ÆLFRIC'S GENESIS AND BEDE'S *COMMENTARIUS IN GENESIM*

Sometime between 992 and 1002, the Anglo-Saxon monk Ælfric (c.955-c.1010) translated part of the Latin Vulgate version of Genesis into Old English and wrote a vernacular Preface to his work.[1] During this same time period, he also translated the *Quaestiones in Genesim* by Alcuin of York (c.735-804)[2] and composed an Old English *Hexameron* on the six days of Creation.[3] With such concerted interest in Genesis, Ælfric became one of the earliest translators of the Bible into the English language and joined the legacy of patristic and medieval scholars who had previously written about the biblical book.[4] Prominent figures in this legacy who wrote works on Genesis influential for Ælfric include Basil of Caesarea (329/30-379), Ambrose of Milan (c.340-397), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Bede of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow (672/3-735), and Alcuin—authors whom Ælfric judiciously echoes at the same time that he supplements them with his own contributions, synthesizing biblical exegesis up to his own time.

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[1] On dates for Ælfric's life and works, see P. A. M. Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', in *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickens*, ed. P. A. M. Clemoes (London, 1959), pp. 212-47. For his translation and Preface, references are to *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's Libellus de Veteri Testamento et Novo, Volume One: Introduction and Text*, ed. Richard Marsden, EETS, os 330 (Oxford, 2008). Biblical references are to *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber, 4th edn (Stuttgart, 2005); translations are from *The Holy Bible: Douay Version Translated from the Latin Vulgate* (London, 1956). Unless otherwise noted, translations from Latin and Old English are my own.

[2] William Proctor Stoneman, 'A Critical Edition of Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbiteri* and of the Related Texts *De creatore et creatura* and *De sex etatibus huius seculi*' (unpub. PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1982).

[3] *Exameron Anglice or The Old English Hexameron*, ed. Samuel J. Crawford, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 10 (Hamburg, 1921).

[4] See Thomas O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers: The Latin Genesis Tradition, 430-800*, Instrumenta Patristica 35 (Turnhout, 1999).

This article examines one aspect of Ælfric's engagement with sources, arguing for his use of Bede's work on Genesis as a model for his own exegesis and translation.

In his Preface to Genesis, Ælfric gives a clear statement about his reason for translating only the first part of the biblical book. According to his claims, the practical reason is that his patron Æthelweard already had possession of a translation for the latter part of the book. Yet there is good reason to believe that Ælfric's assertions in such instances have more complicated explanations behind them. For example, Malcolm Godden and Joyce Tally Lionarons have demonstrated that certain claims in Ælfric's Preface to his *Catholic Homilies* rest on comments made by the Carolingian monk Paul the Deacon (c.720-799) about compiling his *Homiliarium*, which served as a model for the later Anglo-Saxon's preaching collection.[5] In other words, Ælfric is no stranger to adapting existing tropes to his own needs. I propose that another suitable explanation for Ælfric's translation stopping point is found in reference to Bede's *Commentarius in Genesim* and the author's note about this text at the end of his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.[6] The implications of this proposed source allow for exploring two related aspects of Ælfric's work on Genesis: first, a set of relationships between Ælfric's work on Genesis and previous exegesis on the biblical book; and, second, a textual crux in the manuscripts containing the longer and later (eleventh-century) translation project known as the Old English *Heptateuch*.

At the end of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede writes that his life's works include, first, a commentary on 'In principium Genesis, usque ad natiuitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis,

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[5] Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS, ss 18 (Oxford, 2000), p. 3; and Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan: A Critical Study*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 14 (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 59.

[6] On the general sources of the Preface to Genesis, see Mark Griffith, 'Ælfric's Use of His Sources in the Preface to Genesis, Together with a Conspectus of Biblical and Patristic Sources and Analogues', *Florilegium*, 17 (2000), 127-54.

libros IIII.'[7] His commentary, the *Commentarius in Genesim*, ranges from the beginning of Genesis up to Sarah's demand that Abraham drive out Hagar and Ishmael in xxi.9-10.[8] Ælfric's wording in his Preface to Genesis is similar to Bede's in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as he writes, 'ic ne þorfte na mare awendan þære bec, buton to Isaace, Abrahames suna, for þam þe sum oðer man þe hæfde awend fram Isaace þa boc oþ ende.'[9] With his statement, Ælfric takes both a rhetorical and a performative stance: at the same time that he echoes Bede's comment, he also situates his own work as comparable to his model. In doing so, he follows Bede in addressing only the first portion of the biblical book with a gesture that would equally satisfy his benefactor's request and align himself with his chief authority on Genesis.

