England,<sup>2</sup> and Wulfstan’s description

<sup>1</sup> *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. D. Bethurum (Oxford, 1957), pp. 234–5. ‘And there are some men also who rightly must in this holy time be expelled from the church community for high sins, just as was Adam from the community of angels when he forsook the great joy in which he dwelt before he sinned . . . Dear men, on Wednesday, which is *caput ieiunii*, bishops expel in many places out from the church for their own need those who have made themselves highly guilty in open sins. And afterwards on Thursday before Easter they re-enter the church, those who zealously during Lent atone for their sins, just as one instructs them. Then bishops read the absolution over them, and pray for them, and with that alleviate their sins through God’s great mercy. And that is a needful practice, but we do not observe it as well as we should in this land, and it is very necessary that one zealously have it in practice.’

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Watkins’s repeated assertion that ‘nowhere in the church of the English did the continental system of public penance and of public reconciliation by the bishop find actual observance at any time’. (O. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, 2 vols. (London, 1920), p. 643).

raises a number of questions about its use there around the year 1000. By ‘sculan . . . ascadene’, is Wulfstan presenting this as a recommendation, or a requirement (‘should’ or ‘must’)? What does Wulfstan mean by ‘on manegum stowan’? In lamenting that the practice is not held ‘swa wel swa we scoldan’, does he suggest that the practice is known but not often exercised, or is he attempting to introduce something new to English penitential practice? Unfortunately, the sparse nature of the evidence for Anglo-Saxon penitential practice makes it difficult to gauge the use of public penance in a system so heavily dominated by private penance. While evidence for public penance has survived in Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries, as I will discuss below, references to public penance in vernacular preaching texts (apart from those of Wulfstan) are extremely rare, if not absent completely. We do, however, have a description of another Lenten penitential ritual, the general ashing of all the faithful, in a sermon for Ash Wednesday by Ælfric:

On þone wodnes dæg wide geond eorðan.  
sacerdas bletsiað swa swa hit geset is.  
clæne axan on cyrcan . and þa siððan lecgað  
uppa (sic) manna heafda . þæt hi habban on gemynde  
þæt hi of eorðan comon . and eft to duste gewendað.  
swa swa se ælmihtiga god to adame cwæð.  
siððan he agylt hæfde on gearon godes bebod.  
On geswincum þu leofast and on swate þu etst  
þinne hlaf on eorðan . oðþæt þu eft gewende  
to þære ylcan eorðan þe þu of come.  
forðan þe þu eart dust . and to duste gewendst.<sup>3</sup>

Ælfric’s insistence that this practice has been established for the entire Christian community might indicate a sense that the general ashing and public penance represent distinct rituals with separate traditions, and that, for Ælfric, the ashing is to be preferred. A general ashing of this sort is prescribed for monks in the *Regularis Concordia*,<sup>4</sup> and Ælfric includes the ritual in his Letter for the Monks of Eynsham, in such a way as to emphasize the universality of the practice:

<sup>3</sup> *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints I*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS os 76 and 82 (London, 1881 and 1885; repr. 1966), p. 262. ‘On Wednesday, widely across the earth, priests bless clean ashes in church, just as it is established, and afterwards place them upon men’s heads, that they may have in mind that they came from earth, and afterwards will return to dust, just as the Almighty God said to Adam after he had transgressed against God’s command, “Through labours you shall live and through sweat you shall eat your bread on earth, until you afterwards return to the same earth from which you came, because you are dust, and to dust will return.”’

<sup>4</sup> *Regularis concordia Anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque: the Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*, ed. and trans. T. Symons (London, 1953), p. 32.

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Quarta feria Capitis Ieiunii, nona decantata, abbas ornatus stola benedicat cineres et imponat capitibus singulorum, quia legimus in ueteri et in nouo testamento paenitentes semetipsos cynere aspersisse, demonstrantes humanam naturam esse reuersuram in pulverem ob culpam prime preuaricationis. . . . Eant tunc ad processionem reliquas antiphonas decantando. Venientes uero ad ecclesiam quo eunt, cantent antiphonam de ipso sancto et dominicam orationem, flexis genibus, et psalmum 'Ad te leuauit oculos meos' cum precibus et oratione. Incipiant tunc cantores letaniam reuertentes ad matrem ecclesiam et induant se ministri ad missam.<sup>5</sup>

Although this instruction, following the *Concordia*, is intended for monks, Jones has demonstrated that Ælfric wrote this Letter with at least the recognition that it would be read outside the walls of Eynsham, and in other places in the Letter includes ritual elements more applicable to a broader, and at times even an episcopal, setting.<sup>6</sup> The procession here mentioned would have extended the ritual in some way to the larger community,<sup>7</sup> and Ælfric's language here, both in his Lives of Saints sermon and in his monastic Letter, invites us to appreciate the ashing as all-inclusive. Whereas Wulfstan's ritual is intended for those having committed particularly serious sins, Ælfric's addresses all sin, more generally ('primordial sin'), and in none of his three descriptions of the Ash Wednesday liturgy does he indicate any need for sub-groups. Appreciation of this potential disagreement between Wulfstan and Ælfric concerning the appropriate penitential liturgy for Ash Wednesday, however, is complicated by the fact that, as I will discuss below, Anglo-Saxon liturgical witnesses on the whole fail to make this distinction clear. What I hope to demonstrate in this paper is two-fold. Firstly, while Anglo-Saxon descriptions of public penance (apart from those attached to Wulfstan) are rare and difficult to interpret, Anglo-Saxon liturgical witnesses reveal a productive interest in the ritual in tenth- and eleventh-century England. Secondly, while the positions of Ælfric and Wulfstan seem to represent extreme

<sup>5</sup> *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, ed. and trans. C. A. Jones, CSASE 24 (Cambridge, 1998; hereafter *LME*), 120 and 122. 'On Ash Wednesday, after None has been sung, the abbot, vested in a stole, shall bless ashes and put them on the heads of each and every person, because we read in the Old and New Testaments that penitents dusted themselves with ashes, showing that human nature would return to dust, on account of guilt for [man's] primordial transgression . . . They shall then go to the procession singing the remaining antiphons. When they reach the destination church, they shall sing the antiphon of its saint and then, kneeling, the Lord's Prayer, and the psalm "To thee I have lifted up my eyes", with the preces and the collect. Then the cantors shall begin the litany as they [all] make their way back to the mother church, and the ministers shall vest for mass.' <sup>6</sup> See Jones, *LME*, pp. 159, n. 53, 170, n. 98 and 215, n. 313.

<sup>7</sup> The procession following the Ash Wednesday ashing is mentioned as well by Ælfric in his Second Letter for Wulfstan. Ælfric (writing, interestingly, with Wulfstan's voice, and addressing all mass-priests), says that 'Ge sculon bletsian axan on caput ieiunium and mid halig wætere besprengan. Do þonne se mæssepreost on ufe-weardum his heafde myd ðære haligan rode tacne and on ealra þara manna, þe æt þære mæssan beoð, ær-ðam-þe he mæssige and gan to processionem.' *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, ed. B. Fehr (Hamburg, 1914), pp. 214–17.

and atypical positions regarding penitential liturgy, both liturgical and homiletic evidence for public penance and for the general ashing indicate that the relationship between the two ceremonies, in the larger Anglo-Saxon community, was a rather fluid one, with public penance and the general ashing representing options in a wider penitential spectrum.

The use and characteristics of public penance at any stage in history are hard to pin down. Public penance is an ancient form of expiation that has been called upon from time to time in the history of the church, often at times in which the church has felt threatened, and one cannot assume much consistency in the practice. Discussion of it in Anglo-Saxon England, in particular, is tricky, for England was dominated by the system of private penance propagated by the Irish, and Watkins and others are dubious regarding the actual implementation of public penance in pre-Conquest England. Part of the problem, however, is an oversimplified distinction between 'public' and 'private' penance.<sup>8</sup> When the two first came into conflict, they appeared to be quite distinct, and many calls for public penance from the sixth century through the Carolingian era were attempts either to save or to recall a form of expiation that had a fundamentally different set of rules from the private system represented in the penitentials.<sup>9</sup> In the ninth century the Carolingian church took steps to codify its liturgical practices according to the Roman model. By the time of the reform councils of 813, private

<sup>8</sup> The labels 'private' and 'public' have been called into question by a number of recent critics, including R. Meens ('The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance', *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Biller and A. J. Minnis, York Stud. in Med. Theol. 2 (York, 1998), 35–63), M. de Jong ('What was Public about Public Penance? *Paenitentia publica* and Justice in the Carolingian World', *La Guistizia nell'alto medioevo II (secoli LX–XI)*, *SettSpol* 44 (1997), 863–902) and M. Driscoll ('Penance in Transition: Popular Piety and Practice', *Medieval Liturgy: a Book of Essays*, ed. L. Larson-Miller (New York, 1997), pp. 121–63). In particular, 'private' penance quite frequently had public manifestations, and the label is an anachronism. As there is no consensus in terminology (recent critics refer inconsistently to 'private', 'secret', 'occult', or 'tariffed' penance versus 'public', 'canonical' or 'episcopal' penance), I will favour the traditional labels, with the caveat that they must be heavily qualified, as I will attempt to do below.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief description of public penance in the early church, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1997), p. 1250, and M. Metzger, *History of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN, 1997), pp. 55–8 and 103–7. A more complete discussion with passages from early descriptions of public penance can be found in O. Watkins and in R. C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church* (Oxford, 1939). For the interrelationship between private and public penance under the Irish system, see T. P. Oakley, *English Penitential Discipline and Anglo-Saxon Law in their Joint Influence*, Stud. in Hist., Economics and Public Law 107 (New York, 1923) and A. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983). For a more sophisticated treatment of the state of Carolingian and Frankish penance, see de Jong, 'What was Public' and idem, 'Pollution, Penance and Sanctity: Ekkehard's Life of Iso of St. Gall', *The Community, the Family, and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. J. Hill and M. Swan, International Med. Research 4 (Turnhout, 1998), 145–58, and Meens, 'The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance'. For further reading and sources, see also the bibliography provided by Meens.

penance had taken a firm hold, apparently to the detriment of public penance, and to the frustration of some bishops and church councils. Penitentials provided the normal means of penance, a fact that, because of their inconsistencies, spurred a good deal of condemnation on the part of bishops, along with numerous efforts (notably that of Halitgar) to provide an authoritative, workable, and consistent penitential to satisfy these critics. It is unclear exactly to what extent these penitentials suppressed the practice of public penance. Throughout the ninth century, councils called for public penance for public crimes, and condemned the penitentials, while at the same time some bishops, recognizing the increasing dominance of private penance, attempted to revise the penitentials. Public penance surely had some currency in the Carolingian period, but it is less clear than it might seem how and when it would have been administered. As Meens cautions, 'we do not know . . . how these late antique canons were interpreted and used in Carolingian times. At any rate it does not seem plausible to view such texts as a self-evident reflection of ninth-century practice'.<sup>10</sup> While many canons seem to prescribe public penance for public crimes and private penance for private sins, the so-called 'Carolingian dichotomy', other canons provided, for all sorts of sins, penances on the models established in the penitentials. Halitgar's penitential, written c. 830, represents an ambitious attempt to reconcile the two systems based on conservative authority.<sup>11</sup> He calls for public penance, 'apparently recommending [public penance] for serious offenses but also allowing these to be confessed privately'.<sup>12</sup> He also provides an *ordo confessionis* for private penance, with forms based on orders for public reconciliation in the Bobbio Missal and the Gelasian Sacramentary. While giving public penance an honorary position, the fact that even offences that might have required public penance could be handled privately may indicate the preferences of priests and sinners to rely on the private system instead of the public humiliation.

