EARLY ANGLO-SAXON HOMILETIC TRADITION:
A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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The paper explores style and grammar in the works of two distinguished figures in Early Anglo-Saxon homiletic literature, Ælfric of Eynsham (950–1010), best known for his Sermones Catholici (Catholic Homilies), and Wulfstan, Archbishop of York (died 1023) famous for his prodigious sermon Sermo Lupi ad Anglos (Sermon of the Wolf to the English). It is maintained that the rhetorical stances of these homiletic figures though largely similar in their strong appeal to the key Christian values, differ in terms of themes and their linguistic techniques. Preaching is regarded herein as an influential and persuasive mass medium of public communication aimed to educate and foster a moral agent, particularly in the urban context. Therefore, the body of preaching texts from the late Old English period is treated in terms of homiletic discourse displaying a typical set of linguistic markers, i.e., formulaic opening addresses, repetitive tautological or contrastive pairings, alliterations, imperative constructions, topicalized word-order, etc. The cross-study of notable homiletic texts will reveal contrastive features in the texts of the aforementioned authors primarily caused by their sociopolitical vision, language situation in England of the tenth throughout twelfth centuries, and, most importantly, by the tradition of homilies written in vernacular. The similarities commonly attributed to King Alfred's cultural renaissance traits will be highlighted in the works of these authors, who largely contributed to the development of the unique writing style of the English kingdom. To conclude the preamble, it is important to emphasize Ælfric and Wulfstan's foundational role as collective precursors in educating and promoting the English vernacular.

РАННЯ АНГЛОСАКСОНСЬКА ГОМІЛІТИЧНА ТРАДИЦІЯ:
ЛІНГВІСТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

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У статті досліджуються стиль і граматика у творах двох видатних постатей ранньої англосаксонської гомілетичної літератури: Ельфріка Ейншемського (950–1010), найбільш відомого своїми Sermones Catholici

проповідь, граматика,
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(католицькими проповідями), та Вульфстана, архієпископа Йоркського (помер 1023 р.), відомого своєю чудовою проповіддю Sermo Lupi ad Anglos («Проповідь вовка англійцям»). Стверджується, що риторичні позиції цих гомілетичних діячів хоча й значною мірою схожі у своєму сильному зверненні до ключових християнських цінностей, відрізняються за темами та лінгвістичними прийомами. Проповідь розглядається тут як впливовий та переконливий засіб масової комунікації, спрямований на навчання та виховання морального агента, особливо в міському контексті. Отже, корпус проповідницьких текстів пізнього давньоанглійського періоду розглядається з погляду гомілетичного дискурсу, що демонструє типовий набір лінгвістичних маркерів, тобто формульні вступні звернення, повторювані тавтологічні або контрастивні пари, алітерації, імперативні конструкції, тематизований порядок слів тощо. Перехресне вивчення відомих гомілетичних текстів виявить контрастні риси в текстах вищезгаданих авторів, зумовлені переважно їхнім соціально-політичним баченням, мовною ситуацією в Англії X–XII ст. і, що найважливіше, традицією проповідей, написаних народною мовою. Подібності, які зазвичай приписуються рисам культурного відродження короля Альфреда, будуть висвітлені в роботах цих авторів, які значною мірою сприяли розвитку унікального стилю письма англійського королівства. На завершення преамбули важливо підкреслити основоположну роль Ельфріка та Вульфстана як колективних попередників у вихованні та просуванні англійської народної мови.

The problem area. The study of medieval homiletic texts abounds in a lavish collection of papers in different fields of humanistic knowledge. Manuscripts compiled in the tenth throughout the twelfth centuries were collected and edited for delivery and clearly attest to a growth in devotional literature [Gatch, 1977; Haas, 1980; Haines, 1998; Kienzle 2000; Swan, 2003; cf. also in the works by Dance, 2004, pp. 29–61; Orchard, 2004, pp. 63–91; Corradini, 2006, pp. 1266–1277; Gayk, 2008, pp. 161–189; Lionarons 2010; Gittos 2014 pp. 231–266].

Our investigation aims to disclose authorship, dating, audience, principles of construction and employment of homiletic texts as well as no less important issue of socio-historical and cultural settings, in which these texts were produced. A cross-study of preaching texts by two distinguished homilists, Ælfric and Wulfstan, is claimed to reveal a set of contrastive features in said texts. A special focus is laid on style and grammar of discursive events under consideration.

