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CURRICULUM VITAE AC STUDIORUM

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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
I. NATIVITY HOMILY I	22
II. NATIVITY HOMILY II	47
III. NATIVITY HOMILY III	67
IV. NATIVITY HOMILY IV	80
V. NATIVITY HOMILY V	87
CONCLUSION	111
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	113

INTRODUCTION

This study is the result of a detailed examination of Aelfric's five Nativity Homilies, an examination which revealed his versatility of method and flexibility of style in presenting a vast variety of topics. Aelfric introduces a number of structural and stylistic variations which reflect the varied nature of his subject matter.

This study was undertaken after a careful review of Aelfric scholarship, which proved that no writer has provided a critical discussion of the homilies. Students have preferred to consider certain aspects rather than examine the homilies in depth. They have regarded Aelfric as theologian, teacher, stylist and educationist; they have identified most of his sources and have studied his method of drawing upon them. But, apart from an occasional and brief comment, there has been no work devoted to a discussion of the homilies. The lack of such discussion prompted this study, which seemed warranted and essential,

INTRODUCTION

particularly since Aelfric's claim to literary fame is as a homilist. He is the most prolific homilist of Anglo-Saxon England, and, through his homilies, he makes his greatest contribution to the development of English prose and is acclaimed the greatest prose writer of late Anglo-Saxon England. "It is as a homilist with a sense of style and of the literary art," observes Wrenn, "that his greatest contribution to the development of English prose has been made."¹

In all, there are some one hundred and sixty homilies attributed to Aelfric. Thorpe has edited two sets of these homilies, known as the Catholic Homilies, each set providing alternate sermons for forty Sundays and feast days of the year. They consist of expositions of gospel pericopes, instructions on various matters of faith, and a few Saints' lives.² A third set, edited by Skeat, includes

¹ C.L. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature (London, 1967), pp. 224 - 5.

² See B. Thorpe, ed., The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. The First Part Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Aelfric, 2 Volumes (London, 1844 - 1846).

INTRODUCTION

mainly accounts of the lives of Saints venerated by monks, with a few homilies other than Saints' lives.³ A fourth set, consisting chiefly of expositions of gospel pericopes, has been edited recently by Pope. This set provides homilies for Sundays and feast days, other than Saints' lives, from Christmas to the Sundays after Pentecost.⁴

There are four book-length studies on Aelfric, none of which provides a detailed discussion of the homilies. The pioneer study by Edward Dietrich, published in a periodical in two parts, in 1855 - 1856, is still considered the standard work on Aelfric. Dietrich deals with Aelfric's writings, the teachings of the Anglo-Saxon Church as found in these writings, Aelfric's life, character, and achievements. He establishes the homilist's true identity, proving

³ See W.W. Skeat, ed., Aelfric's lives of Saints, Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days formerly observed by the English Church, 2 Volumes, EETS, O.S. 76, 82, 94, and 114 (London, 1881, 1900).

⁴ See John C. Pope, ed., Homilies of Aelfric. A Supplementary Collection, 2 Volumes, EETS, 259 and 260 (London, 1967 - 1968).

INTRODUCTION

that he was not the Archbishop of Canterbury nor the Archbishop of York, but the Abbot of Eynsham. He establishes also the major part of the Aelfric canon, with dates, and likely sources, and the possible dates of important events in his life. Dietrich refers briefly to Aelfric's method of composition, his stylistic features, including his alliterative and rhythmic prose, and some of his syntactical peculiarities.⁵ In 1896, Caroline White published her work on Aelfric, which is part translation and part paraphrase of Dietrich's work. She adds a new chapter on the monastic revival, but omits the section on the doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon Church.⁶

The twentieth century produced two studies on Aelfric, one in English and one in French. In 1912 Harvey

⁵ Edward Dietrich, "Abt Aelfrik" Zeitschrift für die historische theologie, XXV (1855), pp. 487 - 597; XXVI (1856), pp. 163 - 256.

⁶ C.L. White, Aelfric. A New Study of His Life and Writings, Yale Studies in English, II (Boston, 1896).

INTRODUCTION

Gem published his book which treats at length on the origins of monasticism in England, Italy and Ireland. After a quick survey of the religious literature of the Anglo-Saxon period and a description of the Danish invasion, he speaks briefly of Aelfric, and his comments are based mainly on Dietrich and White. A lengthy exposition of the doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon Church follows.⁷ The most elaborate study on Aelfric, written by Marguerite-Marie Dubois, appeared in 1943. She deals with Aelfric's times, his personality and writings. In her view, Aelfric is primarily a homilist and secondly a theologian and grammarian. Her work consists of brief but concise comments on his writings, the possible sources of the homilies, his method of composition and translation and his influence on the homiletical tradition of later centuries. She includes also a special section on the doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon Church.⁸

⁷ Harvey Gem, An Anglo-Saxon Abbot. Aelfric of Eynsham (Edinburgh, 1912).

⁸ Marguerite-Marie Dubois, Aelfric. Sermonaire, Docteur et Grammairien (Paris, 1943).

INTRODUCTION

In addition to these general studies, there exists a large number of short studies dealing with certain aspects of the homilies. The interest shown in their doctrinal content from the sixteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, reflected in many peripheral studies,⁹ finds its clear expression in the words of Thorpe: "His Sermons ... exhibit what were the doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon Church at the period in which they were compiled or translated, and are for the most part valuable in matter."¹⁰ Nelius Halvorson catalogues their doctrinal terms;¹¹ Robert Sala's study, based on all four Anglo-Saxon homilists, includes a section dealing with the doctrinal content of their homilies, with particular reference to Aelfric.¹² John Milton McC. Gatch Jr

⁹ For a list of peripheral studies in this period, see the annotated bibliography in White's Aelfric, pp. 199 - 204.

¹⁰ Thorpe, The Homilies, I, p. vi.

¹¹ Nelius O. Halvorson, Doctrinal Terms in Aelfric's Homilies, University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, V, I (Iowa, 1932).

¹² See Robert Sala, Preaching in Anglo-Saxon Church (Chicago, 1934).

INTRODUCTION

considers their eschatological doctrine;¹³ and J.E. Cross discusses one particular theme found in two homilies.¹⁴

Aelfric's style has attracted attention from the nineteenth century onwards. Thorpe felt that the homilies were important for their language as well as for their doctrine; according to him they are written "in a language which may be pronounced a pure specimen of our noble Germanic mother tongue."¹⁵ Although Aelfric's style is often praised by students of Old English, there is no specific study devoted to it. Comments on his style are found in general works and in literary histories. Considerable attention, however, has been given to his use of alliteration. This tendency, shown occasionally in the first two volumes of his homilies, is most evident in his Lives of Saints,

¹³ See the unpubl. diss. (Yale, 1963) by John Milton McC. Gatch Jr., The Eschatology of the Anglo-Saxon Homilies.

¹⁴ See J.E. Cross, "Bundles Burning - A Theme in Two of Aelfric's Catholic Homilies," Anglia, LXXXI (1963), pp. 335 - 346.

¹⁵ Thorpe, The Homilies, I, p. vi.

INTRODUCTION

which Skeat, its first editor, arranged in verse form,¹⁶ and in his later homilies, in which, as Clemoes suggests, he completes the exposition of gospel pericopes he had not treated earlier.¹⁷ Whether Aelfric was introducing a new form of rhythmic prose or was writing in alliterative verse, probably modelled after the verse of Ottfried and Weissenberg, is still a matter of debate. Also disputed is whether he followed and adapted to Old English what he believed to be the best Latin style,¹⁸ or whether he made

¹⁶ For a short discussion of the problem and for Skeat's reasons for printing the homilies in verse form, see his introduction to Lives, II, pp. 1 - liii.

¹⁷ See P. Clemoes, "The Chronology of Aelfric's Works," in Anglo-Saxons. Some aspects of Their History and Culture (London, 1959), pp. 242 - 243. These are the homilies edited by Pope.

¹⁸ See G.H. Gerould, "Abbot Aelfric's Rhythmic Prose," MP, II (1925), pp. 353 - 366. Referring to Aelfric's sentences in general, F.R. Stenton and Clemoes trace their virtuosity to his training in Latin. Stenton notes, "It was his supreme merit that he came to the writing of English with a keen appreciation of the grammatical precision and structural quality of a Latin sentence." Anglo-Saxon England (Oxford, 1947), p. 452. Clemoes remarks that "no doubt he learned this mastery from

INTRODUCTION

use of the native verse forms of Germanic poetry to convey religious doctrine in a manner designed to penetrate the minds of the people accustomed to such songs.¹⁹ Pope, in his introduction to the edition, includes a section entitled "Aelfric's Rhythmic Prose," in which he summarizes critical opinion on the problem and gives his own observations.²⁰

Many students of Aelfric appear to be interested in identifying the possible sources of individual homilies.

his training in Latin. The clear articulation of his syntax is characteristic of Latin prose. His sentences are analysable in terms of the main members (Cola) and lesser members (Commata) of the classical Latin sentence." "Aelfric," in Continuations and Beginnings. Studies on Old English Literature, Edited by S.E. Gerald (London, 1966), p. 202.

¹⁹ See White, Aelfric, p. 80; Dorothy Bethurum, "The Form of Aelfric's Lives of Saints," SP, XXIX (1932), pp. 515 - 533.

²⁰ See Pope, Homilies, I, pp. 105 - 136.

INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, Max Förster published the result of his research on the sources of Aelfric's individual homilies. In his conclusion he states that the homilist used his sources with great freedom and independence, sometimes elaborating on them and sometimes synthesizing them.²¹ An investigation into the sources of the legendary homilies in the first volume of the Lives of Saints was undertaken by J.H. Ott in 1892.²² His study has been extended by Loomis.²³ The studies begun by Förster were continued by Smetana, who arrived at the conclusion that Aelfric drew heavily on the now lost homiliary of Paul the Deacon,

²¹ See Max Förster, Über Die Quellen von Aelfrics Homiliae Catholicae (Berlin, 1892); "Über Die Quellen von Aelfrics Exegetischen Homiliae Catholicae," Anglia, XVI (1894), pp. 1 - 61; Förster indicates a new source in his Review of "Biblical Quotations in Old English Prose Writings, by A.S. Cook," English Studien, XXVIII (1900), p. 423.

²² See J.H. Ott, Über Die Quellen der Heiligleben in Aelfrics Lives of Saints (Halle, 1892).

²³ G. Loomis, "Further Sources of Aelfric's Saints' Lives," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, XIII (1931), pp. 1 - 8.

INTRODUCTION

when he composed the first two volumes of his Catholic Homilies.²⁴ Smetana further concludes that Aelfric's debt to Haymo is greater than that he acknowledges in his "Preface," "et aliquando Haymonem," and more than that established by Dietrich.²⁵ Pope indicates the sources of the homilies contained in his edition. He also points to Aelfric's unique method of drawing freely and independently upon the Latin sources and his perfect mastery of them. In addition to these studies covering several homilies, short articles

²⁴ See Cyril Smetana, "Aelfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary," Traditio, XV (1959), pp. 163 - 204. See also J.E. Cross, Aelfric and the Medieval Homiliary - Objection and Contribution (Lund, 1965). The suggestion that Aelfric used a homiliary, now lost, was made by John Earl in the late nineteenth century: "It is plain that there is a common source behind both sets of sermons; the well-established series of topics for each occasion seem clearly to point to some standard collection of Latin homilies now lost." Anglo-Saxon Literature (London, 1884), pp. 215 - 216.

²⁵ See Cyril Smetana, "Aelfric and the Homiliary of Haymo of Halberstadt," Traditio, XVII (1961), pp. 457 - 469.

INTRODUCTION

appear from time to time on the possible sources of individual homilies.²⁶

Two references closely related to Aelfric's method of using his sources should be mentioned. Sisam and Nicholas suggest that the words "transferre" and "awendan", used by Aelfric to describe the nature of his works,²⁷ are better rendered by "adapt" rather than "translate."²⁸

²⁶ See B. Fehr, "Über einige Quellen zu Aelfrics Homiliae Catholicae," Archiv für das Studium der Neuen Sprachen und Literaturen, CXXX (1913), pp. 378 - 381; C.R. Davis, "Two New Sources for Aelfric's Catholic Homilies," JEGP, XLI (1942), pp. 510 - 513; Karl Jost, "The Legal Maxim in Aelfric's Catholic Homilies," ES, XXXVI (1955), pp. 204 - 205; Enid Raynes, "MS Boulogne-Sur-Mer 63 and Aelfric," Medium Aevum, XXVI (1957), pp. 65 - 73; J.E. Cross, "A New Source for one of Aelfric's Homilies," ES, XXXIX (1958), pp. 248 - 251; John Milton McC. Gatch Jr, "MS Boulogne - Sur - Mer 63 and Aelfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies," JEGP, LXV (1966), pp. 482 - 490; J.E. Cross, "More Sources for two of Aelfric's Catholic Homilies," Anglia, LXXXVI (1968), pp. 57 - 78; M.R. Godden, "The Sources for Aelfric's Homily of St Gregory," Anglia, LXXXVI (1968), pp. 80 - 88.

²⁷ See Skeat, Lives, I, pp. 4, 5.

²⁸ Kenneth Sisam, "The Order of Aelfric's Early Books," in his Studies in the History of Old English Literature (Oxford, 1953), p. 300; Anne Nicholas, "Awendan: A Note on Aelfric's Vocabulary," JEGP, LXIII (1964), p. 7.

INTRODUCTION

Two aspects of Aelfric's method of organization have been examined; namely, his use of exempla, types and figures,²⁹ and his use of name patterns.³⁰ Charles Davis studies Aelfric's method of translating Biblical passages.³¹

Some syntactical features of the homilies have been studied. Dietrich³² and Karl Jost³³ indicate some particular features of his vocabulary, and Barret has examined the word-order pattern in the homilies,³⁴ Pope

²⁹ Von Hanspeter Shelp, "Die Deutungstradition in Aelfric's Homiliae Catholicae," Archiv, CXCVI (1960), pp. 273 - 295.

³⁰ T.M. Pearce, "Name Patterns in Aelfric's 'Catholic Homilies'," Names, XIV (1966), pp. 150 - 156.

³¹ See the unpubl. diss. (New York, 1949) by Charles Davis, Biblical Translations in Aelfric's Catholic Homilies.

³² Dietrich, "Abt Aelfrik," p. 544.

³³ Karl Jost, Wulfstanstudien (Bern, 1950), pp. 159 - 176.

³⁴ C.R. Barret, Studies in the Word Order of Aelfric's Catholic Homilies and Lives of Saints (Cambridge, 1953).

INTRODUCTION

indicates further syntactical features.³⁵ As the homilies are considered representative of mature Anglo-Saxon prose, they are the basis of some syntactical and stylistic studies of Old English.³⁶

The homilies have been considered the essential part of Aelfric's educational programme. In a series of articles, Sisam and Clemons have established the chronology of his writings to illustrate how the homilies fit into this programme.³⁷ Sisam describes Aelfric's plan to

³⁵ Pope, Homilies, I, pp. 99 - 105.