Mayke de Jong warns us that appreciation of Carolingian public penance is 'better known from the liturgical *ordines* and idealised precepts than descriptions of actual practice. The latter are surprisingly rare'.<sup>13</sup> The best description of public penance, which seems to conform to its traditional elements, is that of Louis the Pious in 833, which as de Jong demonstrates was driven by intense political concerns, so that 'the bishops had very good reasons to conduct proceedings entirely by the book'. The account is, therefore, exceptional rather than illustrative of common penitential practice. The 'Carolingian dichotomy' was 'a theoretical model with rather elusive practical implications',<sup>14</sup> defined in councils

<sup>10</sup> Meens, 'The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance', p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> See Halitgar of Cambrai, *De vitiis et virtutibus* (Migne, PL 105, cols. 651–94) and *Liber poenitentialis* (PL 105, cols. 693–710). <sup>12</sup> Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, p. 105.

<sup>13</sup> De Jong, 'What was Public', p. 865. <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 866.

and episcopal ordinances in an attempt to ‘classify a disorderly reality’. A late witness to this ‘disorderly reality’ is perhaps the penitential account of Iso’s parents in Ekkehard’s eleventh-century account of the saint.<sup>15</sup> The couple, guilty of intercourse on Easter Saturday (because of which the saint is conceived), lament their sin to their entire household, making it a public scandal. They confess straightway to their priest, who instructs them to wear sackcloth and ashes, to wait outside the threshold of the church for a night and a day, and to abstain from Easter communion (they are eventually given communion by an angel in the guise of a neighbouring priest). The penance described in Ekkehard’s *Life* seems to delineate an adaptation of public penance. There is no bishop present, and the penance lasts only a short time, but the central elements of public penance have been usurped and the ritual watered down into something else. Meens asserts that ‘we could see the ritual portrayed so well by Ekkehard as an illustration of the evolution from the Carolingian dichotomy to a later tripartite stage, where a “less solemn form of penance”, the *paenitentia minus sollemnis*, was formally introduced’.<sup>16</sup> The ‘tripartite’ penance to which Meens refers was not expressed formally until the twelfth century, but surely the sort of compromise seen in Ekkehard is part of its origins. De Jong summarizes the state of penitential practice for the Carolingians:

... the notion of ‘scandal’ demanding some kind of public *satisfactio* was a fundamental one in Carolingian society, but for this very reason the divide between public and occult penance was not so tidy as ecclesiastical legislation made it out to be. In theory, priests had to ferret out candidates for public penance, presenting them to the bishop who would then perform the proper ritual; in practice, however, sins which caused public offense could lead to more informal and improvised rituals of atonement. Ekkehard’s story about Iso’s parents is an interesting case in point.<sup>17</sup>

Permutations like that in Ekkehard perhaps demonstrate a practical compromise between the need for serious disincentives and the realities of pastoral care.

A tension between public and private penance is resident in theoretical discussions of Carolingian penance, but in practice the relationship between the two was probably somewhat complicated, involving a range of penitential options. As public penance came into the liturgical landscape in Anglo-Saxon England, either through a post-Reform importation of Carolingian penance or through revival of a practice that had always been in the background, even this theoretical tension between private and public penance may not have been such a problem. Generally speaking, for the Carolingian church, public penance was

<sup>15</sup> See de Jong, ‘Pollution, Penance, and Sanctity’ for translation and discussion of the penitential account. <sup>16</sup> Meens, ‘The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance’, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> De Jong, ‘Pollution, Penance, and Sanctity’, p. 150.

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the model for penitential practice, with private penance representing a newer and somewhat mistrusted system. For the Anglo-Saxons, private penance was the paradigm, and (as I will show below) descriptions of public penance often treat it as something new, an option to be integrated into the private system. As such, one might expect Anglo-Saxon references to public penance and revisions to the liturgical *ordines* imported from the Continent to interpret continental penance in a variety of creative ways, as a salutary, optional practice, rather than a distinct body of penitential thought. This fluidity in the appreciation of continental public penance (which was itself manipulated creatively by the Carolingians) is evident in vernacular and liturgical treatments of public penance in Anglo-Saxon England.

### ANGLO-SAXON REFERENCES TO PUBLIC PENANCE

There is some evidence of an awareness of public penance in England before the time of Ælfric and Wulfstan. Although the early-eighth-century Penitential of Theodore seems to deny the practice of public penance ‘in hac provincia’,<sup>18</sup> the Dialogue of Egbert, *c.* 750–60, forbids those who have undergone public penance from taking Holy Orders, and requires it for certain sins.<sup>19</sup> Beyond this, however, evidence for public penance before the tenth century in England is hard to find. There are a few texts from the tenth and early eleventh centuries which seem to describe the ritual, although it is difficult to be sure of their implications for Anglo-Saxon practice.<sup>20</sup> The pseudo-Egbert penitential (referred to

<sup>18</sup> See H. M. Gamer and J. T. McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, Records of Civilization: Sources and Stud. 29 (New York, 1965), 195. See also *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1869–78) III, 187.

<sup>19</sup> Gamer and McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 239–40. See also *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs III, 410. ‘The ordination of a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon is said to be valid when the following conditions obtain: if he is shown to be stained by no serious offense; if he has not a second wife nor one left by a [former] husband; if he has not undergone public penance, and if he does not seem defective in any part of his body . . . such a man we elect to be elevated to the priesthood. For the following crimes, indeed, we say that no one may be ordained, but that some who have been elevated are to be deposed: namely, those who worship idols; those who through soothsayers and diviners and enchanters give themselves over as captives to the devil; those who destroy their faith with false witness; those defiled with murders or acts of fornication; perpetrators of thefts; violators of the sacred name of truth by the insolence of perjury. These, moreover, except through public penance must not be admitted to obtain the grace of communion nor to recover the honor of their former dignity; for it is alien to the Church that penitents should minister the sacred things, who were lately vessels of wickedness.’

<sup>20</sup> The relevant texts, which I will discuss in the following order, are the pseudo-Egbert Penitential, the Old English Handbook for the Use of a Confessor, the Old English translation of the Rule of Chrodegang, the sermons of Wulfstan, several entries in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 190 (one of the manuscripts traditionally referred to as ‘Wulfstan’s Common-place Book’), and an unedited homily, Cameron B3.2.9, also found in CCC 190.

simply as the ‘Penitential’ by Frantzen),<sup>21</sup> extant in three eleventh-century manuscripts and consisting in part of loosely-translated material from Halitgar, describes a ritual for public penance known ‘across the sea’. Pseudo-Egbert delineates the respective roles of priest and bishop in dealing with those who have sinned gravely:

[11] Be þam þe se mæssepreost þæne dædbetan underfon ne mot butan bisceopes leafan, butan he þone bisceop geræcean ne mæge. – a) þam sacerde gedafenað soðlice, þæt he geornlice asmeage ymbe þæra manna sawle þearfe þe him æt bote seceað, hu he hy rihtlocost getrymman mæge to godes willan 7 to heora sawle þearfe, 7 him bote tæce a be þæs gyltes mæðe. b) 7 gif þa gyltas to þam hefelice beon þæt he <to> bisceopes dome tæcan þurfe, tæce him þider; forþam sanctus Agustinus cwæð on oðre stowe, þæt gif hwa mid heafodlicum synnum gebunden wære, þæt man him to bisceopes dome tæcean sceolde; 7 gif he bisceop geræcean ne mæge, þæt se mæssepreost æt þam þingum þæne bisceop aspelian mote.

. . . [12] a) þas þeawas man healt begeondan sæ mid cristenum folce: þæt is þæt ælc bisceop bið æt his bisceopstole on þæne wodesdæg þe we cweðað *caput ieiunium* ær lenctene; þonne ælc þære manna þe mid heafodleahre besmiten bið on þære scire seal on þæne dæg him to cuman 7 his synna him andettan, 7 he þonne him tæcð heora synna bote ælcum be þæs gyltes mæðe; þa ðe þæs wyrðe beoð he asyndreð of cyrclican gemanan, 7 hi ðeah to heora agenre þearfe hyrteð 7 tihteð; 7 <hi> swa þonne be his leafe ham hwyrfað; 7 eft on þæne þunres dæg ær eastron to þære ylcan stowe ealle gesamniað, 7 heom se bisceop ofer singð 7 forgifenesse deð, 7 hy swa ham hwyrfað mid þæs bisceopes bletsunge. b) þis is þus healdenne eallum cristenum folce; 7 þeh hwæðere sceal se sacerd geornlice smeagean, mid hwylcere anbryrdnesse 7 mid hwylcere fulfremdesse se dædbeta gebet hæbbe þæt him getæht wæs, 7 swa him be þam forgifenesse do.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the pseudo-Egbertian ‘Confessional’ and ‘Penitential’ and the problem of ‘what exactly is being claimed for Egbert here’ in the preceding MS *incipit*, see Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, pp. 133–4.

<sup>22</sup> *Die altenglische version des Halitgar’schen bussbuches*, ed. J. Raith (Hamburg, 1933), pp. 9–11. ‘[11] Concerning how a masspriest may not receive a penitent without the leave of the bishop, unless he cannot reach the bishop. – a) It befits the priest truly that he thoroughly examine concerning the need of the man’s soul who seeks him at penance, how he most rightly may fortify it to God’s will and to the soul’s need, and assign him penance always in proportion with the guilt. b) And if the crimes are so heavy that he needs to refer him to the bishop’s judgement, refer him there. Concerning this Saint Augustine said in another place, that if someone were bound with capital sins, one should refer him to the bishop’s judgement. And if he may not reach the bishop, that the masspriest may represent the bishop at that office. . . . [12] a) These customs are held across the sea amongst Christian folk: that is that each bishop is at his episcopal seat on the Wednesday that we call *caput ieiunium* before Lent. Then each of the men who is besmitten with capital sin in that district on that day comes to him and confesses his sins and he then assigns them penance for their sins, to each in proportion with the guilt. Those who are worthy of this he sunders from the churchly community, and he nevertheless encourages and instructs them to their own need. And they so then by his leave turn home. And afterwards on the Thursday

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Statute 12 also appears, without significant changes, in the early-eleventh-century Old English 'Handbook for the Use of a Confessor'.<sup>23</sup> Halitgar at this point instructs that those who have sinned publicly, in such a way that the whole church is troubled (*commoverit*), be referred to the bishop, and that the sins involved might be either more grave or lighter sins.<sup>24</sup> The Old English instructions, however, have a different focus, and take much greater care to codify the penitential principles.<sup>25</sup> It is unclear here just exactly *when* public penance might be called for. According to statute 11, it is first of all the priest's job to examine all under his care and to apply fit penance. If, however, the crime seems to be 'too high', he may refer the penitent to the bishop. The following quotation from Augustine further defines such sins as 'heafodlicum synnum', capital sins, and there is no question of its public nature (as there is in Halitgar), invoking rather the ancient standard of public penance for any capital sin. Augustine himself, however, had difficulty defining exactly what that meant in terms of public penance, and the usage here is even more suspect. Immediately following this passage, both in pseudo-Egbert and in the Handbook, are prescriptions for private penance for such crimes as murder, fornication, perjury, and so forth. The prescriptions do distinguish between types of guilt (accidental, by ignorance, by necessity, etc.), and many crimes of the worst kind call for excommunication, either as a threat against refusal to do penance or an absolute rule, but nowhere in the rest of these texts is public penance referred to as a prescription or an alternative for any of the 'heafodleahtras' treated. Of course, it must be

before Easter they all come together at the same place, and the bishop sings over them, and grants forgiveness, and they thus turn home with the bishop's blessing. b) This is thusly to be held among all Christian folk. And yet however the priest must thoroughly examine, with every encouragement and with every completeness, that the penitent has fulfilled the penance that was assigned him, and so assist him to that forgiveness.' Raith supplies the relevant bits from Halitgar along with the Old English text. See also Halitgar of Cambrai, *De vitiis et virtutibus*, bk III.