If part of Ælfric's translation rationale relies on Bede, it is curious that he does not cite his predecessor, since he is rarely shy to do so elsewhere. It is clear throughout his corpus that Ælfric often relies on and cites Bede's ideas, and he uses both the *Historia ecclesiastica* and *In Genesim* on a number of occasions.[10] More specifically, Mark Griffith has noted that some of Ælfric's statements in the Preface to Genesis are close parallels to Bede's *In Genesim*.[11] Yet Ælfric's lack of citation in the Preface to Genesis is not altogether out of line with his practices. After all, Ælfric does not always attribute his debts to Bede or other authorities. His rhetorical

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[7] *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.xxiv.2, in *Beda: Storia degli Inglesi (Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum)*, ed. Michael Lapidge, trans. Paolo Chiesa (Milan, 2010), p. 480, lines 126-7: 'The beginning in Genesis, up to the birth of Isaac and the rejection of Ishmael, four books.'

[8] *Bedae Venerabilis opera, Pars II: opera exegetica 1*, ed. Ch. W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout, 1967). On the thematic structure, see *Bede: On Genesis*, trans. Calvin B. Kendall, Translated Texts for Historians 48 (Liverpool, 2008), pp. 14-21.

[9] Marsden *Old English Heptateuch*, p. 3, lines 5-7: 'I need not translate any more of the book except up to Isaac, the son of Abraham, because someone else had translated the book from Isaac until the end.'

[10] See details in entries for 'Beda' and 'Aelfric' [*sic*] in *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Register <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>* (accessed 18 January 2016); Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, *passim*; and Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 254-7.

[11] 'Ælfric's Use of His Sources'.

echoes of Paul the Deacon in the Preface to his *Catholic Homilies* are one example. To point to another more relevant instance, in his homily for the second Sunday in Advent in the first series of the *Catholic Homilies* (I.40), Ælfric diverges from his main source (the first of the *Homiliae in Euangelia* by Gregory the Great [c540-604]) to incorporate a passage indebted to Bede's *De natura rerum* or *De temporum ratione* without direct citation.[12] Even when Ælfric does cite an authority, it might not tell the full story. This is the case in his *De temporibus anni*, in which he cites Bede but does not indicate all of the works he consulted; as Martin Blake claims, 'here, as in the preface to the *Catholic Homilies*, he is being excessively modest about the scope of his sources.'[13] While Blake's claim is certainly true, all of these cases demonstrate the complexities of medieval authors relying on, quoting, or citing sources—none of which were straightforward practices, nor mutually exclusive.[14]

As evidence for Ælfric's thinking on the topic of Bede and where to end his translation of Genesis, a number of other related texts may be brought together. Bede and Ælfric, in fact, stand in a long line of those who worked on Genesis but never addressed the whole book. For all of their popularity and influences on later authors, Basil's *Hexameron* (translated into Latin by Eustathius) and Ambrose's work by the same title constitute commentaries only on the first six

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[12] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The First Series: Text*, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS, ss 17 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 524-30 (lines 39-42). See Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, pp. 336-7.

[13] See *Aelfric's* De temporibus anni, ed. and trans. Martin Blake, Anglo-Saxon Texts 6 (Cambridge, 2009), quotation at 47.

[14] On Anglo-Saxon authors, their sources, and modern source scholarship, see D. G. Scragg, 'Source Study', in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 39-58; Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Source, Method, Theory, Practice: On Reading Two Old English Verse Texts', in *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 161-82; and Charles D. Wright, 'Old English Homilies and Latin Sources', in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J Kleist, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 17 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 15-66.

days of Creation. Augustine famously wrote multiple commentaries on Genesis (*De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*, and *De Genesi ad litteram*), none of them explicating the latter part of the book. Bede used all of these works throughout his corpus.[15] In the preface to his own *Commentarius in Genesim* (a letter to Acca, Bishop of Hexham [c.660-740/2]), Bede cites Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine by name, referring to their commentaries on Genesis as chief among his sources,[16] and including further references to Augustine's *Confessiones* and *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum*.[17] As already noted, Ælfric's sources for work on Genesis include Alcuin's *Quaestiones in Genesim*, which he knew directly since he translated it into an Old English text now known as *Alcuini Interrogationes Sigewulfi*. Alcuin's treatise has a complicated relationship of reliance on Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* and Bede's *In Genesim*, since Alcuin echoes both authors but thoughtfully reworks their exegesis in ways that make it difficult to distinguish his dependence on one or the other.[18]

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[15] See details in entries for Bede's works (esp. in reference to 'Evstath.', 'Ambr.', and 'Avg.') in *Fontes*; and references in Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 191-228.