Introduction. In late twelfth century Allan de Lille, Doctor Universalis, (c. 1128–1202/1203) defined preaching in his manual Summa Praedicatoria «The Art of Preaching» as an ***open and public instruction in morals and faith, serving to form men.*** Allan de Lille's treatment of the didactic and educational mission of sermon delivery turned a starting point in modern homiletic studies. Among a variety of definitions, B.Y.M. Kienzle's well-adjusted version of this concept, found in her groundbreaking monograph *Sermon*, is the most compelling: ***The sermon is an oral discourse spoken in the voice of the preacher who addresses an audience*** [Kienzle, 2000, p. 151]. He follows E. Benvenist's definition of *discours*: «every utterance assuming a speaker and hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some ways» [ibid.].

The latter well aligns with our interpretation of the term «homily»[1] ***as a discursive event that establishes a close link between preacher and congregation, and as such serves as a medium of communication***. The analyzed texts display all the features of traditional homiletic discourse including formulaic openings, parallelisms, alliterations, imperative constructions, etc. The repetition of phrases throughout the homily and especially the final lines are aimed «to remind the congregation that, no matter how harsh the preacher's condemnation of their (imputed) sins or how terrifying the possible punishments, the love of God (and archbishop) is enough to show them the way towards repentance and atonement» [Lionarons, 2010, p. 11]. Furthermore, this category of texts is associated with the concept of performativity, whose origins lie in linguistic work on the effect of speech acts both spoken and written. In medieval preaching, performative speech acts were designed to shape moral agents through an appeal to the audience's already acquired knowledge or the renewal of the existing knowledge [Swan, 2008, p. 178].

Besides, the origin of the Old English word «homily», from the Greek ὁμιλία «a gathering» reflects the idea of a meeting of minds and hearts achieved through the respective roles of the preacher

and the audience in the Anglo-Saxon church. As Old English developed, it took on the meaning of familiar speech encompassing conversation, and a familiar (fatherly) discourse with a group of people. This kind of «fatherly conversation» given by an Anglo-Saxon priest is characterized in terms of instruction, exhortation, reiteration and admonition of Christian church doctrine and precepts. These considerations necessitate the introduction of an important methodological concept of the *«fossilized type of discourse»* we have developed in the course of the investigation. It is worth noting that the spirit and letter of these samples of homiletic discourse were especially relevant in the context of incessant waves of Scandinavian invasion aggravated by the fears of the upcoming Millennium. Given the focus of this paper, we shall analyze the linguistic side of the «preacher-audience cooperation».

The main body of the text. The goal of this paper is to profile two grand figures in Early Medieval England, Ælfric of Eynsham (950–1010), and Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. A large number of well-preserved Old English homilies date back to the tenth century throughout the second half of the twelfth. Among these the most prominent are Ælfric's, monk, mass-priest and abbot of Eynsham[2] from 1005 to his death about 1010, and Wulfstan's, archbishop of York from 1002 until his unrecorded death in 1023. Ælfric's two series of Catholic Homilies, representing the liturgical cycle, were designed for the use of other preachers in the secular church, teaching laity the Christian doctrine. The prodigious writings of Archbishop Wulfstan comprise secular laws, religious canons, political theory and homilies, which have regrettably received less critical attention than they deserve. Nevertheless, the single homily *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* is worth many others, given its commentary on the Danish incursions that culminated around 1014.[3]

Being a more prolific author, Ælfric stands out brighter than Wulfstan for a number of reasons, yet, their shared prominence, elegance of style and sophisticated rhetorical strategies make them close associates, especially in their introduction of the finest examples of vernacular to the public. Mindful of the grandeur of their task, church leaders were engaged in translating Latin texts into the vernacular, which, in effect, was a difficult and energy consuming kind of work. Educational and writing components of this task display two important streamlines in Ælfric and Wulfstan's legacy, i.e., the continuity of King Alfred' writing tradition and the extensive development of their own kind of vernacular, the latter being most typical of Ælfric. At the same time, Wulfstan was more than a writer, his authority stemmed from his socio-cultural and historical position as bishop and archbishop within the Anglo-Saxon church, as well

as from the rhetorical intensity of his texts. Given the primary objective of this paper, i.e., to highlight contrastive features in their homiletic discourse, it would make sense to present the key concepts in their ecclesiastical teaching (*Catholic Homilies* and *Sermo Lupi and Anglos*) in terms of the dichotomy **grace vs. penance and sin**.