<sup>23</sup> R. Fowler, 'A Late Old English Handbook for the Use of a Confessor', *Anglia* 83 (1965), 1–34, at 20. There is one notable difference between the two passages. Where pseudo-Egbert says that the bishop will sing over the penitent and 'forgifenesse deð', the Handbook says that the bishop will '*absolutionem* deð', giving the passage a slightly more liturgical ring. Cf. Wulfstan's reference to the bishop's *absolutionem*, quoted above.

<sup>24</sup> '... qui sive ex gravioribus commissis sive ex levioribus ...' See Raith, *Die altenglische Version*, pp. 9–11.

<sup>25</sup> In place of Pseudo-Egbert's 12a, Halitgar says only that those who have committed public sin, 'quinta feria ante pascha eis remittendum romane ecclesie consuetudo demonstrat' (see Raith, *Die altenglische Version*, pp. 9–11. '... on the fifth day, before Easter, the custom of the Roman Church shows the means of returning for them'). The expansion in pseudo-Egbert perhaps indicates that what could be mentioned allusively by Halitgar needed, or warranted, explanation for the audience of the Old English text. The assertion that these practices are held 'across the sea' frames the following description as an introduction of a new practice, or a reintroduction of a lapsed one.

said that the nature and intended use of penitentials in general did not demand any sort of clean synthesis, which is why penitentials with inconsistent or contradictory prescriptions could be lumped together. The penitential was a guide to be taken with a large grain of salt, and all that their compilers could realistically hope for was to present alternatives and principles for the imposition of penance, to be resolved at the discretion of the individual priest. As such, a priest using pseudo-Egbert or the Handbook, confronted with a repentant murderer, could ascertain the circumstances of the crime and prescribe a private penance of some sort, or, if he deemed that the crime was of a certain nature, or that it would be especially salutary to the sinner, could refer the case to the bishop. An example of such a referral is perhaps to be found in the Northumbrian Priests Law, which mentions that one who marries someone too closely related, ‘. . . næbbe he Godes mildse, buton he geswice 7 bete swa biscop getæce’,<sup>26</sup> which seems to refer to a sin that, because of its gravity, should be referred to the bishop, although whether public penance or some other sort of atonement would be appropriate is never specified.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, while Halitgar clearly refers to the canonical practice, in a way that assumes common knowledge, nowhere in the Anglo-Saxon interpretation, as represented by pseudo-Egbert and the Handbook, are we told that the practices outlined are necessarily ‘public’, and we get no details of what might have been involved, beyond the fact of the expulsion on Ash Wednesday and the absolution on Maundy Thursday. The variability in specific penances enjoined by the bishop in the pseudo-Egbert description further individualizes the practice, and perhaps encourages a variety of permutations. So here, while this interpretation of a practice ‘across the sea’ is compelling, because of its general nature we might envisage a range of possible uses, public and private, based on this model. The inclusion of instructions for public penance in pseudo-Egbert and in the Handbook, then, may represent an alternative to the usual methods of private penance, an attempt to spread awareness of an ancient remedy that might prove useful in addressing especially heinous sins.

This flexibility in the ways in which the ritual of public penance might be reconstituted is evident as well in the translated Rule of Chrodegang, which describes an ‘open penance’ for canons. After a guilty canon has confessed,

þonne he ut of þam cwearterne gange, gif þam biscope 7 þam caldre þince, do he þonne gyt opene dædbote, þæt is þæt he beo ascyred fram cyrcan 7 fram broðra gere-

<sup>26</sup> *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, ed. D. Whitelock *et al.*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1981) I, 466. ‘. . . he may not have God’s mercy, unless he toil and atone as the bishop may instruct’.

<sup>27</sup> Whitelock mentions, with reference to a similar passage in pseudo-Egbert, excommunication or ‘lifelong penance’ as episcopal options for this sort of sin. See also *ibid.* p. 466, n. 1.

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orde 7 fram callum tidsangum, 7 cume to cyrcan dura, þær se ealdor bebeode, 7 licge þær astreht callum lichaman ætforan þære dura oð ealle ofer hine inn beon agangen, 7 syððan arise 7 stande up butan cyrcan dura, 7 gefylle þar his þeowdom be þam þe he mage. . . . Endebyrdnys þæs þe deð opene dædbo(te) þæt is: þu underfoh hine on Wodnesdæg onforan Lencgten, þæt is on *caput ieiunii*, 7 oferþece hine mid hæræn, 7 gebide for hine, 7 beclys hine oð an þunresdæg ær Eastron, þæt is *Cena Domini*.<sup>28</sup>

This practice involves the consultation with the bishop (although it is not clear who is doing the expelling and the reconciling), the expulsion from the church, the expression of that at services by standing outside of the church threshold (after, interestingly, being stepped over by the others), the hairshirt, and the time-frame of Ash Wednesday to Lent. The direction that the penitent be enclosed ('beclys') during this time is striking, although Mayke de Jong has discussed the close Carolingian relationship between public penance and monastic exile.<sup>29</sup> Even more so than for the Carolingians, it is unclear to what degree the Anglo-Saxons understood or held to the elements of public penance, ancient or Carolingian. While pseudo-Egbert attempts to delineate the roles of bishop and priest, these instructions show a permutation of the ritual, adapted to the specific needs of canons, who mimic monastic life and would as a consequence value a form of public penance, or of 'opene dædbote', that rests somewhere between the principles of lay exclusion and monastic enclosure for serious sins. As it might likely be quite common that a bishop might prove unreachable, or that the priest might decide, given the discretion offered him in pseudo-Egbert, to resolve matters himself, we might imagine in the Anglo-Saxon penitential spectrum a wide range of practices resting somewhere between 'public' and 'private' penance, akin to the middle ground described by Meens and evident in Ekkehard's *Life*.

The most interesting non-liturgical evidence for public penance (interesting in that it demonstrates a conscious awareness of continental, canonical penitential practice) comes from manuscripts with connections to Wulfstan. Wulfstan's

<sup>28</sup> *The Old English Version of the Rule of Chrodegang*, ed. A. S. Napier, EETS os 150 (London, 1916), 36–7. 'When he goes out from the enclosure, if the bishop and the elder think it appropriate, he should further do open penance, that is that he should be cut off from the church and from the company of the brethren and from all singing of hours, and come to the church doors, where the elder commands, and lie with his entire body outstretched in front of the doors until all have stepped inside over him, and afterwards he should arise and stand up outside the church doors, and there fulfil his service as best he may . . . The arrangement of the one who does open penance, that is: you receive him on Wednesday before Lent, that is *caput ieiunii*, and cover him with hair, and pray for him, and enclose him until the Thursday before Easter, that is *Cena Domini*.' The phrase 'opene dædbote' is found only once outside the translated Rule of Chrodegang, in HomS9 (Cameron number B3.2.9), an unpublished homily for Ash Wednesday with connections to Wulfstan (CCCC 190, pp. 247–9, printed and discussed below).

<sup>29</sup> See De Jong, 'What was Public', pp. 871–2.

description of the Dismissal and of the Reconciliation in his Ash Wednesday sermon is reiterated and developed in his sermon for Maundy Thursday.<sup>30</sup> This sermon is based largely on a sermon by Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés for Maundy Thursday, and Wulfstan takes much of his description of the ceremony from there. He begins by discussing the biblical foundation for the ritual (specifically the temporary expulsion of Adam from paradise because of sin). Drawing a parallel between Adam and those about to be expelled, he describes the ritual:

lc wille cyðan eow eallum . . . hwanan seo bysn ærest aras þæt bisceopas ascadað ut of cyrican on foreweardan Lenctene þa men þe mid openan heafodgyltan hy sylfe forgyltað, 7 eft hy æfter geornfulre dædbote into cyrican lædað on þam dæge þe bið *cena Domini*. . . And gif hwylc man þonne Godes lage swa swyðe abrece þæt he hine sylfne wið God forwyrce mid healice misdæde, þonne be þære bysene þe God on Adame astealde þa þa he hine nydde ut of paradiso, be ðære bysne we eac nydað ut þa forsyngodan of Godes cyrican oð þæt hi mid eadmodre dædbote hi sylfe geinnian to þam þæt we hy þyder in eft lædan durran . . .<sup>31</sup>

Wulfstan then develops this association with Adam, describing the wailing and tearful prayers of those expelled from paradise, cut off from communion and reflecting their inward state with outward display. Although the connection between the penitents and Adam is made by Abbo, the expansive description of the state of mind of both Adam and the penitents is developed by Wulfstan himself, or brought into the sermon from other descriptions of public penitents. Wulfstan collected a substantial amount of material regarding public penance, some of which deals with the experience of the penitents, in his ‘commonplace book’, and much of this material is extant in CCC 190, an eleventh-century manuscript with connections to Worcester and Exeter.<sup>32</sup> The Latin section of the manuscript contains a loose collection of texts relating to various

<sup>30</sup> See *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Bethurum, pp. 236–8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 236–7. ‘I desire to say to you all . . . whence the practice first arose that bishops at the beginning of Lent expel from the church those men who have made themselves guilty with open capital sins, and they afterwards, after zealous penance, are led into the church on the day that is *cena Domini*. . . And if anyone then should break God’s law so seriously that he undoes himself in relationship to God with high sins, then by the example that God established in Adam when he expelled him from paradise, by that example we also expel from God’s church the seriously sinful until they with humble penance redeem (?) themselves to the extent that we afterwards may dare to lead them thither . . .’

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 345, and see also D. Bethurum, ‘Archbishop Wulfstan’s Commonplace Book’, *PMLA* 57 (1942), 916–29, for a discussion of this manuscript and its relationship to the other versions of the ‘commonplace book’. See also C. A. Jones, ‘Two Composite Texts from Archbishop Wulfstan’s ‘Commonplace Book’: the *De ecclesiastica consuetudine* and the *Institutio beati Amalarii de ecclesiasticis officiis*’, *ASE* 27 (1998), 233–71, on the relationship between the various parts of CCC 190.

liturgical and penitential matters. It includes a short version of Abbo's sermon, which Bethurum believes was the version used by Wulfstan; and the second, Old English, section includes a hyper-literal translation, possibly commissioned by Wulfstan between the writing of his homilies for Ash Wednesday and for Maundy Thursday.<sup>33</sup> The Old English section includes an unedited homily (Cameron B3.2.9, discussed in more detail below), which is similarly a translation of a Latin Ash Wednesday sermon.<sup>34</sup> Wulfstan may have drawn some of his expansive material from this homily, which describes public penance, focusing on the experience of the penitents. The Latin section also includes a number of excerpts, of uncertain origin and interconnection, related to public penance.<sup>35</sup> Clearly Wulfstan derives (or strengthens) much of his understanding of the practice from them, including the ideas of open penance for open crimes<sup>36</sup> and of variable culpability based on the relationship of the mind to the crime. Fehr's selection 39 describes what penitents who have been excommunicated for capital crimes should do:

Qui etiam paenitens balneo non lauet se neque tondet nec unguis incidat nec in stramentis dormiat, sed in pauimento nudo. Cilicio quoque indutus inermis et nudipes cedat. Die noctuque peccata plangat et lacrimabili prece a domino ueniam petat. Ecclesiam non intret, pacis osculum non accipiat; a carne et uino et uxoris carnali copulatione absteineat. Non communicet quamdiu paenituerit, nisi morte preoccupatus fuerit. . . .<sup>37</sup>

This sort of particular description of what happens during the penitential period is echoed in Wulfstan's sermons. Most of this 'commonplace' material is applicable to various kinds of penance (with titles like 'De paenitentiarum diversitate'). We do, however, get an explicit description of the Ash Wednesday Dismissal, as Fehr's Item 41, on pp. 245–7 of CCCC 190. The ritual here presented conforms to the canonical model ('secundum statuta canonum'), specifying the bishop's

<sup>33</sup> See *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Bethurum, pp. 345–6, on Wulfstan's use of Abbo's sermon and on the Old English translation. Both are edited from CCCC 190 as Appendix I by Bethurum (pp. 366–73). <sup>34</sup> The Latin sermon is on pp. 247–9 of CCCC 190.