[16] Jones, *Bedae Venerabilis opera, Pars II*, p. 1, lines 6-8; and *Bede: On Genesis*, trans. Kendall, p. 65: 'Basilius Caesariensis quem Eustathius interpres de Greco fecit esse Latinum, Ambrosius Mediolanensis, Augustinus Hipponensis Episcopus' ('Basil of Caesarea, whom the translator Eustathius turned from Greek into Latin, Ambrose of Milan, and Bishop Augustine of Hippo').

[17] Jones, *Bedae Venerabilis opera, Pars II*, p. 1, lines 14-16; and *Bede: On Genesis*, trans. Kendall, pp. 65-6: 'E quibus Augustinus etiam in libris confessionum suarum, in libris quoque quos contra aduersarium legis te prophetarum, eximie composuit; sed et in aliis sparsim opusculis suis nonnullam eiusdem primordialis creaturae memoriam cum expositione congrua fecit' ('In addition, Augustine also made some mention, with suitable exposition, of this same primordial act of creation in his *Confessions*, and in the outstanding book that he wrote against he adversary of the Law and the Prophets, and here and there in his other works').

[18] See Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'The Use of Bede's Writings on Genesis in Alcuin's *Interrogationes*', *Sacris Erudiri*, 23 (1978), 463-83; Michael Fox, 'Alcuin the Exegete: The Evidence of the *Quaestiones in Genesim*', in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards, Medieval Church Studies 3 (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 39-60; Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., '*Æ*lfric's Downsized Version of Alcuin's *Questiones in Genesim*: Enough is Enough', in *Limits to Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Concetta Giliberto and Loredana Teresi (Leuven, 2013), pp. 155-174; and Michael Fox, '*Æ*lfric's *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*', in *Old English Literature and the*

Even before Ælfric's time, exegesis on Genesis that he would have read and relied on is already a complicated network of scholarly interplay.

The sources that Ælfric used for considering Genesis, then, include works by Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine as mediated through Bede's *In Genesim* and Alcuin's *Quaestiones in Genesim*.[19] Among these, there is little evidence that Ælfric knew commentaries by Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine directly; and, if he did, he intermingles ideas from his various sources so as to make direct dependence on a single author or text questionable. For instance, Michael Fox has demonstrated that Ælfric adapts Alcuin's *Quaestiones* through complex engagements with Bede's *In Genesim*, fusing the two works together along with his own views as he translates.[20] The Preface to Genesis is similar in this respect: the sources are many and complex, but Ælfric cites no single author anywhere in the text.[21] For Ælfric, significantly, the preeminent authority is Bede, who synthesizes exegesis by relevant predecessors while also adding his own learning—thus standing as the gatekeeper of patristic biblical commentary, and an exemplary model. Consequently, we see that Ælfric's exegesis, engagement with sources, and translation practices are highly adaptive, as he weaves together accumulative traditions spanning from the late antique period up to near-contemporaries.

Old Testament, ed. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 10 (Toronto, 2012), pp. 25-63.

[19] See details in entries for Basil (under 'Evthath.'), Ambrose ('Ambr.'), Augustine ('Avg.'), Bede ('Beda'), and ('Alcvin') in *Fontes*; and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, *passim*, esp. references in 'Appendix E: Latin Books Cited by the Principal Anglo-Saxon Authors' (pp. 174-274) and 'Catalogue of Classical and Patristic Authors and Works before AD 700 and Known in Anglo-Saxon England' (pp. 275-342).

[20] 'Ælfric's *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*'.

[21] Griffith, 'Ælfric's Use of His Sources'. On one specific case, see Brandon W. Hawk, 'Isidorean Influences in Ælfric's Preface to Genesis', *English Studies*, 94 (2014), 357-66.

If, as P. A. M. Clemoes has suggested, Ælfric's translations of Genesis and Alcuin's text coincided,[22] at the same time as his consultation of Bede's *In Genesim*, there is ample weight to the notion that Ælfric had Bede on his mind when he composed the Preface to Genesis. Especially striking, as a number of scholars have noted, is the fact that Ælfric's Old English *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* is not a translation of Alcuin's entire work, but ends with a question and answer about Genesis xxii.1. Fox has noted (following Clemoes and Griffith) that this stopping point 'would have seemed to Ælfric a natural place to conclude because the model of Bede's *In Genesim* before him, his own translation of Genesis, and even the poetic *Genesis A* all conclude at roughly the same point in the narrative.'[23] While we do not know the precise chronology of when Ælfric translated Genesis and Alcuin's treatise, or if he worked on them simultaneously, he seems to follow Bede's model in both cases.