³⁶ See C.A. Smith, "The Order of Words in Anglo-Saxon Prose," PMLA, VIII (1893), pp. 210 - 244, based on Aelfric's homilies and Alfred's "Orosius"; J.W. Tupper, Tropes and Figures in Anglo-Saxon Prose (Baltimore, 1897), based on the homilies of Aelfric, Wulfstan, the Blickling collection, and on the translation of the 'Consolation' of Boethius; A. Reskienwicz, Ordering of Elements in Old English in Terms of Their Size and Structural Complexity (Warsaw, 1966), based wholly on the homilies of Aelfric.

³⁷ K. Sisam, "MSS Bodley 340 and 342: Aelfric's Catholic Homilies"; "The Order of Aelfric's Early Books," in his Studies, pp. 148 - 198; 298 - 301. P. Clemons, "The Chronology," pp. 212 - 247; "Aelfric," pp. 176 - 209.

INTRODUCTION

provide religious education in the vernacular as "comparable to Alfred's plan a century earlier, but more systematic and concentrated on the advancement of religion."³⁸ Clemons' article, "The Chronology," deals with the main features of Aelfric's educational programme in its chronological sequence.

This review of Aelfric scholarship confirms that there is no detailed discussion of the homilies from the point of view of organization and style. However, some of these studies provide key critical tools and useful terms for the discussion which this study proposes.

For the purpose of this study, it is of no importance whether Aelfric's homiletic works should be called "Homilies" or "Sermons." Aelfric considered all his discourses as homilies, whether or not they were based on a Scriptural text. As Smetana observes, Aelfric does not maintain a strict distinction between "Sermon" (a discourse on a dogmatic or moral issue for instructional purposes) and a "Homily" (a commentary and exegesis on a

³⁸ Sisam, Studies, p. 301.

INTRODUCTION

Scriptural text).³⁹

Aelfric's straightforward, yet rhetorical, style accounts in great measure for the effectiveness of his homilies. In the "Prefaces" to the two volumes of the Catholic Homilies and to the Lives of Saints, he acknowledges that his sole concern is the edification of souls.⁴⁰ His main interest is to teach, instruct and edify; and for this purpose, he adopts a suitable medium, a simple and appropriate style to express his thoughts clearly. For the benefit of his listeners, he preferred everyday language - "consuetus, purus, apertus" - to the ornate and artificial - "garrula verboritas, ignoti sermones, artificiosus sermo, obscura verba."⁴¹ Clemoes observes that Aelfric's conception of style is derived from his education, and he describes it in these words:

³⁹ See Smetana, "Aelfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary," p. 180.

⁴⁰ See Thorpe, The Homilies, I, p. 1; II, pp. 2, 3; Skeat, Lives, I, p. 3.

⁴¹ See Thorpe, The Homilies, II, p. 2.

INTRODUCTION

It was based on a twofold distinction, between simple speech (*simplex locutio*) on the one hand and artificial discourse (*artificiosus sermo*) on the other. The former implied the use of language that is everyday (*consuetus*), plain (*purus*) and clear (*apertus*), in contrast to the unfamiliar diction (*ignoti sermones*), prolixity (*garrula verbositas*) and obscure words (*obscura verba*) of the latter. His preference was for the first "because it can the more easily penetrate the heart of readers or hearers, to the benefit of their souls."⁴²

It would seem that Aelfric's deliberate choice of a simple style for instruction is in keeping with the rules laid down by Augustine in the Fourth Book of his De Doctrina Christiana.⁴³ In the Middle Ages, as Ogilvy points out, "Augustine was regarded as second only to the Scriptures in authority and as equalled only by Jerome, and, possibly, Gregory the Great among the fathers of the Church."⁴⁴ The De Doctrina Christiana, on which the Manuals of Isidore, Alcuin and Rabanus are based, was considered the most complete authority on the style of preaching.

⁴² Clemons, "Aelfric," p. 193.

⁴³ See, J.P. Migne, Patrologia Latina (Paris, 1845), XXXIV, pp. 90 - 122.

⁴⁴ J.D.A. Ogilvy, Books Known to Anglo-Latin Writers from Aldhelm to Alcuin, 670 - 803 (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 13 - 14.

INTRODUCTION

Augustine adopted the rhetorical principles of Cicero and Quintillian for teaching the Word of God. He recommends a simple, yet rhetorically effective style, with everything sacrificed for the sake of clarity. It is difficult to affirm with certainty whether Aelfric consciously followed the precepts of Augustine, although his familiarity and indebtedness to this wise Doctor have been acknowledged in the "Prefaces" and in the individual homilies.

Our discussion on the structure of the homilies employs the terms used by Sala, who points out that an Anglo-Saxon homily consists of five elements in the following order: (1) Scripture; (2) Exordium with Vocative Address and Orientation, which may be Occasional, Authoritarian, or Scriptural; (3) Body; (4) Conclusion: The Exemplum; and (5) Closing Formula.⁴⁵

Aelfric's Nativity Homilies have been chosen as the subject matter of our study because of their limited number, unity and variety. There are only five, all composed for the feast of the Nativity. This small group of homilies,

⁴⁵ See Sala, Preaching, pp. 94 - 118.

INTRODUCTION

composed for the same feast, yet covering a variety of subjects, each requiring different methods of treatment, seemed the most appropriate material for this study.

The first of the five Nativity Homilies is included in the first volume of the Catholic Homilies, and the second, in its companion volume; the Lives of Saints contains the third,⁴⁶ and the fourth is a revised version of the third, and it is edited by Belfour.⁴⁷ This revised version has been attributed to Aelfric on the grounds of its general resemblance and partial correspondence to the third and to Aelfric's still unedited Latin treatise "De Creatore et Creatura."⁴⁸ The fifth Nativity Homily, the only one in rhythmic prose, is included in the Supplementary Collection edited by Pope.

⁴⁶ There is an unedited Latin version of this homily, commonly believed to be of Aelfric's own composition. See N.R. Ker, Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon (Oxford, 1957), no. 162, 4; Enid Raynes, "Ms. Boulogne," pp. 65 - 73; Pope, Homilies, I, pp. 4, 137, 408.

⁴⁷ See A.O. Belfour, ed., Twelfth Century Homilies in MS. Bodley 343, EETS, O.S. 137 (London, 1909).

⁴⁸ See, Ker, Catalogue, no. 310, 77; Clemons, "The Chronology," p. 242; Pope, Homilies, I, pp. 4 - 5, 86.

INTRODUCTION

Of these five homilies, two are exegetical, the first and fifth, which expound the gospel pericopes assigned for the Masses of the feast; the second discusses various topics relevant to the feast, and the third and fourth treat doctrinal matters not pertaining directly to the feast.

In our discussion of the homilies, no reference will be made to their sources, dates, whether intended to be read or heard or meant for priests or laymen, the reason for their inclusion and their order in the collections. No attempt will be made to examine their doctrinal content, its orthodox or apocryphal nature.

Our analysis is an examination of the homilist's method of organization, such as the logical development of his ideas, the skilful integration of exhortations and other material into the discussions, and the smooth transition from one topic to another. The stylistic features are studied for the purpose of determining their effective contribution to the homilies. Comments on the style of different passages indicate the homilist's ability to

INTRODUCTION

express his thoughts clearly and effectively.

Each of the five Nativity Homilies is examined separately, with one chapter devoted to each homily, an approach dictated by their dissimilarities and our proposed detailed analyses.

CHAPTER I

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Aelfric's first Nativity Homily¹ deals with the story of the birth of Christ as narrated by Luke - the Scripture Readings assigned for the first two Masses of the feast.² It consists of an Exordium, Scripture Reading, Body and Conclusion. The Exordium is comprised of the Vocative Address and the Orientation, with a reversal of the order of these two elements; between the Orientation and the Vocative Address is placed the Scripture Reading which is a re-telling of the Nativity story in close translation. The Body is composed of expositions of the pericopes with discussions on moral exempla, exhortations, and comments on various

¹ All references to this homily are from Thorpe, The Homilies, I. Page and Line References for all quotations will be supplied in the text immediately after the quotation. Thus, "28, 1 - 4" refers to Page 28, Lines 1 - 4. The translation following is also Thorpe's.

² The gospel pericope assigned for the first Mass of the feast of the Nativity is Luke II, 1 - 14; the one for the second Mass is Luke II, 15 - 20. Aelfric treats the two pericopes as one.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

related doctrines.³ The Conclusion includes a moral exemplum, an exhortation deriving from the discussion immediately preceding, and the Closing Formula.

The Exordium clearly states the purpose, subject matter, and the occasion of the homily: "We wyllap to trym- minge eowres geleafan eow gereccan þæs Haelendes acenned- nysse be þære godspellican endebyrdnysse: hu he on þisum daegþerlicum daege on soþre menniscnysse acenned waes on godcundnysse" 28, 1 - 4 (We will, for the confirmation of your faith, relate to you the nativity of our Saviour, according to the order of the gospel: how he on this present day was born in true humanity in divine nature). Following this Orientation we are introduced to the Scripture

³ J.S. Westlake confuses the content of this homily with that of the one in the second volume of the Catholic Homilies. Commenting on the first volume, he says, "...Then follows another, 'De Natale Domini,' which gives the life of Christ from His birth to His ascension." "From Aelfred to the Conquest," in Cambridge History of English Literature, Edited by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1949), I, p. 117. It is actually the second homily that refers to many of the prophecies concerning Christ's birth, His mission on earth, His ascension, and His second coming on the last day.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Reading by means of a transitional sentence⁴: "Lucas se Godspellere awrat on Cristes bec, þæt ... " 28, 5 (Luke the Evangelist wrote in the book of Christ, that ...).

The style of Aelfric's translation of the Scripture Reading⁵ commands our attention, and here we must bear in mind his own rule governing translation. In his "Preface to Genesis," following the discussion concerning the difference between Latin and English word-order and tone, he states: "Ðæt Leden and þæt Englisc nabbap na ane wisan on þære spræce fandunge. Aefre se þe awent oppe se þe taecp of Ledene on Englisc, aefre he sceal

⁴ Sala calls such transitional sentences Scriptural exordia which "take the homilist out of the reading of the Scripture lesson into the exposition of its contents." Preaching, pp. 96 - 97. But, here it is used to introduce the Scripture Reading.

⁵ Scholars agree on the particular Latin version of the Bible translated by Aelfric in his homilies. White states Dietrich's conclusion: "The text which he comments on is always the Vulgate, though occasionally he mentions variations between different Latin translations, and he knew and used, besides the Vulgate, the translation by Jerome." Aelfric, pp. 75 - 76. Pope makes a similar observation, "Aelfric's pericopes and other extended translations from the gospel clearly follow the Vulgate, though one cannot always choose among the minor variations." Homilies, I, p. 152.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

gefadian hit swa þaet þaet Englisc hæbbe his agene wisan"⁶ (Latin and English do not have the same manner of expression. Anyone who translates or teaches from Latin into English must always arrange it so that English has its own style). In his translation of the pericopes, there is a tendency to make the English version conform as far as possible to the Latin. However, he preserves the style proper to English-"his agene wisan." The narrative sequence is sustained by beginning the sentences with the temporal "þa" and the inverted word-order; the use of "and" and "soþlice" at the beginning of other sentences helps to bind the sequence more closely. In the hypotactic sentences and clauses, a great number of subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns are used to elucidate the ideas expressed, as, for example, in the sentences describing the birth of Christ:

⁶ S.J. Crawford, ed., The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis (Oxford, 1922), p. 71.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Da ferde Joseph, Cristes foster-faeder, fram Galileiscum earde, of þære byrig Nazareþ, to Iudeiscre byrig, seo was Davides, and waes geciged Bethleem, forþan þe he waes of Davides maegþe, and wolde andettan mid Marian hire gebyrde, þe waes þa gyt bearn-eaca. Ða gelamp hit, þaþa hi on þære byrig Bethleem wicodon, þaet hira tima waes gefylled þaet heo cennan sceolde, and acende þa hyre frumcennedan sunu, and mid cild-clapum bewand, and aledede þaet cild on heora asena binne, forþan þe þær naes nan rymet on þam gesthuse. 30, 5 - 14 (Then Joseph, the foster-father of Christ, went from the land of Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to the Jewish city, which was of David, and was called Bethlehem, because he was of the tribe of David, and would acknowledge with Mary her birth, who was then great with child. Then it came to pass, while they were sojourning in the city of Bethlehem, that her time was fulfilled that she should bring forth, and she brought forth then her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid the child in their asses' bin, because there was no room in the inn).

Although the story is told in ordinary prose with a narrative style conforming to the original, the homilist's mastery of narration is evident in the controlled movement of the story.

The Scripture Reading re-tells the story of the birth of Christ. In his translation, the homilist is

NATIVITY HOMILY I

faithful to the meaning of the inspired words. However, without altering their meaning, he makes some modifications to render the text more intelligible to the people. In this attempt, the homilist replaces the unfamiliar Latin terms with familiar Anglo-Saxon words; the elliptic and repetitious Latin texts are expanded and clarified, suppressed and simplified. The chief modifications found in the translation are the following: The Latin "Caesar Augustus" becomes "se Romanisca casere Octavianus" 30, 1 (the Roman emperor Octavianus), thereby substituting a specific name and office; "a praeside Syriae Cyrino" is rendered as "fram þam ealdormen Cyrino, of Sirian lande" 30, 3 (from Cyrenius, the governor of Syria), replacing the unfamiliar "praeses" with the familiar "ealdormen"; "divorsorium" is translated into the commonly known "gesthuse"; the edict "ut profiterentur singuli in suam civitatem" appears as "þaet aelc man oferheafod sceolde cennan his gebyrde, and his are on þaere byrig þe he to gehyrde" 30, 4 - 5 (that every man in general should declare his birth and his possession in the city to which he

NATIVITY HOMILY I

belonged), which explains its content in clear terms; Joseph's particular relationship to the Infant, not mentioned in the original, is explicitly stated in "Joseph, Cristes foster-faeder" 30, 5 - 6 (Joseph, the foster-father of Christ); the elliptic "et hoc vobis signum" is elaborated in "Ge geseop þis tacen" 30, 20 - 21 (Ye shall see this token); the repetitious "et pastores erant in regione eadem vigilantes, et custodientes vigilias noctis super gregem suum" is suppressed and simplified in "Ða waeron hyrdas on þam earde waciende ofer heora eowede" 30, 14 - 15 (And there were shepherds in the country watching over their flock).