<sup>35</sup> This material can be found on pages 228–9 and 238–59 of the manuscript, and has been edited by Fehr (*Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, pp. 241 and 243–7). See Jones, 'Two Composite Texts', pp. 235–7 on this penitential material.

<sup>36</sup> 'Qui publice peccauerit publice arguatur et publica paenitentia purgabitur. Et si hoc occulte fecerit et occulte ad confessionem uenerit, occulte ei penitentia imponatur.' (Fehr, *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics*, p. 243).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 246: 'Yet, the penitent should not wash himself in a bath, nor shave, nor cut his nails, nor sleep under coverings, but on the naked ground. He should walk about in a hairshirt, unarmed and barefoot. Day and night he should bewail his sins and with tearful prayers seek grace from the Lord. He shall not enter the church, nor shall he accept the kiss of peace; he should abstain from meat and wine and copulation with his wife. He must not communicate as long as he is a penitent, unless he should be stricken with terminal illness.'

seat as the point of supplication, and featuring the expulsion from the church with the words given Adam at his expulsion from Paradise, after which the penitents are put 'extra limen domus dei'. Particularly interesting, however, is the instruction regarding the imposition of ashes:

Quibus pro diuersis criminibus paenitentia est subeunda, die praefata, id est quarta feria in capite ieiunii ad sedem episcopalem discalciati laneisque induti conueniant et domno pontifici causam actus sui prodant ac sic sibi subueniri per paenitentiae satisfactionem petant. Pontifex autem secundum statuta canonum, prout sibi uisum fuerit, pro qualitate delictorum paenitentiae eis constituat modum atque iuxta morem ipsius diei propriis manibus cyneres imponat capitibus eorum. Quibus peractis prosternat se episcopus cum ipsis paenitentibus coram altari in pauimento aeclesiae, circumstanti clero simul cum eo . . .<sup>38</sup>

The phrase 'iuxta morem ipsius diei', in reference to the application of ashes to heads, seems to imply that the two rituals are distinct, and that the canonical ritual is being superimposed upon the more usual, and more general, Ash Wednesday liturgy, which encompasses all the faithful, not just those accused of especially serious, or public, sins.

Following all this, and following two sermons (one of which, for the Dismissal, is the Latin sermon of which Cameron B3.2.9 is a translation), we have a description of the Reconciliation, 'secundum morem orientalium ecclesiarum', beginning with the instruction that 'conueniant omnes qui pro diuersis criminibus paenitentia sunt dampnata et ab ingressa aeclesiae priuati ad metropolitanam sedem et hora diei tertia collecti, omnes ante ianuam basilicae discalciati laneisque induti expectent. . .'.<sup>39</sup> The bishop and two deacons approach, one deacon positioning himself with the penitents, the other with the bishop. The deacon with the bishop challenges, 'Dicite quare venitis!' ('Say why you have come!'), to which the deacon representing the penitents replies, 'Indulgentiae causa' ('For forgiveness'). The exchange continues between the deacons, with the bishop contributing, as the penitents are allowed to supplicate

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 246–7: 'Those who for diverse crimes are entering into penance, on the predetermined day, that is the fourth day at the beginning of the fast, should come together to the bishop's seat, barefoot and clothed in wool, and they should reveal to the bishop the reason for their act and so seek for themselves to be succoured by the satisfaction of penance. The bishop, however, following the canonical statute, according to what is seen by him, should establish the measure of their penance according to the nature of the sins, and following the custom of the same day, he should with his own hands place ashes on their heads. This finished, the bishop should prostrate himself with these same penitents before the altar, on the pavement of the church, with the clergy having taken their places around him . . .'

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 248: 'All those who are condemned because of various sins and are barred from entering the church should come together to the Metropolitan seat, and having been brought together at the third hour of the day, all should wait before the doors of the basilica, barefoot and dressed in wool.'

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themselves before God's mercy. The exchange is concluded with the instruction that 'tunc residente episcopo legat diaconus positus cum episcopo lectionem hanc'.<sup>40</sup> What follows is the short version of Abbo's sermon (pp. 254–8 in the manuscript). This version, as Bethurum believes, may have been reduced from Abbo's original by Wulfstan himself, who then later adapted it into his own sermon, which would be delivered in its place at this point in the ceremony. After the sermon,<sup>41</sup> and after some antiphons and psalms, the bishop takes the penitents by the hands and leads them into the church. Here, the bishop, along with the penitents, prostrates himself, they all sing the seven penitential psalms, and the bishop arises and absolves them. This is then followed by an assertion that the participation of the bishop is necessary for the remission of sins.<sup>42</sup>

Altogether we have here a fairly complete account of what is involved, both liturgically and spiritually, in at least one manifestation of the rite of public penance. It is hard to know to what extent the material presented in CCCC 190 is taken passively from continental sources or is actively reshaped by Wulfstan or someone else. However, what we find here is consonant with the treatment of public penance in Wulfstan's sermons (and, as I will discuss below, with the fragmentary penitential liturgy presented in the Claudius Pontifical I, which may have been Wulfstan's), and the interpolation of Abbo's shortened sermon into the description of the Reconciliation perhaps hints at a slightly more active Wulfstanian involvement in the penitential material extant in CCCC 190, manipulating these sources as he puts together the material necessary to perform the rite.

Still, while this evidence is compelling, it is difficult to gauge to what extent the practice might have had currency outside of Wulfstan's diocese. In other Anglo-Saxon vernacular discussions of penance for capital crimes, public penance, as a threat or a reality, is almost universally ignored. The Blickling and Vercelli homilists and Ælfric all discuss the various 'heafodleahtras', which theoretically should warrant public penance, but they never openly suggest public penance as a remedy. Both Vercelli and Blickling avoid it, interested more generally in confession and in explaining the theoretical elements of penance, although it must be noted that neither of these manuscripts provides a homily proper to either Ash

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Now, with the bishop sitting down, the deacon positioned with the bishop should read this lection.'

<sup>41</sup> We move from the sermon back to the description of the Reconciliation with the instruction, 'Post finem lectionis surgens episcopus faciat verbum exortatorium ad ipsos paenitentes de eadem lectione' ('After the end of the lection, the bishop, rising, should give a few words of exhortation to those penitents concerning that same lection').

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 249: 'Multis enim utile ac necessarium est ut peccatorum reatus episcopali supplicatione et absolutione solvatur. Mediator enim dei et hominum Iesus Christus prepositis sanctae dei ecclesiae potestatem tradidit ligandi uidelicet atque soluendi.'

Wednesday or Maundy Thursday. Ælfric's apparent silence is more disturbing, however. Whenever Ælfric discusses penance, it is the private mode of expiation that concerns him, and his silence on the issue of public penance is one of the reasons why its significance in post-reform England is clouded. Ælfric makes no definite reference to any need for penance outside of the private, priest-based system. There is, however, an interesting passage in Ælfric's First Series sermon for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost that may indicate some familiarity with the idea of public penance. Explaining the three dead raised by Christ as the three deaths of the soul (evil assent, evil work and evil habit), he describes the youth at Naim, carried and raised before the people, as betokening 'gehwylcne synfulne mannan þe bið mid healicum leahtrum on þam inran menn adyd. 7 bið his yfelnyss mannum cuð'.<sup>43</sup> Representing a more damaged soul than sinners of the first kind, he is in need of *maran læcedomes*:

Swa bið eac se digla deað þære sawle eaðelicor to arærenne þe on geðafunge digelice syngað. þonne syn þa openan leahtras to gehælenne; ðone cniht he arærde on alles folces gesihðe. 7 mid þysum wordum getrumeðe þu cniht ic secge þe aris; ða digelan gyltas man sceal digelice betan. 7 þa openan openlice. þæt ða beon getimbrode þurh his behreowsunge þe ær wæron þurh his mandædum. geæswicode . . . Swilce synfulle arærþ crist gif hi heora synna behreowsiað. 7 betæhð hi heora meder; þæt is þæt he hi geferlæcð annysse his gelaðunge.<sup>44</sup>

Besides the idea that such sinners be raised publicly and reunited to the church, the assertion that 'one must atone for secret sins secretly, and the open ones openly, so that those may be built up through his repentance who were previously deceived by his wicked deeds' is the same sentiment put forth by the Carolingians in asserting the need for public penance for these sorts of grave, especially known, sins. Ælfric's direct source here is Bede, although it is Augustine who developed this explication of the three deaths of the soul from the three raised by Christ. Ælfric apparently knew Augustine directly here, as Pope demonstrates regarding Ælfric's treatment of the same theme in a Friday sermon for the Fourth Week in Lent.<sup>45</sup> This latter passage, following Augustine,

<sup>43</sup> *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The First Series. Text*, ed. P. Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997), 459: '... each sinful man who is inwardly defiled with high sins, and his evilness is known to men'.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462: 'So is also the secret death of the soul easier to resurrect (for the one) who in consent sins secretly, than are open sins to heal. He raised up the youth in the sight of all the folk, and with these words, "Recover, youth, I say to you, arise." One must atone for secret guilts secretly, and open openly, so that those may be built up through his repentance who were previously deceived through his wicked deeds . . . So Christ raises up the sinful if they repent their sins, and delivers them to their mother, that is that he unites them with the unity of his church.'

<sup>45</sup> See *Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. C. Pope, 2 vols., EETS os 259–60 (London, 1967) I, 303–10, for a discussion of Ælfric's sources for these passages, and their manuscript distribution. The passage in question is from pp. 320–1.

refers to open sin and to restoration with the church/mother, but does not include the passage that parallels Caesarius, about open penance for the remedy of those injured, which comes from Bede. As is almost certainly the case with Bede, it would be too much to conflate this explanation with an exhortation to sacramental public penance. There were other ‘public’ forms of penance known in Anglo-Saxon England within the context of private penance, with various acts of humiliation. The assertion that known sin should be expiated publicly for the edification of those injured by the sin is certainly consonant with traditional calls for public penance. Ælfric’s exhortation sounds like a recapitulation of the ‘Carolingian dichotomy’, but the lack of specific reference to public penance makes this assertion a general penitential principle, one that might be applied to any sort of penance, episcopal or sacerdotal.

Hypotheses regarding Ælfric’s opinions on public penance must be complicated by the fact that Ælfric forbade the preaching of homilies on the three days before Easter, what he called the ‘silent days’: ‘Cirlice þeawas forbeodað to secgenne ænig spell on ðam ðrim swigdagum.’<sup>46</sup> Maundy Thursday is the first of the silent days. However, this is also the day of the Reconciliation, and the preaching of a sermon takes a prominent place in the CCCC 190 description. The interpolation of the shorter Abbo into the liturgical framework, as well as Wulfstan’s own Reconciliation sermon, demonstrates Wulfstan’s approval of preaching on this day, at least in this context. However, Ælfric here seems to be forbidding the preaching of sermons on this day, reflecting a possible conflict between Ælfric’s monastic paradigm and Wulfstan’s sense of episcopal duty. Although it may be that Ælfric is discussing exegetical homilies of the sort provided in his series of Catholic Homilies, a late eleventh-century commentator, possibly Coleman, the Worcester scribe and biographer of St Wulfstan, objected to Ælfric’s proscription, invoking among other things the fact that on Maundy Thursday ‘biscepas æt heora bisceopstole sæcgað larspel þonne hi lædað in penitentes. 7 hi doð absolutionem’.<sup>47</sup> It is true that Ælfric never gives any overt indication that he supports, or even knows about, sacramental public penance. Ælfric is writing more generally than Wulfstan, for a mixed audience of monastic and lay, setting

<sup>46</sup> *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies. The First Series*, ed. Clemoes, p. 298: ‘Churchly customs forbid one to say any homily on the three silent days.’ For discussion, see J. Hill, ‘Ælfric’s “Silent Days”’, *Leeds Stud. in Eng.* 16 (1985), 118–31. Hill argues that, while Ælfric may have believed that he was supporting a monastic principle and extending it to the larger Christian community, his injunction against preaching on these days was apparently idiosyncratic.