Fox's comment about parallel end-points for Bede's *Commentarius*, Alcuin's *Quaestiones*, the poetic *Genesis A*, and Ælfric's work does raise another set of plausible associations. Surviving in the single manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junis 11 (s. x^2, Christ Church, Canterbury?),[24] the Old English poetic *Genesis* combines two parts, known as *Genesis A* and the interpolated *Genesis B*.[25] Most relevant for the present study is *Genesis A*, an

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[22] 'Chronology of Ælfric's Works', p. 224-5.
[23] Fox, 'Ælfric's *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*', p. 33. Cf. Clemoes, 'Chronology of Ælfric's Works', pp. 224-5; and Griffith, 'Ælfric's Use of His Sources', p. 139.
[24] Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 15 (Toronto, 2014), no. 640. On the Old English poems in this manuscript generally, see *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings*, ed. R. M. Liuzza (New York, 2002); essays in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. Fox and Sharma; and, most recently, Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London, 2013).
[25] References are to *Genesis A: A New Edition*, ed. A. N. Doane (Madison, Wis., 1978).

adaptive translation of Genesis i-xxii.[26] The whole poem was likely compiled from earlier versions of sections *A* and *B* in the ninth or early tenth century; yet the sole extant version was copied in the second half of the tenth century, around the same time that Ælfric was working on his translation and Preface to Genesis. Although these parallels are perhaps coincidental, they also point to the possibility that all of these treatments of Genesis up to Isaac's life are a common English tradition, based on Bede's work on the biblical book. Indeed, if such a common attitude toward Genesis did exist, it is one more facet of the continued veneration of Bede by later authors relying on his work as the beginning of many English traditions. Furthermore, all of these associations demonstrate a close connection between exegesis and translation of Genesis in Anglo-Saxon England.

The correlations I have proposed so far may be further considered to explore the implications of the present argument by turning to a crux in manuscripts of the Old English *Heptateuch*.[27] Whereas Ælfric translated only part of Genesis, other, anonymous Anglo-Saxon translators also worked to render the first seven books of the Bible into Old English.[28] The collective, cumulative work of Ælfric and other translators is represented in a combined text now known as the Old English *Heptateuch*. This collective translation survives in three manuscripts: Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.1.33 (s. xii^{2}, Christ Church, Canterbury or Rochester?);[29] London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius B.iv (s. xi$^{2/4}$, St. Augustine's, Canterbury?) a

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[26] See Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse: Studies in* Genesis*,* Exodus *and* Daniel, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 16 (Cambridge, 1996), 94-167.
[27] Generally, see essays in *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin C. Withers (Kalamazoo, 2000).
[28] For a more detailed examination, on which I rely, see Marsden, *Old English Heptateuch*.
[29] N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 18; and Orietta Da Rold, 'Cambridge, University Library, Ii. 1. 33', in Orietta Da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan, and Elaine Treharne, *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060-1220* (Leicester, 2010) <*http://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.CUL.Ii.1.33.htm*> (accessed 18 January 2016).

deluxe codex with illustrations throughout;[30] and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 509 (s. xi$^{3/4}$ or xi^{2}, origin unidentified).[31] Based on the dates of these manuscripts, the various translations must have been revised and compiled (again, by anonymous scribes) before the middle of the eleventh century—although it is possible that some anonymous parts of this collective translation predate or were contemporary with Ælfric's work on Genesis.

The conventional view is that Ælfric's translation of Genesis as it survives in the Old English *Heptateuch* ends at xxiv.22 or xxiv.26, based on the text ending at this point in Cambridge Ii.1.33.[32] Yet there are reasons for reassessing the end-point of Ælfric's translation, particularly regarding the suggestions I have posed. Richard Marsden notes that 'Certainly 24:26 is a rather odd place to stop, and it could be that C [Cambridge Ii.1.33] gives us an incomplete version of Ælfric's Genesis, which might have gone originally as far as chapter 35.'[33] The first challenge to the traditional view rests on the relationship of Cambridge Ii.1.33 to other manuscripts. Considering the Cambridge manuscript's late date and complications arising from the circulation of multiple competing translations at the time that it was copied (beyond the

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[30] Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 142; Elaine Treharne, 'London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv', in Da Rold, et al., *Production and Use* <*https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.BL.Clau.B.iv.htm*> (accessed 18 January 2016); and Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 315.

[31] Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 344; Orietta Da Rold, 'Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud 509', in Da Rold, et al., *Production and Use* <*https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Ox.Laud.509.htm*> (accessed 18 January 2016); and Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 657.