Following the Scripture Reading we have the Vocative Address "Mine gebroþra þa leofostan"⁷ 32, 5 (My dearest brethren), from which the homilist proceeds to the exposition of the pericopes, which forms the Body of the homily. As we move from the translation of the Scripture Reading to its

⁷ In his comments on the Vocative Address, Sala notes that "this is a form that varies rarely from the form 'men þa leofestan.' Other forms like 'mine gebroþra' are seldom encountered." Preaching, p. 96. Here we have an instance in which Aelfric combines both to form one Vocative Address.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

exposition we notice a change in style.⁸

At the beginning of his exposition, the homilist describes the significance and importance of the feast of the Nativity: "ure Haelend, Godes Sunu, euen-ece and gelic his Faeder, seþe mid him waes aefre buton anginne, gemedemode hine sylfne þaet he wolde on þisum daegþerlicum daege, for middangeardes alysednysse beon lichamlice acenned of þam maedene Marian" 32, 5 - 9 (our Saviour, the Son of God, co-eternal with, and equal to his Father, who was ever with him without beginning, vouchsafed that he would on this present day, for the redemption of the world, be corporally born of the Virgin Mary). By the repetition of a series of synonyms, each conveying additional meaning, he explains the divine nature of Christ and then describes the Nativity and its purpose and contrasts the divinity and humanity of

⁸ The comments made by C.A. Smith on the style of Aelfric's translation of a Scriptural text within an exposition is pertinent here. According to him the reason for the change in style is "apparently to impress the hearer with the fact that he is listening now, not, as heretofore, to an interpretation of inspired thought, but to the inspired thought itself, dressed as far as possible in its native garb." "The Order of words in A.S. Prose," PMLA, VIII (1893), p. 215.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Christ, thereby arousing a sense of gratitude towards Him for His benevolent action.

Immediately following is a short discussion on the appropriate timing of the birth of Christ, the Prince and Author of peace, born at a time of unprecedented peace on earth. This discussion concludes with the common assertion of medieval theology that angels and men were reconciled through Christ's Incarnation: "Witodlice on swa micelre sibbe waes Crist acenned, seþe is ure sib, forþan þe he geþeodde englas and men to anum hirede, þurh his menniscnysse" 32, 15 - 17 (Verily in such great peace was Christ born, who is our peace, because he united angels and men to one family through his incarnation). This statement emphasizes the propriety of our gratitude towards the Second Person of the Trinity.

Aelfric's mastery of the expository style is evident in the homily as seen in his discussion of the

NATIVITY HOMILY I

text "Maria acende þa hire frumcennedan sunu on þisum andweardan daege, and hine mid cild-claþum bewand, and for rymetleaste on anre binne gelede" 34, 20 - 23 (Mary brought forth her firstborn son on this present day, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and, for want of room, laid him in a bin). This is a neatly balanced sentence consisting of three clauses expressing three different actions naturally linked in a sequence. He treats each action separately. First, he explains clearly why Christ is called the firstborn child of Mary: "Naes þæt cild forþi gecweden hire frumcennede cild swilce heo oþer sibban acende, ac forþi þe Crist is frumcenned of manegum gastlicum gebroþrum. Ealle cristene men sind his gastlican gebroþra, and he is se frumcenneda, on gife and on godcundnysse ancenned of þam Aelmihtigan Faeder" 34, 23 - 28 (That child is not called her firstborn child because she afterwards brought forth another, but because Christ is the firstborn of many spiritual brothers. All christian men are his spiritual brothers, and he is the firstborn, in grace and in godliness only-begotten of the Almighty Father). In his comments on

NATIVITY HOMILY I

the other two actions, the homilist arranges a pattern of sentences, grammatically alike:

He waes mid wacum cild-clapum bewaefed, þæt he us forgeafe þa undeadlican tunecan, þe we forluron on þaes frumsceapenan mannes forgaegednysse. Se Aelmihtiga Godes Sunu, þe heofenas befor ne mihton, waes geled on nearuwre binne, to þi þæt he us fram hellicum nyrwette alysde. ... Se Godes Sunu waes on his gesthuse genyrwed, þæt he us rume wununge on heofonan rice forgife, gif we his willan gehyrsumiap. 34, 28 - 33; 36, 1 - 3 (He was wrapped in mean swaddling clothes, that he might give us the immortal garment which we lost by the first created man's transgression. The Almighty Son of God, whom the heavens could not contain, was laid in a narrow bin, that he might redeem us from the narrowness of hell. ... The Son of God was crowded in his inn, that he might give us a spacious dwelling in the kingdom of heaven, if we obey his will).

These sentences, balanced with parallel construction and antithesis, launch a chain of paradoxes describing Christ's heavenly dwelling and His earthly bin, explain the benefits derived to us from these actions, and thereby remind us of our indebtedness towards Him. The homilist's use of an inverted word-order in the following sentence emphasizes the bounty of Christ: "Ne bitt he us nanas þinges to edleane his geswinces, buton ure sawle haelo, þæt we us sylfe claene and ungewemmede him gegearcian, to blisse and

NATIVITY HOMILY I

to ecere myrhþe" 36, 3 - 5 (He asks nothing of us as reward for his toil, except our soul's health, that we may prepare ourselves for him pure and uncorrupted in bliss and everlasting joy).

The discussion on the nature of the Word and its relation to the other persons of the Trinity once again confirms Aelfric's accomplished style of exposition:

Word biþ wisdomes gewutelung, and þæt Word, þæt is se Wisdom, is acenned of þam Aelmihtigum Faeder, butan anginne; forþan þe he waes aefre God of Gode, Wisdom of þam wisan Faeder. Nis he na geworht, forþan þe he is God, and na gesceaft; ac se Aelmihtiga Faeder gesceop þurh þone Wisdom ealle gesceafta, and hi ealle þurh þone Halgan Gast geliffaeste. 40, 9 - 15. (A word is the manifestation of wisdom, and the Word, that is Wisdom, is begotten of the Almighty Father, without beginning; for he was ever God of God, Wisdom of the wise Father. He is not made, for he is God, and not a creature; for the Almighty Father created all creatures through that Wisdom, and endowed them all with life through the Holy Ghost).

The distinguishing features of this exposition are its logical and persuasive argument, simplicity, clarity, and a moving devotion to the great mystery.

Following this short lucid treatment on the nature of the Trinity, the homilist explains why the Word

NATIVITY HOMILY I

became flesh: "Ne mihte ure mennisce gecynd Crist on þære godcundlican acennednysse geseon; ac þæt ylce Word waes geworden flaesc, and wunode on us, þæt we hine geseon mihton" 40, 15 - 18 (Our human nature could not see Christ in that divine nativity; but that same Word became flesh and dwelt in us, that we might see him). The convincing logic of this argument is clear enough. This statement, related to the preceding discussion on the nature of the Word, serves also as a transition to the next discussion on the nature of the Incarnation:

Naes þæt Word to flaesce awend, ac hit waes mid menniscum flaesce befangen. Swa swa anre gehwiltc manna wunaþ on sawle and on lichaman an mann, swa eac Crist wunaþ on godcundnysse and menniscnysse, on anum hade an Crist. ... Nis þeahhwaepre seo godcundnys gemenged to þære menniscnysse, ne þær nan twaeming nys. We mihton eow secgan ane lytle bysne, gif hit to waclic naere; Sceawa nu on anum aege, hu þæt hwhite ne biþ gemenged to þam geolcan, and biþ hwaepere an aeg. Nis eac Cristes godcundnys gerunnen to þære menniscnysse, ac he þurhwunaþ þeah a on ecnysse on anum hade untotowaemed. 40, 18 - 30 (The Word was not turned to flesh, but it was invested with human flesh. As every man existeth in soul and in body one man, so also Christ existeth in divine nature and human nature, in one person one Christ. ... Nevertheless, the divine nature is not mingled with the human nature, nor is there any separation. We might tell unto you a little simile, if it were

NATIVITY HOMILY I

not too mean; Look now on an egg, how the white is not mingled with the yolk, and yet it is one egg. Nor also is Christ's divinity confounded with human nature, but he continueth to all eternity in one person undivided).

Here we have another example of Aelfric's best expository style. In short sentences, balanced and carefully articulated, couched in plain language, he explains the great mystery of the Incarnation. The commonplace analogy of one man with a body and a soul and of the egg-simile are effective in illustrating the abstract doctrine of the hypostatic union in concrete terms.

A distinguishing stylistic feature of this homily is its increasing use of metaphorical expressions. Christ is called "ure sib" 32, 16 (our peace) because through His Incarnation men and angels are reconciled and united into one family. He came to the world that He might gather His chosen from all nations "and heora naman on ecere eadignysse awrite" 32, 32 (and write their names in everlasting bliss). In his allegorical interpretation of the emperor's edict, the homilist employs metaphorical expressions to balance the temporal and the spiritual;

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Swa swa on þam timan be þaes caseres gebanne gehwilce aenlipige on heora burgum be him sylfum cendon, swa eac nu us cyþaþ lareowas Cristes gebann, þæt we us gegadrian to his halgan gelapunge, and on þære ures geleafan gafol mid estfullum mode him agifan, þæt ure naman beon awritene on lifes bec mid his gecorenum. 34, 3 - 8 (As at that time, according to the emperor's proclamation, each one singly, in their cities, declared concerning himself, so also now do our teachers make known to us Christ's proclamation, that we gather us to his holy congregation, and therein, with devout mind, pay to him the tribute of our faith, that our names may be written in the book of life with his chosen).

The earthly tribute to be paid to the emperor and the enrolment demanded by him are balanced by the "tribute of faith" and "book of life."

Again, while giving an allegorical interpretation to the shepherds who watched their flocks, the homilist resorts to a greater number of metaphors to express forcibly the duties of the teachers:

Ða hyrdas þe wacodon ofer heora eowode on Cristes acennednyse, getacnodon þa halgan lareowas on Godes gelapunge, þe sind gastlice hyrdas geleaf-fulra swala: and se engel cydde Cristes acennednyse hyrdemannum, forþan þe þam gastlicum hyrdum, þæt sind lareowas, is swiþost geopenod embe Cristes menniscnyse, þurh boclice lare; and hi sceolon gecneordlice heora underþeoddum bodian, þæt þæt him geswutelod is, swa swa þa hyrdas

NATIVITY HOMILY I

þa heofenlican gesihþe gewidmaersodan. Ðam
 lareowe gedafenap þæt he symle wacol sy ofer
 Godes eowode, þæt se ungesewenlica wulf Godes
 scep ne tostence. 36, 6 - 15 (The shepherds
 that watched over their flock at Christ's birth,
 betokened the holy teachers in God's church, who
 are the spiritual shepherds of faithful souls:
 and the angel announced Christ's birth to the
 herdsmen, because to the spiritual shepherds,
 that is, teachers, is chiefly revealed concerning
 Christ's humanity, through book-learning: and they
 shall sedulously preach to those placed under them,
 that which is manifested to them, as the shepherds
 proclaimed the heavenly vision. It beseemeth the
 teacher to be ever watchful over God's flock,
 that the invisible wolf scatter not the sheep).

All these metaphors are, apparently, drawn from the Scrip-
 tures. What is characteristic, however, is the homilist's
 ability to adapt and assimilate them into his expressions.

An example of the homilist's skill in adapting
 a Scriptural metaphor to the Anglo-Saxon situation is
 found in his comments on the words of the angel concern-
 ing the time of Christ's birth. After emphasizing that
 the angel said "on daege, and na on nihte" 36, 28 (today,
 and not tonight), he goes on to say "forþan þe Crist is
 se soþa daeg, seþe todraefde mid his to-cyme ealle
 nytennyse þære ealdan nihte, and ealne middangeard
 mid his gif onlihte" 36, 28 - 30 (for Christ is the true

NATIVITY HOMILY I

day who scattered with his advent all the ignorance of the ancient night, and illumined all the world with his grace).. In the Scriptures, Christ is called the light of the world; however, in the hands of the homilist the Scriptural metaphor is extended to dispel the night because of the Anglo-Saxon horror of darkness.⁹

The variety which we noted in Aelfric's style has its counterparts in the various methods he employs in the exposition of the Scripture Reading. In his exposition, he follows the chronological order of the narrative sequence. He comments on the complete text, except the part concerning Joseph's geneology; his relation to the Infant is treated in another part of the text. Before commenting on each section, the homilist summarizes or paraphrases it; sometimes he repeats part of the text. While expounding the text, first he gives the historical or literal meaning and then introduces other interpretations such as allegorical or moral, as the text permits; the exegesis sometimes leads

⁹ See J.W. Tupper, Tropes and Figures, p. 25.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

to discussions on related doctrinal matters, moral exempla, exhortations, and practical lessons. After dealing with one section of the text, he moves on to the next.

The homilist's method of integrating discussions on doctrinal matters into the literal interpretation of a Scriptural text is exemplified in his comments on the words, "Bethlehem," "Gloria in excelsis Deo," and "Let us go to Bethlehem and see the word." After stating that Christ's birth in Bethlehem was in fulfilment of the prophecies, he discusses the literal meaning of Bethlehem - "Bread House," which prompts him to include a discussion on the nature and effect of the Eucharist.¹⁰

¹⁰ Concerning Aelfric's adaptation of the literal meaning of Bethlehem, T.M. Pearce makes these comments: "The Hebrew 'beyth leh' kehm' does mean 'house of bread,' probably in relation to the show bread prepared for the priests to eat in the sacred tabernacle. Bethlehem's ancient name was 'Ephrata,' meaning 'fruitful.' Aelfric certainly adapted the literal meaning, 'Bread house,' to the Lord's supper, which became celebrated as the Catholic rite of the Mass. Thus, as a Catholic pastor, he was able to turn the etymology to religious persuasion, which could be termed indoctrination, as well as enlightenment." "Name Patterns," p. 151.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Commenting on the angelic chant, "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis," the homilist deals at length with one aspect of medieval angelology. Already at the beginning of the homily it was pointed out that one of the effects of the Incarnation was the reconciliation of angels with men. This belief is elaborately illustrated here. Drawing examples from the Old and New Testaments, he shows the change in attitude of the angels toward men because Christ assumed human nature. The exhortation given at the conclusion of this discussion has a forceful and persuasive tone: "Nu we sind getealde Godes ceaster-gewaran, and englum gelice; uton forþi hogian þæt leahtras us ne totwaemon fram þisum micclum wurþmynte. Soplice men syndon godas gecigede; heald forþi, þu mann, þinne godes wurþscipe wiþ leahtras; forþan þe God is geworden mann for þe" 38, 34-35; 40, 1-3 (Now we are accounted citizens of God, and like to angels; let us, therefore, take care that sins do not separate us from this great dignity. Verily men are called gods; preserve, therefore, thou man, thy

NATIVITY HOMILY I

dignity of a god against sins, since God became man for thee). We do not find very many imperative constructions in Aelfric; nevertheless, one is used here to emphasize the dignity to which man is elevated and to exhort him to be mindful of that high state.