<sup>47</sup> See *ibid.* p. 121: ‘... bishops at their cathedrals say a homily when they lead in the penitents, and they do absolution’. As Bethurum reports, regarding St Wulfstan’s use of the earlier Bethurum XV, ‘the ceremony at which this sermon was preached was one of the most impressive at which a bishop officiated. William of Malmesbury tells, on the authority of Coleman, how moving was St Wulfstan’s performance on this occasion’. (*The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Bethurum, pp. 346–7).

forth principles and moral exhortation that apply to all, and specific calls to public penance may have been out of his purview. However, it is not as if Ælfric ignores penitential liturgy entirely. If public penance was at all prevalent in Ælfric's time, one might expect him to make some reference to the practice in at least one of his three discussions of the Ash Wednesday liturgy. It could be that the scope of his discussion, with its focus on Lenten repentance generally, does not encompass public penance, and that his silence is therefore akin to that seen in the Blickling and Vercelli collections. Even Wulfstanian canons and law-codes avoid explicit mention of public penance, because the discretionary nature of its implementation would defy that sort of codification. The silence of non-Wulfstanian preaching on the subject would be more disturbing if not for the fact that the penitential discussions that we do find in Vercelli, Blickling and Ælfric refer to a confession that would be the gateway for those going on to either private or public penance. However, it could also be that Ælfric is actively rejecting public penance because of the need to preach a sermon on Maundy Thursday in conjunction with the Reconciliation ceremony, and that he advocates instead simply the general ashing on Ash Wednesday.

Ælfric's championing of the general ashing may indicate some sort of awkwardness in the juxtaposition of these two rituals. Descriptions of the ashing present it as something traditional in England, whereas the few descriptions of public penance that we have seem to indicate that, for the Anglo-Saxons, something new or unusual is being introduced to this prior framework. The dichotomy is most visible in the apparent conflict between Wulfstan's energetic promotion of public penance (which, according to the models available to Wulfstan, required a sermon on Maundy Thursday) and Ælfric's idiosyncratic sense that the silence of the three days before Easter should not be broken. However, as I will demonstrate below, Anglo-Saxon liturgical *ordines* for Lent do not clearly distinguish between the general ashing and public penance, but rather seem to reflect some fluidity in their relationship. As was the case for the Carolingians, and as we might perceive in pseudo-Egbert, in the Handbook, and in the translated Rule of Chrodegang, the traditional form of public penance might be interpreted as something else, something similar to the 'middle ground' detected by Meens. In this light, it might be more natural, in the wider late Anglo-Saxon liturgical perspective, to appreciate the general ashing and the episcopal penance as manifestations of a single body of penitential liturgical *ordines*, which might be freely readapted according to necessity and circumstance. Attempting to outline the relationship between the two rituals as presented in Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts might bring us closer to an appreciation both of this apparent Ash Wednesday discrepancy demonstrated in the respective homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan and of the general relevance of formal public penance to Anglo-Saxon England. I will present first the evi-

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dence for public penance extant in Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts for Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, and will then discuss the liturgical relationship between the Dismissal and the ashing.

### THE ANGLO-SAXON LITURGY FOR PUBLIC PENANCE

The Gregorian and Gelasian Sacramentaries each provide forms for the Dismissal and the Reconciliation, although the Gelasian gives substantially more for the Reconciliation, and only the Gelasian gives instructions.<sup>48</sup> Many of these forms, especially the Gregorian,<sup>49</sup> find their way into the Anglo-Saxon books, although there are also forms derived from the *Ordines Romani*, as well as quite a few unique forms, for both occasions. Perhaps the earliest extant liturgy for public penance known in England is that in the Leofric Missal. These forms make up part of Leofric A, and are therefore Frankish witnesses of the ninth century, brought into England in the early part of the tenth. Additions were made to it in the tenth century, possibly at Canterbury, and it may have been given to Exeter by Æthelstan.<sup>50</sup> The *ordo* for the Dismissal in the Leofric Missal is a good deal more complete than that in either the Gregorian or the Gelasian, including psalm and chant incipits and instructions throughout the *ordo*. The *ordo agentibus publicam penitentiam* begins with a rubric very similar to that in the Gelasian, and almost certainly related, ‘Suscipis eum .iiii. feria mane et cooperis eum cilicio, oresque pro eo, et in claudis eum usque in coena domini.’<sup>51</sup> Following are four more or less

<sup>48</sup> By ‘Gelasian’ I refer here to the ‘Old Gelasian’ as edited in *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, ed. H. A. Wilson (Oxford, 1894). The directions in the Gelasian Sacramentary for the Dismissal have been often quoted, as follows: ‘Ordo Agentibus Publicam Poenitentiam. Suscipis eum iv feria mane in capite Quadragesimae, et cooperis eum cilicio, oras pro eo, et in claudis usque ad Coenam Domini. Qui eodem die in gremio praesentatur ecclesiae, et prostrato eo omni corpore in terra, dat orationem pontifex super eum ad reconciliandum in quinta feria Coenae Domini sicut ibi continetur.’ (*The Gelasian Sacramentary*, ed. Wilson, p. 15). ‘Order for those going in public penance. Receive him on the fourth day in the morning at the beginning of Lent, and cover him with the hairshirt, pray for him, and enclose him until *Cena Domini*. On that day, this one is presented in the bosom of the church, and with his entire body prostrate on the ground, the bishop gives over him the oration for reconciliation, on the Thursday of *Cena Domini*, just as is set down there.’ The hairshirt is specified, and the penitents are to be ‘confined’, a practice of uncertain use in Anglo-Saxon public penance, although the translated Rule of Chrodegang requires that the penitent canons be confined, and the instruction does appear in Leofric A. (See also de Jong, ‘What was Public’, on the Carolingian relationship between public penance and monastic exile.)

<sup>49</sup> *Le sacramentaire grégorien: ses principales formes d’après les plus anciens manuscrits*, ed. J. Deshusses, Spicilegium Friburgense 28 (Fribourg, 1971), 113–26.

<sup>50</sup> *The Leofric Missal*, ed. F. E. Warren (Oxford, 1883). For a summary of theories concerning the dates of the various parts of the Leofric Missal, see R. Pfaff, ‘Massbooks’, *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. R. Pfaff, *OEN* Subsidia 23 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1995), 11–14.

<sup>51</sup> *The Leofric Missal*, ed. Warren, p. 73. ‘Receive him on the fourth day in the morning and cover him with the hairshirt, and pray for him, and enclose him until *Cena Domini*.’

universal orations, common to the Gregorian and the Gelasian,<sup>52</sup> and diffused in Anglo-Saxon books even where the rest of the *ordo* has not reached (for use either in the ashing or for some other penitential occasion). These forms are general invocations of God's mercy. The following rubric instructs, 'Tunc iubeat sacerdos penitentem surgere secum, et, fixis genibus, decantent istos psalmos.'<sup>53</sup> The fact that only the *sacerdos* is mentioned is striking, and is repeated in the final rubric: 'Et si homo intellectuosus sit, da ei consilium ut ueniat ad te statuto tempore, aut ad alium sacerdotem in coena domini, ut reconcilietur ab eo.'<sup>54</sup> That there seems to be no call for a bishop here is strange. For the Reconciliation on Maundy Thursday, Leofric, with an instruction similar to that in the Gelasian,<sup>55</sup> again refers only to priests: 'Praesentatur pœnitens in gremio ecclesiae, et prostrato omni corpore in terra, dat orationem sacerdos ad reconciliandum ita.'<sup>56</sup> It is from the start unusual to find the order for public penance in a missal (unless a missal designed for use by a bishop), for it is traditionally the prerogative of bishops only, with priests allowed to reconcile only in emergency. Still, the forms given (which I will discuss in relation to the changes made to them for the Canterbury Benedictional) are those from the Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries and present the imperatives of the episcopal reconciliation from the beginning of the rite.<sup>57</sup> Concerning these *ordines*, Warren says only, 'An "ordo agentibus publicam poenitentiam" on Ash Wednesday page 73, and an "ordo ad reconciliandum," page 92, on Maundy Thursday, exhibit the ritual which accompanied the public exclusion from church of penitents on the first day of Lent, and their formal reconciliation on Thursday of Holy Week.'<sup>58</sup> The specific use of the *sacerdos* is

<sup>52</sup> These four forms share with the Gelasian the title 'Orationes et preces super penitentem' (*The Leofric Missal*, ed. Warren, p. 73). Their incipits are as follows: (1) *Exaudi domine preces nostras*, (2) *Praeueniat hunc famulum tuum*, (3) *Adesto domine supplicationibus nostris* and (4) *Domine deus noster qui offensione*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Now the priest should bid the penitent to rise with him, and, with knees bent, they sing these psalms.'

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74: 'And if the man is intelligent, give him counsel that he come to you at the set time, or to another priest at *Cena Domini*, so that he may be reconciled by him.'

<sup>55</sup> *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, ed. Wilson, pp. 63–4: 'Egreditur poenitens de loco ubi poenitentiam gessit, et in gremio praesentatur ecclesiae prostrato omni corpore in terra. Et postulat in his verbis diaconus' ('The penitent is sent forth from the place where he held his penance, and in the bosom of the church is presented, his entire body prostrate on the ground. And the deacon proclaims in these words'). After a long admonition (not found in Anglo-Saxon witnesses), the instructions continue, 'Post hoc admonetur ab episcopo sive ab alio sacerdote, ut quod poenitendo diluit, iterando non revocet. Inde vero has dicit orationes sacerdos super eum' ('After this he is admonished by the bishop or by another priest that what was washed in the penitent not be recalled by repetition of the sin. Then the priest says these prayers over him'), followed by three forms also in Leofric (and in the Gregorian).<sup>56</sup> *The Leofric Missal*, ed. Warren, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> There are three standard forms for the Reconciliation. Their incipits are as follows: (1) *Adesto domine supplicationibus nostris*, (2) *Praesta quasumus domine huic famulo* and (3) *Deus humani generis*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. lxiii.

unusual, however. Possibly this represents something more, some sort of attempted compromise between the imperatives of public penance and the reality of a priest-based system, perhaps as reflected in Halitgar's allowance that the priest might need to perform the reconciliation in certain circumstances.

While the Leofric Missal describes earlier continental practice, Anglo-Saxon versions of the two rituals can vary widely, both in their relationship to continental models and to each other. I will discuss *ordines* related to public penance found in six sources (with passing references to other manuscripts), the 'Egbert' Pontifical, the Benedictional of Robert, the Anderson Pontifical, the Lanalet Pontifical, the Claudius Pontifical (I), and, most fully, the Canterbury Benedictional.<sup>59</sup> Three of these manuscripts (Lanalet, Claudius I, and CB) provide fairly complete *ordines* for the Dismissal. These three witnesses are distinct from one another, and diverge particularly in regards to the relationship between the application of ashes and the Dismissal (discussed below). A creative Anglo-Saxon relationship with the liturgy for public penance is more clearly demonstrated in the *ordines* for the Reconciliation, as found in five witnesses (Egbert, Robert Benedictional, Anderson, Lanalet, and CB). These witnesses reveal a continually developing liturgy.