Despite the differences in themes and concepts materialized in discursive homiletic texts, their authors had to comply with the commonly accepted frame. Old English homilies typically begin with the formulaic address to the audience: *Men ða leofeste* «Most beloved men» or *Lēofan men* «beloved men». It positions the preacher as the person who can define the audience or audiences as a uniform discourse community (all loved presumably either by God or by the preacher or by both), with a common set of assumptions and a shared discourse [Swan, 2008, pp. 181–182]. Further on, the preacher affirms his authority: *Lēofan men, ġecnāwað þæt soþ is* «beloved men, know that which truth is». Wulfstan's eschatological theme in Sermo Lupi as Anglos reflects his concerns regarding corruption that enveloped the English society, its inescapable penance and imminent judgement in view of viking incursions and the nearing of the end of the world, e.g.:

(1) Ðēos worold is on ofste, and hit nēalǣċð þām ende, and þȳ hit is on worolde aa swā lenġ swā wyrse. And swā hit sceal nȳde for folces synnan ǣr antecristes tōcyme yfelian swȳþe, and hūru hit wyrð þænne eġesliċ and grimliċ wīde on worolde [2–4; Sermo LA] – «This world is in haste and nears the end. And therefore things in this world go ever the longer the worse, so it must needs be that things quickly worsen, on account people's sinning from day to day, before the coming of Antichrist».

The homily indicates that the English should heed preacher's warnings, either through persuasion or, if necessary, through legal coercion to adhere to the dictates of a «Holy Society» [Lionarons, 2010]. The performative power of Wulfstan's concept of COERSION (defined here as «making somebody into doing something») is realized by a set of specific linguistic markers, which demonstrates his dominance throughout the text. Guided by preacher's duty to keep the audience together, to ensure their interdependence and solidarity, he urges his fellow Angles to hear the truth, positioning himself as its messenger in the context of forthcoming dramatic events.

The enhanced intensity of message and his involvement in the societal matters as well as the demonstration of his dominance are disclosed in the first and the last lines of the homily. In the opening address, Wulfstan employs personal pronoun singular «I» instead of Ælfric's recurrent «we». E.g.: *sōð is þæt **ic** secge* – «But what I say is true» [Sermo LA,

26, 143]. Cf. in Ælfric: *Witodlice **we** folgiað Cristes fotswaðum* [CH; DOM. III. POST EPIPHANIA DOMINI, 122] – «Verily we follow Christ's foot-traces». The positional rhetoric of Ælfrican homily in comparison to other Old English ones, is that he usually avoids using the forms of «I» or "you" especially when interprets the correct meaning of the Gospel passage [Swan, 2007, p. 184].

In contrast to Wulfstan, Ælfric delivers his homilies in a «fatherly-talk» way, delicately blurring (Swan's term – *I.B.*) his hierarchical position relative to the recipient. His way of preaching does not in any way weaken the link between them since the exposure of the sacred text and its interpretation throughout the ritual procedure strengthen them as group of the privy with a shared knowledge. Another distinctive feature of Ælfric' preaching discourse is that he prefers indirect performatives of the type *us gedafenað þæt we Godes swingle* – it is befitting us that God's scourge [S. Gregorii Pape Urbis Romane IXCLITI., CH, 124]. The latter implies a basic principle of solidarity attested in constructions with hortative *uton* «let us» emphasizing the necessity of the required action from both the addressor and the addressee, e.g.: ***Uton eornostlice flēon to heofunge soðre dædbote*** – «Let us earnestly flee to the sighing of true penitence» [S. Gregorii Pape Urbis Romane IXCLITI., CH, 124].

Motivated by his concern and grave apprehensions regarding the inner and outer misfortunes (moral decay, corruption and Viking incursions) afflicting the English people, Wulfstan believes that it is his mission as a preacher, public official and politician to address them in a direct way. His high position in the hierarchy of the English church empowers him to forcefully admonish Angles and warn them, which would avert the threat of Antichrist and eternal damnation. This undeniably explains the imperative tone in Wulfstan's address calling the newly converted for action, and affirming their commitment to Christendom. Cf.: *þonne **mōte** wē þæs tō Gode earnian bet þonne wē ǣr þysan dydan* [Sermo LA, 6–7) – «then we must deserve better of God then we have previously done»; *þǣr Cristene **scoldan** Godes lage **healdan** and Godes þēowas griðian* [Sermo LA, 12] – where Christians ought to observe the law of God and protect the servants of God».

Wulfstan and Ælfric's homiletic vocabulary is characterized by a strategic use of performative verbs and pronouns designed to achieve a specific persuasive effect. This includes an ample employment of *verba cogitandi* – verbs with cognitive meaning, such as *understand, know, witan*, and *believe*. Yet, in Ælfric's fatherly-talk homily, which favors admonition over direct command, which brings in a note of empathy in his delivery, the inclusive pronoun ***us*** (as seen in ***2.1.***) acts as a form of **hedging**. This rhetorical move blurs the differing positions of the preacher and the congregation, thereby solidifying a general atmosphere of solidarity, which is the key feature of a truly accomplished homily.