The most profound doctrinal matters discussed in the homily are included in the exposition of the shepherds' words: "Uton gefaran to Bethleem, and geseon þæt word þe geworden is, and God us geswutelode" 40, 5 - 6 (Let us go to Bethlehem, and see the word which is come to pass, and that God hath revealed unto us). Immediately following is an exclamation into which is joined a related Scriptural text of much doctrinal content: "Eala hu rihtlice hi andetton þone halgan geleafan mid þisum wordum, 'On frympe waes word, and þæt word waes mid Gode, and þæt word waes God' !" 40, 6 - 9 (O how rightly they acknowledged the holy faith with these words, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and that word was God' !). The homilist's skilful organizing of his material into a systematic and coherent pattern is apparent here.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Following the shepherds' reference to the "Word", he inserts the Scriptural text that speaks specifically and profoundly of the Word. The exclamation permits him to proceed with his discussion on the nature of the Word and its relation to the other persons of the Trinity.¹¹

Aelfric's method of introducing allegorical interpretations together with the literal can be illustrated from his comments on the names of Octavianus and Cyrenius. Octavianus was called Augustus - increasing the empire. This name "Augustus" befits Christ, because as the earthly King Octavianus expanded the earthly empire, Christ, the heavenly King, enlarged the heavenly empire through His Incarnation. Hence, the earthly emperor's edict that all the world should be inscribed, betokened the heavenly King's deed by which he came on earth to gather His chosen ones from all nations and to write their names in heavenly bliss. The homilist's parallel of the earthly and the heavenly are well balanced.

¹¹ For the discussion on the stylistic features of this section, see above, pp. 33 - 35.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Cyrenius, interpreted as "heir," betokened Christ who is the true heir of His Father. To this short comment an instructional sentence is added, "and he us forgifþ þæt we mid him beon yrfenuman and efenhlyttan his wuldres" 32, 35; 34, 1 (and he granteth us to be heirs with him, and partakers of his glory).

The homilist's recourse to allegorical interpretation, also shown in other sections of this homily, as in his comments on 34, 3 - 8 and 36, 6 - 15,¹² is manifested again in the last part of the homily, where he gives detailed comments on Mary, 40, 31 - 35; 42, 1 - 33. He explains why Mary was betrothed to Joseph; how Joseph was informed of his role as the foster-father of the child; and how Mary's virginity was left undefiled and hallowed through the birth of Christ. Examining some of the words Mary pondered in her heart, he refers to many of the prophecies concerning the birth of Christ, thereby emphasizing the idea that the New Testament is the fulfilment of the

¹² See above, pp. 35 - 37.

NATIVITY HOMILY I

Old, and that Christ's birth through Mary was the fulfilment of the prophecies.

To the last words of the Scripture Reading, the homilist adds no comment. After repeating the text, he simply states: "Dyssera preora hyrda gemynd is gehæfd be eastan Bethleem ane mile, on Godes cyrcan geswutelod, þam þe þa stowe geneosiap" 42, 34 - 35; 44, 1 (The memory of these three shepherds is preserved one mile to the east of Bethlehem, and manifested in God's Church to those who visit the place). The actions of the shepherds, however, serve as a moral exemplum from which the homilist draws practical lessons and exhortations, which lead him to the Conclusion of the homily: "We sceolon geefenlaecan bysum hyrdum, and wuldrian and herian urne Drihten on eallum þam þingum þe he for ure lufe gefremode, us to alysednysse and to ecere blisse, þam sy wuldor and lof mid þam Aelmihtigum Faeder, on annysse þaes Halgan Gastes, on ealra worulda woruld. Amen" 44, 1 - 6 (We should imitate these shepherds, and

NATIVITY HOMILY I

glorify and praise our Lord for all those things which he hath done for love of us, for our redemption and eternal bliss, to whom be glory and praise with the Almighty Father, in unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen). We notice that although the moral exemplum and exhortations derive from the immediately preceding comments, they serve as an apt conclusion to the homily.

Aelfric's first Nativity Homily provides us an opportunity to examine one of his methods of homiletic organization and some features of his style. As an exegetical homily, it expounds the Scripture Readings assigned for the feast, greatly enriched by detailed comments. Although the homily is mainly a literal exegesis of the pericopes, it includes also interpretations on other levels to bring out fully the meaning of the inspired words; this method permits the homilist to point to moral exempla and teach practical lessons. The inclusion of the Scripture Reading in the homily enables us to compare Aelfric's two distinctive styles, narrative and expository. The story is told in a simple, vivid and moving prose

NATIVITY HOMILY I

while the exposition is presented in a rhetorical prose, employing various devices. Pairing of synonyms, exclamation, variety of sentences, antithesis, balance, contrast, inverted word-order, imperative constructions, commonplace analogies and similes are skilfully used to convey clearly and effectively the fundamentals of Christian faith and other valuable instructions.

CHAPTER II

NATIVITY HOMILY II

The second Nativity Homily¹ is in a larger frame, necessary for Aelfric's outline of the whole salvation history. It discusses Christ's redemptive mission from His birth to the Last Judgement, viewing this mission as a moment in history and a fulfilment of the prophecies of the holy men and the predictions of the heathen kings.

The homily falls into three clearly defined parts: Exordium, Body and Conclusion. The Exordium includes both Vocative Address and Orientation. The Body is divided into two main sections, the first of which discusses Christ's birth. As a divine person, He was born of the eternal Father without a mother, and, as a human person, he was born of an earthly mother without an earthly father. Christ's birth from an earthly mother without an earthly father prompts a discussion on the Virginity of Mary. Mary's singular privilege of being mother and virgin at the same time is related to the nature of the Church as both virgin

¹ All references to this homily are from Thorpe, The Homilies, II. The translation following is also Thorpe's.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

and mother. The attribution of motherhood to the Church introduces the question of how she begets children, and this leads logically to a discussion of baptism. The second section of the Body is mainly a narrative of the prophecies concerning Christ's nativity and His mission, with only a short passage of exegesis. The Conclusion is comprised of exhortations to moral virtues.

In the Exordium we are directly addressed, "Mine gebroþra þa leofostan"² 4, 1 (My dearest brethren), and oriented to the occasion and subject matter of the homily: "On þisum daege we wurþiaþ ures Haelendes acennednysse aefter þaere menniscnysse" 4, 1 - 2 (On this day we celebrate our Saviour's birth according to humanity). Through an elaboration of the Orientation, the homilist explains the significance and importance of the feast. He points out clearly that Christ is true God and true man with body and soul: "He waes to-daeg acenned of þam halgan maedene Marian mid lichaman and mid sawle, seþe waes aefre mid þam

² Here we have another instance in which Aelfric combines the two forms of the Vocative Address to form one. See above, p. 28 fn. 7.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

Faeder wunigende on þære Godcundnysse" 4, 2 - 5 (He was to-day born of the holy maiden Mary, with body and with soul, who was ever existing with the Father in the Godhead).

The Body of the homily beginning with a discussion on the divine and human natures of Christ opens with a statement of the topic: "He is tuwa acenned, and aegþer acennednys is wundorlic and unasecgendlic" 4, 5 - 6 (He is twice born, and each birth is wonderful and unspeakable). It deals first with the divine nature of Christ and His role in the creation of the world. Aelfric's persuasive method of appealing to reason is manifested in his short illustration of how Christ is co-eternal with His Father: "Nu is þeos acennednys buton anginne, forþan þe se Faeder waes aefre God, and his Wisdom, þæt is, his Sunu, waes aefre of him acenned, buton aelcere meder" 6, 3 - 5 (Now this birth is without beginning, because the Father was ever God, and his Wisdom, that is, his Son, was ever born of him, without any mother). The juxtaposition of this sentence with the following, "Ðeos acennednys, þe we nu to-daeg wurþiaþ, waes of eorþlicere meder, buton aelcum

NATIVITY HOMILY II

eorþlicum faeder" 6, 6 - 7 (This birth, that we now to-day celebrate, was of an earthly mother, without any earthly father), enables the homilist to conclude one discussion and to enter immediately into another. The concluding clauses of the two sentences, "buton aelcere meder" and "buton aelcum eorþlicum faeder," emphasize the uniqueness of Christ's birth in divinity and in humanity.

Following the introductory statements of Christ's birth in humanity, the homilist tells of the circumstances necessitating it:

Se Faeder þurh hine gesceop us, and eft, þaþa we forwyrhte waeron, þa asende he þone ylcan Sunu to þisum life to ure alysednysse; forþan þe Adam, se forma mann, agylte wiþ God, and his Scyppendes bebod tobraec, and deofles lare gehyrsumode, and wearþ deofle betaeht, he and eal mancynn into hellewite. Ða aefre smeade God fram frympe middan-eardes, hu he mihte mancynnes gehelpan, and from deofles anwealde ahreddan. Ða nolde he asendan to ure alysednysse naþor ne engel, ne heah-engel, ne witegan, ne apostolas; ac sende se Faeder his ancennedan Sunu to þrowunge and to cwale for mancynnes alysednysse. Ða geswutelode God hu miccle lufe he haefde and haefþ to us, þaþa he asende his agen Bearn to slege for us. 6, 7 - 20 (The Father created us through him, and afterwards, when we were fordome, he sent the same Son to this life for our redemption; because that Adam, the first man, sinned against God, and brake his Creator's

NATIVITY HOMILY II

commandment, and obeyed the devil's teaching, and was delivered to the devil, he and all mankind, into hell-torment. Then God ever meditated from the beginning of the world, how he might help mankind, and rescue them from the power of the devil. Then he would not send to our redemption either angel, or archangel, or prophets, or apostles; but the Father sent his only-begotten Son to suffering and to death for the redemption of mankind).

Resorting to his narrative style, Aelfric uses a series of sentences linked with the temporal "þa" to present a running account of the fall of man through his first parents and God's decision to redeem him from the pains of hell. This clear, straightforward, and moving narration arouses a great love for God who loved us and loves us so much. Then follows a discussion of Christ's birth in humanity, introduced by the rhetorical question, "Hwa dorste þæs gewilnian þæt se Aelmihtiga Cyning sceolde besceofan to cwale his ancennedan Aepeling³, and swa ahreddan þone þeowan?" 6, 20 - 22 (Who durst desire that the Almighty King should urge to death his only-begotten Prince, and so save the servant?), permitting the homilist to carry

³ Skilfully Aelfric translates a Biblical concept into Anglo-Saxon terms. The Father-Son relationship of the Trinity becomes the familiar "King and his Prince."

NATIVITY HOMILY II

the discussion further. This rhetorical device conveys an impression of immediacy and directness, and it serves also to draw our attention to the next discussion which establishes the necessity of Christ's birth in human nature.

Having established the necessity of the Incarnation, the homilist now speaks of the means Christ chose to be born as man. He who was God chose a maiden to be His mother. Having referred to the appropriateness of His choice, Aelfric concludes the discussion on the divine nature of Christ by employing effectively the rhetorical device of repetition: "He ongann beon þæt he naes, ac he þurhwunode þæt he aer waes. He ongann on þære menniscnyse, seþe aefre waes and aefre biþ God" 8, 2 - 5 (He began being what he was not, but he continued what he before had been. He began in humanity, who ever was and ever will be God). Both sentences begin with exactly the same words; the first states an abstract theological concept; the second interprets it in concrete terms, thereby arousing an admiration for and a devotion to the great mystery. These sentences also lead the homilist to a concluding statement on

NATIVITY HOMILY II

the divine and human natures of Christ: "Nis na hwaepere gerunnen togaedere seo Godcundnys and seo menniscnys, ac seo Godcundnys is ymbcryd mid þære menniscnysse, swa þæt þær nys naþor gemencgednys ne todal" 8, 5 - 8 (Yet are the Godhead and the humanity not mingled together, but the Godhead is invested with the humanity, so that there is neither admixture nor separation). This sentence, neatly balanced with three clauses, each repeating, clarifying, and elaborating the idea contained in the others, sums up the dominant idea of the whole discussion so far. In this conclusion, we have a simple description of a great mystery; profound theological concepts are explained in simple and clear words.

The statement of the next topic, "Marian maegþad waes menigfealdlice getacnod on þære ealdan æ" 8, 9 - 10 (The maidenhood of Mary was manifoldly betokened in the old law), comes as no surprise, because the preceding discussion stating the appropriateness of Christ's choice to be born from a maiden, prepared us for it. In the discussion following, Aelfric explains that the dry rod of

NATIVITY HOMILY II

Aaron which bore fruit without any contact with earth symbolizes Mary who bore a Son without any association with man. He then introduces a discussion on the order of human creation to illustrate the unique nature of Christ's human birth:

Mennisc gesceapennys is on feower wison. Se frum-sceapena mann Adam naes gestryned ne acenned, ac God hine gesceop. Seo oþer gesceapennys waes swa þæt God gesceop Euan of hire weres sidan. Ne sind þas twa gesceapennyssa nanum oprum gelice. Seo þridde gesceapennys is, þæt men beoþ gestrynede þurh wer and þurh wif, swa swa we daeghwomlice gesceop, and þeos an gesceapennys is gewunelic. Seo feorþe gesceapennys waes swa þæt Crist wearþ acenned of maedene buton were. Nis þeos gesceapennys nanum oprum gelic. Ða twa forman gesceapennyssa feollon on hryre, and seo þridde waes on hryre acenned; ac seo feorþe alyside þa þreo. 8, 22 - 33 (Human creation is in four ways. The first-created man, Adam, was not begotten nor born, but God created him. The second creation was so that God created Eve from her husband's side. These two creations are like to none other. The third creation is, that men are begotten by man and by woman, as we see daily, and this creation is alone common. The fourth creation was so that Christ was born of a maiden without man. This creation is like to none other. The first two creations fell into perdition, and the third was in perdition born; but the fourth redeemed the three).

This discursive discussion illustrates the precision and clarity of his style and the economy and the simplicity of his language, seemingly concerned only with conveying his

NATIVITY HOMILY II

thoughts. It consists of a series of sentences of varying lengths, each coherent, compact and so linked that one leads to the other, the last recapitulating the whole. The first states the topic which is elaborated in the remaining sentences. Aelfric's flexibility of style is apparent here; he adopts a style suitable for a philosophical discussion.