The forms for public penance in the mistakenly-titled 'Pontifical of Egbert', which seems to be a West Country text of *c.* 1000, demonstrate an early form of the rite. For the Dismissal,<sup>60</sup> only the four standard forms are provided. The orations for the Reconciliation are more interesting, however. After the standard (that is, Gregorian/Gelasian) three forms for the occasion is the following *Oratio super penitentem*: 'Da nobis domine ut sicut puplicani precibus et confessione placatus es. ita et huic famulo tuo ill. placare domine et precibus eius benignus aspira. ut in confessione flebili permanenti et petitione. perpetuam clementiam tuam celeriter exoret sanctisque altaribus et sacramentis restitutus rursus celi gloriae mancipetur.'<sup>61</sup> This form is found in several places, more

<sup>59</sup> *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals (the Egbert and Sidney Sussex Pontificals)*, ed. H. M. J. Banting, HBS 104 (London, 1989); *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. Wilson; M. A. Conn, 'The Dunstan and Brodie (Anderson) Pontificals: an Edition and Study' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1993); *Pontificale Lanaletense*, ed. G. H. Doble, HBS 74 (London, 1937); *The Claudius Pontificals*, ed. D. H. Turner, HBS 97 (London, 1971); *The Canterbury Benedictional*, ed. R. M. Woolley, HBS 51 (London, 1917, hereafter CB).

<sup>60</sup> Entitled *Orationes et preces super penitentem confitentem peccata sua more solito. Feria. .IIII. Infra Quinquagesimam* (*Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, ed. Banting, pp. 130–1). The heading is given a Roman numeral, XVCI, 'as in the Gregorian Sacramentary' (see *ibid.* p. 130, n. 28).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 131–2: 'Grant us, Lord, that just as you are appeased by the prayers and the confession of the people, so also, Lord, be appeased by this your servant, and assist his prayers, kind one, so that in confession with continuous weeping and in petitioning, he may quickly prevail upon your eternal mercy and may be transferred to a state of restitution with the holy altars and the sacraments, restored to the glory of heaven.'

generally with a different opening (*Exaudi nos domine ut sicut*, as in CB).<sup>62</sup> It is followed here by an instruction that the penitent be raised ‘de pauimento his uerbis dicendo. cananturque antifona.’ The antiphon specified is of a text that is woven throughout the liturgical forms, and throughout all Latin and vernacular treatments of Lent, ‘Viuo ego dicat dominus nolo mortem peccatorum sed ut magis conuertatur et uiuat,’<sup>63</sup> and the absolution is one that is common to the other full *ordines*, the *Absolvimus (te) vicem beati petri*, invoking the power to bind and to loosen given Peter, and by tradition to bishops. Attached by sign to the *ordo* between the *Da nobis domine* and the instruction to raise the penitent is an Old English prayer, a translation of the *Absolvimus*:

Byðor ða leofestan we onlysað eow of synna bendum on gewrixle ðæs eadegan petres ðara apostola ealdres ðam ðe ure dryhten ðone anweald sealde synna to gebindenne 7 eft to onlysenne ac swa miclum swa eow to belimð eowra synna gewregeðnes 7 us to gebyreð sio forgifnes sie god ælmihtig lif 7 hælo eallum eowrum synnum forgifen ðurh ðone ðe mid him leofað 7 ricsað geond world a world. Amen.<sup>64</sup>

This translation seems to be either a supplement to or a replacement of the *Absolvimus*, and if, as it may seem, it is intended for use in the liturgical service, especially for such a key moment as the absolution itself, it raises questions both about uses of Old English in the liturgy and about the appreciation of those performing the liturgy that many, if not the bulk, of the penitents would need some sort of vernacular explanation of what is happening in the liturgical forms. In any event, although this ceremony is fundamentally that found in the Gregorian and Gelasian sacramentaries and in the Leofric Missal, the compelling presence of an Old English translation of the central performative passage demonstrates some sort of active Anglo-Saxon interest in the liturgical forms.

A more common Anglo-Saxon type of Reconciliation *ordo* is evident in the Robert Benedictinal. This manuscript is generally taken to be a New Minster text of the 980s, although Dumville dates it on palaeographical grounds to *c.*

<sup>62</sup> It is also the second part of a form from the Gregorian and the Gelasian (the fifth Gelasian form), *Precor domine clementiae*, that is used, in different manuscripts, for the Dismissal, both before (see *The Canterbury Benedictinal*, ed. Woolley, p. 15) and after (see *The Claudius Pontificals*, ed. Turner, p. 85) the blessing of the ashes.

<sup>63</sup> ‘For the living, says the Lord, I do not desire death for sinners, but that he turn back and live.’

<sup>64</sup> *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals*, ed. Banting, p. 132, n. 30: ‘Dearest brothers, we free you from the bonds of sins by the power of blessed Peter, the elder of the apostles, the one to whom our Lord gave power to bind sins and afterwards to loosen, but however much the accusation of your sins clings to you, the forgiveness belongs to us. God Almighty is the life and the salvation for all your sins, forgiven through the one who lives and reigns with him throughout the world without end.’ The Latin form in Egbert is as follows: ‘Absoluimus uos uicem beati petri apostolorum principis. cui dominus potestatem ligandi atque soluendi dedit. sed quantum ad uos pertinet accusatio et ad nos pertinet remissio. sit deus omnipotens uita et salus omnibus peccatis uestris indultor per eum. qui cum eo uiuit. Amen’ (*ibid.* p. 132).

1020.<sup>65</sup> The book ‘looks to have been commissioned by a bishop’.<sup>66</sup> After a rubric<sup>67</sup> that bears a striking similarity to one common to the Anderson Pontifical and the Canterbury Benedictional (see below), the text gives the *Absolvimus*, followed by ten further forms, all found in other manuscripts. Included are forms that in other *ordines* precede the absolution, and indeed forms proper to the Dismissal, including the fifth Gelasian form used by Claudius after the application of the ashes (as well as the four standard texts for the Dismissal), are mixed in, all introduced as simply *Item* or *Alia*. In comparison to the texts examined so far (Gelasian, Gregorian, Leofric and ‘Egbert’), this would seem to be a rather aimless collection of forms, perhaps a repository of forms not intended to be a sequential *ordo*, if not for two facts. First, the final prayer is preceded by an instruction, ‘Hic erigatur de solo adprehensus manu episcopi per dextram. et inclinetur coram episcopo’,<sup>68</sup> that is very similar to one towards the end of the *ordo* in the Anderson Pontifical and in CB<sup>69</sup> and is followed by the same form, the *Deus innocentiae restitutor et amator*. Second, the order of forms here is also found in at least two other witnesses, the Anderson Pontifical, written *c.* 1000 at (likely) Christ Church, Canterbury, and the Lanalet Pontifical, an early eleventh-century book possibly from Wells.<sup>70</sup> Both Anderson and Lanalet give more information. Lanalet has two extra forms

<sup>65</sup> See D. N. Dumville, ‘On the Dating of Some Late Anglo-Saxon Liturgical Manuscripts’, *Trans. of the Cambridge Bibliographical Soc.* 10 (1991), 40–57, esp. p. 53.

<sup>66</sup> J. Nelson and R. Pfaff, ‘Pontificals and Benedictionals’, *The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Pfaff, p. 94.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Incipit absolutio dicenda ab episcopo. super conuersum et poenitentem. Qui conuersus prosternatur. coram altare et decantet psalmum quinquagesimum. si autem est idiota. ex intimo corde crebro dicat. deus miserere mihi peccatori. seruo tuo. Et faciat episcopus letanias super eum. et hae sequantur orationes’ (*The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. Wilson, p. 57). ‘Here begins the absolution spoken by the bishop over the converted and the penitent. He who is converted should lie prostrate before the altar and sing psalm fifty. If however he is illiterate, he may say quickly in order in the inmost part of his heart, *deus miserere mihi peccatori, seruo tuo*. And the bishop should say litanies over him, and these orations follow.’

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60: ‘He should be raised up from the ground, taken by the right hand of the bishop, and inclined towards the bishop.’

<sup>69</sup> ‘Hic erigatur a solo adprehensus manu episcopi per dextram manum et inclinetur coram episcopo hanc orationem ipso dicente’ (*The Canterbury Benedictional*, ed. Woolley, p. 34).

<sup>70</sup> *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. Wilson, pp. 175–6, gives a detailed analysis of the inter-relationship between the forms in the Robert Benedictional, the Lanalet Pontifical, and the Dunstan Pontifical. Conn (*The Dunstan and Brodie (Anderson) Pontificals*) does not print absolution forms from Dunstan, but the *ordo* in Anderson seems to correspond exactly with Wilson’s analysis of that in Dunstan. As such, Anderson, Dunstan and the Robert Benedictional seem to be of a type, and have correspondence in the order of some forms with Lanalet. There is in addition a second (and incomplete) reconciliation *ordo* in Lanalet (not that discussed elsewhere here), which corresponds much more closely to the Anderson type, including the rubrication. For this second Lanalet *ordo*, see *Pontificale Lanaletense*, ed. Doble, pp. 140–3.

before the *Absolvimus*, one before the raising, and one more at the end (*Item absolutio episcopi*). It lacks all rubrics except for, before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*, the instruction “Tunc leuas eum de pauimento et dicas antiphonam.”<sup>71</sup> The antiphon is the same as that given after the raising in Egbert. Anderson is almost identical to Robert, including the opening rubrics and that for the raising, except that Anderson has an extra final prayer (different from that in Lanalet, but similarly a prayer for absolution) and includes directions for admonition. What we seem to have represented in these three witnesses is a separate strain of reconciliation *ordo* from that in Egbert (which shares the order of forms with the Gregorian and Gelasian), distinguished primarily by the fact that, in Egbert, the raising of the penitent comes after the standard forms, and is followed by the *Absolvimus* and the *Domine sancte pater* (the final form given here), whereas in the others we have this action happening well after the *Absolvimus*, and before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*. In Lanalet, the action is a simple raising up from the pavement. In Robert, the action is somewhat more detailed, as we have the bishop taking him by the hand and ‘inclining’ the penitent towards him.

The compilers of the Canterbury Benedictinal (hereafter CB), apparently with several of these deviant witnesses at hand, came up with an inventive compromise, in which the action expressed in *erigo* occurs twice, once before each ‘raising’ form (before the *Absolvimus* as in Egbert and before the *Deus innocentiae restitutor* as in the Anderson type). CB’s Reconciliation *ordo* begins with an instruction that the penitent should come to the absolution by the bishop, who is singing an antiphon.<sup>72</sup> When this is finished, the penitent lies prostrate before the altar, singing the seven penitential psalms and other chants. There follow three prayers, two praying to the Bishop of Heaven (*summo pontifice uel pontifice celesti*) that the bishop may prove an effective substitute, thereby establishing the bishop’s place as God in relation to the about-to-be-reconciled Adam. The second form here calls on the intercession of ‘sanctorum archipresulum tuorum. agustini. dunstani. atque ælfegi’, connecting the speaker with some of the most prominent archbishops of the English church. This second form ends with a reference to ‘annue benignus . . . nostrae auctoritatis absolutio’, asserting this practice as a regular one. After the third form is the first *erigo* instruction, ‘His peractis erigatur episcopus de solo. uertensque ad penitentem in pauimento prostratum faciat absolutionem’,<sup>73</sup> followed by the *Absolvimus*. The action is reversed; the

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79: ‘Now you should lift him from the pavement and say the antiphon.’

<sup>72</sup> ‘Feria .V. in cena domini omnes paenitentes uenient ad absolutionem episcopo ingrediente. et antiphonam incipiente’ (*The Canterbury Benedictinal*, ed. Woolley, p. 29). ‘On the Thursday, on *Cena Domini*, all the penitents shall come to absolution when the bishop is entering the church and beginning the antiphon.’