[32] Gen. xxiv.22 is indicated as the endpoint, in Griffith, 'Ælfric's Use of His Sources', p. 139; and Richard Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 15 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 404; but see Marsden's appraisal in *Old English Heptateuch*, pp. lxx and lii (esp. n. 50). See also Peter Clemoes, 'The Composition of the Old English Text', in *The Old English Hexateuch*, ed. C. R. Dodwell and Peter Clemoes, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 18 (Copenhagen, 1974), pp. 42-53.

[33] Marsden, *Old English Heptateuch*, p. lxxiii.

scope of the present argument, but previously discussed by Marsden), it is a dubious witness.[34] Any conclusions about Ælfric's translation of Genesis based on this manuscript witness may only be tentative.

Casting more doubt on the conventional view about the end of Ælfric's translation is the fact that, after Genesis xxii.19, textual witnesses of the Old English *Heptateuch* become much more convoluted. Here the texts diverge radically in the manuscripts, with one translation represented in Claudius B.iv and Laud Misc. 509, while a wholly different translation is represented in Cambridge Ii.1.33.[35] Furthermore, after this point, all of the texts portray freer translation practices than in previous sections, including portions of content condensed into summary statements, as well as stylistic divergences from works known to be by Ælfric.[36] Based on these features, Karl Jost and Clemoes suggest (though differing on details) that the surviving passage from Genesis xxiii to the beginning of xxiv (verse 10 or 20) represents an Ælfrician translation revised by a later compiler.[37] This section, however, remains an anomaly. It might even suggest that a full translation of Genesis existed before Ælfric's, but that Æthelweard possessed only the latter half when he requested a translation from his friend. While speculative without further evidence, this possibility might help to explain the difficulties of piecing together various recensions of the *Heptateuch* translation from Genesis xxii onward.

Ælfric's reliance on Bede, as I have suggested, offers the possibility that he ended his translation at xxii.19, after which later scribes had a difficult time reconciling his translation with a full version of the *Heptateuch*. Since the following verses (xxii.20-24) contain extended

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[34] Ibid., pp. xxxiv-clxxv.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., pp. xciii-xcv.
[37] Karl Jost, 'Unechte Ælfrictexte', *Anglia*, 51 (1927), 82-103 and 177-219; and Clemoes, 'Composition', esp. summary at 48.

genealogies that might appear to be irrelevant to the story of Isaac's near-death-experience, verse 19 could seem a natural stopping point for Ælfric. Indeed, verse 19 provides a neat end-frame for the story, concluding the blessings that God bestows on Abraham: 'Abraham þa gecyrde sona to hys cnapum and ferdon him ham swa mid heofenlicre bletsunge.'[38] It seems likely that Ælfric could recognize this end point, recall Bede's model, and choose to end his translation with this verse deliberately. Building on this explanation, it is also plausible that a later compiler sought to reconcile Ælfric's comments about translating *buton to Isaace* with another translation at hand, adding the section from xxi.20 onward in a manner imitative of (but not completely consistent with) the original author's style. Without proper contexts to understand the end-point of Ælfric's translation, his nod to Bede as the authority on Genesis, as well as how the various translations fit together, it is understandable how later scribes working to fuse together the entire Old English *Heptateuch* would have differing principles of compilation as reflected in the extant manuscripts.

Ælfric's knowledge and admiration of Bede is clear from his own statements as much as what source study has revealed. At the start of his homily on Saint Cuthbert (*Catholic Homilies* II.10), he cites the author his source as 'Beda se snotera engla ðeoda lareow', acknowledging his veneration.[39] Bede was, after all, one of the major mediators of patristic exegesis for the medieval period. This much is true from even basic associations between previous commentaries, Bede's *Commentarius*, Alcuin's *Quaestiones*, the poetic *Genesis*, and Ælfric's work on the biblical book. What is even more at stake is how later authors appropriated Bede's works for their own purposes, in both exegesis and translation. For Ælfric, Bede's exegesis was

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[38] 'Then Abraham immediately returned to his men and they went home with him in the blessings of heaven.' Cf. the Vulgate: 'reversus est Abraham ad pueros suos abieruntque Bersabee simul et habitavit ibi' ('Abraham returned to his young men, and they went to Bersabee together, and he dwelt there').

[39] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The Second Series: Text*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS, ss 5 (Oxford, 1979), p. 81, lines 3-4: 'Bede the wise teacher of the English people'.

embedded in his learning and, subsequently, in his own writings—not only in citations and quotations but also in the conceptual frameworks with which he approached the Bible. This seems to be the case with Ælfric's multifaceted approach to Genesis. With Bede's exegesis on his mind, it should be no surprise that Ælfric would follow his English teacher and end his work with Isaac in both exegesis and translation.

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