The discussion on Mary's virginity is introduced through the transitional sentence: "Se ylca Godes Sunu, se-þe ealle þing gesceop, he eac gesceop his agene moder, and on hire innop sylf becom, and þaeron geworhte his agenne lichaman, and wearþ of hire geboren, soþ man on sawle and on lichaman; and seo modor naes na gewemmed þurh þaet cild, ac waes gehalgod" 8, 33 - 35; 10, 1 - 2 (The same Son of God, who created all things, created also his own mother, and came himself into her womb, and therein wrought his own body, and of her was born, a true man in soul and in body; and the mother was not defiled through that child, but was hallowed). While it is an elaboration of the fourth kind of human creation, it is also a skilful introduction to the next discussion, one of the most beautiful in the homily.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

Rhetorical devices are used effectively to enforce an idea:

Maeden heo waes beforan paere cenninge, and maeden on paere cenninge, and maeden aefter paere cenninge. Ne biþ nan maegþhad forloren on cenninge, ac biþ forloren on haemedede. Ðonne hwilc maeden mid luste weres bricþ, þonne biþ hire maegþhad aefre siþþan adylegod, haebbe heo cild naebbe heo. Ac þaet claene maeden Maria haefde behaten hire maegþhad Gode, and waes mid þam Halgum Gaste afylled, and gescyld wiþ aelcere costnunge. Ne unlust on hire mod ne becom, ne heo weres ne braec; þa waes heo forþi maeden, þeah þe heo Cild haefde. Nis nan wifhades mann hire gelica, forþi naþer ne aer ne siþþan naes nan maeden þaet bearn gebaere, and syþþan maeden þurhwunode, buton hire anre. 10, 2 - 14
(Maiden she was before the birth, and maiden in the birth, and maiden after the birth. No maidenhood is lost in birth, but is lost in intercourse. When any maiden with desire associates with man, then is her maidenhood destroyed for ever after, whether she have a child or not. But the pure maiden Mary had promised her maidenhood to God, and was filled with the Holy Ghost, and shielded against every temptation. No evil desire came into her mind, nor had she intercourse of man; therefore was she a maiden, though she had a Child. There is no woman like unto her, for, neither before nor since, was there any maiden that bare a child and afterwards continued a maiden, save her alone).

The section opens with a sentence composed of three balancing clauses: "Maeden heo waes beforan paere cenninge, and maeden on paere cenninge, and maeden aefter paere cenninge." Each clause repeats the word "maeden," which, for purpose of emphasis, is the head-word of each of the

NATIVITY HOMILY II

clauses, which are in inverted word-order. In this and in the following sentences, the words "maeden" and "maegphad" are repeated ten times. Aelfric uses repetition with very considerable effect to emphasize the great dignity of Mary's virginity. In a still simpler manner, through the familiar analogy of the female bee which procreates without male intercourse, he illustrates how some species reproduce and yet preserve maidenhood.

By means of a lucid transitional sentence, "Eac seo halige Godes gelapung, þæt is, eal cristen folc, is genemed to anum maedene" 10, 19 - 20 (Also the holy Church of God, that is, all christian people, is consecrated to one maiden), the discussion on the maidenhood of Mary is followed by one on the nature of the Church, also called a maiden. With Scripture as his authority, the homilist calls the Church a Virgin, comparing her with the Virgin Mary who is also a Mother. The discussion on the nature of baptism⁴ is introduced by an explanation of how the

⁴ Aelfric's discussion on the nature of baptism does not support Sala's statement, "on the subject of baptism there is little teaching of note" in the Anglo-Saxon homily. Preaching, p. 110.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

Church begets her children. The rhetorical question, "Hu biþ se mann tuwa acenned?" 10, 34 (How is a man twice born?), carries the discussion forward. In conclusion, he attributes to Christ and His bride the role of begetting the children of God and then proceeds to the second section.

The second section of the Body, which illustrates how Christ's birth and His redemptive mission were the fulfilment of the prophecies, begins: "Ure ealde faeder, Adam, us gestrynde to daeþe, and Crist us gestrynp gastlice to þam ecan life, gif we forbugað deofles lare, and beoþ urum Drihtne gehyrsume on his bebodum" 12, 13 - 15 (Our old father, Adam, begat us to death, and Christ begets us spiritually to eternal life, if we eschew the precepts of the devil, and be obedient to our Lord in his commandments). This sentence, rich in content, antithetically balanced, contrasts Adam who begot us to death with Christ who begot us spiritually to eternal life, an idea implied in the conclusion of the preceding section where the begetting of the children of God was attributed to Christ and His bride, the Church.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

In preparation for the narration of the prophecies, Aelfric summarizes the section, drawing attention to the fact that all these prophecies were made about Christ so that we might believe in Him:

Ealle þa þing þe Crist dyde for us, ealle hi waeron aer gefyrn gewitegode, þæt men sceoldon gelyfan þæt he is soþfaest, þonne he hæfþ swa fela gewitan þe cyþdon his to-cyme, and hu he geboren waes, and he he þrowode deap his agenes þances, and hu he of deape aras and astah to heofonum, and hu he cymb eft to þam micclum dome, to demenne eallum mancynne, aelcum be his gewyrhtum. 12, 16 - 22 (All the things that Christ has done for us, they were all prophesied long before, that men might believe that he is true, when he has so many witnesses who declared his advent, and how he was born, and how he suffered death of his own free will, and how he arose from death and ascended to heaven, and how he will come again to the great doom, to judge all mankind, each according to his works).

Many prophecies are narrated in a lucid and flowing style. The narration is interrupted by a short commentary on the words of Daniel, "and biþ gesmyrod ealra halgena Halga" 14, 15 - 16 (and the Holy of all holies shall be anointed), introduced by a rhetorical question, following which he proceeds with the discussion.

The excellence of Christ's anointing with the sevenfold graces of the Holy Ghost is illustrated by

NATIVITY HOMILY II

contrasting it with the anointing of king, deacon, priest, and bishop with holy oil. Since in Christ there is the fullness of all these dignities, "Crist is soþlice ealra biscopa Biscop, and ealra cyninga Cyning" 14, 28 - 29 (But Christ is Bishop of all bishops, and of all kings King), He should be anointed not with the earthly oil, but with the sevenfold graces of the Holy Ghost. There is no apparent reason for introducing a commentary on this particular text except possibly for the purpose of emphasizing Christ's dignity and for conveying information concerning holy anointing in general.

The narration of the prophecies of Jeremiah, Micah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and David, is concluded with the rhetorical device of "occupatio," which tells us that there are many more testimonies written about Christ, which, if narrated, would require a great length of time and that it would be impossible to narrate them all even if much more time were available: "Gif we willaþ areccan ealle þa gewitnyssa þe be Criste awritene sind, þonne gaep þaer swiþe micel hwil to; ne þeah-hwaepere we ne magon hi

NATIVITY HOMILY II

ealle gereccan, forþi na þæt an þæt halige witegan be him witegodon, ac eac swilce haepene men setton on heora bocum be eallum þisum þingum þe we nu beforan eow raedon" 18, 10 - 15 (If we will recount all the testimonies that are written concerning Christ, a very great time will be passed therein; yet can we not reckon them all because not only have holy prophets prophesied of him, but heathen men also have set in their books concerning all these things which we have now read before you). This sentence serves also as a transition to a discussion on the prophecies of the heathen kings.

Merely stating that the heathen Sibylla has written "on leop-craeftes wison" 18, 15 - 16 (in song-craft wise) concerning Christ's birth, passion, resurrection, ascension and second coming, the homilist passes on to the narration of the story of Nabuchadnezzar and the three young men, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, based on Daniel, II and III. Omitting all details, he selects the particular episode of the three young men found in the fire, accompanied by a fourth, whom the king recognized as the Son of the

NATIVITY HOMILY II

living God. Despite this highly selective material, Aelfric's narrative moves with ease and vigour. This narration is followed by a further explanation of why Christ wanted all these prophecies to be made concerning Him: "Crist wolde þæt manega witegan, and eac þa hæpenan sceoldon bodian his to-cyme, and cyþan his faer, þæt mancynn waere þæs þe geleaf-fulre and þæs þe gewisre on hwaene hi sceoldon gelyfan, and ealle cweþan, aegþer ge mid muþe ge mid mode, swa se sealm-scop sang be God, 'Ðu eart maere and micel þe wundra wyrcest; þu eart ana God'" 20, 30 - 35 (Christ would that many prophets, and also the heathen should announce his advent, and make known his course, that mankind might be the more believing, and the more certain in whom they should believe, and all say, both with mouth and with mind, as the psalmist sang of God, 'Thou art glorious and great who workest wonders; thou alone art God'). This sentence, placed effectively at the end of the narration, serves both as a formal conclusion to the second part of the homily and as a transition and introduction to its concluding part.

In the Conclusion, the homilist exhorts us to believe in the wonders of God and to be grateful to Him for

NATIVITY HOMILY II

His mercy in sending His only-begotten Son for our redemption. His insistence on the need for faith, clearly stressed in his explanation of the purpose of the prophecies, is repeated here. In suggesting how we should spend the occasion of the great feast, the homilist points to the practice of the virtues of lowliness, mercy, righteousness, truth, almsgiving, temperance, patience and chastity.⁵ He gives the reasons why God loves chastity more than other virtues, and then warns us against excess in eating and drunkenness.⁶

Once again he points to the Virgin Mary's supreme dignity, urging reverence for and devotion to her,⁷ whom

⁵ These virtues are eight in number. Sala observes that in the Anglo-Saxon homilies the list of virtues usually contains eight instead of the later seven elements. See, Preaching, p. 108.

⁶ John Godfrey accounts for Aelfric's insistence on the virtue of chastity and for his warning against drunkenness and over-eating: "Along with drunkenness and over-eating, sexual excess was a besetting sin of the Anglo-Saxons, but Aelfric was not content merely to urge moderation in the last respect." The Church in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 337 - 338.

⁷ In this and other reference to Mary, Godfrey sees Aelfric's great devotion to the Mother of God. See, The Church, p. 340.

NATIVITY HOMILY II

he contrasts with Eve: "Ure ealde moder Eua us beleac heofenan rices geat, and seo halige Maria hit eft us geopenede, gif we hit sylfe nu mid yfelum weorcum us ne belucaþ" 22, 24 - 27 (Our old mother Eve shut to us the gate of heaven's kingdom, and the holy Mary opened it again to us, if we ourselves by evil works shut it not against us). In a previous section, using a similar type of sentence, he contrasted Christ with Adam. Obviously, these grammatically alike sentences are for the purpose of showing clearly the contrast between the old Adam and the new, and the old Eve and the new.

The homily concludes with an exhortation to ask Mary's intercession. The divinity and humanity of Christ are stressed once again in this exhortation to which is joined the Closing Formula: "Uton forþi mid micelre geornfulnysse hi gebiddan, þaet heo us þingige to hire agenum Bearne, seþe is aegþer ge hire Scyppend ge hire Sunu, soþ God and soþ mann, an Crist, seþe leofaþ and rixaþ mid Faeder and mid Halgum Gaste, hi þry an God a

NATIVITY HOMILY II

on ecnyse. Amen" 22, 28 - 33 (Let us, therefore, with great fervour, pray to her, that she mediate for us to her own Child, who is both her Creator and her Son, true God and true man, one Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Father and with Holy Ghost, those three one God to all eternity. Amen).

In his second Nativity Homily, Aelfric exploits the potentialities of prose - inverted word-order, repetitions and rhetorical questions. He employs these devices with considerable effect, proving his mastery of the medium. In this non-exegetical homily, he deals with a variety of related themes. He states one topic, discusses it fully and then passes on to the next, with the conclusion of one short discussion leading to the next topic. This forward movement is maintained by means of such devices as repetition and rhetorical questions. The transitions are logical and clear. Variety in the length of sentences, the blending of narration and exposition, the sudden change from the narrative to the expository style, all contribute to the success of the homily. The different styles are

NATIVITY HOMILY II

evidence of Aelfric's flexibility in his method of treating different material. Whatever his theme, he expresses his thoughts clearly and effectively, as illustrated in this second Nativity Homily.

CHAPTER III

NATIVITY HOMILY III

Aelfric's third Nativity Homily¹ treats of the nature of God and of the soul of man. The new subject matter is treated differently - it is a homily with three main divisions: Exordium, Body and Conclusion. The Exordium comprises both Vocative Address and Orientation, but with a new element. The two main sections of the Body deal with numerous different items, hence the statement of each topic before it is discussed in detail. The Conclusion consists of a prayer. The very nature of the subject matter limits exhortations; however, wherever possible and required, the homilist integrates them into the body of the discussion, thus producing an instructional sermon, not an abstract treatment of theology and philosophy.

In the Exordium, after the Vocative Address, the homilist reminds us of one of his previous Nativity Homilies "Men þa leofestan, hwilon aer we saedon eow hu ure haelend

¹ All references to this homily are from Skeat, Lives, I. The translation following is also Skeat's.

NATIVITY HOMILY III

cr̄ist on þisum daege on soþre menniscnysse acenned waes of þaem halgan maedene marian" 10, 1 - 3 (Men beloved, we told you erewhile how our Saviour Christ was on this day born in true human nature of the holy Virgin Mary), and clearly states the occasion, subject matter and purpose of the homily: "Nu wylle we swa þeah, for þyses daeges maerþe, eower mod mid þaere gastlican lare onbryrdan eow to blisse, þurh god" 10, 3 - 5 (Nevertheless, we now desire, for the honour of this day, to stir up your minds by ghostly teaching for your happiness, by the grace of God).

The Body of the homily is made up of two sections, the first dealing with the nature of God. This section opens with a statement of the opponents' views which are refuted by ample proofs revealing all aspects of the true doctrine. Reference to the Arian heresy helps to explain the true doctrine of the nature of the Trinity: "Sume gedwol-menn waeron þuruh deoful beswicane swa þaet hi cwaedon þaet crist, godes sunu, naere aefre mid þam halgan faeder wuniende, ac waere sum tima aer þan þe he

NATIVITY HOMILY III

acenned waere, ac þæt halige godspell hæfþ oferswiþod swylcera gedwolena andgit for-oft" 10, 5 - 9 (There were certain heretics beguiled by the devil, so that they said that Christ the Son of God was not eternally dwelling with the Holy Father, but there was a certain time (period) before He was born; but the holy Gospel hath full oft surpassed the understanding of such heretics). This statement of the heretical views prepares us for a refutation based on Christ's own words: "Ic eom anginn þe eow to spræce" 10, 11 (I who speak unto you am the beginning). The simple analysis of the Scriptural text is followed by a statement of the true doctrine: "Se faeder is angin, and se sunu is angin, and se halga gast is angin; ac hi ne synd na þreo anginnu, ac hi ealle þry synden an angin, and an aelmihtig god aefre unbegunnen and ungeaendod" 10 - 12, 14 - 16 (The Father is the Beginning, and the Son is the Beginning, and the Holy Ghost is the Beginning; they are not three Beginnings, but they all three are one Beginning, and One Almighty God, ever unbegun and unended). Aelfric's carefully articulated syntax, balanced with repeated parallel clauses and antithesis, reveals the necessary emphasis.

NATIVITY HOMILY III

To this authoritative refutation, he adds the commonplace analogy of a man who climbs beyond the ladder and falls, to show effectively the absurdity of the opponents' views.