Ælfric Grammaticus is an acclaimed advocate of the Late West Saxon dialect, as well as a brilliant writer, whose works encompass multiple genres (*Latin grammar, Lives of the Saints, Heptateuch and various treatises*). He is also recognized as a creative author for his «functional approach» to blending grammatical structures of different structural paradigms. In *Catholic Homilies*, for example, he employs non-canonical imperatives – what Aikhenvald terms «imperatives in a broad sense» [2010, p. 17] These imperatives are normally oriented towards a first or a third person and are often co-opted with other forms, specifically with subjunctives and the hortative *uton/utan* (as shown in ***2.2. and 2.3.***). In doing this, Ælfric intentionally demonstrates the rich inflectional capacities of the West Saxon «standard», at a time when analytical constructions were yet to evolve. His usage also demonstrates «that commands can be directed at non-second persons and that canonical and non-canonical imperatives make up paradigms» [Aikhenvald, 2010; see also van Olmen, 2011, p. 670]. Cf. the examples from The Epiphany of The Lord:

(2.1.) ***Us is eac to witenne*** – «we are also to know»;

(2.2) ***uton nu fón on þæs godspelles trahtnunge*** – let us now resume the exposition of the gospel;

(2.3) ***Gewít-e ðis gedwyld fram geleaffullum heortum*** – «Let this error depart from believing hearts».

We believe that Ælfric's choice of non-canonical imperatives in the *Catholic Homilies,* specifically his use of ***we-forms*** and ***two-syllable alliteration***, among other feature, epitomizes his commitment to King Alfred's literary tradition, whose works he mentions «in terms of respect». This choice also demonstrates his dedication to the advancement of the vernacular, which remained his intensive and tireless undertaking.

In King Alfred's time, the ecclesiastical community and the general congregation were often poorly educated or illiterate. Consequently, the necessity to educate both the clergy and the laity became a central concern of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Ælfric, a Grammarian and distinguished author, together with other men of learning, focused on tutoring these societal categories with a historical and theological perspective. It is widely understood that educating people in Ælfric's time required considerable effort and special rhetorical skills. These skills included maximal solidarization with the audience, close attention to their needs, and the employment of a linguistic politeness strategy. The latter is best represented in Ælfric's opening addresses of his *Catholic Homilies*, as well as in the use of ***we-forms***,

which serve as prime examples of vigorous but indirect command.

Divergent from Ælfric's stylistic approach, Wulfstan's signature style is characterized by the second-person imperative construction (the *you-*imperative). It is traced in other pieces of his ecclesiastical and legislative legacy, particularly in *Canons of Edgar* (1004–1018), where he addresses church reform issues, details of pastoral care, and instructions for the general behavior of parish priests, etc. In *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, his direct commands are rendered by a set of strong performative verbs (other than *cognitive ones* we refer to in the previous passage): *do, show, believe, repay, repent, examine, protect, warn, save*, etc. An extensive repetitive use of modal verbs, such as *sculan (>shall), motan (>must), magan (>may), durran (>dare)* lends an intense emotional coloring to his warnings, effectively threatening Angles with new internal and external sufferings. Furthermore, Wulfstan's choice of Scandinavian loan words of the kind *lagu (>law), cnawan (> know) tacan (>take)* is likely a speech adaptation to the circumstances of his service as a bishop of York (for more than twenty years), where Old Norse speakers constituted a major element of the York residents.

Conclusion. In Early Anglo-Saxon studies, the homiletic legacy of Wulfstan and Ælfric is commonly regarded in terms of its contribution to fostering English Christian identity and the development of English prose style. Both distinguished authors are also acclaimed for composing and disseminating some of the finest samples of Old English literature to a wide audience.

While conducting a comparative linguistic study of their work, we have focused on the divergent linguistic traits that are of historical interest, primarily their continuity in subsequent periods of English history.

Their legacies differ significantly, reflected in their distinct stylistic approaches, as well as their structural and lexical preferences. Wulfstan, a preacher and a major public authority, a key figure in Royal Courts, is characterized by an adamant, forceful, and coercive tone. In contrast, Ælfric is a well-balanced, dedicated, and committed educator. His gentler stylistic approach creates a special connection between the pastor and the audience, effectively shaping a particular category of devotional agents.

Differing in their general approach to both the delivery and its content, they also contrast in linguistic preferences. This is best explained by Wulfstan's use of eschatological motives, whose language employs direct commands, repetitive tautological pairs, and a set of intensifiers that aggravate the general atmosphere of the impending end of the world. This approach is materialized through direct performative speech acts, whereas Ælfric prefers indirect commands.

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