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31: ‘These things finished, let the bishop be raised up from the ground, and turning to the penitent lying prostrate on the pavement, he performs the absolution.’

bishop is here rising up by himself and only turning to the penitent, not taking him up or leaning him forwards, such that the penitent is still on the ground for the absolution. Next are two long prayers (found in other texts, if often in shorter form) which describe both the state of the penitent and the danger facing him.<sup>74</sup> Following are instructions that the bishop perform another absolution over the penitents. The penitent is still prostrate before the altar (*Qui conversus prosternatur coram altare*), singing a psalm. The instruction provides that 'Si autem idiota est ex intimo corde crebro dicat' (the instruction is also in Anderson and in the Robert Benedictional, and marks the beginning of the *ordo* in these texts). The bishop chants litanies and says five more orations. The fourth, taken from the *Orationes in reconciliacione paenitentis ad mortem* in the Gregorian and the Gelasian, mentions the ejection of the penitent.<sup>75</sup> The first and the fifth are unique to CB, and the other three are taken from the Anderson type, and are in the same order as here. From this point, the compiler follows that model.

Following these forms, accordingly, is the second 'erigor' action: 'Hic erigatur a solo adprehensus manu episcopi per dexteram manum et inclinetur coram episcopo hanc orationem ipso dicente.' This time, it is the penitent who is raised up by the bishop and turned towards the altar. There follows, as in the Anderson type, the *Deus innocentiae restitutor*. Again on the Anderson model there is at the end a short benediction *ab episcopo*, and instructions for admonition, as follows: 'His peractis. det ei episcopus monita salutis unde incedat uiam ueritatis. et cautus existat ne ad pristinum redeat uomitum. et simul amittat remissionem presentis uitae et futurae. sed oret assidue. elemosynam det in quantum ualet. ieiunium amet. uigiliis cum sanctis orationibus insistat. castitatis tam corporis quam animae. et super omnia caritatem habeat. Finit.'<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> The second of these explains the public penance as a way to keep the rest of the flock from sustaining damage: 'Moueatur pietatem tuam fletus . . . ne ecclesia tua sui corporis portione priuata temeretur. ne grex tuus detrimentum sustineat . . .' (*ibid.* p. 32) 'May weeping stir your mercy . . . Do not let your church, deprived in part of its body, be dishonoured, nor let your flock sustain damage . . .' The idea that the Adam-like exile just endured was for the good of the whole church may hint at the idea of public penance for known crimes, in that the 'flock' was in danger because the sin was known.

<sup>75</sup> 'Maiestatem tuam domine supplices deprecamur. ut (huic) famulo tuo longo squalore paenitentiae macerato miserationis tuae ueniam largiri digneris. ut nuptiali ueste recepta. ad regale mensam unde eiectus fuerat mereatur introire' (*ibid.* p. 34). 'Lord, may we, supplicants, beseech your majesty, that you may deign to bestow the grace of your compassion on this your servant, long steeped in the squalor of penance, so that, having recovered the wedding garment, he may merit to enter to the royal table from which he was cast out.'

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*: 'These things finished, the bishop should give him an admonishment for soundness, how he should proceed in the way of truth, and should live being wary not to return to the former vomit, and abandon at once slackness in the present life and in the future, but he should pray constantly, give alms in as far as he is able, love the fast, stand for vigils with holy orations, with purity in body as well as in spirit, and above all have love.'

This is expressly described as an occasion for a sermon. The prescribed topics amount to general exhortation, and any of a host of extant sermons could be appropriate here.

In summary, we seem to have at the opening of the eleventh century at least two strains of absolution/reconciliation *ordines*, one showing its influence most prominently at Canterbury but also at Winchester (and presumably more widely, as its inclusion at the end of the Lanalet Pontifical as Lanalet's second reconciliation *ordo* may indicate) and the other demonstrated in manuscripts coming from further west. The assertion must be made quite generally, as the dates and provenance of the relevant manuscripts are too uncertain at the moment to be more definitive, but it can be said that a variety of arrangements were available to the compilers of CB. If the owner of the Lanalet Pontifical was indeed Lyfing, bishop of Wells *c.* 999–1013 and archbishop of Canterbury from 1013–20,<sup>77</sup> he may have brought differing forms to Canterbury, and an assimilation might have been desirable. In any case, the 'Egbert' Pontifical's Old English translation of the absolution, the variance in structure of the extant reconciliation *ordines*, the creation of new prayers in many of these witnesses (at times interpolating distinctively Anglo-Saxon elements, such as invocations of Anglo-Saxon archbishops), and the originality shown by the compiler of the CB *ordo* all indicate a liturgically dynamic environment, and a somewhat more widespread interest in public penance than has been allowed. From this, it would seem that public penance in Anglo-Saxon England was not a purely Wulfstian phenomenon, but was actively adapted at several sites across England. Whether this might represent a new interest in the ritual we cannot say, due to the lack of English liturgical witnesses before the mid-late tenth century. However, at least in the late Anglo-Saxon period, this penitential model was of interest to more than just one man.

#### ASHING VERSUS DISMISSAL

However, just how and to what extent might this model have been actually used? Perhaps Wulfstan's promotion of the ritual contributed to the liturgical development of the ritual elsewhere, or perhaps we are simply blind to its presence and role in penitential practice before the late tenth century, but non-liturgical treatment of Lenten penance on the whole assumes a private model, and consonant with that, the general ashing prescribed by Ælfric. Where public penance is discussed, outside of the Wulfstian descriptions, it is treated in such a way that the divide between the canonical public penance and the more general Lenten liturgy is hard to delineate. This ambiguity is especially evident in the liturgical witnesses for the Ash Wednesday liturgy, and perhaps gives us a hint of how the ritual was appreciated outside of the particular examples of Ælfric and Wulfstan.

<sup>77</sup> See Nelson and Pfaff, 'Pontificals and Benedictionals', p. 93.

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If the blessing and application of the ashes is something to be done by every priest, as Ælfric asserts, then a separation of the *ordo* for them would be appropriate. It is hard to find, however, a separate *ordo* that prescribes the application of ashes and the procession. In several witnesses, the forms for the ashing rest alone, simply the actual forms for the application of the ashes, without any of the surrounding ceremony, and without the procession.<sup>78</sup> When the relevant forms do appear in a larger context, that context is always the formal Dismissal, as I will suggest below with respect to the Lanalet Pontifical, the Claudius Pontifical I, and the Canterbury Benedictional. This could, of course, be to some extent due to the pontifical nature of these manuscripts, compiled for episcopal use and generally giving more complete *ordines* than do most Anglo-Saxon sacramentaries and missals. Still, whatever the reason, the liturgy for the general ashing, such as survives in Anglo-Saxon liturgical manuscripts, is bound up with that for the Dismissal of public penitents, complicating discussion of Anglo-Saxon use of the two on Ash Wednesday.

An early sacerdotal example of the fluidity between the ashing and public penance is perhaps represented in the tenth-century Winchcombe Sacramentary. The text gives five forms for the day. The first is what in the eleventh-century texts is the first of two standard forms given for the ashes, as follows:

<Feria Quarta Cinerum>

Deus qui non mortem sed paenitentiam desideras peccatorum fragilitatem conditionis humanae benignissime respice, et hos cyneres quos causa proferendae humilitatis, atque promerendae ueniae capitibus nostris inponi decernimus, benedicere pro tua pietate digneris, ut qui nos cyneres esse uoluisti, et ob prauitatis nostrae meritum in puluerem reuersuros creasti: peccatorum ueniam, et praemia nobis repromissa penitentibus misericorditer concedas.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Independent forms (presented without a surrounding *ordo*) for the imposition of the ashes are given in the Robert Missal (*The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, ed. H. A. Wilson, HBS 11 (London, 1896)), the Portiforium of St Wulstan (*The Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*, ed. A. Hughes, 2 vols., HBS 89–90 (London, 1956–7)) (the same two forms given in each, with a different ending for the second in the latter), and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 146 (Samson Pontifical), among others. Leofric has the above quoted passage for the blessing of the ashes as part of Leofric C (*The Leofric Missal*, ed. Warren), and it appears as the second reading for the blessing of the ashes in the Robert Benedictional (*The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. H. A. Wilson, HBS 24 (London 1903)) and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 422, the ‘Red Book of Darley’. It also appears in numerous places as part of the *ordo* for the consecration of a church (see *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, ed. Wilson, p. 79, *Benedictio cinerum*).

<sup>79</sup> *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, ed. A. Davril, HBS 109 (Woodbridge, 1995), 48. ‘God, you who desire not death but repentance, look upon the frailty of the human condition of sinners most benignly, and these ashes, which, brought forth with humility, and deserving of grace, we determine to be put on our heads, deign to bless for your mercy, so that you who have desired us to

The type of manuscript in which this prayer occurs (a sacramentary with little or no explicitly episcopal material) encourages us to take this as a form for the general ashing, rather than as one for public penance. It is interesting to find it followed, however, by the four ancient mass forms for public penance that begin the *ordo* for the Dismissal in Leofric (from the Gelasian and Gregorian). Winchcombe does provide a remarkably full service for the *Reconciliatio penitentis ad mortem*,<sup>80</sup> and in the directions for Holy Week it gives the three central forms for Reconciliation from the Gelasian and the Gregorian.<sup>81</sup> However, without the larger context, it is difficult to say whether public penance is represented here, or whether elements of the episcopal Dismissal are being adapted to the more general ritual. It may be that behind the use of forms for public penance in Winchcombe (as, perhaps, in the Leofric Missal) is an attempt to develop the sort of priest-based ‘middle ground’ between private and public penance described by Meens, whereby the canonical model is used as material for more universal penitential practices.

The episcopal *ordines* for the Dismissal similarly reflect an ambiguous relationship between the two Ash Wednesday rituals. In the Lanalet Pontifical’s *ordo*, following a series of long, sermon-like prayers are five forms for the Dismissal, after each of which a psalm is sung. After the fifth is the following rubric:

Et si in graui<bu>s delectis preocupatus fuerit expelli debet ab ecclesia cantando  
R. In surdore uultus tuae. Et prosternat se ante ianuam ecclesiae tunc orent pro  
eo Pater noster.<sup>82</sup>

There follows a string of penitential chants (many of which appear in witnesses from the Leofric Missal through CB). After these are a few more common forms for the Dismissal, followed by two standard forms for the ashes, introduced only by the title *Benedictio cinerum*. It is hard to say, as the *ordo* is not at all complete, whether the two are meant to be part of the same ceremony. In the early Gelasian and Gregorian forms, the text ends quite happily without the forms for the ashes, and we cannot assume that the two sections are combined here. The unity of the *ordo* seems a bit more certain in CB, although the fact that CB never specifies when the penitents are thrown out makes it uncertain whether the texts provided after the title *Benedictio cinerum* are there specifically for them. The least ambiguous *ordo* for the Dismissal, in this respect, is in the

Footnote 79 (*cont.*)

be ashes, and have made us, deserving because of our depravity, to be returned to dust, may mercifully grant grace for sinners and favours promised to us in our petitions.’

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p. 260. <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75.

<sup>82</sup> *Pontificale Lanaletense*, ed. Doble, p. 71. ‘And if someone should be involved in serious offences, he must be expelled from the church, with the singing of the Response *In surdore (sic) uultus tui*. And he should prostrate himself before the door of the church, then they should pray for him, *Pater noster*.’

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Claudius Pontifical I, a manuscript of *c.* 1000, probably from Worcester or York and quite likely the pontifical used by Wulfstan himself. Between the forms for Palm Sunday and for Easter are some missing pages, so we cannot know the actual liturgy of Wulfstan's Reconciliation (if the book indeed belonged to him). It does, however, provide the forms for the Dismissal and the ashes, and is the only witness to make their interrelationship, at least in this episcopal context, clear. A brief comparison of these three *ordines* (in Claudius, Lanalet, and CB) demonstrates an illuminating uncertainty concerning how to integrate the two parts of the liturgy for Ash Wednesday.