A discussion on the nature of transitory and eternal things is introduced next, in order to explain the nature of the Trinity more positively. The discussion follows the statement of its topic, "Dreo þing sind on middanearde" 12, 25 (There are three things on this earth), and the portion dealing with the Trinity reads:

-Dridde þing is ece, swa þæt hit naefþe naþor ne ordfruman ne ende; þæt is se ana aelmihtiga god on þrynnesse and on annysse aefre wuniende un-
asmeagendlic and un-asaecgendlic. Se faeder is angin of nanum oþrum, and se sunu is angin, aefre of þam faeder acenned, and se halga gast is angin, aefre of þam faeder and of þam sunu, na acenned, ac forþ-staeppende forþan þe se sunu is þæs faeder wisdom, of him and mid him; and se halga gast is heora begra wylle and lufu of him þam and mid him þam. 12, 31 - 38 (The third thing is eternal, so that it hath neither beginning nor end; such is the One Almighty God in Trinity and Unity, who continueth ever unsearchable and unspeakable. The Father is the Beginning, of none other; and the Son is the Beginning, eternally begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost is the Beginning, eternally of the Father and of the Son, not begotten, but proceeding; because the Son is the wisdom, of Him and with Him; and the Holy Ghost is the Will and the Love of Them both, of Them both and with Them both).

NATIVITY HOMILY III

In this discussion we have by far the most simple, direct, and intelligible description and illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity. The simple illustration is blended with a moving devotion for a great mystery which demands faith. The need of faith is shown in the exhortation at the end of this discussion: "On þisne enne god we sceolon geleafan, and hine mid weorcum wurþian, forþan þe ealle þa halgan bec aegþer ge on þære ealdan æe ge on þære niwan soþlice sprecað þe þere halgan þrynnesse and soþre annyse" 12, 38 - 41 (In this One God we must believe, and honour Him with our works, because all the holy books, both in the Old Law and in the New, speak indeed concerning the Holy Trinity and Very Unity). This exhortation makes the whole discussion meaningful to the daily life of a Christian.²

² Aelfric's skilfull integration of exhortation into the discussions such as this does not support the view expressed by White, "The first of these, that for Christmas day, which begins the book, is an abstract treatment of the nature of God, and of the soul of man." Aelfric, p. 126.

NATIVITY HOMILY III

There follows a discussion on God's creatures, the aim of which is to emphasize one aspect of the nature of God: He is uncreated and unending. Another example of the homilist's concern with incorporating exhortations into the body of a merely speculative discussion is found here:

Ac se man ana gaep uprihte, þæt getacnaþ þæt he sceall ma þaencan upp þonne nyþer, þelaes þe þæt mod sy neoþer þonne se lichoma; and he sceal smeagen embe þæt aece lif, þe he to gesceapen waes, swiþor þonne embe þa eorþlican þing, swa swa his waestm him gebicnaþ. 14, 57 - 61 (But man alone goeth upright, which signifieth that his thoughts should be more upward than downward, lest the mind be lower than the body; and that he ought to seek after the eternal life for which he was created rather than after earthly things; even as his form showeth him).

Through the exhortation, the philosophical discussion is translated into practical application.

The treatment of the nature of God is carried further with the help of a rhetorical question: "Aeft gif hwylc gewytleas man wenþ he hine sylfne geworhte, þonne axie we hu he mihte hine sylfne gewyrcean gif he aer nes" 14, 67 - 69 (Again, if any witless man think that God made Himself, we ask him how He could have made Himself if He existed not before?). The homilist's ability to argue, persuade, and illustrate through example

NATIVITY HOMILY III

is at its best in the concluding part of this section on the nature of God:

Seo sunne þe onlihte ealne mid-eard is godes gesceaft, and we magon understandan þæt hyre leohte is of hyre, na heo of þam leohte, and seo haetu gaep of þære sunnan and of hire leohte gelice. Swa eac þæs aelmihtigan godes sunu is aefre of þaem faeder acenned, soþ leoht and soþ wisdom; and se halga gast is aefre of him þam, ne acenned, ac forþ-steppende; and se sunu ana under-faeng meniscnyse and on þisum dege wearþ to menn geboren to þi þæt he wolde us to his rice gefaeccan. 14, 71 - 79 (The sun which lighteth up the whole earth is God's creature, and we can understand that her light is from herself and not she from the light, and the heat proceedeth equally from the sun and from her light. So likewise the Son of Almighty God is eternally begotten of the Father, true light and true wisdom; and the Holy Ghost is eternally of Them both, not begotten, but proceeding; and the Son alone took human nature, and on this day was born as man to the end that He might fetch us to His Kingdom).

A phenomenon from nature illustrates as clearly as possible a supernatural mystery. In this concluding discussion we have an implicit refutation of the heresy, an explicit statement of the orthodox doctrine, and a formal linking of the whole discussion to the feast of the Nativity.

The transition from the section on the nature of God to that on the nature of the soul is clearly marked

NATIVITY HOMILY III

with the statement, "Nis nanum menn on þisum deadlican life libbendum nanas þinges swa mycel neod swa him biþ þaet he cunne þonne aelmihtigan god mid geleafan, and sibban his agene sawle. We habbaþ eow oft gesaed eowerne geleafan be þaere halgan þrynesse. Nu wylle we eow sum þing be eowre sawle saecgan sceortlice, gif we magon" 14 - 16, 79 - 84 (There is nothing so needful to any man living in this mortal life as that he should know the Almighty God by faith, and afterwards know his own soul. We have often spoken to you of your faith concerning the Holy Trinity, now will we, if we can, briefly tell you something about your own souls). Very skilfully placed at the end of the section on the nature of God, this statement serves as an exhortation, as a conclusion to and a justification of the preceding section, and as an introduction to the following section. Above all, this transitional sentence accounts for the subject matter of the homily. The reason for the positive exclusion of any detailed discussion on the feast of the Nativity proper is stated at the very beginning of the homily, in the Exordium, where the

NATIVITY HOMILY III

homilist reminded us of one of his previous Nativity Homilies.³ In this transitional sentence, he gives the motives for his choice of the new material.

The various items discussed in connection with the nature of the soul are introduced by such statements as, "Ealle þa geleaffulan faederas, þe godes lare awriton, saedon untwylice and gepwaerlehton on þam anum þaet god gescypp aelces mannes swale, and seo sawl nis na of godes agenum gecynde" 16, 84 - 87 (All the orthodox fathers who wrote God's lore, spoke undoubtedly and unanimously agreed in this, that God createth each man's soul, and the soul is not of God's own nature); "Upwytan saecgaf þaet þaere sawle gecynd is þryfeald" 16, 96 (Philosophers say that the soul's nature is threefold); "Uton nu behealden þa wundorlican swyftnyse þaere sawle" 18, 122 - 123 (Let us now consider the wonderful swiftness of the soul). The homilist succeeds in infusing practical applications and exhortations to moral virtues even into these speculative

³ See above, pp. 67 - 68.

NATIVITY HOMILY III

discussions as, for example, in the following, which deals with the origin of the soul from God:

Gif heo waere of godes gecynde genumen, witodlice ne mihte heo singian. Ðam men is gecyndelic þæt he lufige þæt þæt god is. Hwaet is god butan gode anum se þe is healic godnisse butan þam ne maeg nan man nan þing godes habban? Ðas godnysse we sceolan simble lufian þe us aelc god ofcymp, ac þissere godnysse lufu ne maeg beon butan on þære sawle, and seo an sawul is aepel-boren þe þonne lufað þe heo fram com, þe hi þyllice gesceop þæt heo on hire andgyte habban mihte godes anlicnesse and gelicnesse, and þæs wyrþe waere þæt hyre god onwunode. 16, 87 - 96 (If it were taken from God's nature, evidently it could not sin. It is natural to man that he should love that which is good; who is good but God only, who is supreme goodness, without whom no man can have anything that is good? This goodness, from which cometh to us every good thing, we must ever love, but the love of this goodness cannot exist except in the soul, and only that soul is nobly-born that loveth Him from whom it came, who created it such that it might have God's image and likeness in its understanding, and might be worthy of this thing, viz. that God should dwell in it).

The whole discussion on the nature of the soul is in a straightforward style, the simple clauses and sentences contributing to the unemotional and objective nature of the discussion. One particular device, however, should be mentioned. It is found in the discussion on the various names of the soul:

NATIVITY HOMILY III

Heo is on bocum manegum naman gecyged, be hyre weorces þenungum. Hyra nama is anima, þæt is sawul, and seo nama gelymþ to hire life. And spiritus, gast, belimþ to hire ymbwlatunge. Heo is sensus, þæt is andgit opþe fel-nyss, þonne heo gefret. Heo is animus, þæt is, mod, þonne heo wat. Heo is mens, þæt is mod, þonne heo under-stent. Heo is memoria, þæt is gemynd, þonne heo gemanþ. Heo is ratio, þæt is, gescead, þonne heo to-sceat. Heo is voluntas, þæt is wylla, þonne heo hwaet wyle. Ac swa þeah ealle þas naman syndon sawul. 20 - 22, 180 - 188 (It is called by various names in books, according to its offices. Its name is Anima, that is, Soul, and the name befitteth its life; and Spiritus, that is, Spirit, which appertaineth to its contemplation. It is Sensus, that is, perception or sensation, when it perceiveth. It is Animus, that is, intellect, when it knoweth. It is Mens, that is, mind, when it understandeth. It is Memoria, that is, Memory, when it remembereth. It is ratio, that is, Reason, when it reasoneth. It is Voluntas, that is, will, when it willeth anything; nevertheless, all these names are one Soul).

This pattern of a series of sentences grammatically alike maintains the train of thought, helping to bring out the relationship between ideas complementary to each other, and at the same time emphasizing the unity of the soul, which idea is repeated in the antithetical clause concluding the discussion, for the sake of emphasis.

The beauty of the soul, which the homilist says

NATIVITY HOMILY III

is the love of wisdom, is the last point discussed. It leads to a moral exhortation, "Witodlice þæt is soþ wysdom, þæt man gewylnige þæt soþe lif on þam þe he aefre lybban maeg mid gode on wuldre gif he hit on þyssere worulde ge-earnap" 24, 237 - 239 (Verily this is true wisdom, that a man desire the true life wherein he may live for ever with God in glory, if he merit it in this world). In the Conclusion of the homily, the wisdom of the soul is related to the true Wisdom, and this is only a logical growth from the preceding discussion and the moral exemplum. The homily is concluded with a prayer, "To þam us ge-laede seo leofa drihten crist, se þe is soþ wysdom, and sawla lif, se þe mid his ecan faeder, and mid þam halgan gaste a on ecnysse leofap. Amen" 24, 239 - 242⁴ (To this may our dear Lord Christ bring us, who is the true Wisdom, and the Life of souls, who with His Eternal Father and with the Holy Ghost liveth for ever and ever. Amen).

⁴ This formula does not support Sala's contention that the Closing Formula of an Anglo-Saxon homily "never invokes divine guidance upon the congregation, but is an act of worship upon the part of the priest and people, directed toward the Trinity." Preaching, p. 117.

NATIVITY HOMILY III

Our study of the structure and style of Aelfric's third Nativity Homily widens our knowledge of his method of treating different material. He develops an argument or an abstruse thought with clarity; he uses a medium suitable for expressing theological and philosophical speculations, from which he draws practical lessons. His flexible style is evidenced in his vigorous argument in refuting a heresy and in expounding a profound mystery. In his discussion of the nature of the soul, he adopts a style with no emotional appeal. In brief, lack of emotion, simplicity, and clarity are the most striking features of this homily.

CHAPTER IV

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

This partially revised version of Aelfric's third Nativity Homily¹ includes new material requiring new treatment. Like the third, this too falls into three main divisions: Exordium, Body and Conclusion. The Exordium, however, is of an entirely different kind. The Body is not limited to discussions on the nature of God and of the soul of man. The first section contains closely related discussions on the Virginity of Mary, the nature and purpose of the Incarnation, the nature of the Trinity, and the doctrine of the Eucharist. The second section, dealing with the nature of the soul, undergoes no substantial change; however, the soul's origin from God is more elaborately illustrated and more vigorously argued. The homily invokes the authority of the Scripture more frequently. The Conclusion is essentially the same as that of the earlier version. Since the elements common to the third and fourth homilies have already been discussed in the preceding chapter, only the revised portions will be discussed here.

¹ All references to this homily are from Belfour, Twelfth Century Homilies. The translation following is also Belfour's.

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

The Exordium, stating the occasion of the homily, is actually an exhortation: "A la!, gebroþrae, araereþ eowre heorte to þam heofenlice Gode mid soþ ileafe for þisse halgae daege; and lufiaep eowre Haelend, þe mid eadmodnesse to us com nu todaege, on soþe menniscnesse acenned of Mariae þet halige maeden" 78, 2 - 5 (Lift up your hearts, O brethren, to God in heaven with true faith for this holy day; and love your Saviour who with humility came to us on this very day, born in true humanity of Mary the holy maiden). It introduces discussions on Mary's singular privilege of being virgin and mother, and the nature and purpose of the Incarnation.

The discussion on the Incarnation concludes with emphasis on the divine nature of Christ, "For þon þe he ane is God, and allre kynges kyng, and alre lafordae laford, a on ecnesse rixiende mid alle his halgen" 78, 15 - 16 (For he alone is God, and king of all kings, and Lord of all Lords, ever ruling in eternity, with all his holy ones).

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

The homilist's effective juxtaposition of the following heretical views with this assertion emphasizes the falsity and contrast:

Nu weron summe dwolmen mid deofles gaste ifulled þe nolden ilyfaen þæt þe lyfigende Haelend waere aefre aer þysre weorlde angein wuniende mid his heofenlice Faeder, of him soþlice acenned; ac, bi þon þe heo saedon, sum timae sceolde beon aer þam þe þe Haelend waere þe alle þing iwrohte. 78, 16 - 21 (Now, there were certain perverse men filled with the spirit of the devil who would not believe that the living Saviour before the beginning of this world was ever dwelling with his heavenly Father and truly begotten of him; but, as they said, there must have been some time before the Saviour existed who created all things).

The temporal "Nu" at the beginning of this sentence and of the immediately following sentence in refutation of the heresy helps to maintain the train of thought and conveys a sense of continuity of the argument.

The heresy is refuted first by the authority of the Scripture. However, a new method is employed to introduce a detailed commentary on the text. Following the Scriptural text, "Ic me seolf eam angen þe wip eow speke" (I myself am the beginning who speak with you), the homilist adds, "Her is sceortlic andsware, ant swipe

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

deoplic" 78, 24 - 26. (Here is a short answer and a very profound one). The profundity of the answer logically demands a detailed exposition which is found in the following discussion dealing with the nature of the Triune God.

The exhortation incorporated into this discussion is worth noting because of its unparalleled force and emphasis:

Dis ge sceolen ilyfen, swa swa us laereþ þe witega, Nisi credideritis non intelligitis. 'Buton ge hit ilefaen ne mage ge hit understanden.' Nu is eft awriton on opre stowe þus, Altiora te ne quesieris. 'Ne ongin þu to asmeagene ofer þine meþe embe þa mycele deopnesse; ne hure embe þone þe all þing iscop; ac ilef on him, forþan þe he is soþ lif; for þi laes þe þu dweolie on þine þriste smeagunge, for þan þe þu ne mihte. 80, 15 - 21 (This must you believe, as the Prophet teaches us, Nisi credideritis non intelligitis - 'Unless ye believe ye cannot understand it.' Now is it written again thus in another place, Altiora te ne quaesieris. 'Do not try to ponder beyond thy measure about great mysteries; and surely not about him who created all things; but believe in him, because he is the true life; lest thou grow foolish in thy presumptuous thinking, because thou canst not do it').

The exhortation is based on the authority of the Scripture, and its forceful tone indicates the need for faith in the Trinity.

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

The discussion on the nature of various creatures and on the superior qualities with which man is endowed, concludes with another strong exhortation: "Ne beo ge na attre, swa swa þa yfelae neddrae, terende eow bitweonen and teone wyrcende; ne ge ne gan lytende, swa swa þa nytene gap þe libbaeþ bi gres, and heo Godes ne gemep" 84, 13 - 16 (Now you must not be poisonous like noxious adders, rending one another and working harm; and do not go bent down as the beasts do who live by grass and do not take notice of God). The purpose of this exhortation, obviously, is to remind man of his excellence. Also, it paves the way for a discussion on the Eucharist, confirmed by the immediately following: "Soþlice ure Scuppend us geaf to bileofenaen igearcnodne laf of eorþlice tylunge, and eac þone arwurþae laf þe engles brucaeþ, þaet is, þe Haelend Crist þe is heorae lif and urae" 84, 16 - 19 (Our Maker, indeed, has given us for nourishment prepared bread of earthly making and also the glorious bread which angels feed on, that is, the Saviour Christ who is their life and ours). Substantially

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

and syntactically, these two sentences are linked with the assertive "soplice." The discussion on the Eucharist concludes with an exhortation to receive Holy Communion on the feast of the Nativity and on all possible occasions. The logical integration of these various discussions is impressive.

The transitional sentences introducing the section on the nature of the soul are emphatic in tone:

Ge men sceolen witen and wislice understonden for hwi oper for hwon ge beop isceapene on þisse sceorte life, oppe to hwan ge wurþaep iwende aefter þissum life. Eow is mucel neod þaet ge on eowre mode icna-waen þone lifigende God, and on him ilefaen, and þaet ge eac smeagen embe eowre agene swale, þaet ge sum þing cynnon bi hure cynde. 84, 31 - 33; 86, 1 - 4
 (You people should know and intelligently understand why or wherefore you are created for this short life or what you will be changed into after this life. There is much need for you to recognize in your hearts the living God, and believe on him, (and) also to think about your own soul, in order to learn some-thing about its nature).

These sentences, containing exhortations to faith in God and to a consideration of life hereafter, serve also to justify the section on the nature of the soul.

NATIVITY HOMILY IV

The partially revised version of Aelfric's third Nativity Homily is certainly richer than the earlier one. It is more explicitly relevant to the feast of the Nativity and, because of the inclusion of additional materials, the homily assumes the form of an occasional sermon. The elaborations in the first part of the discussion required a blending of the homilist's expository and narrative styles. The revision preserves the simplicity of language, the clarity of expression, and the persuasive arguments found in the third homily and, in addition, the homilist's serious and emphatic tone for instructional purposes. His genius for integrating different salutary topics into related discussions is another striking feature of this revised homily.

CHAPTER V

NATIVITY HOMILY V

In his fifth and last Nativity Homily,¹ Aelfric expounds the first fourteen verses of the Gospel according to St John - the Scripture Reading assigned for the third Mass of the feast. Of all his homilies for the feast of the Nativity, this is the most varied in structure. In it are found some major divisions common to the other homilies, both the exegetical and the non-exegetical. However, individual sections vary in their subject matter and scope and, consequently, in their treatment. The main parts are: Exordium, Scripture Reading, Body and Conclusion, with the exhortations, moral exempla and practical applications incorporated into the Body which can be divided into two sections.

The Exordium serves as an introduction to the Scripture Reading rather than as an Orientation proper.

¹ All references to this homily are from Pope, Homilies, I. Since the homily is printed in verse form, in the quotation, ends of lines will be marked by /. The translation following is my own.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

It has no Vocative Address and it mentions only indirectly the occasion of the homily: "We raedaþ on þisum Drihtenlican symbeldaege/ þaet halige godspell be þaes Haelendes acennednysse,/ aegþer ge be his godcundnysse ge be his menniscnysse,/ swa swa Iohannes awrat" 196, 1 - 4 (On this feast day of the Lord, we read the Holy Gospel concerning the birth of the Saviour both in His divinity and in His humanity, as written by John). Following this statement, the homilist provides a wealth of information (196 - 197, 5 - 26): John's kinship with Christ; the privileges he enjoyed and the special love granted to him because of his chastity; the visions mentioned in Ezechiel and in the "Apocalypse"; John's ability to perceive clearly the divine nature of Christ with the sharpness of an eagle's eye; the request made by the bishops of Asia; the circumstances under which John wrote; the characteristics of his Gospel and how it differs from the other three. This information stresses the significance and importance of the gospel pericope and commands attention to the Scripture Reading.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

Noteworthy is the homilist's method of introducing the Scripture Reading. Following his reference to the requests of the bishops of Asia, he adds: "And he him bead þa þreora daga faesten,/ and aefter þam faestene he wearþ swa afylled/ mid þam Halgan Gaste þaet he ongann to writenne/ þa halgan Cristes boc swa swa we her secgaþ:" 197, 23 - 26 (And he undertook a three days' fast, and after that he was filled with the Holy Ghost and began to write the holy book of Christ as we read here). This sentence, relating the extraordinary circumstances under which the Gospel was written, marks the logical transition to the next section of the homily.

The Scripture Reading consists of a straightforward translation of the gospel pericope. In his rendering of the text, the homilist endeavours to make his version conform with the original, imitating, wherever possible, its structure, syntax and word-order.² However, he does

² Pope points to some stylistic features in Aelfric's translation. Referring to lines 28 - 29 (On an-gynne waes Word,/ and þaet Word waes mid Gode,/ and þaet Word waes God.) and 35 - 36 (And þaet lecht scean on þeostrum, and þa þeostru ne underfengon/ þaet foresaede lecht.) and line 41 (Naes he na him sylf lecht, ac þaet

NATIVITY HOMILY V

not fail to make the necessary modifications to clarify

he cydde gecyþnesse be þam/ lechte.), Pope remarks: "At these points in his translation of the gospel, Aelfric binds three half-line phrases into a kind of triplet which he himself seems to regard alternatively as a line and a half, to be rendered symmetrical by a fourth half-line or as a single extra-long line. Thus at lines 28 - 29 and the repetition at 155 - 6 he prefixes an introductory half-line (þæt is on Engliscre spræce; þus awritende, respectively), whereas he allows the repetition at 147 - 8 to stand as a triplet. Similarly, the three phrases at 35 - 36 and their repetition at 293 - 294 form a triplet, or, as printed for convenience, a line and a half. The first two phrases are bound by the repeated "þeostrum - þeostru," and second and third by the alliterating "f", the first and third by the repeated "leht." I have treated the less obviously tripletic 41 and its repetition at 310 as a single extra long line. One might regard "ac þæt he cydde" (which does not alliterate with the preceding half line) as an extrametric introduction to the more heavily stressed words that follow, or one might take the first half-line as an asymmetrical unit poised against the two closely bound halves that follow. Another conspicuously tripletic sequence occurs at 39 - 40 (Ðes com on gecyþnysse þæt he cydde be þam lechte/ soþe gecyþnysse, þæt ealle gelyfdon þurh hine) and 304 - 5, but Aelfric has added another half line to complete the gospel verse and restore the usual balance. At lines 301 - 2 (He wæs fram Gode asende þæt he secgan mihte/ soþe gecyþnysse), however, he paraphrases the earlier part of the same verse in three half lines alliterating on "s" and does not add a fourth half line. Such variations as these, though comparatively rare, are not without precedent in Aelfric. Here they seem to have been prompted by Aelfric's desire to do justice to the original, either by imitating its structure, as in the first verse, or by finding an economical substitute when some change of structure was required." Homilies, I, pp. 221 - 222.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

the meaning of the original. Thus, the Latin "Hoc erat in principio apud Deum" is rendered more emphatic in translation by the addition of an adjective "aelmihtig" attributed to God: "Dis waes on anginne mid þam aelmihtigan Gode" 198, 30 (This was in the beginning with God Almighty); the reflexive pronouns "ipsum" and "ipso" of the Latin "Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil," are replaced by the noun "Word" for which they stand: "Ealle þing syndon gesceapene þurh þæt word,/ and butan þam Worde nis geworht nan þing" 198, 31 - 32 (All things were made through the Word, and without the Word was not made anything), thereby achieving clarity; in translating the "In ipso vita erat, et vita erat lux hominum," the homilist employs the assertive "witodlice" to bind the sequence more closely and, at the same time, to enforce the meaning: "Ðaet geworht is waes lif on him sylfum,/ and þæt lif witodlice waes manna leoht" 198, 33 - 34 (That which was made was life in itself, and that life, truly, was the light of men); the demonstrative pronoun "eam" in the Latin "et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt" is replaced by the noun which

NATIVITY HOMILY V

is clearly specified: "and þa þeostru ne underfengon/ þaet foresaede lecht" 198, 35 - 36 (And the darkness did not comprehend the above mentioned light); the verse "In propria venit et sui eum non receperunt" is rendered more emphatic by the repetition of the strong possessive "agene" in both clauses: "On his agenum he com, and his agene ne underfengon hine" 199, 46 (Unto His own He came, and His own received Him not); the simple unemphatic statement "et vidimus gloriam ejus" is made more forceful by the reflexive pronoun and assertive adverb in "And we sylfe gesawon soþlice his wuldor" 199, 52 (And we ourselves have truly seen his glory); the elliptic "gloriam quasi unigeniti" is elaborated to illustrate the meaning in "swylc wuldor swa gedafenap Godes acennedan Suna" 199, 53 (Such glory befitting the Only begotten Son of God). Aelfric's translation is certainly faithful to the sense of the original. Wherever possible, he does endeavour to retain the Latin word-order while adopting a proper English style; his English version is in keeping with his own rule governing translation.³

³ See above pp. 24 - 25.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

After the Scripture Reading, a new element is found in this homily, that is, a short section in which the homilist mentions Augustine and his commentary. As the text is mutilated, its content can only be conjectured. It would appear, however, that Aelfric is acknowledging his indebtedness to "Augustinus se wisa and se wordsnotera bisceop" 199, 55 (The learned and eloquent Bishop Augustine) probably, for many of the ideas expressed in the homily.

A transitional sentence⁴ takes us into the Body of the homily: "Se soþfaesta godspellere us saede þurh

⁴ Sala calls this transitional sentence Scriptural Exordium. According to him, there are three kinds of exordia to be found in Anglo-Saxon homilies: "A. Occasional. This type introduces a discourse on some event of the Christian year, such as fast days, saints' days, or any celebration which the homilist desires to emphasize. B. Authoritarian. In this type, especially prevalent in Aelfric, reference is made to the authority to whom the preacher is indebted for his discourse. C. Scriptural. This type of exordium is really only a transitional sentence or phrase that takes the homilist out of the reading of the Scripture lesson into the exposition of its contents." Preaching, pp. 96 - 97.

This is the only Nativity Homily in which Aelfric employs all these three kinds of exordia.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

God/ þæt þæt Word waes on anginne mid þam aelmihtigan
 Gode:/ On anginne waes þæt word: and þæt angin is se
 Faeder,/ mid þam waes þæt Word wunigen (...);/ and þæt
 Word is anginn, swa swa he eft saede,/ 'Ego principium qui
 et loquor vobis:' Ic Sylf eom anginn, ic þe to eow sprece"
 199 - 200, 63 - 69 (The holy evangelist told us through
 God that the Word was in the beginning with the almighty
 God: In the beginning was the Word: And the beginning is
 the Father, with whom was the Word dwelling (...); and the
 Word is the beginning, as He often said 'I who speak un-
 to you am the beginning').

These opening lines of the first section of the
 Body are a paraphrase and a commentary on the first three
 verses of John. This section, as a whole, consists chiefly
 of Scriptural elaborations, testimonies concerning the "Word"
 and "Wisdom" from Genesis, Psalms, and St Paul, followed
 logically by discussions relating to the three persons
 of the Trinity. Introduced also is the testimony of the
 heathen prophet Hermes on the "Word" and "Wisdom." The

NATIVITY HOMILY V

discussions in this first section dealing with doctrinal matters convey a sense of seriousness and profundity. Nevertheless, these doctrinal matters are expressed in clear and simple language as apparent in the exegesis of the Psalm, "Verbo Domini Caeli firmati sunt et spiritu oris ejus omnis virtus eorum." The exegetical comments on this Psalm read: "Her is nu belocen on bysum lytlan ferse/ eall seo halige Ðrynnys þe is þrymwealdend God:/ se Faeder and his Word, þæt is his agen Wisdom,/ for þan þe word is wisdomes geswutelung,/ and se Halga Gast, þe hylt ealle þing" 201, 84 - 88 (In this short phrase is hidden all the Trinity which is the all-governing God: The Father and His Word, which is His own Wisdom because word is the manifestation of wisdom, and the Holy Ghost who illumines everything).

Although the doctrinal content is very abstract, the discussions are made relevant to practical life by the incorporation of exhortations. Following his explanation of the nature of the Holy Ghost, the homilist adds: "and þæra manna heortan þe on middanearde gelyfab/ on þone

NATIVITY HOMILY V

sopan God symble beop on luste/ þurh þone sylfan Gast, and he sylþ us eallum/ ure synna forgyfennysse swibe mihtiglice" 201, 94 - 97 (and the hearts of men, who on earth believe in true God, will be gladdened through that Spirit, and He granteth us, with His great power, the forgiveness of all our sins). This exhortation to faith is more explicit in the lines following St Paul's reference to Christ as the Father's Wisdom: "(...) ne on heora gesetnessum/ þaet we sceolon gelyfan on þone so (.../...) nas and geworhte eall þing" 202, 110 - 112 (... that we must believe in the ...). Although the text is mutilated, it is obvious that the discussion ends with an exhortation to faith.

The homilist concludes the first section with the rhetorical device "Occupatio." Immediately after his comments on the testimony of the heathen prophet Hermes, he says: "Fela we mihton secgan swylcera gewitnyssa/ þurh haepene witegan be þam heofonlican Gode,/ gyf us to lang ne þuhte hit her to logienne." 203, 145 - 147 (We could tell you many more of such testimonies of the heathen prophets if we did not think it too long to narrate them here).