Claudius, Lanalet, and CB all begin with five forms, the first, third, fourth, and fifth of which are the four standard forms from the Gregorian/Gelasian, while the second is a common addition. After these initial forms, CB prescribes a series of chants with no other instruction. Lanalet here has the above conditional instruction, and prescribes a *Pater noster* and series of chants. Claudius has the call for the *Pater noster* and the same chants (minus one in Claudius), and the two texts seem to be related in some way here. It is at this point that the three texts diverge. Lanalet gives four short forms, and then the two for the ashes, with no further rubrication. Claudius gives two of these forms, and then, under the title *Benedictio cinerum*, it gives the *Deus qui non mortem sed penitentiam*. After this form is an instruction parallel to that given before the blessing of the ashes in Lanalet: 'Hic mittuntur cineres super capita eorum cum aqua benedicta et expellantur extra ecclesiam. Incipitur. In sudore uultus tui. et prosternens se ante hostium canit episcopus. Inclina domine',<sup>83</sup> followed by the *Precor domine clementiae*. The expulsion from the church, with the words of God to Adam that he must earn his bread from the sweat of his brow, indicates that the liturgy for the ashes as represented here is specifically set up for the penitent who is being cast out of the church.

CB, however, differs slightly at the end, enough so as to leave some ambiguity concerning the relationship between the two parts of the *ordo*. After the chants (here the same as in Lanalet) are the same two forms given in Claudius (of the four in Lanalet), followed by a rubric saying simply that, in commendation of the penitent, 'hac ultima super ipsum dicta oratione'.<sup>84</sup> This final oration is the *Precor domine clementiae* that ended the *ordo*, after the ashes, in Claudius. Here, it precedes the forms for the ashes, and the only remaining rubrication is likewise ambiguous. CB gives for the ashes two standard forms, including the *Deus qui non mortem*, and two further forms, not found elsewhere. Those praying here

<sup>83</sup> *The Claudius Pontificals*, ed. Turner, p. 85: 'The ashes are placed over their heads with blessed water and they are expelled from the church, the *In sudore uultus tui* is begun, and prostrating himself before the exit the bishop sings, *Inclina domine*.'

<sup>84</sup> *The Canterbury Benedictional*, ed. Woolley, p. 15.

acknowledge that they, like Adam, have been cast out of paradise into the earthly valley, and are undertaking the ashes in hopes of attaining mercy. The actual application of the ashes comes directly after: ‘Ammonitio humilis cuius-cumque quando cinere respergitur. Memento homo quia cinis et pulvis es. et quia in puluerem reuerteris’.<sup>85</sup>

It could be that the singular here refers to the penitent discussed in the singular in previous rubrics. It could also be that this is a form for applying the ashes one at a time, accounting for the singular. While in Claudius the liturgy of the ashes is clearly laid out as the climax of a Dismissal ceremony, the Canterbury forms allow for somewhat more flexibility. There will not always be candidates for public penance, and the book may be used as a model for non-episcopal ceremonies. What we see in Claudius is consonant, in subsuming the ashing to the episcopal Dismissal, with Wulfstan’s imperatives, and with the model presented in the ‘commonplace’ material. Other liturgical *ordines*, however, whether Blessings of the Ashes with juxtaposed Dismissal material or Dismissal *ordines* that allow for this sort of ambiguity in how they might be used, perhaps point to a spectrum of penitential permutations between the extremes presented by Ælfric and Wulfstan.

In his sermon for the day, Ælfric describes a ceremony without public penance, but with the same basic character, by which the penitent, receiving ashes, is told, as was Adam by God, that he must live in toil for his sins. Ælfric does not call for public penance, simply that ‘do we þis lytle on ures lencenes anginne. þæt we streowiað axan uppan ure heafda’,<sup>86</sup> but many of the themes that are repeated through the liturgy for public penance find expression here. Whether or not Ælfric was hostile towards the practice or merely ambivalent, the liturgical evidence seems to indicate that the relationship between public penance and the general ashing was an issue of uncertainty to compilers of liturgical manuscripts. Public penance is perhaps developed here as a penitential option, among many others, in a single liturgical landscape, and the liturgical *ordines* for it might be used in that capacity, or in another, more private one.

In that spirit, Wulfstan’s lament that the practice is not held as well as it should be is perhaps more a call to revitalize a liturgically provided but diffusely utilised means of penance than an attempt to institute a little-known, foreign custom. It would be interesting to know just what Wulfstan means when he says that the practice is held ‘on manegum stowan’,<sup>87</sup> whether he means in many places in England or many places ‘across the sea’. Whichever is the case, there were

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17: ‘Small admonition for whoever is sprinkled with ashes: Remember, man, that you are ashes and dust, and you will return to dust.’

<sup>86</sup> *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, ed. Skeat I, 264: ‘. . . we do this little thing at the beginning of our Lent, that we strew ashes upon our heads’. <sup>87</sup> *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Bethurum, p. 235.

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several places in England by the end of the tenth century that should have had forms available for the occasion. The forms in Lanalet specify 'if someone' has sinned gravely, and perhaps Wulfstan, in saying that the practice is not followed as it should be, is exhorting that the option should be exercised more often, or in a more strictly canonical way, for the health of the flock. In the liturgical witnesses, the exact relationship between this episcopal Dismissal and the more general application of the ashes is difficult to delineate. Pontificals and episcopal benedictionals, in which reside the bulk of the liturgical evidence for these Lenten ceremonies, would naturally reflect a liturgical topography that incorporates both public penance and penitential practices applicable to all the faithful, more so than the primarily sacerdotal liturgy explicated by Ælfric. Still, the weight of this liturgical evidence seems to indicate some sort of productive interest in developing the liturgy for the dismissal of public penitents, and in particular in nurturing a fluid relationship with the general ashing. As Hill has demonstrated, Ælfric's proscription against preaching on the 'swigdagum' was apparently idiosyncratic. Similarly, the evidence seems to indicate that Wulfstan's intense interest in public penance, in its continental/canonical form, was probably more exceptional than typical. Most of the liturgical witnesses, on the other hand, represent medial points on the spectrum between the ashing and the Dismissal, revealing an interest in exploring the potential relationships between the two rituals described by Ælfric and by Wulfstan. This fluidity reflects that evident in vernacular descriptions of public penance such as those in Pseudo-Egbert, the Handbook, and the translated Rule of Chrodegang, which seem to allow for, or encourage, permutations of the canonical practice.

#### CONCLUSION

It must be remembered here that we know very little about just how the Anglo-Saxons understood what was required in the models for public penance available to them. Wulfstan and others may have been aware of how public penance was performed in the ancient church, or on the Continent, but in their own descriptions of the practice (which are admittedly few) what we get is quite general. Wulfstan and others call for public penance only for high sins, and Wulfstan specifies those of an 'open' nature. Nowhere, however, do they attempt to define just what this means. This is up to the bishop, and all the priest needs to know is that a serious crime may be referred to the bishop. There is no specific indication of what the penitent must do during this period, other than weep profusely, beyond the same exhortations to fasting, almsgiving, and good deeds seen throughout exhortations to Lenten piety, and the specific details of the penance, even the public penance, are determined case by case, as with private penance, 'swa biscop him tæce'. In many liturgical texts, the forms for penance might be used either for public penance or more generally. Similarly,

where public penance is discussed in Anglo-Saxon vernacular texts, it is mixed together in an address applicable to all Christians.

An anonymous homily for Ash Wednesday reveals this same duality.<sup>88</sup> The first two-thirds of the sermon (addressed to ‘broðru þa leofestan’) amounts to a string of general exhortations to ‘Bugað fram yfele and doð god’ and to do penance faithfully. The homilist says that just as Adam was thrown out of heaven (for capital sins), so must we find another way back through fasting. This applies to all in Lent, and the sermon would seem to be simply a nice adaptation of a Dismissal sermon for general penitential use, except that the rest of the sermon deals directly with public penance:

Witodlice Adam forgægde his drihtnes æ þa ða he æt of ðam forbodenan treowe and forðon drihten hine sceaf ut of neorxnawange on wræcsið þisses lifes þær he ðolode mænigfealde geswinc and siþþan æfter ðisses lifes geswincum on helle susle lange heofode oðþæt Crist þe ðisne middaneard alisde hine þanon generede and hine eft ongean lædde to neorxnawanges blisse. Æfter ðære bisne we sind gelærede þæt we ut drifað þæge þe forgægdon godes æ and þurh heafodgilt beoþ scildige wiðutan [þis] þerxwolde godes huses. And heom biþ forwirnd cyrclic ingang oþ þæt hig geendodre openlicre dædbote eft beon onfangene mid bisceoplicre lefe on bosm þære modorcircan swa swa Adam wæs onfangen æfter langre behreowsunge and langre tyde heofunge into neorxnawange to halgra geferræddene. To ðære geferræddene us eac gebringe Christ se ðe leofað and rixað mid his efenecan fæder and þam halgangaste on calra worulda woruld.<sup>89</sup>

The dual address, to the general penitential public who must find another way home and to the public penitents who must do ‘openlicre dædbote,’ makes the

<sup>88</sup> The piece, a translation of a Latin piece extant in CCCC 190 (pp. 247–9), is unedited (Cameron B3.2.9). This homily and the Old English translation of Abbo’s Maundy Thursday sermon (the originals of which are presented in this order in the midst of descriptions of the ceremonies for public penance) are together in the manuscript, such that the two sermons provided for public penance are translated and provided in the order in which they are found in the Latin description of the rite. While the two Latin sermons occur close together in three of the ‘commonplace’ MSS (CCCC 190, Vitellius A. vii (65v), and Cotton Nero A. i (159v–162v)), the Old English translations are extant only in CCCC 190.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Truly Adam forsook his Lord’s law when he ate from the forbidden tree, and therefore the Lord cast him out of paradise into the exile of this life, where he suffered manifold toil, and after the toils of this life lamented for a long time in hell-torment until Christ, who freed this world, saved him from there, and afterwards led him back to the bliss of paradise. After this example we are taught that we drive out those who have forsaken God’s law and through capital crime are guilty outside the threshold of God’s house. And for them entrance into the church is forbidden until they, having completed open penance, afterwards might be received with the bishop’s leave into the bosom of the mother-church, just as Adam was received after long repentance and a long time of lamentation into paradise, into the holy company. To that company may Christ bring us also, he who lives and reigns with his eternal father and with the Holy Ghost in the world of all worlds.’

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final prayer, to enter heaven and the holy fellowship, as did Adam after a long penance, a prayer for all Christians in Lent. As such, the dividing line between public penance and more general penance is somewhat indistinct. This homilist presents the practice as an extreme remedy applied to a sub-class of the body of penitents that includes all the faithful. Everyone is metaphorically cast out of the church on Ash Wednesday because of their sins, as was Adam from Paradise, but some, guilty of ‘high sin’, require a more strenuous remedy, one that is characterised primarily by physically (and ‘openly’) preventing them from entering the church. Exactly how one might integrate these two penitential remedies is left somewhat vague, and finds a number of permutations in Anglo-Saxon developments of the rite. The diversity amongst the extant witnesses demonstrates a continued and relatively widespread interest in manipulating these practices, both stemming from the same liturgical tradition and involving the same dramatic theme. This creativity allows bishops and priests to use the *ordines* for public penance in a variety of ways, steering more towards strict canonical penance or towards general Lenten cleansing as circumstances and individual tastes dictate. It is as a powerful and malleable penitential option that the ancient rite of public penance found a home in Anglo-Saxon strategies for handling sin.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> I would like to thank Dr Sarah Hamilton for advance access to her forthcoming article, ‘Rites for Public Penance in Late Anglo-Saxon England’, *Ritual and Belief: the Rites of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. M. B. Bedingfield and H. Gittos (forthcoming), to which I was introduced after the submission of this article.