NATIVITY HOMILY V

Our basis for dividing the Body of the homily into two sections is the homilist's two separate treatments of the first three verses of John. At the beginning of the Body, he paraphrases the three verses and comments upon them; later on, in his verse-by-verse exegesis of the text, these are quoted and again commented upon. There is no apparent reason for these two separate treatments of the same text. As the first treatment seems to stand apart, and as the homilist seems to give a formal conclusion to that treatment with the "Occupatio," the Body of the homily seems to fall into two clearly defined sections.

The second section of the Body consists of a verse-by-verse exegesis of all the fourteen verses of the Scripture Reading.⁵ This section can be divided into seventeen short sections, each comprising a repetition of

⁵ Clemons' comments on Aelfric's exegetical method seem pertinent here: "His understanding of the form of exegetical commentary known as the 'continuous gloss' depended on training too. This was an exposition in which text and gloss were written consecutively and the gloss was not placed in the margin or between the lines of the text. Aelfric used this technical form increasingly for his homilies commenting upon passages of Scripture." "Aelfric," p. 191.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

the part of the text followed by a commentary. In his exegesis, the homilist limits himself to the simple literal - *sensus historicus vel literalis* - explanation of the text. Doctrinal matters, Scriptural elaborations, moral exempla, exhortations, practical lessons and refutation of heresies, all are skilfully introduced into the exposition without producing any impression of digression. Our discussion will be limited to an examination of the homilist's method of organizing these materials rather than of the materials themselves.

The homilist refutes the Arian and the Manichaeian heresies in the course of his exegesis. The Arian heresy that challenged the co-eternity and, consequently, the co-equality of the Son with the Father is mentioned immediately after the repetition of the first three verses of the Scriptural Reading, and it is refuted by the authority of the text itself: "On anginne waes Word, / and ðaet Word waes mid Gode, and ðaet Word waes God" 204, 155 - 156 (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God). This refutation provides an opportunity

NATIVITY HOMILY V

to state in clear terms the true doctrine concerning the nature of the Trinity.

The Manichaeian heresy, which challenged the co-equality of the Son with the Father because He was born of a woman and the Virginity of Mary after childbirth, is shown erroneous in the exposition of the text "And þæt Word is geworht flaesc, and hit wunode on us" 213, 403 (And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us). Following the repetition of the text, the homilist adds: "Nis þæt halige Word awend to flaesce,/ ac se heofonlica Aepeling⁶ her on þas woruld com/and þa menniscnysse genam of Marian innoþe,/ soþ man acenned on sawle and on lichaman,/ and wunode swapeah God on þære godcundnysse,/ an aelmihtig Haelend, us to alysende" 213, 404 - 409 (Not that the Word is transformed into flesh, but the heavenly

⁶ We notice how the homilist adapts a familiar Anglo-Saxon term to describe the Son of God. Another instance of such adaptation we have in line 70 where Moses is referred to as "Moyses se maera heretoga."

NATIVITY HOMILY V

Prince came here unto this world, assumed the human nature in the womb of Mary, and was born true man in body and soul; nevertheless, God dwelt there in His divinity, one almighty Saviour, to redeem us). This commentary on the text is an example of Aelfric's simple and clear literal exegesis. After this exposition, he refers to the teachings of Manichaeus, and, by means of a commonplace simile, illustrates how through Christ's birth Mary's virginity was not lost, but kept intact and sanctified: "Gyf seo sunne scinþ, swa swa we geseop oft,/ on fulum adela (...) fyled ne bip,/ micle swiþor mihte se aelmihtiga Godes Sunu butan eallum fy (...) beon of hyre acenned,/ and heo mihte beon micclum geclaensod/ þurh his halg (...); and he naes befyled/ and hyre maegþhad is ansund, þonne heo butan haemedede (..."

214, 420 - 426 (If the sun shines, as we see often, over the muddy places, it does not become defiled, The Son of the almighty God can much more swiftly...).

The homilist's effective use of a commonplace simile is found in another part of this section. Here it is to bring out the meaning of the text, and not to refute

NATIVITY HOMILY V

any heresy. The simile "Swa swa þære sunnan lecht be-
scinþ þære blindan,/ and se blinda ne gesihþ (...) scinen-
dan leoman,/ swa eac þa unrihtwisan and þa ungeleaffullan/
mid ablendum modum ne mihton geseon/ þæs Haelendes lecht
þe onliht þas (...)" 209, 294 - 298 (As the sun's light
shines over the blind man, and he does not see the shining
ray, so also the unjust and unbelieving with blind mind
cannot see the light of the Saviour which enlightens us)
elucidates the text and serves as an exhortation to faith.

The exposition of the text "and butan þam Worde
nis nan þing geworht" 204, 176 (and without the Word was
made nothing) is very extensive. Old Testament materials
are used as moral exempla with exhortations aptly incor-
porated into the discussion. An outline of the creation
and fall of man precedes the exhortation "God gesceop
heofonas, him sylfum to wununge/ and his halgum englum þe
him gehyrsumedon,/ and eac he geuþe þære ylcan wununge/
Adames ofspringe gyf hi hit gearnodon" 205, 200 - 204
(God created the heavens for Him to dwell with His holy
angels who obeyed Him, but He will grant that same dwelling

NATIVITY HOMILY V

to all the children of Adam if they can earn it). Immediately following is a catalogue of the things God created for our needs on earth since we were to live there as the consequence of Adam's fall.⁷ At the conclusion of this discussion, the homilist assures us that "we magon geearnian on urum wraecsipe gyt/ þaet ece lif mid him and þa uplican wununga/ gyf we forlaetaþ unriht and lufiaþ urne Scyppend" 206, 219 - 221 (we can earn, in our exile, eternal life with Him and the heavenly dwelling, if we abandon injustice and love our Creator).

After a brief reference to the belief that God, because of our sins, created some creatures to torture us in order that we may become better, the homilist speaks of Moses and the plagues of Egypt during the reign of

⁷ Pope suggests that through the reference to these things God created for us, the homilist tries "to emphasize, on general scriptural authority, that God gives gifts in abundance even to fallen man." Homilies, I, p. 194.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

Pharaoh (206 - 207, 222 - 248). These materials serve as moral exempla and lessons for our instructions are drawn from them: "(...) ne mihte nan mann macian to wecgum/ gyf God ne geworhte þa oran to þam./ Ne furþon aenne sticcan ne aenne staef we naefdon/ ne ane oflaetan to urum maessan gode/ gyf he us ne foresceawode him sylf þæt on aer;/ and we magon swaþeah mid his agenum þingum/ hine us gegladian/ and hine eac gremian gyf we him aetbredaþ/ his agene cyste his cystigan modes" 207, 249 - 257 (... no one can make a piece of money if God had not created the ore. Likewise, we can have no stick nor staff, nor any mass-offering, if God had not provided us with them before; thus, with His own things we can please Him, and even displease Him if we ourselves limit His kindness). This exhortation is also an indirect comment on the limitations of human magical powers and wonders which are mentioned in the last part of this short section.⁸ Referring to God's deliverance of Moses from the hands of his enemies, the homilist

⁸ For this suggestion, see Pope, Homilies, I, p. 193.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

speaks of the power of God to create different kinds of fleas from the carcasses of animals. This comment, however, is preceded by a reminder to us of our limited understanding of these matters: "Ge ne magon na swiþor, þeah þe we eow secgon,/ heora (...) tocnawan," 208, 267 - 268 (You cannot understand more even if we tell you).

The exegesis of the verse "Swa fela swa hine underfengon, eallum hiom he forgeaf/ anweald/ Godes bearn to beonne, þam þe on his naman gelyfaþ" 211, 349 - 351 (As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God, to them that believe in His name) is a very moving discussion on the kindness of God. After repeating the text, the homilist adds: "Her ge magon gehyran þæs Haelendes cystignysse/ and his micclan godnysse ofer manna bearnum/ þaethe gyfþ us anweald, gif we on hine gelyfaþ, / Godes bearn to beonne, swa swa þis godspell segb/ and swa swa he sylf saede to sumnum his gecorenum:/ 'Ego dixi dii estis, et filii Excelsi omnes:'/ Ic saede to soþan, ge sylf syndon godas,/ and suna þæs Hextan þe heofonas gewylt" 211 - 212, 352 - 359 (Here you can see

NATIVITY HOMILY V

the kindness of God the Lord, His great goodness over mankind that He gives us power to become God's children, if we believe in Him, as this Gospel says, and as He Himself told to some of His chosen: 'I have said, you are gods; and all of you are children of the most High').

The homilist next introduces the words spoken to Moses and Aaron and the words of the Psalmist to show the promise God made to man that he will become a son of God. He then skilfully integrates a discussion on the purpose of the Incarnation: Christ became man so that He can have brothers to enjoy heavenly happiness with Him and to reign with Him in heaven. Here again is illustrated how we become children of God, and it is interesting to note that the exegesis on the next verse includes a discussion on Baptism - the means by which we become children of God.⁹ The homilist's ability to incorporate

⁹ Here we have another instance to challenge Sala's contention that the Anglo-Saxon homilist has very little teaching of note on baptism. See, Preaching. p.110.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

doctrinal matters into his discussions is well manifested in this part of the homily.

Aelfric's method of expanding his discussion by means of Scriptural elaborations is found in his exegesis of the verse "Naes he na him sylfum leoht, ac þaet he cydde gecyþnysse be þam/ leohte" 209, 309 - 310 (He himself was not the light, but was to bear witness to the light). The discussion includes an explanation of the text "Vos estis lux mundi" and of St Paul's statement that we were once in darkness, but now in the light of God, because those who believe in God live in Him. Another example of such expansion is found in his discussion of the text "And we sylfe gesawon soþlice his wuldor,/ swylc wuldor swa gedafenap Godes ancennedan Suna" 214, 427 - 428 (And we ourselves have seen His glory, such glory befitting the only begotten Son of God), where the homilist includes references to some of the events that occurred during Christ's baptism, His transfiguration, and His passion. All these Scriptural texts are brought in to illustrate that God Himself manifested the glory befitting His only begotten Son.

NATIVITY HOMILY V

The exposition of the last verse of the Scripture Reading is introduced with the transitional statement "Daet godspell geendap nu on þisum wordum þuss:/ 'Eall fulne mid gyf and mid sopfaestnysse' 216, 455 - 456 (Now the Gospel concludes with these words: 'All fullness with grace and truth). In the first part of the discussion, the homilist shows how Christ had the fullness of grace; He was true God and true man, born of the Virgin in the tribe of David, one Christ in two substances. Christ has the fullness of truth because He Himself said "I am the way, the truth and the Life." After contrasting the Mosaic law with Christ's law of grace and truth, and after pointing to the different effects these laws produced, the homilist affirms that all that Moses had said is fulfilled in Christ and that His journey was designed from the beginning of the world. Thus the Nativity of Christ is the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Old Testament.

The Conclusion of the homily follows immediately after this discussion to which the Closing Formula is

NATIVITY HOMILY V

syntactically joined: "Ðam is wuldor and lof and wyrþmynt on ecnysse/ mid þam heofonlican Faeder and þam Halgan Gaste/ on anre godcundnysse: we cwepað, Amen 216, 470 - 473 (To Him be glory, and praise, and dignity for ever with the heavenly Father and with the Holy Ghost, in one divinity: we say, Amen). The Closing Formula contains a new element: The act of worship directed towards the Trinity is emphasized by our assent "we cwepað, Amen."

Aelfric's use of rhythmic prose for this fifth Nativity Homily calls for a brief comment. Although it is written in alliterative rhythmic lines, he consciously excludes poetic devices such as ornate diction, kenning, and variation. "Augustinus se wisa, and se wordsnotera bisceop" 199, 55, although a prosaic statement, clearly indicates the homilist's familiarity with poetic devices. The alliterative pattern binds the sentences together and guides their forward movement. However, the exclusion of poetic devices from the homily keeps it within the realm of prose of which Aelfric is the acclaimed master. His mastery is evident in the flexibility of his style employed

NATIVITY HOMILY V

in the translation of the pericope and in its exposition.

The study of Aelfric's fifth and last Nativity Homily confirms our belief that he is a most versatile homilist. His method of treatment varies according to the subject matter, illustrated again in this homily in which he adopts different methods of exposition for the same Scriptural text. Emphasizing the meaning of the text, he gives a literal explanation; a very difficult theme is treated methodically and lucidly. The profound mysteries are explained in simple and plain language; difficult concepts are expressed through commonplace analogies and similes.

The pattern used by Aelfric to arrange his material in this homily makes it one of the most varied of all his Nativity Homilies and one of the richest because of the wealth of elaborations in his discussions. Certain of the obvious features are the homilist's wide range of knowledge, his conception of the Old Testament as a storehouse of moral exempla and prophecies concerning the redemption of man, and his ability to introduce Scriptural elaborations

NATIVITY HOMILY V

and incorporate exhortations. Aelfric's careful craftsmanship in integrating a wide range of materials into a coherent and unified structure makes this one of his most skilfully organized homilies.

CONCLUSION

Aelfric's versatile method and flexible style are illustrated in his five Nativity Homilies, each of which required individual and particular treatment. They are vast in scope encompassing a variety of material, such as the narration of prophecies; translation and verse-by-verse exegesis of gospel pericope; literal, allegorical and moral interpretations of Scriptural texts; discussions on the nature of the Trinity, Baptism, Eucharist, the human soul, and on the Virginity of Mary; refutation of heresies; and exhortations to virtues.

Such a wide range of subject matter required Aelfric to explore the potentialities of the language. His lucid treatment of divergent material results from his use of a simple, yet rich, vocabulary, effective commonplace analogies and similes and striking rhetorical devices. He succeeds in harmonizing the native modes of thought and expression with Latin rhetorical features. The flexibility of his style is apparent in his use of narration, exposition, Biblical exegesis, argument and exhortation in the presentation of profound doctrine,

CONCLUSION

the refutation of heresies, the explanation of theological and philosophical concepts and in the communication of information.

Unquestionably, Aelfric is the most important literary figure of the late Old English period, due, in great measure, to his contribution to the development of Old English prose of which he is the undisputed master. It is, however, as a homilist that he makes his greatest contribution.

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ABSTRACT

This study has undertaken a detailed analysis of Aelfric's five Nativity homilies with specific reference to their structural organization and stylistic features.

The introduction reviews Aelfric scholarship and observes that there has been no critical discussion, as such, of the homilies.

Each of the five chapters of the study examines one of the five homilies. Chapters I and V consider the first and fifth homilies, both of which expound the gospel pericopes assigned for the Masses of the feast. These homilies illustrate Aelfric's various methods of exegesis in explanation of the different pericopes. Chapter II discusses the second homily, which deals with a variety of topics related to the feast and conveys a wealth of information. Chapters III and IV analyse the third and fourth homilies, in which Aelfric discusses doctrinal matters not strictly related to the feast, such as the nature of God and of the human soul.

ABSTRACT

The Conclusion asserts that while Aelfric's contribution to the development of Old English prose is significant, it is as a homilist that he makes his greatest contribution.